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Peer reviewed

Extending Applied Linguistics for Social Impact: Cross-Disciplinary Collaborations in Diverse Spaces of Public Inquiry. Doris S. Warriner and Elizabeth R. Miller. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, 228 pp.

Reviewed by Mathijs Arens

In this review, I discuss *Extending Applied Linguistics for Social Impact: Cross-Disciplinary Collaborations in Diverse Spaces of Public Inquiry*, edited by Doris S. Warriner and Elizabeth R. Miller. The book contains individual chapters by contributors exploring a wide spectrum of topics from healthcare to racism in athletic mascots to supporting public education by local museums. In the introduction to this book, Warriner and Miller provide a brief overview of the type of work described by the various contributors. Though the contributors are all linguists, the work detailed in each chapter is transdisciplinary as the work extends beyond strict linguisticism. Key to the work being done is the examination of how applied linguistics has, according to the authors, failed to apply itself outside in ways tangible to the greater public. The call to action of this book involves putting aside ideas of self-importance as linguists and instead acknowledge that there are other stakeholders with their own expertise and skills which can support and (potentially) be supported by linguistic research.

Reviewing a volume with chapters by various authors with a wide range of interests is both challenging as it is enlightening. While each chapter deserves its own isolated praise and review, I have divided this review into 4 sections:

1. Chapters 1-5
2. Chapters 6-7
3. Chapter 8
4. Overall opinions

Chapters 1-5: Blessings and Trials of a Collaborative Linguist

In the first five chapters of the book, the authors explore the nature of applying linguistics in collaboration with non-linguists and non-academics. Some of these collaborations are described as - at best - difficult, while others are treated as quintessential parts of the authors' research.

In the first true chapter of the book, Higgins provides an informative exposition on how different languages were historically repressed on official levels in Hawai'i, including Pidgin (the focus of the author's research), allowing readers unfamiliar with the topic to easily understand the importance of the projects. The research involved three projects conducted by Higgins, though the author explains that her role as an academic allows her to support stakeholders with closer ties to Pidgin and Hawaiian education rather than the other way around.

These projects involved close ties with Pidgin-speaking high school students, a local museum, and a public discussion on the role of Pidgin in Hawai'i. With a focus on supporting Pidgin-speakers from multiple angles, this first chapter of the book provides clear examples of how researchers may leave the "ivory tower" and be of practical use to local communities.

Moore writes Chapter 2 on how linguists and museums can help young children who are dual language learners (DLL) and those who are stakeholders of young DLLs (educators, parents, etc.). While Moore explains that the challenge in educating DLLs is that they are still trying to grasp not one but two or more languages, the author spends even more time describing her partnership with Ohio State University's Center of Science and Industry (COSI). As there were many people who contributed to the research project described in this chapter, Moore considers herself as having "participated" in the research rather than having led the effort. In this matter, the author spends a great deal of time explaining the administrative dealings of the project such as occasional changes in project members, various challenges facing those who remained, and other problems encountered during the course of the project. These problems were largely the result of working with individuals across different fields while trying to accommodate for differing institutional needs. Overall, this chapter serves as a cautionary tale and encouragement for university professionals pursuing interdisciplinary relationships. Moore emphasizes the reality that project partnerships are only as strong as the personal relationships formed between individuals.

Similarly, Miller's Chapter 3 can be summarized as successful in terms of interdisciplinary partnerships while at the same time strained in regard to the relationships formed. Miller's work with the Social Sustainability Research Coordination Network (SSRCN) was inherently cooperative as a coalition of people from different fields working to advance social sustainability. Miller discusses at great length how she became involved with the SSRCN, with her role as a linguist being to examine the language used in the organization's online and in-person communications. The main goal of her project was originally to develop an "internationally recognized conceptualization" for social sustainability, though the focus of the project shifted as the SSRCN's overarching goals changed over time. Miller explains that her frustrations with the organization eventually led her to leave the project altogether. Despite these frustrations, Miller admits that her involvement in the project educated her on the usefulness of applied linguists in cooperative projects. As such, I found this chapter to be both enlightening and applicable to applied linguists. Readers may find in this chapter a relevant example of how to apply their expertise in projects which they may not be especially passionate about while still being useful to non-linguists. Chapter 3 is therefore both a success story as well as another cautionary tale.

