Document généré le 17 mai 2024 04:51

Meta
Journal des traducteurs
Translators' Journal

META

PENNYCOOK, Alastair and OTSUJI, Emi (2015): *Metrolingualism. Language in the City*. Routledge: London/New York, 205 pages

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Volume 61, numéro hors-série, 2016

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1038693ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/1038693ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (imprimé)
1492-1421 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Simon, S. (2016). Compte rendu de [PENNYCOOK, Alastair and OTSUJI, Emi (2015): *Metrolingualism. Language in the City*. Routledge: London/New York, 205 pages]. *Meta, 61*, 178–178. https://doi.org/10.7202/1038693ar

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NOTES

1. Charles Booth Online Archive. London School of Economics & Political Science. <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/static/a/3.html>.

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Pennycook, Alastair and Otsuji, Emi (2015): *Metrolingualism. Language in the City*. Routledge: London/New York, 205 pages.

This is an exciting book. It introduces a new way of thinking about language contact, and a new way of exploring the realities of language in urban life. It is written with enthusiasm for the dynamism of city life in the diverse cities of Sydney and Tokyo. It is somewhat marred by repetition, however, and feels like an accumulation of research notes rather than a fully prepared work of scholarship. Part of this disorder is voluntary, however, as the aim of the project is to highlight the very process of research, not only in terms of the discussions and reflections of the researchers as they visit the shops, cafés, construction sites, markets and restaurants that are their research sites – but also in terms of the large number of sources which are quoted throughout the book. It is perhaps best to think of this book as a collection of notebooks and sketches – as a resource, then, for further work.

The aim of the book is clear and frequently repeated. In response to the increasing discomfort of sociolinguists with notions like bilingualism, multilingualism and code-switching – notions that point to the transgression of language norms while at the same time maintaining the premise of a norm, a single unitary bounded language – the authors focus rather on the 'ordinary' multilangaging activities of the city. Shifting the focus away from relations *between* languages, or from how different languages are deployed in particular domains (demolinguistic mapping), or from how the individual is a container of various languages (p. 16), they propose a view of everyday language use in urban space which they call *metrolingualism*.

This is a 'non-count' approach to diversity, opposed to the 'mindset' of monolingualism. Polyglossia (or transglossia, or a host of other *trans* terms which have been mobilized for the last decades) is understood as a normal language practice, not a deviant one.

Central to the perspective is that these languages are deployed in specific contexts of urban space, and are implicated in activities germane to those spaces: languages emerge in the interrelationship between multitasking and linguistic resources, the intricate patterning of movement, activity and semiotic resources. As the authors explain: "[…] Language does not just happen against an urban backdrop, it is part of the city, the barber shop, the market garden, the networks of buying and selling. […] Language activities produce time and space" (p. 33).

The book is rich in variations and adumbrations of these themes: the ordinariness of language mixing, the imbrication of language and the urban setting, the creativity of speakers, the common rhythms of language and city life. Three main notions are introduced: metrolingual multitasking, spatial repertoires and metrolingua francas.

Lest the mood be considered too celebratory, one chapter focuses on the frictions caused by multilingualism and by the constraints imposed on language use. "Social spaces are shaped by speech, by what can and cannot be said in particular venues, by how things are said and by the way they are heard" (p. 85). But generally speaking, the mood of the book is upbeat. Part of the emphasis on 'ordinary' language comes with the choice of sites like markets, restaurants, etc. and its populations of 'ordinary' people – the workers who make these sites function. This focus adds political clout to the idea of metrolingualism. At the same time, however, the authors ask a pertinent question: why is multilingualism not a value, why is it not valued? (p. 169).

I was surprised not to see any references to the pioneering work of Louis-Jean Calvet on urban sociolinguistics and particularly marketplaces. And the editors did not catch the faulty: "language *hales* us" (p. 148).

The authors conclude by emphasizing the fact that the book has been a 'writing together,' an interwoven text, a work in progress. As a text that tries to capture the elusive, ephemeral, transitory life of words in the city, it will surely stimulate discussion in cultural geography, sociolinguistics… and translation studies.

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