

Bourdieu's notion of habitus at one point (pp. 79–80). Such shortcomings sometimes make it difficult to critically assess and properly appreciate Canagarajah's claims. Nevertheless, the book was a stimulating and commutating read. In each chapter, Canagarajah picks up the reader at a specific problem and leads her through existing theories. The main paradigm shift from the monolingual to the translanguing orientation then informs a critique of these existent theories. This allows Canagarajah to put forward his own syntheses, resulting in a number of practice-based theoretical concepts, among which, I think, codemeshing, negotiation strategies, performative competence and cosmopolitan dialogism can be productively developed in future sociolinguistic theorising and empirical research.

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MIGUEL PÉREZ-MILANS. *Urban Schools and English Language Education in Late Modern China: A Critical Sociolinguistic Ethnography*. New York/Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge. 2013. 196 pp. Hb (9780415502221) US\$135.00.

Reviewed by JÜRGEN JASPERS

At the same time as the globalising economy pressurises nation-states into becoming catalysts of economic flows rather than guardians of their subjects' civilization and welfare, we can regularly observe these nation-states actively trying to redress the balance and strategically secure more advantageous positions in the global race they compete in. Since this usually involves an investment in language learning and language policy, often in combination with protecting (or marketing,

or otherwise taking account of) a national linguistic heritage, it is in our interest as sociolinguists to understand how such investments are concretely processed, that is, localised in actual settings. As a traditionally salient site for crafting national agendas, schools are a prime location for investigating the implementation of these strategies and the resulting challenges and opportunities they afford. Our understanding of these processes as the work of managing globalisation would be incomplete, however, if it was primarily based on Western schools.

Miguel Pérez-Milans' book speaks excellently to all of these concerns. It offers a captivating account of how Chinese schools marry an emphatic investment in academic excellence and English-language education intended to propel China forward as a formidable competitor in the international arena, with an equally ideological commitment to Chinese cultural tradition in the hope of balancing the potentially unwholesome (non-socialist) foreign influences of English. As Pérez-Milans demonstrates, this exercise culminates in the implementation of intrinsically conflicting discourses, that require students to excel *as individuals* on an intellectual and, with regard to English, linguistic level, but also to stand out on a physical and moral level, notably through proving their unswerving patriotism and cultural allegiance through engagement in *collective* physical rituals and altruistic activities. Pérez-Milans carefully attends to how Chinese schools resolve the ensuing tensions between individual excellence and commitment to the collectivity, and in so doing provides an unusually rigorous empirical account of large-scale curricular development.

The book concentrates on three 'experimental' or *avant-garde* schools, officially designated by the Chinese state as most successful implementers of its educational modernisation programme. Surprisingly, in light of the country's political doctrine, these schools are thoroughly neoliberalised. The bureaucratic deregulation that followed China's 'open door' policies in the 1980s allows schools to set their own registration fees and top-up teacher salaries, depending on the number of pupils they manage to attract. On account of their prestige, experimental schools receive more entry applications, set higher fees to fund facilities and attract good teachers, and select students promising to confirm these schools' high success rates in national year-end examinations that support their innovativeness. The direct impact of student fees on the budget, however, requires schools to compete with other schools (through carefully managing the school's public image as a centre of excellence) for students wishing to compete for jobs on the labour market (through seeking prestigious educational credentials such as English-language skills). And since the school's officially designated prestige and public image depends on students' high scores, students and staff are constantly under pressure to prove their worth.

Adding to pupils' and teachers' strain is that part of these schools' attraction and official endorsement as model schools crucially depends on their capacity for self-presenting on a cultural level as typically or safely Chinese. For apart from its emphasis on quality and excellence in education, the Chinese state also sends out clear messages that good community members ought to be rooted in a 'patriotic-plus-Confucian-based collectivist ethos' (p. 160). This investment in culture is fairly

recent, following a turbulent history in which Chinese cultural policy has fluctuated between completely abandoning what was perceived as a pre-modern, provincial heritage to recycling it as a 'love of a culturally distinct ancient community of people' (p. 120) since the 1980s. As Pérez-Milans rightly points out, this collectivist ambition falls hard on the individual accountability that an emphasis on academic excellence and competition invites.

The body of the book describes how pupils and teachers attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. Chapter 3 describes how each experimental school anchors its academic competitiveness in a social image that capitalizes, respectively, on bilingualism, a patriotic pedigree and local community cohesion. Chapter 4 explains how these schools invest in institutional rituals that insist on collective membership and moral behaviour (through such practices as collective physical exercises, flag greeting sessions, collaborative cleaning, greeting and goodbye routines at the school entrance, managing student flow in the corridors between class sessions) as a way of balancing the processes of streaming, selection and competition that they relentlessly encourage.

In the 5th and most important chapter Pérez-Milans goes into the most sensitive aspect of China's education policy, its opening up to English, describing how schools come to define 'what counts as legitimate teaching-learning practice within the context of the innovation reforms' (p. 147), and in particular develop 'a passionately Chinese way of teaching English' (p. 156). Pérez-Milans vividly describes how collective recitation and choral activity during English-language classes function as a potent, multivalent symbol that simultaneously answers to the institutional exigency of teaching large groups of students, to an investment in an international language that exemplifies the school's experimental status and to a relatively communicative language teaching methodology, as well as to a distinctly Chinese collectivist spirit and socio-emotional intensity. Choral activity thus works to domesticate English and the belief systems of its native speakers, while it answers to academic innovation and a Confucian, collectivist ethos. As is the case elsewhere, however, language policy implementation of necessity is a fairly 'messy', unpredictable affair, and Pérez-Milans accordingly demonstrates how students (and, on some occasions, teachers) work the system through faking co-operation, showing less-than-maximum enthusiasm or engaging in collusive behaviour.

