

Journal of Sociolinguistics

**Kuteeva, M., Kaufhold, K. & Hynninen, N. (Eds.). (2020).
Language Perceptions and Practices in Multilingual
Universities. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38755-6>**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Sociolinguistics</i>
Manuscript ID	JSLX-21-050
Manuscript Type:	Book Review
Keywords:	
Abstract:	

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

Book Review

Kuteeva, M., Kaufhold, K. & Hynninen, N. (Eds.). (2020). *Language Perceptions and Practices in Multilingual Universities*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-3-030-38754-9. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38755-6>

Reviewed by Vasi Mocanu, Universitat de Salamanca & Adventia. European School for Aeronautics. Salamanca, Spain.

E-mail: vasim@usal.es/vmocanu@adventia.org

If one googles the word “internationalization”, a mesmerizing ~~number of~~ over 15 million results come out with webpages that span from a product ~~design~~ tailored in such a way that it can be readily consumed across many different countries and encoding characters ready to be used in software that go beyond ations, to an established Journal of Internationalization and Localization dedicated to a field of research that “is more and more solicited by language businesses, software developers, translation agencies, international multilingual organizations, universities, language planning policy makers and standardization institutes” (The Journal of Internationalization and Localization: main webpage, 2021). The wording used in the latter pose of a well-established journal, mixing and meshing “language businesses, software developers, translation agencies, international multilingual organizations, language planning policy makers, standardization institutes, and universities”, to say the least, remarkable and it urges for a thorough investigation on what factors might have led to “universities” being both a producer and a container of internationalization and localization practices in such a need to be considered as both subjects and receive ES of research on how their “internationalizing” and “localizing” modus operandi is and how it ought to be.

Connected to the above, Kuteeva et al.'s (2020) edited volume *Language Perceptions and Practices in Multilingual Universities* is instrumental for understanding why and how

1
2
3 universities have become a battlefield where pressures to cater for both international and
4 domestic taste result in pulling language policies and practices in different directions” (p.2), that
5 stand on the edge between Englishization and protection of national languages, a paradox
6 experienced by a considerable number of universities in Europe.
7
8
9

10 The volume, which takes onboard recent conceptualizations of languages as entities on the move
11 is divided into three parts, each of them related to different institutions and actors in Northern
12 European universities (Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland), the Baltic States, and the
13 Netherlands, which have different degree of power on and are affected differently by
14 internationalization policies and practices that impact on language attitudes and ideologies. In
15 this way, Kuteeva et al. (2020) provide a substantial and essential contribution not just to making
16 visible the wide array of linguistic ideologies, practices, and perceptions in higher education
17 institutions but also to an approach of internationalization in universities in Northern countries,
18 the Baltic States and the Netherlands through a highly valuable and enriching methodological
19 diversity.
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

29 The book is divided in three parts which include a total of 13 chapters. To begin with, the first
30 part deals with tensions that arise between monolingualism and multilingualism on the national
31 and institutional levels. Secondly, the volume focuses on students as stakeholders in multilingual
32 universities. It is also with stakeholders that the third part is concerned, but this time, academic
33 and administrative staff is considered. The book is prefaced by an introduction and concluded
34 with an epilogue.
35
36
37
38
39

40 The edited volume relates to more than one field of interest under the scope of sociolinguistics.
41 On the one side, it deals critically with discourses on protection of local languages and it turns
42 the spotlight on language ideologies by contrasting both to the factual realities of multilingualism
43 in higher education. Therefore, the book connects well with previous studies on multilingual
44 policies in higher education at the aftermath of internationalization (e.g. Doiz et al., 2013; Cots et
45 al., 2012; Risager, 2012). Similarly, parallelisms can be drawn between the volume and previous
46 research on the impact of English medium instruction (EMI) and content and language integrated
47 learning (CLIL) on language-related practices and stakeholders in higher education (e.g. Macaro,
48 2018; Smit, 2009; Fontanet-Gómez, 2010). Finally, a number of chapters in the volume
49 contribute to sociolinguistic research in relation to internationalizing practices of domestic and
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 international students (e.g. Garret & Gallego, 2014; Llurda et al., 2015; Mocanu & Llurda, 2020;
4 Jones, 2020).
5
6

7 The first chapter of the volume, written by the editors themselves, introduces the reader into the
8 social and political conditions that have brought European universities to wonder about whose
9 language should come first and establishes the gap that the volume attempts to cover: providing
10 research that considers the forgotten academic languages in literature, including “those used on
11 the backstage of educational and research setting” (pp. 3).
12
13
14
15
16

