BOOK REVIEWS

PETER BACKHAUS. *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Analysis of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*. Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters. 2007. 158 pp. Pb (1853599468) £19.95/$39.95.

DURK GORTER. *Linguistic Landscape: A New Approach to Multilingualism*. Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters. 2006. 89 pp. Hb (1853599166) £29.95/$54.95.

Reviewed by NIKOLAS COUPLAND

Peter Backhaus says that linguistic landscape research is a relatively young sociolinguistic sub-discipline (p. 3). Durk Gorter's title says it constitutes a new approach to multilingualism. Authors in both books attribute the first use of the term 'linguistic landscape' to a 1997 article by Rodrigue Landry and Richard Bourhis, although Bernard Spolsky's foreword to the Backhaus book acknowledges that there is a much longer history of interest in language texts displayed in public domains. It would be surprising if this was not the case, given that, as Landry and Bourhis noted, the language of public signage can be the most immediately striking index of a distinctive spoken language environment. These two books from Multilingual Matters certainly catch a new wave of interest, and take us well beyond the indexicality perspective.

Road signs, street names, public notices, advertisement hoardings, shop names and logos are the types of texts analysed, and interpreted in relation to the sociolinguistic environments of Jerusalem, Bangkok, Tokyo, Donostia-San Sebastian, and Lyouwert-Leeuwarden. Public signage in settings like these is shown to be a key element of political activity around language. Texts servicing apparently mundane communicative functions, such as explaining parking restrictions or giving directions, can also be assertions of minority language rights, or instruments of official language policy, or markers of changing power relations between languages or language groups. The linguistic landscape is inevitably an important site of engagement for sociolinguists, and language has featured extensively in visual urban clutter for centuries. So what *is* new about linguistic landscaping? Why these two books *now*?

Gorter suggests that the advent of digital photography has been one stimulus. Recent reassessment of the linguistic–visual interface under the rubric of multimodality – recognition that texts of most sorts do not make their meaning through language alone – is an intellectual reflex of the digital age. Arguments that social life is being increasingly mediatised (Jaworski and Thurlow, forthcoming) are also contingent. Gorter (p. 81) also points to globalisation and the increasingly profound impact of global languages, especially English,

on diverse linguistic ecologies. The character of linguistic landscapes is largely shaped by commercial considerations, and so is globalisation itself, so it is plausible to see linguistic landscaping as an important part of our experience of global change.

Some of the studies in the Gorter collection (first published as a theme issue of the *International Journal of Multilingualism*) make related observations. In his short chapter, Peter Backhaus comments on the introduction of some English texts into the Tokyo landscape, but also Chinese and Korean, as efforts to create 'an overseas atmosphere' (p. 64). Thom Huebner observes the consistent use of Thai and English in Bangkok in government signs marking national ministries or institutions, whereas direction signs and traffic regulation signs are in Thai only. On the other hand, private sector commercial signs show much more variation, partly organised according to city neighbourhoods and even by particular roads. Huebner finds that English lexis or syntax (e.g. using modifier-head word order) is sometimes used to add 'a cosmopolitan flair' to a commercial sign. Unfamiliar phonological sequences from English are also accommodated into Thai words, potentially stimulating the development of new mixed varieties. These are revealing case studies, not least of global shifts being imprinted on the linguistic landscapes of 'the east'.

In their chapter, Eliezer Ben-Rafael and colleagues similarly note that English is quite strongly represented (with Hebrew) in Jewish localities in Israeli cities and (with Arabic) in East Jerusalem, where it is 'a status symbol *per se*' (p. 23). All the same, they show that it is Hebrew that seems to serve as a language of wider communication, and to index modernity, for Israeli-Palestinians. But the contemporary relevance of Ben-Rafael and colleagues' research is, as the authors say, that it exposes complex sociolinguistic dynamics with greater accuracy than previous research. For example, their data point to the strength of representation (and hence social power) of Hebrew in some environments where Arabic is an official language. Again, the economic priorities of Palestinian-Israeli traders may, they suggest, be over-riding an ethnic-identity-marking function, in contrast to non-Israeli Palestinians who avoid Hebrew in the linguistic landscape domains that they control. This is the linguistic landscape being treated as a different, and in some ways more revealing, analytic resource than spoken linguistic usage. Ben-Rafael and colleagues suggest that these power relations would not be identified from more typical sociolinguistic research on the distribution of languages in use.

The contemporary dynamics of Frisian and Basque likewise emerge clearly from Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter's comparative study, where they see different patterns of resistance to the dominance of Dutch and Spanish, respectively, in linguistic landscaping. In the Basque Country (as in Wales and Catalunya, for example) the minority language is a heavily planned and monitored element of the visible landscape; most public signs are bi- or multi-lingual with Basque quite regularly represented. Not so for Frisian, which has a very small presence in Ljouwert, where Dutch dominates in the visible landscape, even though Frisian has a stronger presence as a spoken language than Basque has in its own context.

Again then, linguistic displays in public spheres are data that help us understand sociopolitical moves and tensions in particular environments. The linguistic landscape does *not* always index spoken language patterns.