Chapter 4 is the first in the book by multiple authors; specifically Obed Arango and Holly Link. Readers should be prepared for the especially political and potentially divisive nature of this chapter. The research described in this chapter was performed in collaboration with RevArte (Revolucion Arte), a nonprofit specializing in supporting the Mexican-American community to

allow for discussions of race and politics. “Obed’s” ties with RevArte granted him access to research participants to help the authors’ work on ideology and what they refer to as *translanguaging paxis*. Specifically, translanguaging involves the unconcerned breaking of language barriers without warning or special attention drawn to the act. Using translanguaging, Link and “Obed” discuss their project - a subversive narrative written by young members of RevArte which overturns common portrayals of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the media. Not unlike the story described by the authors, this chapter is both heart-warming as it is heart-breaking. The emphasis of fusing story-telling and justice is a constant theme which serves as a model for others hoping to educate the community on translanguaging. In the theme of Latinx pride and strength, the chapter itself uses translanguaging unapologetically, only translating long stretches of Spanish, forcing readers to meet the authors’ language decisions rather than strictly catering to the readers.

Writing on linguistics and theater, Ellen Skilton begins Chapter 5 explaining her participation in a practice called Theater of the Oppressed (TO) in connection to her experience with racial Whiteness. The author describes the basic tenets of TO in how audience members are welcomed as a part of the performance rather than serve strictly as spectators. This, as the author describes, is the perfect set-up for “interrogating Whiteness.” As a White woman, the author testifies to the cultural norm for White people (mainly women) to hold niceness and the dissolution of discomfort as sacred principles of culture. By exploring this discomfort through TO, the audience is encouraged to participate in questioning this accepted norm which permeates life in White-dominated spaces. Using theoretical frameworks available to the author by her status as a linguist, Skilton asserts that the combination of theater practices and linguistic theory “can disrupt or maintain whiteness: niceness, comfort, control, and white solidarity.” Readers unfamiliar with Theater of the Oppressed or theater techniques in general will assuredly find this to be a well-structured chapter which clearly explains these concepts in detail as it moves from idea to idea, taking the reader along and explaining it every step of the way. A challenge which the reader may face, however, is the speed at which these ideas are explained. Some readers may feel uncomfortable with some of the ideas presented in this chapter, especially readers unaccustomed to the topic of race and White-privilege. Those who have experience with theater and/or justice-centered education, however, will likely deeply resonate with this chapter as Skilton both identifies injustice and provides a framework for combating injustice.

Chapters 6-7: How Linguists Can Be of Service to Others

Chapters 6 and 7 continue the discussion of collaboration between linguists and non-linguists, though the focus seems to shift from linguist-centered narratives to an emphasis on projects already in place in which linguists may enter into supporting roles. Both chapters describe the role of linguists in health care, albeit in different ways. While Chapter 6 focuses on health education and literacy, the other explores ways linguists can be more direct in their service to healthcare workers.

Chapters 6 and 7 both examine the ways in which linguists can support the efforts of health providers working with minority language communities. In these chapters, all of the authors clearly express the need for linguistic support in various efforts to help patients while validating the existing efforts of the healthcare workers currently engaged in supporting local communities.

In chapter 6, Feuerherm et al. explore different aspects of the same project to promote health equity amongst residents of Flint, Michigan. During the 2016 Flint water crisis, all efforts to make the public aware of the problems with the water were in English. The authors point out that this monolingual policy failed to account for the sizable non-English speaking population residing in the city. To better support these residents, the authors partnered with two community organizations to create a program called Health and English as a second language Literacy Program (HELP); the goal being to improve health education and English as an additional language education for residents of Flint. This effort involved collaboration with healthcare workers and interpreters who could help the patients understand the finer details of their doctors' communications. With the support of the linguists, health providers and interpreters gained support in developing a common framework in which to support their patients.

Continuing in the field of healthcare, Katherine E. Morelli and Doris S. Warriner enlighten readers on the value of Cultural Health Navigators (CHN) who serve as mediators between healthcare providers and the communities they serve. As "insiders" who are a part of the immigrant community, the CHNs of this study support a pediatric clinic in the United States which focuses on assisting refugee families. As a result of the wide linguistic and ethnic diversity of these families, researchers quickly established that language, literacy, and culture could create barriers to healthcare access. Beginning with an incredibly enticing hook, this chapter reminds readers of the sometimes harsh realities which real people face on a regular basis. With the support of applied linguists, the authors argue that many of these burdens could be lifted as healthcare providers are given the tools to more effectively serve their communities.

