



Iveson, Mandie. *Language Attitudes, National Identity and Migration in Catalonia: 'What the Women Have to Say'* (Sussex Academic Press, 2019), 244 pp. ISBN: 24681097531

The aim of this volume might seem straightforward: to gain an understanding of women's attitudes towards the Catalan language and how they use it in their everyday social practices to construct gendered and national identities. Indeed, traditional, top-down analyses of the role that Catalan has played in the grand

narratives of nation building and the attitudes that surround this role are salient and have been quantified extensively. However, Mandie Iveson's *Language Attitudes, National Identity and Migration in Catalonia* adopts a different, bottom-up approach seeking to demonstrate how such attitudes are far from simple and, in fact, attest high levels of complexity, are multifaceted in nature and *messy*. By seeking to address the shortcomings of traditional sociolinguistic research, Iveson focuses unashamedly on 'what the women have to say' and by focusing on the community of El Masnou, challenges the grand narratives of the Catalan establishment or, more aptly named by Elena Moya in her preface to the book as, 'the old-boys-club' (x).

Iveson's self-defined 'history from below' (2), brings together the voices of three generations of women from this community, all of whom have a unique story to tell, which is shaped by either their Catalan ancestry, their experiences under Franco, being brought up in post-dictatorship Catalonia, or being an internal (i.e. Spanish) or external (international) migrant from different social classes. Iveson's transcriptions of these interviews form the basis of the data that is interrogated throughout. Whilst the inclusion of such a vast array of voices imbues this research with unique sociolinguistic and sociocultural value, one of the greatest, overarching strengths of

the book is that the human essence of these voices has not been lost entirely in its translation to the written work or through the use of selective quotations. Iveson's careful, thoughtful transcriptions and closely aligned English translations are presented, in the majority of cases, as longer extracts (both in Spanish and Catalan) and retain the wondrous ungrammaticality, disjointedness and translingual spontaneity of oral production, all of which, in the absence of being present at the interviews, give you a real sense of who these women are and why they hold such attitudes. The only criticism to be made of the translations is that many of these features are lost when rendered into English; in particular, the instances of code-switching between Catalan and Castilian discourse in some of older respondents. Whilst this may not be of prime importance to the work, such differences reveal a significant sociolinguistic difference that exists in the discourses of pre- and post dictatorship Catalans and are a telling reminder of the impact of linguistic restriction in public domains. Perhaps even some discussion dedicated to the issue in Chapter 4 might have helped to bring this feature to the fore for non-Catalan or non-Castilian speakers. Furthermore, in light of the move towards more open data, providing access albeit restricted to some of the transcripts or social media data could be of benefit to other researchers working in the field.

Nonetheless, to bring sense to this inherent *messiness* in the first three chapters of the book Iveson sets out the approaches, interpretive instruments and theoretical frameworks that underpin her analysis with great clarity. Furthermore, she often astutely justifies her choice of approach by citing key data from her corpus to demonstrate the usefulness and appropriateness of such approaches and frameworks. Her opening chapter presents the case for using an oral history approach to examine the discourse of women's lived experiences and relationships between their personal experiences and the wider, historical and contemporary contexts (2–3). Here, she also justifies her use of a constructivist interpretation of physical, temporal and ideological spaces to demonstrate how these inform and shape the women's attitudes towards language, identity and migration from the perspective of what is valid and what is illegitimate. Furthermore, by exploring such spaces through the lenses of stance, indexicality and discourse analysis, she describes how their intersectional and

heterogeneous nature become increasingly apparent. Furthermore, considering these issues at the local level helps to ‘reveal different perspectives from those [...] at a wider or regional level’ (4). We also learn later that her choice to focus her study on El Masnou was influenced by other strategic motivations including the existing spatial divisions that exist between the new and old town corresponding to the physical divisions between Catalans and migrants (non-Catalans). Other personal motivations also include the fact that she was a resident of El Masnou and married to a Catalan. Whilst she raises the issue that as a feminist researcher her position as an ‘insider’ might skew the interview outcomes and constitute an imbalance of power, she indicates that because she is neither Catalan nor Spanish, she was a more neutral ‘outsider’ (39).