Backhaus's book gives him the space to develop his analyses well beyond the confines of the chapters in the Gorter volume (where chapters by Ben-Rafael and colleagues and Huebner stand out as most theoretically and empirically elaborated). Backhaus's book has a usefully detailed review chapter commenting on earlier research in Brussels, Montreal, Paris, Dakar, Lira Town and Rome, as well as on the research sites that come up for consideration in Gorter's collection. He also reviews Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003), which itself takes in many more research sites, including Hong Kong, Beijing and Washington. The Tokyo study itself is impressively detailed. It involves a complex coding procedure, distinguishing monolingual texts from those with many different 'multilingual' characteristics, such as using Roman alphabet or Braille representations of Japanese (but with complex exceptions), and more obvious cases where elements of other languages are incorporated into public signs. Backhaus's survey took in 28 areas of Tokyo, sampled at particular times. Apart from Japanese (in its various scripted forms) and English, the study identified (in diminishing amounts) elements of Chinese, Korean, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Latin, Thai, Italian, Persian, Tagalog, German, Arabic and Russian in its data.

Backhaus provides data, in long tables, on the precise language combinations he observed, across the various spaces surveyed, and for the sub-categories of top-down (official, municipal) and bottom-up (non-official, commercial) texts. This is a productive distinction used by other researchers, although it merits further consideration (see below). A particularly interesting section considers 'part-writing' – types and degrees of translation/transliteration in multilingual signs. Non-fully-equivalenced multilingual signs are treated as polyphonic, as opposed to monophonic texts which are, in different ways, 'scored for one language only' (p. 90). Bakhaus makes the assumption that 'homophonic signs are multilingual as a result of considerations given to speakers of languages other than Japanese' (p. 93). That is, the non-Japanese text is added in fully-equivalenced form (but in his data stylistically subordinate to Japanese) to allow readers with no facility in Japanese to understand the reference and function of the text.

Through extensive use of photographs, Backhaus comments on some texts in detail, including aspects of the design and material constitution of individual texts. This is the perspective pioneered by Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003), which stands as the most theoretically rich and inclusive treatment of linguistic landscapes published to date. Scollon and Wong Scollon's semiotically framed approach considers how a text can give priority to one language over another, or imply particular relations between languages. The materiality of a sign might index its history – when it was designed and put into the landscape, under what ideological conditions and for what specific purposes. The contextualisation of a sign – where it is located, relative to people and other elements of a landscape – might index how it is intended to be read (or ignored), and so on.

Across the two books under review, the dominant epistemology is variationist, centred on the coding and counting of linguistic text-features and the analysis of their spatial distribution. As a result, even though Backhaus commendably engages with stylistic specifics in many instances, and although all individual studies are highly informative about their research sites, there is an overall impression that the research is less consequential than it promises to be. As Gorter asks in relation to sampling, where do you take pictures and how many, what constitutes the unit of analysis in linguistic landscape surveys, and what facets of a sign's linguistic make-up do you code for (pp. 2–3)? But more fundamentally, there are arguably limits to what a quantitative survey approach can deliver here. If we concede, as above, that linguistic landscapes are not necessarily linked indexically to their local environments, then studying the co-variation of text-type and environment in unlikely to generate sufficient insight.

In a valuable concluding discussion (pp. 81 ff.), Gorter argues for 'multiple perspectives' in the future development of the field, including further research on the link between landscaping and language policy and on the perception and use of landscape texts. He returns to the top-down/bottom-up distinction, and this is certainly in need of refinement. For example, some top-down texts will have been subject to very specific policy demands (see Gorter, pp. 84 ff.), requiring public signage of some sorts to include one or more specific language(s), but perhaps also to display those languages in specific spatial or prominence relations. In other cases, a top-down effect will be achieved not so much through overt prescription but through an inculcated style of linguistic display, attuned to a prevailing ideological climate. Language ideologies and language policies need to be disentangled. Some so-called bottom-up signs will have been carefully and expensively crafted by commercial organisations, while others will be fully vernacular productions – *ad hoc*, informal, less reflexive, and so on.

This suggests that there are important issues of genre to be clarified within what Gorter and others in these sources concede is an excessively diffuse concept of 'linguistic landscape texts'. Even an apparently unitary genre such as 'shop signs' will subsume different histories and contexts and technologies of production, with different inputs into design, manufacture and display. In general, studying the *entextualisation* of linguistic landscape forms will be important and revealing, in the same way as we will need to find methods to study the perception and pragmatic functioning and *use* of texts. The ideological stance that has led to some minority language communities investing vast sums of money in (monophonic) bilingual signage is unlikely to be matched by users. Movements from context to text, and from text to context, need to be researched. To that extent, compiling photographic data bases of linguistic landscape texts – which we all find irresistible – may be only a first methodological step.

Stylistic analysis of landscape texts will need to be sensitive, building on Backhaus's distinction between monophonic and polyphonic, and Scollon and Wong Scollon's suggestive arguments about the role of typography and materiality. In bilingual signs, for example, and again following Backhaus,

it will be important to track the perceived relationship between linguistic forms coded in different languages. Monophonic representations, such as (in Wales) direction signs that twin *Taxi* (English) and *Tacsi* (Welsh), with minimal interlingual distance, are sometimes considered to be pedantic and risible. But the government's commitment to 'fully bilingual signage' is serious and sincere, and designed to afford equal respect to Welsh and English.

