

Bokmelding

Wim Vandebussche, Ernst Håkon Jahr and Peter Trudgill (eds.): *Language Ecology for the 21st Century: Linguistic Conflicts and Social Environments*. Oslo, Novus Press 2013. 342 pages.

Reviewing a book which is even slightly connected to the works of Einar Haugen as a foreigner in Norway seems like a daring endeavour. Unavoidably, one stumbles. “From crumbling cliffs our view follows as on upward and downward currents the gulls, shags and eagles of thought and emotion glide and swoop, weave over the water webs of brightness and sad sound, patterns perceived differently by each observer” (LePage, when reviewing Dell Hymes in 1979). The cliffs of book reviews, much as the gentle cliffs of the Southern Norwegian fjords, can hopefully be navigated safely...

Almost four decades after the introduction of the term *language ecology* by Einar Haugen (in 1971/1972), researchers were invited, to “assess the continued value and applicability of Haugen’s ecolinguistic theory (as well as its shortcomings) with respect to their specific field of inquiry” (11), as the editors Wim Vandebussche, Ernst Håkon Jahr and Peter Trudgill state in their introduction. A conference, organized to celebrate the newly awarded full-university status of the University of Agder, served as a point of departure and along with six contributions from the conference and five invited authors, this volume combines papers on the term and concept of language ecology and examples of how this concept or metaphor can be used in specific research environments.

The first four articles address “the legacy of Haugen’s work in the development of current linguistic theory and practice”, focusing on language change, linguistic profiling, Ausbau linguistics and minority language studies.

Stig Eliasson, himself a student of Einar Haugen, sets the theoretical scene and contributes the introduction to language ecology as a point of departure for the book. He points to Haugen’s understanding of language as deeply linked to the society where it is relevant. Language is thus not a monolithic, de-contextualized, static entity. He continues by presenting Haugen’s 10 questions which are used as a point of reference throughout the book. It speaks of the power of persuasion of the editors that many of the contributors refer to this article and in particular those that were invited to join at a later stage. Where edited volumes sometimes run the risk of being a loose connection, this volume is woven

tightly and the reference points are made very explicit, up to the point where readers might find parts slightly redundant.

The second part of Eliasson's chapter is devoted to the term 'ecology' and its usage in biology (what he terms 'conventional usage'), sociology and psychology. The author also talks about the concept in linguistics and the follow-up hypotheses, like the ecological risk hypothesis. On the same note, linguistic diversity as compared to biodiversity could have been mentioned. Before looking at implementations, Eliasson spends some time on discussing the metaphorical or substantive nature of ecology as a concept. This question is addressed throughout the book and following this example it can be very helpful to understand some of the challenges of interdisciplinary work, when we have to decide how to employ concepts of neighboring (or distant) disciplines.

Kees Versteegh and Jeroen Darquennes speak about further developments. Versteegh draws on one example of ecology when household composition and movement of spouses influence language behaviour and learning of children (and adults). Darquennes looks at Haarmann's and Edward's frameworks, which further developed Haugen's research questions, before himself proposing further amendments.

Peter Trudgill, himself a professor at Adger university, presents an overview how *Abstand* and *Ausbau* can be applied to a range of different language situations, from European to international examples. Looking at the construction of status for dialects and languages, the author gives brief descriptions of examples for Norwegian, Dutch, Caribbean English-based Creoles, Ullans in Northern Ireland, Maori and Catalan. He also addresses the shifts from dialects to languages and vice versa drawing on examples from Germany, Hungary and the languages of former Yugoslavia. The brief examples can be useful to students and teachers who want to understand the underlying factors of the *Abstand / Aufbau* hypothesis and can learn through comparison.

The second part of the book consist of three case studies from primarily historical European contexts and four examples of current cases outside of Europe. The distribution between historical and current cases seems surprising but due to the small number of articles, this might not hold any deeper meaning. Through the inclusion of the papers by Deumert, Harlow & Barbour and Andersson the focus was widened to include more non-European contexts (when originally, only Miriam Meyerhoff's contribution about the Caribbean was part of the conference).

Joan A. Argenter asks for the additional gain that can be drawn from looking at multilingual historical contexts with an understanding of language ecology.

His example is the Iberian peninsula where different dialects and languages were present over time but did develop certain domains and patterns of transmission, according to their use and meaning in societies. Both in the historical and current contexts, he sees language ecology as a way to explain language shift and to take the influence of societal factors on languages and language use into account.

Gro-Renée Rambø deals with roughly the same historical times but a different location: her study looks at Scandinavian languages being in contact with German via the trade between the Hanse cities. Apart from seeing the situation as one of language contact, she employs the framework to look at how the ecology of language influences patterns of language use and transmission: for this article, the history and living conditions in different cities, Bergen and Tønsberg/Oslo in Norway and Stockholm in Sweden, are in focus. In her research, she stresses the importance of language as social and psychological phenomenon and uses Garner to highlight the ecological perspective. In Garner's words in a later publication (2014, 112), "the focus was on the co-existence and interaction of languages, communities and cultures within a society."

