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## **Ana Bocanegra-Valle (ed.): APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: EMPLOYABILITY,**

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## REVIEW

Ana Bocanegra-Valle (ed.): APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: EMPLOYABILITY, INTERNATIONALISATION AND SOCIAL CHANGES. Peter Lang, 2020.

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How can applied linguistics address the social challenges posed by an increasingly internationalized and global economy? What promising areas of investigation are emerging, with the potential to impact society? These questions are addressed by this volume, which aims to provide an overview of possible pathways for research in applied linguistics. The book achieves this aim by focusing on four key areas of enquiry demarcated by the editor, Ana Bocanegra-Valle: *knowledge transfer, internationalization, employability, and social challenges*.

In the introduction, the intention of the volume is foregrounded: to raise awareness of how applied linguistics can contribute to ‘enhancing economic growth and societal well-being’ (p. 9), especially through the collaboration between universities, the industry, and the public sector. The four areas of interest are clearly and concisely explained and argued for, before the comprehensive overview of the contents of the volume.

Part one of the volume is dedicated to *knowledge transfer*, defined as the exchange process of skills, competencies, and information between the university and the industry/public sector. This cross-fertilization can point to interesting and novel pathways for research within applied linguistics, and the four contributions in this part of the volume open vistas toward areas that are not typically investigated in our discipline. Some of these vistas are outlined in Chapter 1, where Mairal-Usón and Faber provide a thought-provoking overview of new directions for linguistics research in the 21st century: digitalization, artificial intelligence and human–machine interaction, health sciences and neurogenerative diseases, and interdisciplinary research in collaboration with biology. In Chapter 2, Tarp illustrates how lexicography can inform the development of digital writing assistants as integrated information tools, with possible benefits for language learning and teaching. Fouz-González, in Chapter 3, connects to research in computer-assisted language learning and presents the learners’ perspectives on a pronunciation app, lifting the research potential of smartphone technology as a digital support for language learning. Finally, this section of the book is closed by Sancho Guinda, who explores an intriguing genre combining rhetorical and discursal traditions of academic, engineering, and computer-mediated writing—the entrepreneurial proposal. Her work illustrates how university practices often expect students to master complex genres of communication, but seldom scaffold students in this endeavor.

In Part two, *internationalization* in higher education is approached. First, Elspeth Jones argues for the necessity to internationalize the curriculum for

all students, to promote multicultural understanding and prepare students to live in multicultural societies. To this end, she underscores the key role of languages and especially English Medium Instruction, and points out that adopting a foreign language in teaching is not enough to promote internationalization. Rather, a revision of the curriculum and the learning outcomes is required to create what she describes as ‘interculturalisation at home’ (p. 151), where all students can benefit from an internationalized education promoting constructive exchanges. The challenge of promoting authentic intercultural experiences is also tackled by Carracelas-Juncal, who reports on the language learning and personal growth benefits of service-learning in the context of stay-abroad programs. Similarly, the third chapter in this section, by Mocanu and Llurda, touches upon the transformative potential of study-abroad experiences in a longitudinal, survey-based study that examines how identity, sense of belonging, and attitudes toward language learning are altered in the course of Erasmus exchanges in Europe. Their findings suggest that students’ perceived value of the exchange experience is attached to the perceived marketability of the target language, resulting in the ‘fetishisation’ of English and the hierarchization of languages according to economic value (p. 201). This section of the book is concluded by Carciu and Muresan, who explore how academics themselves experience internationalization by tapping into the views of the faculty at a higher education institution in Romania. Highlighting both the benefits and challenges perceived by these academics, they crucially underscore the importance of a context-sensitive, multi-layered approach to study internationalization processes in higher education.

The two areas of *employability* and *social challenges* are combined in Part three, where four contributions tackle the social dynamics that linguistic practices generate and embody. Pennington underscores the consequences of pronunciation and accent for second-language speakers—with English for professional purposes in focus—arguing that inaccuracies in pronunciation elicit both prejudice and unwarranted misconstructions of professional competence. Pronunciation pitfalls are illustrated together with examples of their potential consequences. The chapter concludes by proposing recommendations to minimize these consequences, such as aligning more closely with the people one communicates with, projecting friendliness and listener orientation, and adopting ‘linguistic tolerance’ (p. 242). Continuing the theme of employability, Wiwczarowski and Cellér address the discrepancy between the language skills taught in higher education and the needs of the job market. The authors underscore how ‘soft skills’ (p. 246) are currently highly marketable, posing the question of whether, and how, higher education meets these specific communicative needs. With Hungarian universities as example, they propose relinquishing test-based language education in favor of an alternative, more authentic solutions that entail the collaboration with potential employers. In the following chapter, Mac Donald and Bracho shift the focus from employability to social challenges. Using a corpus of written compositions, they probe Spanish university students’ attitudes toward immigration, relating to

recent applied linguistics research on young people's attitudes toward politically or racially loaded issues. Unfortunately, in line with this research, their findings suggest a prevalence of negative attitudes (especially among female respondents) that appear to echo the stereotyped discourse of some politicians and mass media outlets. The authors conclude by noting that attitudes can change, and that possible solutions can be brought about by promoting an understanding of social justice and a critical reflection on what motivates migration. Finally, the book concludes with a chapter on women engineers' identity construction, by Molina-Plaza and Allani. Adopting an original approach that combines the focus on multimodality and social semiotics, the authors explore how women engineers construct their professional identities in a field—Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), that sees them as under-represented. Specifically, they examine the homepage and the profiles in the 'role models' section of the UK's Women's Engineering Society (WES) website, highlighting how the website and the profiles' structure embody a hierarchy of themes centered around the 'explore, connect and collaborate' model, recasting the discourses about women engineers in a positive light.

In sum, the volume engages with valuable current themes and offers a variety of ideas for the rejuvenation of applied linguistics, by showing how it can contribute to several new scientific, technical, and social endeavors. It is also a merit that the book comprises both theoretical, research-oriented as well as practice-oriented contributions, from scholars with a variety of backgrounds and interests. The merit of the volume, its eclecticism, is perhaps also a limitation. The wide spectrum of research contributions enclosed somewhat dilutes the four themes into a fragmentation of discourses and arguments that not always align. Nonetheless, the volume provides an overview of many interesting starting points for students and researchers and has the potential to be a flexible instrument for teaching and learning, appealing to a wide variety of applied linguists from novice to expert. Many of the topics covered by the volume's contributions could be a springboard for MA and PhD research and course development.

Perhaps another important contribution of this work is that it stimulates us, as applied linguists, to reflect on our practice and its meaningfulness in this changing world. Globalization and internationalization may have strengthened the cultural and epistemological traditions of the neo-liberal academy, built on 'the marketization of everything, including subjectivities ... internalizing the discourse that success depends on individual effort and resources to market oneself successfully' (Rabbi and Canagarajah 2017: 2–3). Accordingly, we could reflect on the ethical and social implications of our practices and how they may promote questionable epistemological and conceptual biases, such as the monolingual bias toward native speakers in language learning research and education (Ortega 2010), or values for knowledge production that

may shelter an inherently colonial, racist, and Euro/Anglo-centric epistemology at their core (Kubota 2019). As Kubota (2019: 12) underscores ‘We must scrutinize our complicity with white hegemonic knowledge—mainstream theories and methodologies—in our academic activities, including teaching, conducting research, writing, mentoring, and doing service for the university and professional communities.’ While the book does not explicitly advocate for such a scrutiny, it raises the need for a consideration of how applied linguistics may engage with social changes, and the volume’s contributions provide a wide array of possible interesting directions.

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