

Action linguistics! Reinforcing linguistic diversity and language awareness through participatory research

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CALL FOR CHAPTERS

Focus

This volume brings together scholars working on linguistic diversity and language awareness, minorities, language and power, and education. The participants share a methodological orientation towards linguistic ethnography and action research in linguistically diverse settings. In particular, we invite submissions from projects that include co-operation between linguists and artists, or have an otherwise cross-disciplinary framework. Chapters combining art, participatory research, and language education, are warmly welcome.

Description

The book explores a number of cases where linguists have worked together with language communities to foster minority languages and raise language awareness in multilingual environments. The projects aim for developing linguistically responsive methods for language revitalization, learning, and teaching.

The volume consists of chapters based on case studies. Each of the cases highlight different participatory and emancipatory approaches to multilingual realms. Some of these are related to preserving endangered languages, others creating equal opportunities and a sense of belonging for different language groups. There are also cases related to raising interest in the diversity of languages spoken within a community.

The book focuses on the following questions:

- How can linguists encounter the problems of language communities in an ethically sustainable way?
- What can linguists do to raise language awareness in the communities they are working with?
- How to use participatory methodologies involving cooperation between professional linguists and language community members in protecting linguistic diversity?
- How can sociolinguistic knowledge about linguistic ideologies, attitudes, and power relations be applied to support diversity in a context-sensitive way in different local settings?

At the threshold of the 21st century, linguists around the globe are increasingly aware of the danger of language extinction that threatens to wipe out cultural and linguistic diversity (Crystal 2002; Nettle & Romaine 2000). At the same time, new types of multilingual communities emerge around the world, bringing together languages that have previously not encountered, which leads to new kinds of linguistic diversities (Blommaert 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji 2015). This simultaneous process of extinction of the old and emergence of new linguistic variation calls into question the ways in which societies traditionally approach linguistic diversity and equality (cf. Saarikivi & Toivanen 2016; Jaspers & Madsen 2018). It also challenges the idea of linguists being merely observers and describers of societal processes affecting languages, and highlights the need of putting linguistic knowledge in action to solve critical societal, cultural and environmental challenges of our times.

Sociolinguistics, applied and anthropological linguistics have gained an ever more solid understanding of the ways in which people employ linguistic repertoires in asymmetric social environments. Research has clarified the reflexive processes through which ideologies and attitudes contribute to social relations and to the semiotic force of linguistic conduct (Rampton 2006; Madsen et al. 2015; Pérez-Milans 2016). The core of this book is to explore the ways in which this research knowledge can be put into action.

One part of the volume focuses on co-operation between linguists and artists. While swathes of art projects have been carried out to bring language related issues on the political and societal agenda, the methods and the results of these projects have been investigated only to a very limited extent (cf. Ferro & Poveda 2019). Furthermore, a central domain in the volume is language in education: action research in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms invites us to discuss translanguaging pedagogy (García 2014; Cummins 2017; Svensson & Torpsten 2017; Li Wei 2018).

Background

The volume emerges from the activities of a research group Itä-Helsingin uudet Suomen kielet (new Finnish languages of East Helsinki). The project was carried out by linguists, community artists, and a journalist, in cooperation with teachers and pupils in an elementary school and its surroundings in East Helsinki. The general aims of the project are threefold. First, to make the local linguistic diversity visible. Second, to encourage participants to display their knowledge about and affiliation to minority languages that often go unnoticed in institutional spaces. Third, to develop language awareness and encourage (trans)languaging practices.

Bibliography

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Submitting an abstract

Please send an abstract of max 500 words until 2 March 2020 to Heini Lehtonen (heini.lehtonen@helsinki.fi) and Janne Saarikivi (janne.sarikivi@helsinki.fi).

Your abstract should include a description of your project, the focus questions of the chapter, as well as the data and the methods, and a short description of your theoretical framework.

Schedule

Abstracts: 2 March 2020

Announcement of acceptance: 29 March 2020

First version of the chapter drafts due: 30 September 2020

The planned volume will be published in an international peer reviewed series with a focus on sociolinguistics. The proposal will first be sent for peer review in the Routledge series Critical Studies in Multilingualism (eds. Marilyn Martin-Jones & Joan Pujolar).