Readers of these chapters may struggle to understand the issues as they relate to public health but should expect to be made aware of the linguistic gap in health services. For the linguist with a passion for service, these chapters provide insight and inspiration for how to move the field from academia to tangible application.

Chapter 8: Calls to Action

The writing style of the eighth chapter deviates from the norm as Netta Avineri, Eric J. Johnson, Bernard C. Perley, Jonathan Rosa, and Ana Celia Zentella have written their own sections in this chapter to discuss topics which are related in theme though different in their specific contexts.

First on the list is the question of who, according to the US Census, is "linguistically isolated." Zentella employs anthro-political linguistics to dissect the term "linguistically isolated", describing it as problematic as it has created a stigma surrounding Spanish speakers in the U.S. As the term likely suggests that Spanish monolinguals may be isolated from English

speakers, Zentella rightly argues that English monolinguals must therefore also be considered “linguistically isolated.” Thanks to a partnership between the author and different organizations which represent minority groups, the coalition was able to successfully lobby the Census Bureau to eventually change the classifications to be less stigmatizing and less damaging to *minority* language speakers in the U.S.

Moving on from census classifications to popular narratives, Rosa writes on the debate surrounding the conceptualization of migrants who enter the U.S. without authorization as somehow being “illegal.” Using himself as a firsthand witness, Rosa argues that immigration and resistance to immigration are tied to concepts of race, with the United States having established a rhetoric of anti-immigration in response to certain waves of immigration. Rosa provides a call to action to reshape our understanding of who is considered human, changing certain laws and practices which are dehumanizing to those who cross the southern U.S. border; both to those who cross with documentation and who cross without documentation.

Perley continues the discussion on dehumanizing practices as he addresses racist mascot names and iconography in sports teams. Perley succinctly explains the common practice for school and professional athletic teams to employ mascots which use terms which harm Native Americans with racist images and names; Perley clarifies that this is a form of hate speech, but is considered acceptable by the American public at large. Meanwhile, attempts to resist this practice by protestors graffitiing over racist imagery is met with outrage; showing the hypocrisy of American views of these mascots. Therefore, the author asserts that healing must be found for both the abused (Native American communities hurt by the names and images) and the abuser (who must find healing from being a bully). Moreover, American society must learn to overcome its racist attitudes towards Native Americans, often an “invisible community.”

In the final section of the chapter, Johnson discusses the concept that children from low-income families hear 30 million fewer words in the first three years of their life than those from wealthier families. Johnson argues that the concept is rooted in problematic language as the notion of a “language gap” is “misleading” and denies the deeper truths of family life. Through efforts such as lectures, newspapers, and public events, the author hopes to reframe public thinking about the “issue” (so-called) of the language gap.

While some other chapters in this book were written by multiple authors, this chapter uniquely clarifies which sections were written by whom, as they are each written as first-person narratives. As the authors of this chapter are explicit in how their personalities and personal histories both affect and are affected by their research, readers should be aware of possible bias in their arguments. Conversely, readers may more easily accept the authority of the authors in their role as self-admitted stakeholders.

Overall Opinions

A significant challenge when reading a collection such as this is that each chapter is its own realm, each with its own themes and lexicon of terms which - even when properly defined - presents a challenge to readers uninitiated to the topic. Despite this difficulty, the consistent flow

of each chapter allows readers to - more or less - keep up with the pace of the book. As such, linguists interested in surveying distinct efforts to cooperate across disciplines have much to gain from a cover to cover read as they explore each chapter. Alternatively, readers may decide to read select chapters based on their own specific needs. In either case, readers may find “new ways of thinking” from these authors who seem to believe that linguistics has a part to play in solving real-world problems.

As a writer, I recommend this book to those seeking insight into how different authors convey to readers the appropriate emotional context surrounding their work. As a researcher, I strongly recommend this book for those hoping to draw inspiration from successful collaborations with others, though the warnings to such aspiring collaborators is clearly stated throughout the book. As Rymes describes in the afterword, moving the field away from *applied* to *collaborative* linguistics will require humility on the part of academics accustomed to favoring their own expertise as superior to the expertise of others. Despite this challenge, the authors of *Extending Applied Linguistics for Social Impact: Cross-Disciplinary Collaborations in Diverse Spaces of Public Inquiry* proudly present their successes and humbly offer their failings to inspire applied linguists to join them in joining with others.

Mathijs Arens is an independent English Second Language teacher from California. Having received his education from UC Berkeley and Cal State LA, Mathijs specializes in the intersectionality of performance art and language instruction.