

Ethnography and Language Policy edited by Teresa L. McCarty. New York, NY: Routledge, 2011. 309 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-80140-9.

Ethnography might be thought of as something purely descriptive and objective, done by someone who comes from outside. This is not the view I hold. Ethnography must be descriptive and objective, yes, but not only that. It must be conscious of values and goals; it must relate description to analysis and objectivity to ... the goal of equality of educational opportunity (Hymes, as cited in McCarty, 2011, pp. 43-44).

When asked to teach a graduate seminar on the ethnography of language policy for the first time, Teresa McCarty was surprised that she was unable to find a single text that encompassed both topics. Consequently, she decided to create a reference for using ethnography as an essential tool to investigate the emerging field of Language Policy and Planning. *Ethnography and Language Policy* presents significant contributions from distinguished and recent scholars in applied linguistics, anthropology, sociolinguistics, and education. In her contributions to the collection, McCarty argues that language policy and planning function “not as separable acts, but as mutually constitutive, interdependent, and co-occurring sociocultural processes” (p. 8). These processes frequently mask and reproduce the hegemonic language ideologies and power structures that foster social inequalities, particularly in and through education. She advocates for a critical ethnographic approach to uncover “the marbling of those processes as they merge and diverge, constantly configuring and being (re)configured within a larger social landscape, which they in turn (re)shape” (p. 17). Critical ethnography has long been used in education and sociology research to uncover power dynamics at play, and McCarty’s volume reveals its utility for doing the same for language policy.

This volume offers a wide range of examples of how ethnography of language policy can be applied in macro, meso, and micro settings and gives insight to explicit and implicit effects of language policy and planning at various levels. The book is organized into three parts: Parts I and II offer a diverse and engaging collection of ethnographic case studies, while Part III includes Nancy Hornberger and David Johnson’s commentary on all the texts in the volume. These discussions give the reader a nuanced perspective on the broader themes that connect the studies and offer suggestions for further research. The other authors in this volume, adopting this sociocultural stance on the study of language policy, explore global, local, and individual drivers of language shift, spread, maintenance, and revitalization. Their case studies employ an extensive array of methods, such as participant-observation, in-depth interviews, document collection, focus groups, photo-based interviews, video-taped lessons, and quantitative analysis. Each of the methods used in these case studies provides

readers insight into how ethnography can be used to “peel back the layers” of complex language issues, and perhaps even an indication of how their own studies could be constructed (p. xxii).

The intricacies of language policy and planning as a field are revealed in these case studies, which show how the implementation of language policies, either implicit or explicit, affect language shift, spread, maintenance, and revitalization. King and Haboud’s study on the effects of emigration in Andean Quichua communities and Collins’ commentary explore the impact of globalization on language shift and maintenance. The complexities of language shift and youth identity formation and performance are examined in both Canagarajah’s study of the Tamil diaspora in Canada and Nicholas’s study of the Hopi youth in Arizona. Successful stories of language revitalization projects are covered in Hill and May’s study on Maori-medium bilingual education and Martin-Jones’s study of bilingual vocational education in Wales. The piece by McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol, and Zepeda and Nicholas’s work both examine the detrimental nature of the spread of English on the indigenous languages of Native American populations in the US. In contrast, Hopson’s work on Namibian schools and Canagarajah’s study both consider the ability of English to be used as a tool of liberation from oppressors. The Combs, Gonzalez and Moll piece delivers a window into the destructive impact of the restrictive, top-down, English-only policy in Arizona schools on undocumented immigrant youth and their families, and demonstrates how teachers, by creating a linguistic “third space” (p. 195), resisted this “pedagogy of control” (p. 199) to better serve their students. In the final chapter of Part II, Ramanathan calls for researchers to be more self-reflective and to re-examine how their own language ideologies impact the data they choose to present (and not to present) for public examination. The ethnographies presented in this collection delve into the multitudes of sociopolitical contexts of language policies and the sometimes tragic, sometimes uplifting, consequences of their implementation.

Through these case studies, McCarty successfully demonstrates the ability of critical ethnography to “peel back the layers of the onion” and provide a multi-layered analysis of language policy and planning. Although McCarty suggests that the book is not intended solely for academics, but also for policy-makers and educators (p. xxii), the vocabulary employed throughout the rest of the text assumes some technical knowledge. This collection of studies offers a glimpse at the diverse selection of contexts and issues that critical ethnography is well suited to explore and a treasure trove of methods to choose from. Students, academics, and researchers in the field alike will find this compilation a valuable addition to their reference collection.

Reviewer

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