Landscape texts are sometimes designed ironically and self-parodically, to meet the expectations of cynical users. Different modes of 'address' are used in signs, seeking to construct particular relationships with readers/users. The 'landscape' of clothes and tattoos is often partially linguistic, and here there can be complex implied relationships between mention and use. Does wearing a T-shirt with a Welsh slogan imply that the wearer speaks Welsh, or does it signify 'I've been to Wales and bought the T-shirt'? The next stage in an evolving paradigm could usefully be to fill in issues of social meaning and contextualisation that are at the heart of what landscape texts do. It is easy to envisage a critical stylistics of linguistic landscaping evolving alongside the survey orientations that these books mainly espouse.

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MIRIAM A. ELIASSON. *Verbal Abuse in School: Constructing Gender and Age in Social Interaction*. Stockholm, Sweden: Karolinska Institutet. 132 pp. 2007. Pb (9789173570954).

Reviewed by KOENRAAD KUIPER

In the best of all social worlds, power would be evenly distributed, social distance would be a minor factor in social interaction and human beings would be

perennially polite, attending sensitively to the positive and negative face wants of others and the genders would unequivocally respect each other. Since ours is not the best of all possible social worlds, there is a dark side to politeness in which power is exercised by means of the capacity of utterances to coerce and humiliate through attacks on the negative and positive face of others (Austin 1988; Culpeper 1996; Turnbull 1972). Like face work in general, attacks on face do not occur in a social vacuum. Members of out-groups and whole out-groups may be the subject of such attacks, in extreme cases with fatal aftereffects (Ji 2004; Klemperer 1978). Such attacks are not restricted to adult perpetrators, as anyone who has listened to children in school playgrounds will know. Bullying and verbal nastiness are commonplace. They are used, among other identities, to construct various forms of masculinity (Walker and Hunt 1988). They are also used by members of one gender to attempt to construct (or deconstruct) the other. That is what Eliasson explores in the monograph under review, which is her PhD dissertation.

The monograph consists of a research report and four studies, one in print, one in press and two under review, based on Eliasson's doctoral research. The research report begins with an extensive literature review showing that verbal abuse of girls by boys and of boys by other boys is common. The abuse is based on normative preferences for gender roles where the abuse is often couched in terms of a deviant role. So a boy may be called a 'poof', while a girl may be called a 'whore'. Eliasson also investigates age as a factor in verbal abuse since gender identities are age graded, with adolescence being a transition from childhood sexuality to adult sexuality. How adolescents do gender might therefore be affected by their age. The aims of Eliasson's research (p. 16) were thus to:

- assess the prevalence of verbal abuse according to gender and age and the effect it has on students' well-being;
- examine how and why girls and boys in school use verbal abuse to construct gender and age; and
- explore students' meaning-making of verbal abuse in this context.

The first data set used to fulfil these aims came from a large high school questionnaire survey in a Swedish city. The other dataset came from qualitative interview and observation studies. The subjects for both data sets were in the age range from 12 to 15 years old.

Eliasson's findings are not unexpected for those who have taught in schools but they might be for those who have not. Verbal abuse was common. It was largely perpetrated by boys on both other boys and girls, and those subjected to it experienced a degree of discomfort as a result.

Most of the abuse was, however, perpetrated by a few boys and it is clear that their social status was, in part, constructed through their high-profile verbal posture. This was achieved through verbal duelling as well as by initiating non-reciprocated sexual abuse. These high-status boys saw their abusive activity as joking, as a way of being funny and tough, as did some of the bystanders, and

objects of the abuse. Boys who did not participate in this activity were seen as 'nice, humourless and "swotty"' (p. 28).

For those girls who were involved in giving abuse, the results were more complex. Most of the abuse given by girls was in response to boy-initiated abuse. Those girls who indulged in abusive talk were also regarded as immature, which, for girls, was a negative factor in the evaluation of their status since girls, but not boys, were expected to be mature. Girls who gave as good as they got were also considered to be sexually promiscuous and this was also negatively evaluated.

Generally, offering verbal abuse was seen as a stage one goes through and that mature individuals do not indulge in giving sexual abuse. It may be that once the work of gender normalisation has been done by putting everyone in their gendered place, it is no longer necessary. However there is evidence that this is not always the case as Culpeper (1996) shows for army recruits and as Kuiper (1990) shows for rugby players.

For Eliasson's subjects, the perception amongst friends that rituals of sexual denigration lead to a kind of solidarity was often voiced. No explanation is given by Eliasson for this perception but is an interesting perception. How is it that being called a 'faggot' or 'whore' by your friends makes you more their friend? Learning not to be offended is part of it. This is at the heart of much male-to-male verbal duelling (Dundes, Leach and Özkök 1972; Labov 1972). It is at the heart of saga feuding with the real heroes being able to put up with taunts, at least for a while. Your fuse may be short but it must not be too short. It is another interesting question why this should be a social value that requires such rigorous testing by adolescents.

In all, this is a very well constructed set of studies of a vitally important phase in the lives of young people. While these studies have been pursued in Sweden, it would be interesting to see similar work being done in non-Western societies. It may be that gender construction, both male and female, does not necessarily have to be negotiated by running the gauntlet of a few alpha males whose egos are bigger than their capacity for empathy.

