

Book review

Annus, Irén (ed.): European encounters: Language, culture and identity. (2015). Szeged: JATE Press.

Erzsébet Balogh

University of Szeged, Hungary

The book is a collection of eight multidisciplinary papers whose authors work in different academic fields at the Faculty of Arts, University of Szeged, Hungary. Many of the underlying investigations as well as the editorial work were supported by the LINEE (Languages in a Network of European Excellence) project.

The volume introduces the reader to various encounters that emerge, as a result of a cultural flow of people and ideas, in language use, cultural production and identity constructions. These three areas are the guidelines around which the articles of the volume are organized. The book starts with a general introduction by the editor which is followed by three studies in the chapter *Language*, three studies in the chapter *Culture*, and two in the last chapter *Identity*. The introductory chapter provides an outline of the book by describing the main aim of the further works and by connecting them to the overarching theme of the volume.

In the first chapter (*Language*), the first two articles investigate issues concerning the English language learning experiences and English language usage of Hungarian students majoring in English or American Studies at the University of Szeged. The first of these two papers investigates the identity and community constructions of the Hungarian students while using and communicating in English as a foreign language with the help of written and interview data (Peckham). The findings of the study show that some students still consider native-speaker English as a norm for communication; however, students with some outside-of-school experiences realize the changing role of English in Europe and regard the lingua franca variety of English as acceptable for communication as any native variety. The main aim of the second article is to examine student reflections on task-based language teaching (TBLT) and learning (Williams). The author presents the existing foreign language learning culture in Hungary as a traditionally classical humanist one that can be characterized by focusing more on grammatical forms than on communication and by teaching in a rather teacher-fronted style as opposed to TBLT that encourages students to explore, to solve problems and to make decisions. The results show that when students participate in a TBLT class, despite their classical humanist educational background they have favorable responses to this way of teaching and learning. However, the author believes that TBLT is unlikely to be introduced in language learning in Hungary. The third paper of this

chapter examines the linguistic landscape of Szeged, Hungary (Annus). The researcher collects evidence of different languages existing on public and commercial signs in the city, and then she categorizes them along different criteria, i.e. whether they are official or non-official signs, whether they are monolingual or multilingual signs, and to which four areas in relation to speech acts they can be connected. The investigation shows that Szeged is still a monolingual community despite the presence of tourists and students from foreign countries. However, the dominance of English over other foreign languages can also be observed in the city, showing that the local community values this language culturally and economically.

Traveling and tourism are the main themes of the three papers in the second chapter of the book (*Culture*). First, Edith Wharton's travelogues are analyzed in which Wharton compares and contrasts the cultural practices of France and the US whereby she sets French cultural practices as an example for the US to follow (Kovács). However, her writings during the First World War show that her view of the inferiority of US culture changes when she realizes that the US could be a cultural and political ally to France against Germany. The second article discusses Hungarian hip-hop lyrics of three bands, i.e. Sub Bass Monster, Punnany Massif, and Ludditák (Szabó-Gilinger). The texts are analyzed and compared on the notion of the different meanings of hip-hop in the Hungarian context. One of the main themes this study aims to investigate is initiation, that is, education of hip-hop culture, understanding of basic values and learning the proper vocabulary. The other theme covers the inclusion and the exclusion dimensions that cannot be separated from each other since inclusion characterizes those rappers who have mastered certain aspects of hip-hop culture, while exclusion those who have not acquired such knowledge yet. Finally, the third article of the chapter deals with the relationship between cultural heritage and wine-tourism in Hungary (Mód). The author provides a detailed description of wine-tourism, and he also highlights the importance of vineyard landscapes and cultural heritage in this context. Vineyard landscapes with their diverse cultural traditions and wine-making processes as well as rituals and customs (cultural heritage elements) are all crucial factors in shaping today's wine-tourism practices.

The third chapter (*Identity*) consists of two articles that investigate migrants' identity constructions in Hungary, with the help of interviewing Poles and Croats living in Szeged. The first study examines how Polish migrants living in Hungary for about 30 years define their identity (Suszczyńska). The results indicate that almost all interviewees define their identities primarily on the national level. However, some spatial metaphors participants use, for example, the journey or home metaphors, and the emerging face sensitivity in connection with their initial language difficulties and unrecognized professional status during the interviews also show that their identity can be described as an ongoing process that participants constantly (re)do. The second paper focuses on migrants' identity formation from a gender perspective (Barát). In particular, the author examines the differences and similarities between Polish migrants settling in Szeged in

the 1970s and 1980s and Croatian migrants settling in Szeged in the 1990s focusing on their identity formation through the negotiation of the meaning of the concept 'home'. The narratives the participants provide reveal that women are more flexible in their interpretation of the notion of citizenship, while the dominant notion in males' interpretation of 'homeland' is rather nationalistic. Also, the author draws attention to the fact that exclusion is or might be a common phenomenon within the European Union due to emerging and existing ideological internal borders.

To sum up, the volume offers what it promises, i.e. a collection of multidisciplinary studies that focus on the processes and workings of encounters emerging through the usage of language (signs), through travel of people and ideas in various forms across/within nations, and through migrants' identity formation processes abroad. First of all, I recommend the book for people living and working in Szeged as, beyond their own experiences of the city and its life, they can have a further insight into the exciting relationship between Szeged and the various linguistic and cultural scenes that exist here. Furthermore, I also recommend the papers for everybody who wants to form an overall picture of this Hungarian region since the book presents various aspects of Szeged through different points of view – linguistic, cultural and in terms of identity construction.