

JOSÉ ANTONIO FLORES FARFÁN & FERNANDO RAMALLO. 2010. *New Perspectives on Endangered Languages*. John Benjamins. 161 pp. ISBN: 978-9-027-20281-9

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1. OVERVIEW. This volume establishes a new perspective by bringing together scholars with a range of approaches to endangered languages, thus living up to its name: the very act of bringing these authors together provides a new perspective on the connections between documentation, sociolinguistics, and language revitalization. Specifically, it illustrates how language documentation can and should be informed by sociolinguistic considerations if it is to help promote language revitalization. The question, then, is what should documentation consist of? While the authors propose different answers to this question, there is a certain amount of consistency among them, and a picture emerges from this volume of the factors that are considered most relevant. Table 1 summarizes the factors mentioned in each chapter. ('Mentioning' may consist of actual reporting on that factor for the community in question, or of recommendations that such factors should be considered.)

In this table we see reflections of two distinct meanings of the term *sociolinguistic*. The first refers to the study of demographic characteristics of a community (e.g., language density, history of contact), while the second refers to the quantitative study of variation among different forms (e.g., pronunciations, lexical variants) within a language, often referred to as the 'variationist approach.' These may also be contrasted under the labels *macro-* and *microsociolinguistics*. Both kinds of sociolinguistics are essential to the perspective endorsed by Flores Farfán & Ramallo. However, in Table 1, where factors are listed by decreasing frequency of mention in the six chapters, it is clear that the factors related to the first meaning (grouped here under 'community level,' 'educational,' and 'attitudinal') are more widely discussed than the variationist or individual-related factors (grouped here under 'stylistic' and 'individual'). Indeed, only two chapters, those by Reiter and Grenoble, make any specific reference to the need to consider individual-level or variationist differences.

In considering Table 1, it is worth recalling the observation by Himmelmann (2009:48, cited by Reiter in the book under review, 143) that the "potential which any single factor might have for inducing language shift is only realized in a specific and complex constellation of factors." That is, the effect of a single factor will be determined in part by the other factors considered in the same analysis. Thus a more consistent set of factors could lead more quickly to generalizations in the future as envisioned by this book.

In other words, the full integration of sociolinguistics and documentation for the purposes of revitalization requires consideration of a constrained set of factors. The range of this set has been discussed in Nagy 1997, which provides a generalized model of the types of factors relevant to understanding contact-induced language change, grouping the individual-level factors (those used in variationist studies) along the three axes described in Table 2. As that list was constructed by surveying a sample of published language-contact studies, it is not surprising that the factors overlap considerably with the categories that emerge from a content analysis of the volume under review: revitalization of endangered

languages is a particular subset of the contact context, so a similar set of factors should be relevant. The checkmarks in Table 2 indicate the categories which are addressed in at least one of the chapters in this volume. (As noted in Nagy 1997 (6), sex and age are conspicuously absent among these factors. It is possible that sex- and age-correlated differences, which have frequently been reported in variationist studies, are reflections of behavioral differences across generations and genders. Miriam Meyerhoff (pers. comm., 1997) pointed out that there is therefore “no need to reify these factors if there are more general behavioral patterns which account for the same effect.”)

| Factors | Reiter | Aikhenvald | Muysken | Grenoble | Dorian | Franchetto |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|---------|----------|--------|------------|
| COMMUNITY LEVEL | | | | | | |
| Population (e.g., size, homogeneity, endo/exogamy) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Encroachment (war, migration) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Other historic events | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Genetic relatedness (linguistic) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Language density | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Geography | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Ecology | | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| EDUCATIONAL/ECONOMIC | | | | | | |
| Schooling (access, language of instruction) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Codification | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Economic incentives | | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Fieldwork training effects | | | | | | ✓ |
| ATTITUDINAL | | | | | | |
| Speaker/ community attitudes | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Researcher attitudes | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| INDIVIDUAL-LINGUISTIC | | | | | | |
| Bilingualism | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Linguistic competence | ✓ | | | | | |
| STYLISTIC | | | | | | |
| Registers/spheres for use | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| INDIVIDUAL NON-LINGUISTIC | | | | | | |
| Interlocutor | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Age | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Sex | ✓ | | | | | |

