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Abstract

Maryam Borjian's (2017a) edited book, *Language and Globalization: An Autoethnographic Approach*, provides real and personal narratives of authors from different geographical locations across the globe around complex issues surrounding linguistic globalization. Using autoethnography as a method, the book steps away from the typical academic writing. It engages readers into plots contextualized in several parts of the world about diverse languages which are intertwined with theoretical frameworks and concepts specific to the field of language and linguistics. The format of the book allows all readers to comprehend complex concepts through the medium of stories and help make personal connections. The simplicity of the writing style makes it easy for any reader to understand the influence of globalization from a language perspective.

Keywords

Language, Globalization, Autoethnography, Narratives, Linguistics

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Language and Globalization: An Autoethnographic Approach: Book Review of a Collection of Personal Narratives

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Maryam Borjian's (2017a) edited book, Language and Globalization: An Autoethnographic Approach, provides real and personal narratives of authors from different geographical locations across the globe around complex issues surrounding linguistic globalization. Using autoethnography as a method, the book steps away from the typical academic writing. It engages readers into plots contextualized in several parts of the world about diverse languages which are intertwined with theoretical frameworks and concepts specific to the field of language and linguistics. The format of the book allows all readers to comprehend complex concepts through the medium of stories and help make personal connections. The simplicity of the writing style makes it easy for any reader to understand the influence of globalization from a language perspective. Keywords: Language, Globalization, Autoethnography, Narratives, Linguistics

Maryam Borjian's (2017a) edited book, *Language and Globalization*, starts with an introductory note that describes the basics about the book—a collection of real-life, personal narratives with scholars from different sub-disciplines of linguistics and autoethnography as the underlying approach. The book is divided into five parts—Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks: Issues, Challenges and Changes; Global English: Views from the Classroom; Language, Identity and Crossing the Boundaries of the Expected; Language Death and Birth; and Epilogue. The entire book engages readers in the overarching theme of Language and Globalization, along with the individual chapters which narrate a specific angle to the existing discourses around the interconnection between language and globalization.

The author addresses this book as “the call of many critical poststructuralist and post-colonial scholars to go beyond Western logocentrism and to find a new locus of enunciation.” (p. xiv). Using multiple theoretical lenses, globalization as a concept has been examined and reexamined in order to understand its outcomes and to collate a scholarship from different viewpoints. For instance, Park (2017) in his chapter examines the three parts of his name which signifies both his US and Korean identity. His last name “Park” symbolizes the South Korean desire for the modern West that is attributed to globalization. From the different stories, the reader would realize that the understanding of the word “globalization” means different things to each of the authors who have contributed to this book. By the end of this book, the reader will leave having multiple interpretations of the term “globalization.” The purpose of the Iranian-American editor of the book seems to be striving towards debunking the knowledge about globalization that has been produced by Europe and North America. The “new locus of enunciation” then becomes places other than Europe and North America.

What drew me towards this book was the “real-life” narratives by the many autoethnographers in the book who dwell with the issues of language and globalization from different perspectives. Their stories do not offer the “absolute” truth but have the capacity to engage readers with a “relative” truth. Stories about an author's trip to Mexico and the various connections she made from different critical texts on globalization (Borjian, 2017b), an Ethiopian scholar's argument for the teaching of English in addition to learning indigenous

languages (Yadete, 2017), a Maori scholar fighting against the “unwanted imposition” of English language (Rapatahana, 2017), and many more diverse tales offers a variety of lenses and tools to get an understanding of how language connects with the globalization phenomena.

Getting an opportunity to engage with a non-Western perspective is so refreshing and, therefore, the editor has utilized non-European scholars in the book with stories from countries like Australia, Armenia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, New Zealand, South Korean and more. The story about a native English speaker who finds herself teaching English in South Korea and being reduced to a commodity (Erling, 2017), the “English-only” policy encounters by a Bangladeshi-American scholar during her schooling and finding the relevance of translanguaging in later years (Choudhary, 2017), an Australian scholar recognizing the needs of biscriptal English learners (from Hong Kong) with respect to reading and writing (Bunce, 2017), and other stories which touch upon the various concepts and theories around language and language learning. Prior to reading this book, I was exposed to various discourses around the English language which would mostly be from a Western perspective. However, through this book, the author looks at ideas around English language from different lenses enabling readers to understand a plethora of perspectives. This has been captured by the editor in the following quote.

By retelling English through the stories of multilingual authors with multiple experiences, English emerges not as an autonomous language, but as a language practice that is part of a multilingual repertoire controlled by speakers and not by nation-states and global power. (Borjian, 2017a, p. xv)

The format of the book allows readers to move beyond the academic structure of writing which perpetuates a single way of expressing ideas. Using autoethnography as a method to trigger conversations around language and globalization, the book rejects the traditional approach to express ideas, which produces typical academic books. Autoethnography as a method allows writers “to examine his/her self and draws on his/her own lived experiences to reflect on an academic topic through a personal narrative” (Borjian, 2017a, p. 2). This version of ethnographic inquiry enables researchers to use their autobiographical materials as the primary source of data. As Maryam says, “The evidence provided in this book is not empirical but rather existential” (Borjian, 2017a, p. 2). Here, readers are engaged in real stories which give a personal touch but also simultaneously spark investment in ideas around globalization—which makes the comprehension of such complex ideas easier for novice researchers. Even though there are some stories that are contextualized in faraway geographical locations, they would still strike a chord with the readers as they are familiar and relatable. The potential readership for this book could range from novice researchers in the field of language, linguistics and education to all readers due to the writing style adopted by the many authors.

The focus of the book has solely been the speakers instead of languages and nation-states. The reference lists include eminent authors from the linguistics field like Suresh Canagarajah, Alastair Pennycook, Robert Philipson, Ofelia García, and David Crystal. Additionally, there are authors from non-Western parts of the world like Nairobi, Kenya, Armenia, Philippines, Russia and more. It was interesting to see that the authors cited articles and books that were new to my novice researcher’s eyes and acknowledged authors from the countries mentioned above who have also contributed in the research area but do not get much recognition as compared to other Western authors. One would even find references to articles and books in different languages at the end of some of the chapters. Attending a course on “Language and Globalization” at my university this Fall semester (2018) has introduced me to new terminologies associated with this complex theme—Linguistic imperialism, Hybridity, killer language, translanguaging, glocal, standard variety, regional dialect and global language.

This book introduces a new way to engage readers with these same concepts through the medium of stories set in different contexts which enables an individual to look at the application of these concepts.

The weakness of the book is the pre-requisite knowledge that it requires from readers about autoethnography as a method. It would lose points in reaching out to researchers who are apprehensive about the reliability and authenticity of autoethnographic writings (Sparkes, 2000). Since most of these narratives rely on previous memory and recollections, the critics of autoethnography raise questions about the accuracy of this source of data (Holt, 2003). I also felt that the ending of the book could have been enhanced if the editor had summed up the narratives and connected them to each other in the form of a concluding chapter.

Language and Globalization includes unique, context-specific perspectives from various authors. This is a good book for novice researchers like me who are testing the waters of applied linguistics for the first time for their research as it exposes researchers to different theoretical concepts. It primarily gives you a gist of all the themes that the field offers. It is then up to researchers to pave their way moving forward. For me (as a novice researcher), *Language and Globalization* scores well in content, questions and methodology.

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