

6. LANGUE ET IDENTITÉ

«Des nationalismes comparables ? : Le rôle de la langue et de la littérature dans les nationalismes québécois et wallons», le texte de Alex Demeulenaere, met en parallèle deux nationalismes devenus plus inclusifs après des débuts ethnocentristes. S'ils ont en commun leur niveau de développement économique, le fédéralisme, le bilinguisme et une immigration culturellement diversifiée, c'est le fait d'être une minorité francophone qui les unit vraiment. Toutefois, le nationalisme wallon serait une réaction au nationalisme flamand et moins fortement lié à la langue qu'au Québec. Cet ancrage identitaire et le désir d'autonomie au sein de la fédération rapprochent en fait les mouvements du Québec et de Flandre.

Dans une contribution intitulée, «Les français en Colombie-Britannique : État des lieux et perspectives de recherche», Christian Guilbault s'est intéressé à l'apport de l'immigration et des apprenants en langue seconde dans la progression du français. Dans une étude pilote sur les représentations linguistiques, des étudiants devaient classer neuf variétés de français familiers. Des différences ressortent entre les participants selon leur niveau de compétence mais, en général, les accents de Montréal et de France (Sud) sont évalués plus positivement que ceux des anglophones et francophones de l'Ouest canadien, variétés pourtant plus proches de celles des participants.

En résumé, les cadres méthodologiques et les sujets abordés dans cet ouvrage sont très variés ; il est donc question de géolinguistique dans sa définition la plus large. D'aucuns pourraient y voir une faiblesse car il est vrai que l'inclusion de toutes les communications entraîne forcément des inégalités ; en effet, le traitement de certains textes est nettement plus fouillé et la longueur des textes varie entre 8 et 22 pages. Toutefois le recueil possède l'avantage indéniable d'être accessible tant aux étudiants qu'aux spécialistes de la langue et les professeurs pourront y puiser des ressources en français pour leurs cours. Il s'agit par ailleurs d'une bonne contribution (cinq articles) aux rares travaux sur les variétés de français de l'Ouest canadien.

Asya Pereltsvaig. 2012. *Languages of the world: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. vii + 278. \$37.95 (softcover).

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The book *Languages of the world: An introduction* is about “diverse human languages and the peoples who speak them, how these languages came to be spoken where they are now spoken, how they interacted and changed each other” (p. 3). Intended to be used as a textbook for a course of the same name that the author teaches at Stanford University, the book aims to provide students with an introduction to the diversity and typology of human languages around the world.

The book offers detailed information about the vast variety of the world's languages. Pereltzvaig explains how specific language families are components of

larger and more extensive families and can be traced back to ancestral or proto-languages. The author details numerous similarities and differences among languages and illuminates how the study of human language is increasingly enhanced by evidence from other disciplines such as anthropology, archeology, history, and genetics.

Pereltsvaig finds Ferdinand de Saussure's 1916 definition of language as "a product of the collective mind of linguistic groups" to be insufficient in clarifying the borders of languages since it does not definitively determine the membership of any linguistic group. As a result, she devotes most of chapter 1, "Introduction", to the presentation of an appropriate definition of language. A general geopolitical definition is adopted to refer to the languages spoken in different countries, for example, Serbo-Croatian's division into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin. However, due to the discrepancies that are found between linguistic and geopolitical divisions, the criterion of "mutual intelligibility" is taken as the yardstick against which different languages are definitively judged: "if two linguistic varieties are mutually intelligible, they are considered dialects of the same language, and if they are not, they constitute distinct languages" (p. 4). The taxonomy of languages is discussed from the level of dialects to the level of language families.

Chapter 2, "Indo-European languages", examines the languages of Eurasia and demonstrates how the historical studies of many linguists have led to the conclusion that these languages descended from a common ancestral language; Proto-Indo-European. The chapter discusses various theories about the origin of the Indo-European languages and the reasons behind their expansion and diversification.

Chapter 3, "Non-Indo-European languages of Europe and India", examines the languages spoken in Europe and India that are not of Indo-European descent. Pereltsvaig discusses how the grammatical, morphological, and phonological patterns of non-Indo-European languages led to the identification of the Finno-Ugric and Dravidian language families, and of the Basque language. The author demonstrates that, despite their differences, the languages within these families share certain grammatical characteristics.

Chapter 4, "Languages of the Caucasus", analyzes the more than 100 languages spoken between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Three language families are discussed as particular to this region: Northwest, Northeast, and South Caucasian (or Kartvelian). In this chapter Pereltsvaig notes the significance of field linguistics in documenting endangered and little-known languages such as those of the Caucasus region.

