Anne-Claude Berthoud, François Grin & Georges Lüdi (eds.)


The book assembles an impressive body of research that focuses on a rapidly changing multilingual Europe. Migrant communities, European border expansion, job transfers are only three examples of the valuable terrain that the European context provides for the observation of the dynamics of multilingualism emerging from the contact among societies, languages and cultures. The editors, Swiss scholars Anne Berthoud, François Grin and Georges Lüdi, have coordinated the European funded *Dylan* project (http://www.dylan-project.org/Dylan_en/presentation/presentation.php); the primary sources of data have been presented in this work. Through the collection of a vast amount of empirical data, the *Dylan* project’s ambitious goal is to investigate the contexts within which multilingualism is an asset rather than a disadvantage. This book provides a snapshot of the complexity of the field as well as an in-depth view of the perfectly orchestrated research conducted within the European project.

The volume comprises four parts. The first three assemble research conducted in the contexts of 1) Commercial entities / corporates; 2) European Institutions; and 3) Higher Education. The fourth part presents research that tackles transversal issues and provides a cross-sectional view of the work undertaken in the project. A very succinct and insightful introduction and conclusion frame the four sections and provide a clear summary of the salient findings.

The first section of ten chapters deals with studies conducted on national and international companies, of varying sizes. Numerous language contexts are investigated. The multilingual practices, representations and ideologies documented take into consideration not only national, official languages (English, French, German, Danish, etc.) but also minority languages such as Slovene and Gaelic. Hence, multilingualism in companies has been tackled in terms of how it manifests in users’ practices but also in their representations. Furthermore, the data collected allow for the exploration of different facets of multilingualism implemented in the European context. The first three chapters present the results from very fine-grained analyses of interactional data collected in both French and Swiss-based companies. Whilst the first two adopt a conversational analysis framework and thus boast an emic perspective, the third chapter adopts a discourse analytical approach and taps into aspects of multilingual management. An important element underpinning the
interactions analyzed in the first two chapters is intersubjectivity, the principle that ensures comprehension between individuals engaged in the same conversation. Through an interactional and multimodal approach, the authors show how intersubjectivity is enabled through language negotiations, repairs, etc. Thus, these two studies demonstrate that speakers will, through their language activity, adjust their language choices. These adjustments are evidence of the plasticity inherent to multilingual practices. The third chapter, focused on multilingualism and management in companies, provides a complementary view, showing the interdependence between multilingualism and multiculturalism. As suggested by the authors, multiculturalism is the necessary condition for maximising the benefits of multilingualism. Chapters four and five deal with the representations of multilingualism via the analyses of interview data collected in French and Danish companies. The dynamic nature and the tensions of multilingualism's representations are highlighted, as well as the resultant close relationship between individual and group identities. It is somewhat surprising that Tajfel’s (1978) landmark work has not been taken into consideration as he has written extensively on the tensions between individual and group identities. Chapter six focuses on Gaelic and language planning. The authors grapple with difficult issues concerning the efficiency of language policies especially when these pertain to minority languages (as is Gaelic) that are confronted with the pressure of English, the dominant language. The results from this research are certainly valuable for policy makers who are required to balance the “cost efficiency” of language policies with their potential significance on an ideological level. Although not focusing on language minorities, the last chapter of the first section deals with management of language diversity within corporate websites. Similarly to the findings in the other chapters of this section, this chapter underlines the supremacy of English as the language medium par excellence. Interestingly though, the authors observe that companies’ Internet sites contain a wide selection of languages the reader could choose from, suggesting that, despite the observed English supremacy, companies wish to broaden their sites’ readership by expressing their specificities in a wider variety of languages.

The second section of the volume comprises three chapters pertaining to multilingualism in European Institutions. Similarly to section one, these focus on language practices, policies and representations within and beyond post-Enlargement European institutional contexts. Adopting a multi-level perspective, the research presented in this section skillfully captures the dynamics of communication in workspaces where language practices are on a continuum between monolingualism and multilingualism. In ever-changing