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MICHAEL BAMBERG. *Narrative: State of the Art*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 2007. 270 pp. Hb (9789027222367). € 94.00/$114.00.

Reviewed by CAMILLA VASQUEZ

Oral narratives of personal experience have provided rich data for sociolinguists over the past 40 years. Traditionally, sociolinguists concerned with linguistic variation have used narratives as a source of data for examining particular linguistic features (e.g. phonological, lexical) of interest. In more recent years, sociolinguists and discourse analysts with a wider range of interests have become increasingly drawn to studying the processes of narration, the social functions of narratives, and have come to regard the narrative itself as a unit of analysis. However, research *on* narratives and research *using* narratives has not been the exclusive domain of sociolinguistics, or even of 'language studies' conceptualized more broadly. Over the past four decades, there has been a simultaneous boom in narrative research in many branches of the social sciences and humanities as well – a boom which Michael Bamberg, editor of *Narrative: State of the Art*, describes as a 'narrative turn'. I begin the following review by characterizing this edited collection as a whole. I then review the chapters that are most immediately relevant to sociolinguists working with narratives. Next, I discuss three chapters which address some of the central issues of concern in this volume, and I close by pointing out a few themes which emerge across a number of chapters.

   The collection of essays in *Narrative* was originally published in 2006, as a special issue of the journal *Narrative Inquiry* (Issue Number 1, Volume 16), for which Bamberg also serves as editor. In his introduction to this most recent volume (a slightly expanded version of his introduction to the original special

issue), Bamberg explains that the recent profusion in theorizing on narrative from various disciplinary perspectives has resulted in a field of narrative of studies which is 'not necessarily coherent or homogenous' (p. 2). The volume's chapters – which certainly do attest to this diversity of perspectives – were kept deliberately short in order to provide as wide a variety of approaches to narrative as possible. Following Bamberg's brief introduction, the volume consists of 25 essays, with an average length of ten pages per essay.

Contributions in the volume focus on the following questions posed by the editor: 'What was it that made the original turn to narrative so successful? What has been accomplished over the last 40 years of narrative inquiry? What are the future directions for narrative inquiry?' (p. 4). Although a few contributors take up the challenge of responding to the first of these questions, the second and third questions actually receive most of the attention in this collection, as seen, for example, in chapters by Dan McAdams, a personality psychologist who traces the impact of narrative method and inquiry in his own discipline over the past three decades, or Stephanie Taylor, who provides an overview of narrative-related work in social psychology and indicates some directions for further development in relation to narrative in her field. In addition to such chapters, which review the history of narrative research within a particular discipline or sub-discipline, the majority of the essays in this volume are largely theoretical, often taking up a discussion of a particular topic related to narrative, such as the chapter by Amy Shuman which explores entitlement and empathy in narrative, or the chapter by social psychologist Wolfgang Kraus focusing on identity and belonging in narrative. Much less abstract are the chapters written by sociolinguists who, in addition to theorizing about narrative, also provide concrete examples of actual narrative data.

Bamberg states that, as the volume's editor, he attempted to include authors from very different disciplines and with very different concerns. Yet he also offers a caveat that the volume may not necessarily be representative of all current trends in narrative studies, and that it is inevitably constrained by his own predispositions and frame of reference. These characterizations are both accurate and fair, because on the one hand, the volume is highly eclectic: authors represent a wide spectrum of disciplines, from experimental psychology to internal medicine to philosophy. On the other hand though, approximately half of the volume's contributors represent some domain of psychology (clinical, personality, social, discursive, counseling, etc.), reflecting Bamberg's own primary disciplinary orientation.

'Core' sociolinguists whose work appears in this volume are William Labov, Barbara Johnstone, and Jan Blommaert. In his chapter, Labov's primary concern is with developing a framework for understanding what he calls 'narrative pre-construction', or in other words, the cognitive operations involved in 'how narrative events are stored in memory and accessed by the narrator' (p. 50). Drawing on his earlier (1967, 1997) work on narrative, Labov explains that the way a narrative is told is essentially opposite to the way that same narrative is

organized and constructed in the mind of the speaker. Johnstone's focus is quite different from Labov's. As the title of her chapter 'A new role for narrative in variationist sociolinguistics' suggests, Johnstone demonstrates how – in addition to serving as source of data for studying linguistic features – particular types of narratives can, in and of themselves, be a tool for sociolinguists studying variation. Johnstone identifies and discusses the production and circulation of language ideologies related to a particular vernacular dialect (i.e. 'Pittsburghese') in linguistic encounter narratives, or stories told about encounters with speakers of this dialect. In 'Applied ethnopoetics', Blommaert offers a more critical perspective to narrative analysis. Blommaert argues that an ethnopoetic approach to narrative analysis can be an especially useful tool for understanding stories told in interactions where 'different systems of meaning-making' converge. Blommaert illustrates this approach with data from cross-cultural bureaucratic encounters: stories told by African asylum seekers to Belgian immigration officials. Finally, the chapter by the discursive psychologists Elizabeth Stokoe and Derek Edwards, 'Story formulations in talk-in-interaction', examines how speakers formulate and orient to the telling of a narrative in naturally occurring talk-in-interaction.