Chapter 5, "Languages of Northern Africa, Middle East, and Central Asia", and chapter 6, "Languages of sub-Saharan Africa", discuss characteristics common to the languages of these regions such as the use of tone and pitch to indicate lexical or grammatical meaning. The author also points to the importance of this region as the origin of the emergence of human language, and notes that the linguistic diversity of the area makes it particularly worthy of close study.

Chapter 7, "Languages of eastern Asia", challenges the historically held belief that all of the region's languages descended from Classical Chinese. The various Asian languages are demonstrated to belong to three separate families: Sino-Tibetan,

Austro-Asiatic, and Tai-Kadai. The author argues that contact among these languages had caused grammatical similarities that had led to the conclusion that they originated from the same ancestral language. In this chapter Pereltsvaig also discusses three eastern Asian languages; Japanese, Korean, and Ainu, whose genetic relation to any determined language family has not been conclusively demonstrated.

Chapter 8, "Languages of the South Sea islands", discusses some 1250 different languages spoken in southeast Asia and Oceania. In spite of the Austronesian languages being spoken over a wide geographical area, including numerous islands and island archipelagos, it is easy to find various common grammatical and morphological features; a common core of features that is known as "the Austronesian prototype". Regardless of this close relation between the Austronesian languages, there are differences that obscure the place of origin of proto-Austronesian. This chapter discusses possibilities for resolving this puzzle, and then ends by examining Malagasy, spoken in Madagascar.

Chapter 9, "Aboriginal languages of Australia and Papua New Guinea", explores the less well-studied languages of these regions. The reason behind the less exact classification of languages in this area and a lack of adequate knowledge about their relationships, according to Pereltsvaig, is the diversity and density of the languages in Australia and Papua New Guinea. The majority of these languages are endangered or will be in the near future. In addition, the high amount of borrowing among the languages makes it a complicated task to identify a common ancestral language (Floreay 1988). Pereltsvaig, however, offers a detailed look at the similarities and differences of these languages and reviews the work done to determine their language families.

Chapter 10, "Native languages of the Americas", examines the languages spoken in North America, Meso-America, and South America, each of which is distinguished by its own unique and complicated linguistic patterns. Pereltsvaig discusses how speakers of these languages had little contact with speakers of other languages even in geographically close neighbouring areas. This is evident as even the languages of the geographically and culturally closest regions show great variation. The diversity of the languages in the Americas has led to difficulty classifying these languages into families. This chapter also discusses the Piraha language, which has been claimed to be unique in its grammatical and cultural peculiarities (Everett 1986).

The topic of Chapter 11, "Macro families", is the examination of whether establishing even larger groupings of the language families examined in chapters 2 to 10 is possible. This chapter considers both well-established proposals for macro language families and other more controversial models. For example, the widely confirmed Afroasiatic macro language family, the more controversial Uralic and Altaic families, and the debatable Nostratic and Eurasiatic hypotheses are discussed. The Nostratic and Eurasiatic hypotheses are controversial since they are "the reconstruction of a proto-language based on a reconstruction rather than on actual descendent languages" (p. 218).

Finally, chapter 12, "Pidgins, Creoles and other mixed languages", discusses languages that develop from contact situations. The author elaborates on how contact among languages can lead to borrowing, which in turn can cause a language to become different from its genetic relatives. The major point in this chapter is that

neither pidgins, creoles, nor mixed languages are “chaotic mixtures”; they follow systematic rules (p. 231).

This book, on the whole, establishes a welcome addition to the growing studies on the languages of the world (e.g., Nettle and Romaine 2002, Fullana 2008, van der Hulst, Goedemans, and van Zanten 2010). There are certain elements of the book that we find to be particularly appealing. The discussion of linguistic issues and controversies makes use of numerous helpful examples. The eighteen language maps and several language family charts in the text help the reader to better locate the languages geographically and typologically. The book’s website is a very valuable resource which presents additional maps as well as sound properties of some of the languages in the book. Moreover, the “test yourself” questions, which are asked throughout the book, enable the readers to process information from various languages. One criticism we have is that, even though this book claims to target an audience unfamiliar with linguistics, some undergraduates might struggle with specific syntactic topics such as “location and direction case markers” or “active systems”, which are not, in our opinion, transparently defined. Overall, this book is a helpful and detailed resource for those venturing into the study of the world’s languages.

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