

## *Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage*

### **Urban Diversities and Language Policies in Medium-Sized Linguistic Communities**

Edited by Emili Boix-Fuster

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In the edited volume, *Urban diversities and language polities in medium-sized linguistic communities*, the argument presented is that more attention should be paid to medium-sized linguistic communities (MSLCs) in urban cities and how they are coping with the pressures of an increasingly globalized world. In the preface to the edited collection of essays, the editor, Boix-Fuster, contends that there is a need to study MSLCs because language policy in urban areas has primarily focused on examining the struggles of majority and minority linguistic communities in the face of globalization. Boix-Fuster's edited volume contains only case studies of several European cities in which there are MSLCs. As Boix-Fuster and his colleagues argue, MSLCs are equally important to study because they also face pressures of being reduced to minority status due to the influence of globalization on language maintenance goals. Boix-Fuster's edited volume therefore deviates from the norm when studying the effects of globalization language maintenance, and as a result, offers unique insight into how medium-sized linguistic communities in Europe are navigating life in an increasingly globalized world.

The origins of the Boix-Fuster's edited volume date back to conference on the challenges of urban areas in medium-sized linguistic communities held in September and

October of 2010 at the University Centre for Sociolinguistics and Communication at the University of Barcelona. It was during the conference that all of the volume's contributors presented papers on their research concerning MSLCs. The majority of the contributors are professors and lecturers in language, communication, linguistics, education, sociology, and policy analysis across Europe. As a result of their diverse backgrounds and extensive experience researching MSLCs, the book will be of interest to a vast array of readers including social scientists, linguists, and geographers.

The edited volume is divided into eight chapters. The first two chapters give the reader a baseline to understand the major issues surrounding MSLCs in the European context, especially where language policy is concerned. The first chapter, written by Extra, explores the criteria used to define MSLCs and presents six different European cases. In the chapter, Extra makes the argument that linguistic practices and goals at home and in educational institutions differ and that a hierarchical status system is developed within multilingual cities, where English always has a high status. In Chapter 2, Hambye delves into how policies can support and slow language development. This chapter focuses on the linguistic tensions between English, French, and Dutch in the historically Dutch city of Brussels and concludes that language laws have forced the Dutch language to serve two purposes in the community, that of a *lingua franca* and a source of symbolic value.

The remaining chapters examine specific issues such as language and power, symbolic historical importance, bilingualism, and the importance of educational institutions in promoting language maintenance. In Chapter 3, Pascual and Ramallo examine the Galician linguistic community in Spain and argue that although there is widespread local usage of Galician, Spanish symbolically has a higher status. Nuolijärvi, in Chapter 4, examines the absence of an individual's mother tongue in the university setting in Finland. He argues that in Finland, language policies need to be in place in order for people to have the right to use their own language within university settings. The fifth chapter, written by Soler-Carbonell, echoes similar findings to that of Hambye. In the chapter, Soler-Carbonell examines the tensions between Estonian, Russian, and English at the local and national level in the city of Tallinn. He concludes that new speakers entering an MSLC will need to gain legitimacy within the community to transition to the status of veteran speakers. In Chapters 6 and 7, Amorós and Dodon, and Boix-Fuster, both examine different MSLCs in Spain. In both chapters, the theme of linguistic social capital and language and power is explored. The final chapter, written by Maegaard and Jørgensen,

concludes the volume with an assessment of the linguistic background of Copenhagen. The author argues that there is no longer a separation between high and low speech in the city and that distinctions are now made based on ethnic constructs.

One of the merits of Boix-Fuster's edited volume is that it combines research from a variety of disciplines ranging from sociology to education. As a result, the book will appeal to a wide audience of students, researchers, and academics interested in studying how the social pressures brought on by globalization are affecting the plight of Europe's MSLCs. The book is also written in a manner that is accessible to a wide audience and does not rely heavily on technical, specialist language. It would therefore serve as an appropriate text to be used in both undergraduate and graduate studies in history, sociology, education, and linguistics.

One limitation to Boix-Fuster's edited volume is that although the book describes itself as a collection of European case studies on MSLCs, there is an overemphasis on examples from Spain. For example, three of the eight chapters are devoted solely to linguistic communities in Spain, thus limiting the representation of other European MSLCs that could have been showcased in the volume. The inclusion of more European case studies from other areas would have better shown the diversity of Europe's MSLCs as well as their unique strategies for coping with the effects of globalization on language maintenance.

Despite one minor limitation, *Urban diversities and language politics in medium-sized linguistic communities*, is still a useful book for understanding the plight of Europe's MSLCs in an increasingly globalized world. Its innovative approach will be of interest to scholars looking for case study research focused on these types of linguistic communities. Additionally, its interdisciplinary nature will ensure that those from a range of research interests and academic backgrounds will find the information both informative and enlightening.