Although there is no explicit discussion of how chapters have been ordered or organized, it appears that the core, or the 'heart', of this volume is located in three consecutive chapters found toward the center of the book, in what can be thought of as a conversation among three authors: applied linguist Alexandra Georgakopoulou, narrative psychologist Mark Freeman, and narrative psychologist (and editor) Michael Bamberg. This textual interaction provides some of the richest and most interesting discussion of the critical issues in narrative studies these days. At one level, the central issue in these chapters is the 'small story/big story' debate. For those who are not familiar with Bamberg's (or Georgakopoulou's) recent work and the small/big story dichotomy, small stories are, in essence, 'those derived from everyday social exchanges', whereas big stories are 'derived from interviews, clinical encounters, autobiographical writing, and other such interrogative venues' (Freeman, p. 155). The main argument, as summarized by Freeman, is that narrative inquiry has traditionally privileged 'big stories' (i.e. autobiographical accounts told in response to some type of elicitation) – yet, the kinds of stories people actually spend most of their time telling are 'small stories'. Consequently, big stories have recently come under scrutiny as somehow artificial and removed from day-to-day reality. What is particularly at issue in the discussion here is which type of story is most useful for studying identity: Bamberg's own position is that narrative inquiry scholars concerned with identity should turn more of their attention to small stories, which are 'extremely valuable for showing how identity gets renegotiated and reconstructed in and through social interaction' (Freeman, p. 156).

What seems to further underlie the big story/small story debate however, is a tension between the two 'camps' in narrative research: narrative inquiry scholars, whose main focus in narrative is on *content* (Freeman's 'expressivists') and

narrative analysts, who regard narrating as an *activity* that takes place between people (Freeman's 'productivists' – though both Bamberg and Georgakopoulou take issue with this term). Bamberg's basic argument is that narratives are not transparent windows onto the self: 'Narratives cannot be taken simply and interpreted solely for what has been said and told. Rather, they have to be analyzed' (p. 167). This position is echoed by social scientists Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont. In their provocatively-titled chapter, 'Rescuing narrative from qualitative researchers', the authors argue that one of the unfortunate outcomes of the narrative turn is that too many qualitative researchers fail to subject narratives to systematic analysis: 'All too often, we believe, narratives are collected and celebrated in an uncritical and unanalyzed fashion. It is a common failing, for instance, to imply that informants' voices "speak for themselves"' (p. 197). Bamberg takes up the same position in his unambiguous response to Freeman: 'When we study narrative, we are neither accessing speakers' past experiences nor their reflections on their past experiences [. . .] Rather we study *talk*' (p. 171; emphasis mine). Thus, in this debate, every bit as important as the *type* of stories narrative scholars should be looking at is *how* scholars should be approaching, or 'reading', those stories.

Ultimately, Bamberg takes a strong position, describing himself as 'skeptical' about whether 'small stories and big stories can manage to co-exist peacefully and complement one another' (p. 172). In contrast, Georgakopoulou suggests that it is the current interest in identity in the human and social sciences that may act as a catalyst for increasing dialogue between narrative inquiry scholars and narrative analysts, and she is hopeful that small stories will become increasingly important in this dialogue. Regardless of the future status of big stories versus small stories or the potential for narrative inquiry scholars and narrative analysts to 'peacefully co-exist', what is evident in both Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's contributions (as well as in chapters by communication studies scholars Eric Peterson and Kristin Langellier; social psychologists Stephanie Taylor, Wolfgang Krauss; and counseling researchers Wolfram Fischer and Martina Goblirsch) is a continued understanding of narrative as performance, and more specifically, of the performative construction of identity in narrative. Furthermore, Bamberg argues – as does Georgakopoulou – that in addition to a view of narrative as social action, increasing attention to the contexts of narrative activity is needed in a great deal of narrative inquiry.

Some of the chapters in this collection are likely to be more interesting and more immediately relevant than others to readers of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. However, at the same time, I believe that any sociolinguist or discourse analyst working with narrative would benefit by familiarizing themselves with the diversity of perspectives on narrative that is represented in this volume. Some of the authors have made an effort to extend beyond disciplinary boundaries, while others have not. As a result, what this volume makes very clear is that although there are some overlapping issues in narrative research across disciplines, a move from *multi*disciplinarity to *inter*disciplinarity is much needed in narrative studies.

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MARIO SARACENI. *The Language of Comics* (Intertext). London: Routledge. 2003.
110 pp. Pb (041521422X) £9.99.

Reviewed by MICHELLE M. LAZAR

The Language of Comics is part of Routledge's INTERTEXT book series targeted
at beginner-level English language studies students. Like most others in the
series, this is a slim book, comprising six fairly short chapters or 'units'. Unit
One ('What are comics?') offers a good historical overview of comics including
their development from stand-alone strips in newspapers to their later collection
into books, as well as the move from targeting children to adults as audiences.
Unit 1 also usefully describes four main components of comics: panels, gutters,
balloons and captions. Drawing upon the distinction made in linguistic analysis
between functional and content words, Saraceni applies this to the analysis of
comics. Interestingly, most of what he identifies as 'functional' elements in his
sample comics are non-linguistic, such as musical notes, dots, sweat drops and
dollar signs, but it is not clear why or how these are classified as functional.