17 Part I reports on studies that examine language perceptions and practices on the national and
18 institutional levels. Chapter 2, authored by Kuteeva, focuses on language perceptions at a large
19 multilingual university in Sweden in order to shed light on the “tensions between academic
20 monolingualism and multilingualism as perceived by policymakers, students, and academic
21 staff” (pp. 29) to conclude that participants seem to support “major European academic
22 languages in addition to Swedish and English” (pp. 51). Also on Swedish territory, in the third
23 chapter, Källkvist & Hult apply an ethnographic discourse analysis approach to examine how
24 languages other than Swedish and English are considered by a committee in charge of language
25 policies at a major university in Sweden. The chapter shows that monolingual practices in
26 Swedish are seen as a resource for those activities that are legally binding, for which any other
27 language is seen as problematic. However, transnational activities of the universities seem to
28 contemplate the use of both English and inter-Scandinavian communication practices.
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

38 Chapter 4, authored by Saarinen, focuses on how tensions and challenges emerge when it comes
39 to the position of Swedish in one monolingually Swedish University in Finland and how it
40 relates to the status of Finnish constitutional bilingualism. Through a critical discourse analysis
41 framework, the author examines interviews with both students and staff to conclude that Swedish
42 is challenged by both multilingual and bilingual practices, as well as by pressures stemming from
43 the increasing use of English. Also on Finnish territory, in the fifth chapter, Jalkanen & Nikula
44 examine how the curriculum for the multilingual and communication studies at a Finnish
45 university supports students’ multilingual repertoires to conclude that the role of language in the
46 documents related to the curriculum can be defined as multi-layered and variable depending on
47 the situation it has to adapt to and it reflects recent political developments in Finland.
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 In Chapter 6, the last one concerned with institutions, Soler turns the spotlight on three higher
4 education agencies in the Baltic States to examine the multimodal resources they employ for the
5 promotion of their universities. The study explores a selection of promotional videos and texts to
6 show a picture where the national is lowered in favor of the international and one can easily get
7 by using English exclusively.
8
9

10
11
12 Parts II and III move the focus to the individual level and examine language perceptions and
13 practices as reported by university students, on the one hand and administrative staff, on the
14 other. Participants with a wide array of backgrounds are considered in the chapters, taking
15 onboard both international and local students, as well as participants with a migration
16 background and those without it.
17
18
19
20

21
22 Clarke's seventh chapter ~~examines through~~ in-depth interviews how international multilingual
23 students at the University of Helsinki align with the discourse in the university language policy,
24 the way they adapt to institutional policies and to what extent they make use of their agency in
25 relation to them. The study shows how the "disjunction between the students' languages as
26 largely non-academic languages and English as a lingua franca" (pp. 189) results in the
27 production of knowledge that is culturally bound. On a similar note, chapter 8, authored by
28 Kaufhold & Wennerberg, delve into multilingual students' perceptions of language use in
29 Swedish higher education through in-depth interviews with higher education students with a
30 migration background. The chapter shows that despite the fact students use all the languages
31 available to them for meaning-making, their ultimate aim is to achieve monolingual ways of
32 learning.
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

41
42 In the 9th chapter, Wilkinson & Gabriëls explore the perceptions of students in Dutch higher
43 education in relation to educational democracy and linguistic justice in EMI programmes. Their
44 study concludes that students are aware about the language asymmetries prompted by English
45 dominance which might lead to feelings of language misf among the students. Surprisingly, the
46 chapter brings to the fore the possibility that the non-English trac may be less monolingual than
47 the EMI one, since the need for resources might actually lead to a need to use English along
48 Dutch.
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Arnbjörnsdóttir's 10th chapter takes the reader to the Icelandic context and deals with the
4 differences between the English language that is acquired at grassroots level in the Icelandic
5 society and the functions English should fulfill at the university level to show that many
6
7 contradictions arise when students who have been schooled in a different language are expected
8
9 to have an English language level that is appropriate at the professional and academic level.
10

11
12 On a different note, chapter 11 critically explores the effects of internationalization by means of
13 analyzing the reported experiences of everyday university lives of researchers at a Swedish
14 university. Holmes' study brings to the fore a shared frame of reference, "in which linguistic
15 practices and repertoires, as well as the identities indexed by such linguistic phenomena, exist
16 according to a certain order of visibility" (pp. 287) and in which the focus relies on two
17 hegemonic languages: Swedish and English, showing how ideological structures appear even in
18 the absence of a powerful authority.
19
20
21
22
23

