Book review

Bell, Nancy (ed.). (2017). *Multiple Perspectives on Language Play*. **Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 406 pp.**

Multiple Perspectives on Language Play, edited by Nancy Bell and published by De Gruyter Mouton, is a collection of fourteen insightful papers focusing on linguistic creativity, humour, and jocular language. The twofold aim of the volume is i) to offer a multi- and interdisciplinary approach to playful language, and ii) to prompt researchers to adopt a cross-disciplinary perspective in the study of linguistic creativity.

In the introductory chapter, Nancy Bell provides a brief overview of research in jocular language, presents the general targets of the volume and discusses her conceptualization of the terms *creativity*, *language play*, and *humour*.

The first paper of the volume "Language play in conversation", written by Neal R. Norrick, places emphasis on two aspects of playful language in daily interaction: language games with language as their *object* and language games with language as their *medium*. In particular, he examines how language structures, formulaic speech, overstatements, terms of direct address, puns, and question and answer sequences may be related to both categories of language games. He concludes that formulaic play in conversational contexts may encourage interlocutors to engage in extended practices of language creativity.

Thorsten Huth's paper "Playing with turns, playing with action? A social-interactionist perspective" explores how second language learners play with the orderliness of turn taking, i.e. with turns, paired action, and preference organisation. Relying on a social-interactionist and conversation-analytic framework, he investigates compliment sequences in dyadic telephone interactions between American learners of German. He demonstrates that L2 learners exhibit their metapragmatic awareness of such interactional mechanisms in a joint, conscious, and systematic way.

Tony Veale, in his study "The shape to tweets to come: Automating language play in social networks", combines cognitive and computational linguistics to display how humans assess metaphorical tweets generated by two computational systems, that is, *@Metaphor Minute*, which does not consider semantics, and *@Metaphor Magnet*, which considers pragmatics. He shows that our knowledge of playful formulaic phrases enhances our comprehension of intense linguistic innovation.

Elizabeth Holt's paper "'This system's so slow': Negotiating sequences of laughter and laughables in call-centre interaction" focuses on the boundaries between serious and non-serious talk in sequences with ambivalent status. Based on conversation analytic methods, she examines turn-taking after long silences in calls to a gas-supply company, and particularly: i) turns in which employees comment on the slowliness of the system; ii) the customer's laugh response; and iii) turns with further laughables by employees. She illustrates that although fuzzy turns can be responded with laughter, and thus create a less formal key, they perform serious tasks.

In their paper "Laughter as a 'serious business': Clients' laughter in prenatal screening for Down's syndrome", Olga Zayts & Stephanie Schnurr delve into the use of laughter in

asymmetric environments. Drawing on data from consultation interactions between nurses and pregnant women during prenatal screening for Down's syndrome, they concentrate on the reciprocation of the nurses' laughter by the clients. Through the lens of conversation analysis and ethnography, they uncover three basic functions of shared laughter: i) the management of risk talk, ii) the negotiation of participants' epistemic statuses and stances, and iii) the negotiation of deontic authority. In the first case, (non-)reciprocated laughter appears to exhibit affiliation, since clients align with nurses' attempt to soothe the pregnant women. In the other two cases, it may express disaffiliation given that it is used as a topic terminator, as a means to establish epistemic and deontic authority and as a mitigator to dispreferred actions.

Michael Haugh's paper "Jocular language play, social action and (dis)affiliation in conversational interaction" explores jocular mockery in everyday encounters between Australian and American speakers of English. By adopting an interactional pragmatics framework, he examines sequences in which speakers playfully make, and negotiate, a diminishing comment about oneself, another speaker or an absent third party. In particular, he places his emphasis on two analytical axes: jocular play *with* language, such as wordplay, and jocular play *in* language, such as the co-construction of humorous fantasy scenarios. He shows that speakers employ jocular play to affiliate with the affective/moral stances which are circulated during talk in interaction or to mask disaffiliative stances in delicate social actions such as complaints, criticisms, and disagreements.

In her paper "'Everything he says to me it's like he stabs me in the face': Frontstage and backstage reactions to teasing", Valeria Sinkeviciute reports on the ways participants in the Australian and the British reality show "Big Brother" respond to teasing. More specifically, she examines teasing episodes in frontstage (public) and backstage (personal) interactional settings. She illustrates that, while at the frontstage teasing may be treated as non-serious by the target, at the backstage it may be marked as impolite by the target and/or a third party via metalanguage. With regard to cultural differences, she observes that British participants tend to initiate meta-talk with the target while their Australian counterparts both express their support for the target and inform the teaser about his/her impolite behaviour. Furthermore, in the UK version the target may discuss the teasing incident with the teaser.