Unit 2, titled 'Words and pictures', is devoted to explaining the interrelations
between the two modalities in comics. Text-image relations discussed here are of
two kinds. The first is called 'blend', where drawing upon the Piercean distinctions
of 'icons' and 'symbols', Saraceni presents an insightful and well-developed case
for both words and pictures in comics as simultaneously iconic and symbolic to
varying degrees. The second kind of relation is 'collaboration', in which each
modality remains distinct yet contributes to the overall meaning. In my view, a
discussion of Barthes' text-image relations of anchorage and relay would have
enriched the treatment of the subject here.

Unit 3 ('Between the panels') deals with the sequential organization of
panels in comics. 'Cohesion' is one of the linguistic concepts introduced to help
make sense across panels, focusing particularly on repetition of story elements

arranged either sequentially or occurring in different parts of the comic. 'Coherence' is another concept dealt with here introducing readers to pertinent ideas of semantic field and inference.

Units 4 and 5 titled 'The voices of comics' and 'The eyes of comics', respectively, apply concepts from literary narrative studies to the study of comics. Unit 4 is about speech and thought presentation. Whereas in literary narratives, direct and indirect presentations of characters' speech and thought processes are both common, according to Saraceni, only the direct mode of presentation occurs in comics, and even then that is heavily mediated by the narrator. The subject of Unit 5 is the analysis of point of view, which Saraceni aptly shows is conveyed verbally as well as visually in comic texts.

The final unit, though titled 'Comics and computers', is disappointingly less about comics and more about the visuality and visual technology of computers. Saraceni's point is that technology such as computer graphics can benefit comics production; however, because the discussion about computers is of a general nature, it is unclear whether or how the application uniquely affects comics as a genre.

The Language of Comics is written with a pedagogic aim in mind. The language and style are clear and accessible. When introducing analytical concepts (e.g. point of view from literary studies), Saraceni first shows how they work in their original context before demonstrating their use in comics. This is helpful in situating particular conceptual ideas, and allows the reader to appreciate the similarities and distinctiveness of comics in relation to other genres or forms of media.

Organisationally, too, the book is student-friendly. At the start and end of each unit, a summary of key issues is provided. The content in each unit is divided into smaller sections and interspersed with a wide variety of useful student activities.

Overall, *The Language of Comics* offers a good introduction to a fascinating, and much neglected media genre in language studies, and familiarises the reader with appropriate linguistic, semiotic and literary/narrative analytical concepts for its analysis. I would like to have seen some treatment of social ideologies in the content of comics, but perhaps this is something interested readers can take further based on some of the analytical concepts introduced in the book. The book would have also benefited from a wider international selection of examples, especially from the hugely popular Japanese *manga* series. Nevertheless, this is an interesting and engagingly written book and a welcome addition to the INTERTEXT series.

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Shi-xu (ed.). *Discourse as Cultural Struggle* (Studying Multicultural Discourse). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 2007. 200 pp. Pb (9789622098121) $24.95.

Reviewed by Songqing Li

This volume addresses a topic which has recently acquired vital importance on account of the increasingly intercultural contact in the current era of globalization. The collection consists of twelve chapters divided into two parts. Part 1 contains three innovative, thought-provoking and complementary chapters that focus on theoretical and methodological issues. In Chapter 1, Shi-xu proposes a cultural approach to discourse by discarding the traditional, long-time Western bias. For Shi-xu, discourse as part of cultural-rational context is historical and global but of course locally characterized, and a site of cultural power struggle (cf. Blommaert 2005). Cultural differences and conflict between Western and non-Western discourses simultaneously enhance the likelihood of dialogue and critique between them. Shi-xu proposes an exploration and rediscovery of cultural power relations and practices in both sorts of discourse, working to reconstruct, enhance and promote cultural diversity, tolerance, coexistence, harmony and prosperity for the world. To the extent that the proposed cultural approach is timely and closely related to the many issues in the globalizing world, this collection is genuinely appreciated.

The diversity of cultural and historical contexts, together with various cultural-political objectives of different discourses, further raises a methodological problem of research strategies instrumental for the study of discourse-embedded cultural power relations. Shi-xu calls for critical ethnography as a solution to this problem, which allows researchers to triangulate the theory and data in discourse analysis: 'what is appropriate whatever one's theoretical orientation or use of quantitative or qualitative data' (Silverman 1993: 156). Thus, the proposed cultural approach is essentially heterogeneous, working as a hybridized product initiated mainly from dialogue between a variety of theories and methodologies. In this regard, the sketched framework is a case in point of our pursuit of cultural reconstruction, enhancement, and harmony in today's global and multicultural world.

By affirming the existence and right for cultural difference, Chapter 2, by Robert Maier, considers the role of discourse in cultural struggles and transformations in the multicultural world. To investigate this relationship, it espouses the dynamic constellations of power in discourse (illustrated empirically with examples of racist practices in Europe) and advocates the integration of the principle of autonomy into a weak, universalistic stance.

Chapter 3, by Aydan Gulerce, is primarily devoted to a rethinking of philosophical, theoretical and practical aspects of human discourses, divergence and harmonization. It argues for an incorporation of conceptual tools from other disciplines, which are 'put to work' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 16) in the development of multiculturalist discourse scholarship.