Iveson’s analysis stretches across the next four chapters allowing the reader to become more acquainted with the women informants and their views. Whilst it is impossible to really do justice to the complexity of the data in this review, it is possible to consider some of the overarching conclusions that illustrate the interconnectedness of the themes of the research. One of the most prominent themes is that of linguistic authenticity, which continues to be linked to the historic repression of Catalans, whether this is in the guise of Franco or today’s state government. In the same vein, the voice of women in Catalonia is equally repressed, as it was and continues to be invisibilised by traditional, gendered national narratives. Simultaneously, despite their collective invisibility, the issue of the women’s imagined levels of Catalanness, a perception underpinned by the notion of ancestry, bolsters a sense of othering informed by an ‘essentialist understanding of language as an identity marker’ (202), which places non-Catalans, and, in particular, external migrant women, in a position of diminished power. In fact, Iveson highlights how women perceive migrants to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’ (203), particularly when considered from the perspective of their attitude to learning and speaking Catalan. Whilst Catalonia has long been perceived as a *pais d’acollida* with public integration policies supporting such a view, Iveson demonstrates that this is not necessarily a view shared by all. Moreover, when the women do speak positively of integration from the Catalan perspective, the space of

*El Masnou*, divided between its old town and newer *els Blocs* urbanisation, demonstrates that true integration exists in name only. This lack of true integration is further compounded by the continued importance of ethnolinguistic identity as opposed to the more civic approach purported by policy. For some of these women, Catalanness is still contingent on their views of linguistic competence, cultural affinity or political ideology in equal and differing measures at one time or another. Nonetheless, such a fixed notion of Catalaness is challenged by migrant women who present diverse, transnational and hybrid identities, interestingly exemplified by Iveson through her brief exploration of food in Chapter 6. However, whilst the policy of integration rather than mutual cooperation and understanding is the official line, migrant women remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Although not strictly following any particular chronology, Iveson's analysis and clear chapter plenaries guide the reader through the women's narratives, chronicling a history of modern Catalonia from this unique viewpoint. Chapter 7, which still draws on the oral histories but triangulates this with social media data, might appear anomalous at first sight given the approach that Iveson has adopted hitherto. However, from a methodological perspective, this chapter is perhaps the most innovative adopting as its focus the 'Catalan public consultation: November 2014' (164). Iveson adopts tools more widely associated with corpus linguistics (for example, *Antconc*) to interrogate the social media data and opts for search functions such as word lists, concordances and N-grams. Unfortunately, Iveson only reveals that these search functions provided a guide for the next stage of the analysis (170) and does not provide any detail about the type of data retrieved and how it informed her decision making process. It is important that methodologies are clear in this respect when using such innovative approaches so that peers can learn from their application. Nonetheless, Iveson's innovation is not thwarted by her interesting application of Michael Bamberg and Alexandra Georgakopoulou's small stories framework (2008) as a way of challenging grand narratives of identity so that they can be approached in a more bottom-up way. By adopting this approach, Iveson shows, for example, the apparent importance of using images of children in the social media surrounding the

campaign to reinforce the idea of future nation building: such an imagined role that is not dissimilar to that of Francoist ideology. Perhaps the most poignant part of this chapter, strategically chosen to bring the analysis to a close, is the scrutiny afforded to the video campaign *Votaré per tu* and the social media commentaries that accompanied it. The absence of women in the campaign is echoed in the comments of Iveson's informants, which highlight not just the invisibilisation of women but also underpinning the fact that masculinised nationalism has become so banal it has almost become naturalised placing the 'burden of representation' at the door of women (200). It is also here that Iveson employs Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak's discourse historical approach or DHA to analyse at 'micro, macro and intertextual levels' the discursive construction of national identity (38). However, the links that Iveson makes between her description of the approaches she adopts and their application later in the book (and in particular in Chapter 7) could be made more explicit.

It is clear that Iveson's succinct conclusions in Chapter 8 not only draw together the different themes emerging from the data but also demonstrate how issues connected to language attitudes, national identity and migration in Catalonia are interconnected. Simultaneously, Iveson also illustrates how new approaches within disciplines can help researchers to deconstruct our own research grand narratives. Although short, the exemplification of how social media data, when used ethically, demonstrates the value it can afford research seeking to understand the 'bigger picture' through smaller, localised narratives. For policy makers, Iveson's final words constitute a call to arms to the Catalan government to adopt a greater awareness of such issues at a local level to uncover the instances of exclusion in Catalan society because, failing to do so, will mean that 'language, gender or migrant integration policies will not serve best the people they are intended for nor the Catalan community as a whole' (205).

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