The next paper "Cities, conviviality and double-edged language play" written by Emi Otsuji & Alastair Pennycook, evolves around language play in metrolingual urban spaces, where people from diverse environments interact and (re)shape their linguistic landscapes in creative ways. By analysing workplace encounters in Sydney, they argue that metrolingual conviviality has a double-edged character as it can sway between inclusiveness and exclusiveness. In the first case, language play may celebrate diversity and confirm bonds of intimacy and solidarity via fluidity, while in the latter, it can be used to impose cultural, gendered, and racial conformity via fixity.

David Hann's paper "Building rapport and a sense of communal identity through play in a second language classroom" investigates how language playfulness can be a useful tool among second language speakers with respect to the construction of in-group cultural identities. Relying on the concepts of *frame* (Goffman 1974), *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin [1935] 1981), and *recontextualisation* (Bauman & Briggs 1990), he focuses on jocular conversational episodes between an instructor and two low proficiency adult learners in an English-for-Business course. He reveals that language play may function as an effective vehicle through which errors in L2 are transformed into acts of affiliation, and thus contribute to the shape of collective identities.

The next contribution entitled "The first English (EFL) lesson: Initial settings or the emergence of a playful classroom culture" and written by Jet Van Dam & Anne Bannink sheds light on the different nuances of language play in first English lesson of a Dutch secondary school. Through a combination of educational ethnography, sociocultural approaches, and the

Dynamic Discourse Model (Polanyi & Scha 1983; Polanyi 1988), they evince that the multiple forms of classroom playfulness such as all-class chorusing, chants, role-playing games, and dramatisation discursively build a culture of play.

In the chapter "The emergence of creativity in L2 English: A usage-based case-study", Søren W. Eskildsen deals with the role of creative language in second language acquisition. From the standpoint of usage-based linguistics (Cadierno & Eskildsen 2015), trace-back methodology (Lieven et al. 2009; Vogt & Lieven 2010), and conversation analysis, he investigates the linguistic repertoire of an adult L2 learner as a beginner and as an advanced student, namely from a longitudinal perspective. He argues that routines play a significant role in L2 learning and that creativity lies in the deconstruction of fixities.

Jiyun Kim, in her paper "Teaching language learners how to understand sarcasm in L2 English", shows how L2 learners can benefit from an innovative pedagogical intervention, based on Systemic-Theoretical Instruction and on the notion of Schema for the Orienting Basis of Action (Gal'perin 1989, 1992), in order to understand sarcasm. Through the analysis of pre- and post-instruction focus-group discussions with Korean advanced level university learners of L2 English, it becomes evident that participants both expand the notion of sarcasm and enhance their ability to detect and comprehend sarcasm.

The next article entitled "Anti-language: Linguistic innovation, identity construction, and group affiliation among emerging speech communities" and co-authored by Natalie Lefkowitz & John S. Hedgcock explores creativity in anti-language use. In particular, the authors examine the linguistic features and the sociolinguistic functions of four anti-language practices: i) Verlan, ii) novel francophone usage in social media, iii) deliberate underperfomance in the FL language, and iv) speaking Spanish as a heritage language. As they demonstrate, anti-language is characterised by fluidity and comprises a continuum of features.

The last essay of the book, entitled "Celebrations of a satirical song: Ideologies of anti-racism in the media" and written by Julia McKinney & Elaine W. Chun shows how a satirical anti-racist video which humorously rebuts stereotypes against the Asian culture was received and commented on by mainstream media. The authors argue that, although media discourses adopt an explicit anti-racist perspective, they end up reproducing racist values and beliefs.

The volume *Multiple Perspectives on Language Play* is an invaluable asset for researchers and students who are interested in linguistic playfulness, humour, and creativity. All fourteen contributions successfully manage to provide the reader with a multi- and interdisciplinary scope on the phenomena examined, thus confirming that "layering" (King & Mackey 2016), i.e. the pursuit of research problems via a range of epistemological lenses, offers a versatile and thorough account of language phenomena. Conversation analysis, second language acquisition, educational ethnography, cognitive linguistics, computational linguistics, usage-based linguistics, psychology, to name few of the approaches employed by the contributors, compose an appealing mosaic of different perspectives which enrich our understanding of language play. In addition, the exploration of language play in multiple interactional contexts constitutes an important merit of the volume: friendly conversations, TV shows, media, institutional talk, such as workplace, medical encounters, and classroom interaction. Since four articles focus on second language acquisition, the volume would also be a major appeal to those interested in L2 issues. Since the majority of the papers put emphasis on English language, it would be interesting to explore linguistic practices of playfulness in other languages in the future. Overall, this edited volume is a significant contribution to the relevant literature and highly recommended.

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