TABLE 1. Factors reported in each chapter that contribute to sociolinguistically-informed documentation

| Addressed in Reviewed Vol. | Factors Contributing to Intensity of Contact |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AXIS 1: LINGUISTIC FACTORS | |
| √ | Language learned first Proficiency in each language Number of languages spoken Parents' language |
| AXIS 2: AMOUNT OF CONTACT | |
| √ | Length of residence in community Amount of daily contact with dominant language speakers Amount of travel outside the local community Intermarriage |
| √ | Age of second language acquisition Domains of use of each language Media contact |
| AXIS 3: CULTURAL IDENTITY | |
| √ | Neighborhood/network membership Urban vs. rural residence Occupation |
| √ | Status/prestige within each of the two (or more) cultures Race/ethnicity |
| √ | Political leaning Ownership of particular types of animals Media contact Amount of schooling Parents |
| √ | Domains of use of each language |

TABLE 2. Individual level factors contributing to Intensity of Contact
(adapted from Nagy 1997:6–7)

The relative cohesiveness in approaches of the studies described above shows that the important first step of bringing scholars in the three domains (documentation, sociolinguistics, revitalization) into conversation with each other has been achieved here—to a certain extent. While it is a fine collection of papers, they each stand separately, more like journal articles than as cohesive chapters of a book. (Throughout the volume, I noted only one reference by one author to another's contribution.) Yet, it is an important step forward, and one that will lead into the necessary dialogs the editors envision.

As noted above, the goal for the book is to link the agendas of documentation, sociolinguistics, and language revitalization. The editors propose that this has required, and will

continue to require, a reconfiguration of priorities, putting “threatened language-speakers at the forefront of the action and debate” (147). Their goal is to “promote a model of collaborative research or engaged linguistics that reports benefits not only for those performing the research but for all of those being researched” (148)—aiming towards situations where the researchers and the subjects are one and the same. This is a goal that still requires work. Important and complex issues, such as access to and protection of data, are raised: these critical discussions justify our current distance from that goal. One segment of the book which directly engaged with this issue is Muysken’s Table 9 (113), in which the objectives of the main actors involved in the “documentation and potential survival of Uchumataqu” are specified. Here, community members (language consultants, leaders, and the community as a whole) are listed directly below ‘Linguist’ as actors involved in the revitalization and documentation processes. Other chapters make less explicit references to means of including community members’ goals in balance with (or better, overlapping with) the linguists’ goals.

Although the contributions are not especially cohesive, they do have some important features in common: they are clear and well-presented, and they each provide useful and thought-provoking examples. As such, this makes an excellent reader for students and scholars wishing to gain greater familiarity with the field: it can be seen as a menu of different ways one might go about presenting documentation research. Contributions are also geographically wide-ranging: we find reports on work conducted in Papua New Guinea, Russia, Scotland, and South America (two projects in Brazil and one in Bolivia).

Continuing the menu metaphor, the contributions are spicy and made from a wide variety of ingredients. While the primary goal is documentation of endangered languages for the purpose of revitalization, if such studies are also to serve linguistic interests, as stated, then a greater degree of similarity among their ingredients could be desirable. While Table 1 (above) summarizes the range of factors that are reported in each chapter, showing wide variability from one to the next, it does not do justice to many topics covered in this book. The remainder of this review summarizes particular strengths of each of the chapters.

2. CHAPTER SUMMARIES. Aikhenvald provides a description of a diglossic situation in New Guinea. In describing the state of Manambu language endangerment, she reports demographic factors (population, language density, history of warfare between language groups), linguistic factors (degree of relatedness among language varieties present, associations of varieties to modernity vs. ‘backwardness’ and to language purism, presence of bilingualism), stylistic variables (uses of different languages in different contexts), and speaker variables (age, interlocutor). This chapter clearly presents interesting examples showing both the presence and absence of borrowing as well as the effects of some of the factors listed above.