Part 2 consists of nine chapters in three areas: cultural transformation, conflict and harmony. Chapter 4, by Norman Fairclough, examines policy documents in Romania within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to explore social transformation in this country where a 'knowledge-based economy' and an 'information society' are being constructed. Chapter 5, by Feng Jieyun and Doreen Wu, examines a shift in cultural values among the young people in mainland China towards greater individualization. The authors demonstrate this change through an analysis of the appeals to 'linguistic uniqueness' and individual style in Chinese web-based commercials. Chapter 6, by Gary Sigley, illustrates the transformation of cultural nationalism to global integration through a case study of Christmas celebrations in one, rather underdeveloped area of China.

The next four chapters witness a shift from empirical studies on social and cultural transformations to theoretical and conceptual discussions of cultural power struggle. Chapter 7, by Qing Cao, is concerned with how 'Western' media portray China as a cultural 'Other'. The author emphasizes the need to examine specific historical conditions in which Western images of China are produced, as well as the diverse forms of power relations having direct effects on image formation. Chapter 8, by Jung-ran Park, focuses on sociocultural aspects of *face* in Korea within linguistic politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987). The author examines facework in naturally occurring and mediated (TV drama) conversations between Koreans, and compares Brown and Levinson's approach with the social indexing approaches (e.g. Ide 1989; Matsumoto 1988; Gu 1990), and concludes that 'the cultural-specific face is culturally determined' (p. 135). Chapter 9, by Garrett Albert Duncan, provides a critical description of Afro-American culture and language research, and cultural imperialism in the United States. In a unique theoretical light inspired by Johannes Fabian's (2002) concept of allochronism, it makes transparent the cultural imperialism of 'white' in 'black' culture and language research and renders this dominance as vulnerable and erasable in the end. Chapter 10, by Wu Zongjie and Lu Qingxia, examines a wide range of traditional Chinese medical discourses and the diverse cultural influences that shaped them, including current 'westernizing' forces which appear to threaten them.

The last two chapters are concerned with the attitudes towards cultural diversity and the possible ways to enhance intercultural communication, respectively. Chapter 11, by Reza Najafbag, makes a plea for a better cross-cultural understanding and tolerance in a case study of the administrative reform in Iran as a means of resolving cultural conflict. The main thrust of Chapter 12, by Shen Zhaohua, is to map possible directions for developing of intercultural communication competence for Chinese college students through EFL education.

The book under review demonstrates clearly that in unraveling the dynamics of cultural power relations, it is worthwhile scrutinizing a wide range of discourses utilizing various theoretical approaches such as the various sociological and anthropological frameworks cited here. The collection, however, does contain a few minor weaknesses. Despite the editor's declaration for an inclusion of both

Eastern and Western discourses for analysis (p. 11), there is an overemphasis upon the former. Structurally, the empirically-grounded Chapter 10 seems to have been better placed in Part 2 rather than the more theoretical Part 3 of the book. Part 2 would have also benefited from a more extensive theoretical framing of its chapters.

Even so, it is still easy to sense originality and freshness of the proposed culturalist perspective for discourse analysis. The volume itself is a symbol of cultural coexistence and harmony given its adoption of a wide range of theories and methodologies, examination of a large number of culturally related topics, and international authorship. But beyond that, it is a valuable contribution to discourse analysis as well as social science more generally.

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BRIAN PALTRIDGE. *Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum. 2006. 344 pp. Pb (9780826485571) £17.99.

Reviewed by EKATERINA TIMOFEEVA

Discourse analysis has become an umbrella term for many different approaches in the social sciences and humanities. This book belongs to the *Continuum Discourse Series* which is intended for teachers and researchers in applied linguistics, ELT and English Language. Brian Paltridge's knowledge and expertise in these fields and his research interests, which include English for Specific Purposes, thesis and

dissertation writing, and English as a Second Language, place him perfectly in this series. Indeed, *Discourse Analysis* frequently refers to the author's earlier works on discourse analysis, genre, thesis and dissertation writing, and also examines works of Paltridge's students, adding a unique personal touch to the book.

In comparison to other introductory books on discourse analysis, Paltridge's *Discourse Analysis* addresses the concept from the language teachers' perspective. Therefore, almost every chapter makes suggestions on how language teaching can be improved by incorporating discourse analytic techniques into the teaching process. As in his previous book *Making Sense of Discourse Analysis* (2000), Paltridge focuses on several different approaches to the linguistic analysis of discourse, such as pragmatics, genre analysis, conversation analysis, grammar, corpus-based analysis, and critical discourse analysis. The discussion of theoretical concepts is illustrated with case studies and examples from contemporary texts. The book also contains discussion questions and project sections which can be used in the classroom to expand upon the theoretical concepts of the chapters. Furthermore, it is necessary to acknowledge that *Discourse Analysis* might be used as a guide and reference book in discourse studies as each chapter provides an opportunity to deepen knowledge and understanding of key concepts in discourse analysis by providing a synopsis of literature on the topics discussed in the book.

The book is organized into nine chapters. In the introductory chapter, the author suggests that the results of discourse analysis partly depend on the adopted research perspective and nature of the research question. The stated aim of the book is to provide an introduction to some of these perspectives.