24
25 In Chapter 12, Järnlström et al. introduce a case study examining professional communication at a
26 Finnish university and bring to the fore the language-related challenges university staff might
27 perceive at work and how these relate to conceptions of language misfit. The results of the study
28 suggest that feelings of misfit and fit might move along a continuum but the former could have a
29 considerable undesired effect on job satisfaction or commitment.
30
31
32
33

34
35 In relation to the previous chapter, Hynninen and Kuteeva's 13th chapter look into what
36 discourses related to language practices are constructed in interviews with researchers in Finnish
37 and Swedish universities and how these discourses relate to the positions the researchers
38 undertake in the interviews. The results show that independently on the field of study, the role of
39 English is salient but despite this fact, the way it relates to other languages depends on the object
40 of study. Of special interest are the encountered tensions between the academics' needs to pursue
41 their career and a perceived need to protect their L1s.
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 Finally, chapter 18, authored by Dimova, examines the role of norms of the Test of Oral English
49 Proficiency, an assessment instrument used by the University of Copenhagen to certify EMI
50 lecturers' oral proficiency in English. The study is not just illuminating when showing that the
51 feedback from the test relied extensively on structural linguistic characteristic and had a native-
52 speaker bias, but it also triggered a change in that it has already triggered changes towards a
53
54
55
56
57

1
2
3 more communicative approach of the above-mentioned test and its corresponding feedback,
4 which responds better to the proficiency expected from EMI lecturers.
5
6

7 The volume is closed by an epilogue in which Lasagabaster & Doiz provide a Southern vision
8 that is illustrative of the contrasts and similarities between Southern Europe and the Northern
9 neighbours' language perceptions and practices in higher education. Relying on extensive
10 knowledge and experience of the Southern context, the authors show how English seem to reign
11 over all the other foreign languages in European institutions from the North Pole to the African
12 border, triggering many language-related frictions and thus making impossible to talk about what
13 they exemplify as a linguistic Shangri-La where all languages coexist in peace and harmony.
14 Furthermore, the difficulties that seem to stem from this clear linguistic hierarchy with English at
15 the top are far from a relapse while tensions between protectionism of national languages and a
16 need to stay in touch with the international scene are an ever-growing reality in nations all
17 around the European continent. However, the future that awaits language policies and practices
18 in European Universities is yet to come. And between the mystery of the future and the roots that
19 keep us grounded in the past, Kuteeva et al's (2020) volume provides priceless light on a present
20 that will enable us to see the most equitable way for all.
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Bibliography

Cots, J.M., Lasagabaster, D., & Garret, P. (2012). Multilingual policies and practices of universities in bilingual regions in Europe. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 216, 7-32.

Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J.M. (2013). Globalisation, internationalisation, multilingualism and linguistic strains in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38 (9), 1407-1421.

Fontanet-Gómez, I. (2010). Training CLIL teachers for the university. In D. Lasagabaster & Y. Ruiz de Zarobe (Eds.), *CLIL in Spain: Implementation, results, and teacher training* (pp. 257-276). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Garret, P., & Gallego, L. (2014). International universities and implication of internationalization for minority languages: Views from university students in Catalonia and Wales. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35 (4), 361 – 375.

Jones, E. (2020). The Role of Languages in Transformational Internationalisation. In A. Bocanegra-Valle (Ed.), *Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Employability, Internationalisation and Social Challenges* (pp. 135-158). Bern: Peter Lang.

Llurda, E., Doiz, A., & Sierra, J.M. (2015). Students' representations of multilingualism and internationalization at two bilingual universities in Spain. In Fabricius, A., & Preisler, B. (Eds.) *Transcultural interaction and linguistic diversity in higher education: the student experience* (pp. 92 – 115). London. New York. Shanghai: Palgrave Macmillan.

Macaro, E. (2018). *English medium instruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mocanu, V., & Llurda, E. (2020). Constructing and reconstructing attitudes towards languages in study abroad. In A. Bocanegra-Valle (Ed.), *Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Employability, Internationalisation and Social Challenges* (pp. 181-202). Bern: Peter Lang.

Risager, K. (2012). Language hierarchies in the international university. *International Journal on the Sociology of Language*, 216, 111-130.

1
2
3 Smit. U. (2019). Classroom discourse in EMI: On the dynamics of multilingual practices. In K.
4 Murata (Ed.), *English-medium instruction from an English as a lingua franca perspective:
5 Exploring the higher education context* (pp. 99-122). New York: Routledge.
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60