Apart from its topical relevance for sociolinguistics, the book is commendable in the author's explicit contemplation of his own role as researcher, its impact on access to different field sites and on the data set, and taking these as a starting point for the analysis. Equally creditable is the author's holistic attention not just to language use but also to sculptures, dances, physical activity and choreography, landscapes, spatial relations, TV screens and posters. His consistent effort to describe and explain the frictions that ensue from combining a meritocratic with a collectivist ethos, beyond a mere focus on criticising nation-state agendas for language, will hopefully inspire other students of language policy.

Attending to three schools at the same time, however, with classes of up to 50 students, would be a daunting challenge for any sociolinguistic ethnographer. At certain times, therefore, the analysis inevitably remains a fraction more panoramic

than one would have hoped for. Generally speaking, and in spite of the ample efforts at contextualisation, the description often leaves a skeletal impression of each school in that we learn fairly little about practices in spaces other than English-language classes, nor do we discover much about individual students, their reputations, trajectories and expected social evaluation as to their intellectual, moral or physical performance at school. There are relatively few occasions when we hear individual student voices in the study, and when we do, this often appears to be a providential side-effect of the broader focus on general classroom procedures. Indeed, there do not appear to be (useful) interview data with students, and most audio- and video-recordings are (of necessity?) whole-class. This may in fact have been illustrative of the premium put on the collectivity in each school and the impossibility of singling out individual students for audio-recording. But this goes largely unacknowledged, and such recordings clearly would have brought out more precisely the various collusive, hushed asides, fake contributions or other 'discontinuities' to collective rituals that the author was interested in describing as examples of students' rejection or resistance.

Comparatively little attention too, in light of the importance given to them as signs of agentive rejection in chapter 5 and in the book's conclusion, goes to appreciating the weight of collusive behaviour. While Pérez-Milans rightly demonstrates that participants are well attuned to the conditions that impact on them and are capable of seeing behind the curtains, the observable subversion remains mostly limited and *sub rosa*. One wonders to what extent this may have had to be qualified as a necessary contextual effect, in schools where deviant behaviour can impact sharply on highly desired marks and where the pressure to participate in collective rituals subsequently is much higher than has been demonstrated for Western school contexts. In this light, one wonders what other kinds of resistance would have been observable in this 'high supervision' context besides collusive in-class behaviour (such as drop-out behaviour, failing to produce good marks, non-cooperative behaviour among students in the margins of official activity, or the recruitment of academic excellence to symbolically distance oneself from students who perform poorly). It also remains unclear to what extent the tensions that characterize experimental schools are intrinsically different from those that obtain in other, 'normal', Chinese schools.

These critical remarks notwithstanding, this book is an eye-opener for all sociolinguists interested in understanding how nation-states respond to and 'do' globalisation through language education policies. This is not a book about China, in other words. Or at least it is less about China than about how globalised institutional spaces such as schools are 'key sites for the exploration of links between processes of economic transformation, changes in the organisation of a given community, and discursive practices through which that community reconstitutes itself' (p. 9). It unquestionably invites us to include other Eastern schools in our understanding of these processes. But it also exhorts us to explore if and how, and with what results, Western nation-states, like China, pursue paths to political and economic modernisation that blend an increasing investment in language

commodification and internationalisation with a more protective concern for linguistic and cultural heritage.

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ISTVAN KECSKES. *Intercultural Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2014. vii + 277 pp. Hb (9780199892655) US\$67.06.

Reviewed by YI-JU LAI

As an English language learner who studies language socialization within contexts of intercultural communication, I take a particular interest in resources that examine how communication takes place and meaning is achieved. Istvan Kecskes' *Intercultural Pragmatics* provides some insightful perspectives in this area. This ambitious and thoughtful book reflects on a critical but often neglected question in pragmatics research: how are language systems used in intercultural communication encounters between speakers with different first languages and cultures, and how is it those speakers come to use a second language as their means of social interactions?

Kecskes proposes a multilingual, intercultural, socio-cognitive, and 'discourse-segment' approach to better understand speakers' language production and linguistic competence in interaction. This four-pronged approach moves beyond traditional pragmatic theories concerning utterance segments among monolingual speakers. It centers on discourse segments (i.e. an organized set of utterances) in conversation among bi/multilingual speakers as well as the sociocultural and socio-cognitive factors involved in intercultural communication. Examples in the book are primarily from naturally occurring conversations between bi/multilingual speakers.

In the introduction, Kecskes orients readers to his perspective, arguing that intercultural pragmatics concerns 'the way the language system is put to use in social encounters between human beings who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and usually, represent different cultures' (p. 15). It describes how the dynamic interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (e.g. individual prior experience or actual social situational context) are involved in intercultural communication. The concept of intercultural pragmatics is argued to supplement current pragmatic theories with its unique multilingual and intercultural perspective.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of current pragmatic theories including major lines of pragmatics research (e.g. Gricean pragmatics) and addresses selected issues within current theories. Kecskes indicates that the two major streams of pragmatic