Each chapter is, consequently, centered round a particular discursive approach which is not only described but also evaluated critically by the author. Defining discourse analysis as 'an approach to the analysis of language that looks at patterns across texts as well as the social and cultural contexts in which the texts occur' (p. 1), the author marks the importance of context in discourse analysis of real-world texts, providing a rationale for his later chapters that in one way or another discuss the interplay between language use and context.

Chapter 2 explores the relationship between language-use and identity. First, the author introduces early concepts of discourse analysis that illustrate how the choice of language or language variety is influenced by social and cultural factors and contexts, particularly, the notion of *discourse community*, which determines the ways in which people communicate with each other in particular settings. Second, the chapter goes on to more recent constructionist approaches to discourse, using examples from gender studies in order to demonstrate how people perform their gendered identities through talk in interaction. The importance of context for discourse analysis is discussed throughout Chapters 3 and 4, focusing on situational context and introducing key issues of discourse analysis from a pragmatic perspective (Ch. 3), and examining the connection between genre-specific characteristics of discourse, such as linguistic features and discourse structure of texts, and its contextual appropriateness (Ch. 4).

Chapter 5, devoted to the analysis of spoken data, discusses some theoretical and methodological issues in conversation analysis (CA). For instance, emphasizing the primacy of the conversational rather than contextual data in CA, the author notes the constraints of this approach, which might gain further insights by incorporating ethnographic descriptions and getting more information about conversational interaction. Once again, the constructionist approach to the analysis of conversation is emphasized. Chapter 6, by far the most detailed chapter in the book, acknowledging limitations of the traditional sentence-based perspectives on grammar, discusses grammar from a discourse-based perspective that connects the text to the social context in which it occurs. Chapter 7, pointing out that the findings of the majority of discourse studies are based on small sets of textual data, and, consequently, are difficult to generalize, promotes corpus-based discourse studies as an attempt to produce more generalizeable findings of discourse studies. Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that corpus studies do not account for contextual aspects of texts. Chapter 8, exploring the connection between the use of language and social, cultural and political contexts from a critical perspective – apart from traditional views of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), such as Fairclough's (1992) three dimensional model – introduces some current trends in CDA, such as multimodality and critical work on online texts.

The final chapter offers students practical guidelines for doing discourse analysis. For instance, suggestions are made on how to choose a research topic and formulate a research question. To exemplify methods and applications of discourse analysis, the author analyzes several research projects conducted by his students. Finally, the issues of the *reliability*, *validity*, and *replicability* of the projects are addressed.

In short, the book finds a good balance between theoretical and applied issues in discourse analysis. Each chapter thoroughly explores methodological and theoretical premises of discourse analytic approaches, tracing their evolution and developments, and giving priority to the current trends. That is why, for instance, the topic of discourse and gender, being characterized by the author as 'a topic that has been discussed at great length' (p. 24), is a recurring theme in the book; this, surprisingly, unites the different discursive approaches represented in the chapters. For instance, extracts from the TV show *Sex and the City* are used as examples for 'doing' gender (Chapter 2), and recent work on *Cosmopolitan* (cf. Machin and Thornborrow 2003) is used to illustrate how multimodal discourse is used in this global magazine to promote values of 'independence' and 'fun' among women (Chapter 8). As part of his focus on the relationship between discourse and current lifestyle trends, Paltridge examines also data from the internet, for example, he discusses the power of discourse in online chat environments that help people to create their desired identities (which may be different from their offline identities).

The book's strength lies particularly in its ability to establish connections between discursive concepts and first and second language teaching environments. For instance, moving from sentence-based to text-based

perspectives by incorporating the discursive concepts of genre (Chapter 4) and grammar (Chapter 6), both first and second language students can improve their writing skills. The chapters also help to enhance awareness of cross-cultural patterns when analyzing discourse. Thus, it is demonstrated that the pragmatic notions of face and politeness are culture-specific (Chapter 3). While a substantial body of language teaching literature exists on each of these concepts, it is very useful to have a book that brings this information together. Moreover, the author frequently suggests that there has not been enough discourse analytic research done on second language learning, both spoken and written, which can be used as a tool for understanding the acquisition of a second language.

The main weaknesses of the book, however, are related to its strengths. Indeed, being particularly targeted at language teachers (and their students), and using a linguistic approach to discourse analysis, the book might lose social science readers interested in discourse studies. Furthermore, in keeping with its introductory character, and its attempt to produce a simplified and coherent account of the discipline, the book is not always consistent. Thus, for instance, Chapter 6 on grammar seems much more difficult than other chapters of the book which might create confusion among the readers. The author assumes that incorporating popular culture texts in the classroom will motivate students to learn complex discursive concepts and facilitate the learning process but his consistent use of examples drawn from sources such as *Sex and the City, Big Brother*, or *Cosmopolitan* throughout the book seems to be somewhat one-sided and simplistic.

Overall, the book emphasizes the significance of discourse analysis for language teaching and learning. Therefore, it is recommendable both for students and teachers encountering discourse analysis for the first time. The book is written in a readable style and does not require previous knowledge of discourse analysis, as every term and concept is explained and ample illustrative examples are provided.

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