

Reviews

Larissa Aronin. *An Advanced Guide to Multilingualism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. 256 p. ISBN: Paperback: 9780748635641. Hardback: 9780748635634. Ebook (ePub): 9781399501149. Ebook (PDF): 9780748635658.

With this textbook by Larissa Aronin, those who prepare a course on multilingualism do not need to search for other sources, because it is comprehensive, concise, and up to date. In the modern world, full of minorities, refugees and migrants, it should be a must-read for every schoolteacher and student. Being an overview of the latest fundamental issues in the field, the book contains multidisciplinary and hands-on resources. Yet, it is not only about multilingual people and their groups, but also about spaces and objects used by linguistically diverse communities. Everyone needs to be aware of challenges posed by multilinguals in education, translation as well as societal and family language policy. Indeed, the multiple languages and identities of children and old people, those in care and under investigation and trial reveal problematic attitudes. It can be easily used as a course book during a twelve-week semester.

The first part is titled “The field of multilingualism” and provides a general overview of the subject, a discussion of the subject’s breadth as a body of knowledge, and a glossary of terms and concepts. The three chapters inside of it, “What is multilingualism?”, “Multilingualism as an exceptional resource,” and “Multilingualism as Modern Reality and Field of Knowledge,” serve as general introduction and focus on most frequent terms, underlining that every case is unique, but the phenomenon is very common. The idea of the New Linguistic Dispensation “transparently captures the essence of linguistic arrangement in society. It refers, firstly, to allocation, supply, allotment and distribution of languages across the world and in very local niches. It also denotes, secondly, management, administration and regulation of linguistic riches, as well as, thirdly, permission, indulgence and privilege to use them in certain communities” (p. 49).

The second part is dedicated to “Languages,” its chapters are entitled “Languages of the world” (here, the continuums of varieties are important, e.g., dialects, standardized, codified, pluricentric languages, pidgins and creoles) and “Classifications of languages” (including the notions of lingua franca and artificial languages). Everyone interested in typology, similarities and differences of linguistic structures, and varieties of anthropological characteristics of languages is welcome to read these chapters.

The topic of Part III is “Multilingualism in society” with its chapters “Multilingualism at the societal level: basic concepts” and “Societal multilingualism: multilingual countries and regions” that discuss how linguistic, geographical, and social processes are intertwined in social settings that accommodate and adapt to language speakers with their languages and cultures resulting in different language arrangements.

Part IV’s “Individual Multilingualism” sections focuses on how a multilingual person uses languages in a variety of contexts, ages, and affordances. Language contact with ideas of borrowing, Sprachbund, and diglossia, helping to define domains of language behavior are introduced in Chapter 6 “Multilingualism at the societal level: basic concepts”. Chapter 7 “Societal multilingualism: multilingual countries and regions” provides an overview of multilingual nations and linguistic communities. Aronin explains how become countries multilingual, what are the roles and statuses of languages in multilingual regions and organizations and puts forward measures of linguistic diversity underlining the spectrum of solutions to the problems in different countries.

Part V “Individual multilingualism”, first in the Chapter 8 that reviews psycholinguistic and cognitive dimensions, examines the personal level of language encounters trying to find out what is recurrent, easy, or complex in such constellations. The author touches upon multilingual brains, cognitive aspects, health problems, and age markers. Chapter 9 “Individual multilingualism: social dimensions” raises the questions of identity, multilinguality, trajectories of becoming multilingual, and various categories of multilinguals, which always finds a great appreciation of the auditorium.

The book would be incomplete if the author had not demonstrated “How we experience and study multilingualism” in Part V. Chapter 10 “The ways we experience, treat and use languages” covers the social aspects that affect a multilingual’s life. The favorite research areas of Larissa Aronin are “Dominant language constellations” and “Material culture of multilingualism”, and she aptly introduces them here along with the concepts of translanguaging, code-switching, intercomprehension, and receptive multilingualism. The hot topic of “Methods of studying multilingualism” is explained in the Chapter 11 where Aronin shows quantitative and qualitative methodologies and different approaches in accordance with the current theories. The last Chapter 12 “Models of multilingualism” seems to be very unusual. It displays a plentitude of thought-provoking materials for those who prefer to operate with integrated units in order to answer why and how is multilingualism qualitatively different from bilingualism, is there one big lexicon or different lexicons for different languages, how and why do different languages interact with each other at an individual level, what are the additional factors that come into play when a third or subsequent language is being acquired (p.191).

Every chapter provides a summary of ideas, suggestions for further reading, a chapter’s review

in form of a table, some provocative subjects for discussion (called reflective questions) and exercises. These assignments seem to be suitable for any student group. The books end with a bibliography, a language and a subject indexes, and a glossary. It will be a pleasure to work with such an instrument.

Reviewed by **Ekaterina Protassova**, University of Helsinki, Finland