Dorian presents thought-provoking issues relating to private vs. public elicitation of linguistic forms, storage of data, and the differing needs of documentation vs. revitalization. The chapter is both broad and deep, reflecting Dorian’s own experiences working in Scots Gaelic communities as well as reporting on others’ work. This chapter is elegantly written and chock-full of information and issues that we all must consider. For example, Dorian points out that the availability of schooling in an endangered language may “risk further neglect of home transmission” (29) as well as changing the variety by the very pro-

cess of creating school norms (35). She carefully explicates issues related to the difficulty of accurately informing non-scholars about the linguistic goals of research in order to elicit informed consent from speakers of endangered languages. Her message is that the cultures may be so different between academia and remote communities where endangered languages are often found that full information about either one cannot be accurately transmitted to the other. This point is echoed in the following chapter by Franchetto (50). Dorian's reflections, developed in the many years since she initiated her fieldwork, and thus 'riper' than those of scholars who have spent less time in the field, are invaluable.

Franchetto's description of the evolution of the fieldwork 'scene' in Amazonia (Kui-kuro) is culturally sensitive and shows great depth of understanding of the culture with which she works. Like Dorian, she was deeply embedded in the community of study, and, like Dorian, she points out unexpected down-sides to some activities viewed as important for revitalization and documentation: e.g., that the time spent training speakers in the technicalities of conducting fieldwork takes away from their time to be involved in their traditional culture (in naturalistic ways) and may decrease their interest in their cultural traditions as well. In keeping with the editors' goals for this project, Franchetto describes the speakers' expectations for the research and documentation tasks.

Grenoble's chapter reporting on several Siberian varieties is rich with history and geography to provide context for the linguistic situations she describes. An important contribution of this chapter is a set of connections made between documentation, revitalization, and sociolinguistic methods. These include reiteration of the message that linguists need to educate people about linguistic diversity and internal language variation. This is especially true for people interested in documenting their own endangered language (83)—it should be made clear that *all* languages have variation, and that variation doesn't necessarily lead to extinction. She also recommends the documentation of "language in interaction" (85), or language produced in natural contexts, as a complement to elicited forms, in order to (a) document the variation mentioned above, and (b) provide documentation of language that will be useful for community members. That is, she recommends documenting the ways speakers actually use the language, rather than adhering to the common documentation focus on forms that are "linguistically interesting," but perhaps rarely used (85). She makes a strong case for systematic study of variation by pointing out that the form of a single token cannot be attributed to influence from another language or dialect, or to attrition or incomplete acquisition, or to language change (internal or contact-induced) (85): such distinctions can only be made when both diachronic and synchronic patterns of variation across a range of tokens are analyzed.

Muysken provides a nice overview of the discourse on language documentation and endangerment since the 1970s, showing the differing perspectives of different actors (section 2). His chapter provides a fascinating description of a language contact situation in Bolivia, in which he explores the potential reasons for a language's demise: "(a) urban migration; (b) socio-economic restructuring and ethnic reorientation; (c) population decrease; (d) demographic growth and increasing exogamy...; and (e) a fragile ecology" (93). Muysken is particularly insightful on the dearth of data or evidence that may exist for understanding some of these factors, exemplified through a range of tables of data that highlight the large degree of diversity and the small number of speakers. While, in this respect, the chapter is similar to Grenoble's and Reiter's contributions, contrasting the three highlights, once

again, the difference in factors that are reported in different studies.

Reiter's report examines the Awetí-speaking region of Central Brazil in the 21st century. While the linguistic focus is on genderlects, informative examples are given about individual- and community-level factors that affect ethnolinguistic vitality. This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology used to attain the data presented. The author's close involvement with the community permits insights not often mentioned: e.g., she warns of the possibility of borrowings (here, from Portuguese) being ridiculed by community members as a relevant factor in contact-induced language change. As well, she provides detailed reports on the ethnographic background, individual linguistic competence, spheres of language use, and age and gender distributions and divisions in the communities studied.

Returning to the goal of linking the three agendas, the book closes with a compelling essay about the need to provide a central role for the "speakers at the forefront of the action and debate" (148). This goes hand in hand with a shift from linguistic research conducted primarily to advance the theoretical linguistic research agenda toward research whose *primary* goal is revitalization.

3. CONCLUSION. The elements highlighted in the above summaries provide evidence of our current stage in this transition, suggesting that there is still work to do toward reporting "benefits not only for those performing the research but for all of those being researched" (148). Probing questions are raised, such as, "How can we not limit linguistic archives and repositories to linguists? How can we start thinking [of] an even more general public including non-speakers?" (149). And, more generally, how can we "promote a model of documentary linguistics in which interdisciplinarity is not seen as a handicap" (149) in order to better work toward revitalization of endangered languages?

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