Ernst Håkon Jahr stays in the area but looks at the ecology of Norwegian dialects turning into standards and being used in schools. He starts out with Ivar Aasen and Knud Knudsen, the two most important Norwegian language planners, and shows how through legal decisions and everyday practices, the two-standard situation evolved, emphasizing the importance of the pupils' dialects used in school. Highlighting two cases from Grimstad and Bergen, he exemplifies the struggle and outcomes of language ecology.

With Rambø, Jahr and Trudgill, three scholars from Agder university are featured in the collection, which makes it relevant for the local and regional context but has necessarily left out other researchers who draw on Einar Haugen's work as well (see i.e. Creese & Martin 2008). Still, the last part of the book is open to scholars who draw on contexts outside of Europe and includes some authors that have not been present at the conference.

Ana Deumert looks at the hierarchies, hegemonies and resistances in South Africa's language ecology by drawing on different perspectives. The first part of her chapter gives an overview of the main language groups in South Africa and their speakers, before moving on to a historical analysis of the hierarchization of European and African languages by European colonizers. The colonizers were placing the Khoesan languages at the bottom (i.e. by constructing their clicks as indicative of 'primitive' languages), the Bantu languages as in-between and finally the European languages on top. From within those groups the author

takes Afrikaans as one example to show how hierarchies are constructed between standardized and non-standard forms. Finally, the chapter closes with a focus on resistance and heteroglossia, demonstrating how resistance to standard forms can be found as early as 1930.

Māori in the 21st century is in focus of Ray Harlow and Julie Barbour's contribution who follow Haugen's classification of ten ecological questions. For each of the points, the authors give a brief summary about the development with a focus on the current status of the language and its users. Standardization, domains of use and language attitudes are presented more extensively and the authors also highlight an important addition to Haugen's framework taking attitudes of non-speakers of Māori (in the case of New Zealand the majority of speakers) towards the language into account. Given this analysis, the case of Māori seems more optimistic but the language remains under pressure and "faces a very precarious future" (262).

Miriam Meyerhoff investigates how indexicality and the specific meaning of a social index might be seen as part of a larger language ecology. With this study the author points to Haugen's own interest in dialectal features and distributions and links it to the notion of indexicality. Her examples stem from the variety English spoken on Bequia, an island belonging to St. Vincennes and the Grenadines. Starting with some social context and history, the author then focuses on linguistic variables in the speech of adult speakers from different villages before moving to non-linguistic variables and concentrating on the importance of place as a salient category: both those speakers that spent most of their adult life in the village and those that moved between the village and more urban settlements retrieved the same patterns in their use of linguistic variables.

Drawing on research in Botswana, Lars-Gunnar Andersson uses some of Haugen's ecological questions to reflect on the language ecology in Southern Africa. Like Deumert, he starts with presenting the three major language groups and their speakers before moving to an evaluation of the strengths of languages. After the macro level analysis, the author reflects on micro analysis in 'situational use (i.e. in shops, with students, with siblings, with parents or with grandparents)' in 1990 and 2008. Using the case of Setswana and English, he states a general trend towards English, with the most frequent use of Setswana with parents and grandparents. At the same time, in shops, more Setswana use is reported in 2008 than in 1990.

The case studies from Southern Africa, New Zealand and the Caribbean present the reader with interesting insights and highlight the importance of ecol-

ogy as it is related to social settings. The title of the volume, *Language Ecology for the 21st century: Linguistic conflicts and social environments*, refers to these environments, but seems relatively generic. Especially the notion of conflict is rather implicit and is only highlighted in some papers.

We can conclude that for the interested reader, this volume offers a concise collection of views: the editors' aim to highlight and discuss one specific concept allows for in-depth readings. Through this specific focus comparative understanding is enhanced. Unfortunately, there are some shortcomings in the editing and the choice of presentation which make it hard to follow the texts at times: the typesetter's choice to use same font size for quotations and text leads to confusion especially when it comes to longer quotations, but we also found that this was done differently in the first chapter where smaller font size is used for quotations than in the rest of the chapters. Otherwise, the embedding of tables and figures could have been done more elegantly, i.e. with the same number of lines between text and figures, and in some paragraphs the spacing is perceptibly wider than in others. For a second edition, a little more consistency with those editing decisions would lead to a better presentation.

The volume is recommended as a way to get into discussions of one of Haugen's concepts through contemporary and historical examples. The mode of organization, starting with a conceptual discussion, requests relatively little background knowledge from the reader and will make the volume accessible to readers of different levels of experience and expertise. Each reader will then find their own point of entry, put languages in contact and look out over the "patterns we hope will be recognizable having been more-or-less used before" (LePage 1979), much like one finds one's paths along the shores outside of Kristiansand.

References

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