

Language, Culture, Identity, and, Everything In Between

Nunan, David, and Julie Choi, eds. 2010. *Language and Culture: Reflective Narratives and the Emergence of Identity*. ESL & Applied Linguistics Professional Series. New York: Routledge.

Pupavac, Vanessa. 2012. *Language Rights: From Free Speech to Linguistic Governance*. Palgrave Studies in Minority Languages and Communities. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rivers, Damian, J. and Stephanie Ann Houghton, eds. 2013. *Social Identities and Multiple Selves in Foreign Language Education*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Reviewed by Erica Mallett, Loyola University Chicago

The interplay between language, culture, and identity will forever be a phenomenon addressed by researchers. Not only do we enjoy the task of defining these terms, but it is fascinating to discover the inner workings of one's identity through examining individuals' interaction and participation in language and culture. In consistently reanalyzing these concepts under current global and political influence, we gain a better understanding of how they work together for individuals and communities. The books presented below each examine language, culture, and identity differently, both through personal experiences and throughout historical contexts. Each book brings the reader to a point of personal reflection on how language and culture work together to form one's identity as well as the underlying meaning of such processes. They are beneficial not only for researchers but also for teachers, language learners, and those interested in the concepts of language, culture, and identity.

Nunan and Choi (2010) create a dynamic composite of biographical narratives received from their colleagues. Each author describes personal experiences in relation to language learning or use and the interconnections between language, culture, and identity. As a result each chapter contains vivid examples of encountering, creating, and reshaping one's identity as it relates to culture and language. The book is creative and well-supported with evidence gleaned from each scholar's personal experiences. All of the scholars represented here speak English to some capacity and all of the narratives are written in English, thus missing opportunities to explore other language learning experiences from those not proficient in English. However the authors mention that the book may be attractive to those interested in the impact of globalization on language, culture, and identity; so the presence of English represented here is most likely a representation of that.

The writers express an intimate and adaptive journey through which the relationships between language, culture, and identity are constantly considered and analyzed. Each contributor interprets their life or specific account therein differently; however, the constant theme of continual growth throughout and within the concepts of language, culture, and identity remains constant. Therefore the reader remains connected in each narrative.

Language and Culture: Reflective Narratives and the Emergence of Identity holds relevance in the field of international education as the key concepts of language, culture, and identity analyzed here are consistently revisited in research conducted in comparative education. The authors provide continuity between research and practical implications for language teachers

and learners through the sharing of personal experience. This may be an example for others to emulate, as it effectively highlights the interconnections between language, culture, and identity from a point of reference within. Nunan and Choi have organized this book as a conversation, so it diverges from the strict writing styles often associated with academic writing. It creates a space for a dynamic discussion of language, culture, and identity, as well as a fluid connection between each concept, which is beneficial in understanding and forming one's own identity.

In stark contrast to Nunan and Choi, Pupavac (2012) does not provide a dynamic analysis of language, culture, and identity. Instead she provides a critical analysis of language rights as they relate to human rights and international language policy. The reader is provided with a great deal of data, information, and theoretical discourse surrounding the controversial topic of language rights. The author also provides each side of the arguments presented, allowing readers to generate their own criticisms or beliefs. Although the book includes many examples to help one understand the complex context and implications regarding language rights, if readers are not versed in the issue, the book may leave them confused. The book appears somewhat crowded in certain areas, therefore inadvertently challenging the reader to decompress the material before one can reach full understanding.

Pupavac maintains a voice critical of the motivation for human advocacy and for whom it is beneficial or differential. This notion of human advocacy is featured throughout the critical examination of certain time periods such as the Enlightenment and the age of Romanticism. Throughout the text Pupavac advocates for linguistic diversity. As the forces of globalization continue, so do its debilitating effects, such as the loss of languages, as Pupavac demonstrates. *Language Rights: From Free Speech to Linguistic Governance* provides an overview of critical components influencing language policy. This analysis provides the reader with examples, theory, and an understanding of the present and potential impact that the loss of languages may have on society as a whole. Not only are languages disappearing, but Pupavac identifies regulatory policies that she says stifle voices and threatens true freedom of speech. The importance of language diversity will remain a topic of discussion as long as the increase of globalization causes a decrease in cultural diversity, including the diversity of language. Although difficult to uncover in some areas due to the amount of historical context that must first be taken in as a point of reference, the arguments presented are relevant for us to consider both as a current issue, and an inevitable issue in the future.

Moving away from language diversity issues and personal narratives Rivers (2013) discusses the complexity of identity formation specifically. Here the concern is not with the relation of culture and language explicitly, but examining intercultural interaction as well as the creation of identity as related to 'other' in foreign language learning. The contributors present various case studies that encompass the theme of identity construction in foreign language learning. Each case study utilizes a different theoretical paradigm that aids in the deconstruction of the authors' core concepts and allows the reader to effortlessly relate them to identity formation in the text. A central component of the identity formation focused upon here is the influence it receives from foreign language interaction. The way in which the interactions are presented make it is easy for the reader to understand without overcomplicating the issue. The reader is provided with a variety of information as related to the concepts of intercultural interaction, and the creation of identity within foreign language learning and teaching; and the contributors provide clear and concise examples as each case study represents. Collectively the contributors present a variety of theoretical concepts to analyze; however, the text as a whole maintains a critical eye on the broad concepts of language as well as narrow minded views potentially marginalizing different

community groups, due to oppressive linguistic practices such as the ‘nationalist paradigm’ mentioned in chapter 6 (Cole & Meadows, 121-138).

Social Identities and Multiple Selves in Foreign Language Education is important to the field of international education as it is a significant piece in examining the interaction with interlocutors from diverse perspectives. This book analyzes concepts such as motivation, emotion, and universalism relative to identity development in students, both individually and in groups. Through the critical examination of different social interactions taking place in a foreign language classroom one can better understand the dynamic ways in which identity is constructed by both teachers and students. Achieving this understanding is likely to lead to pivotal moments of identity formation. For foreign language instructors, this information is paramount in the facilitation of language learning opportunities in the classroom in which students are likely to experience crucial points of identity formation. Although these are not necessarily revolutionary findings, as a whole the reader is provided with evidence of the social aspect of identity and the multi-dimensionality of identity formation.

Each book reviewed here presents an argument relevant to the future of international education and language policy. As the complexity of identity formation is presented, each new inquiry can potentially lead to a new discovery in the interplays of language, culture, and identity. The discoveries then lead to a greater understanding, which in turn can lend us to better practices in policy and teaching. These books are beneficial to researchers, teachers, language learners, and those interested in the topics presented here. Each book has a different way of examining the concepts of language, culture, and identity; through narratives, historical overviews, and theoretical case studies. The material is presented in a dynamic way that is sure to capture the readers’ attention and provide a solid foundation upon which one can embark on personal self reflection as related to the impact of culture and language on identity formation.