

Uju Anya (2017). *Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning. Speaking Blackness in Brazil*, Routledge, 254 pages, ISBN 978-1-1389-2778-0 and 978-1-3156-8228-0

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Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning. Speaking Blackness in Brazil is the first volume of Routledge Advances in Second Language Studies serie, edited by John Hellermann and Søren Wind Eskildsen. The author, Uju Anya, looks at language to shed light on multiple identities arrangements changes while learning another language. Second language learning interfaces with the positioning of multiples identities in a new context. The multiple identities in question are related to an intersectional approach, articulating social class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. All these dimensions are taken into account, even if a focus is done on blackness as an entry point. The respective American and Brazilian contexts are presented to understand what may be at stake when navigating from one social space to the other.

From the very beginning of the book, Uju Anya presents herself as a critical language researcher, who “promotes[s] antiracist and feminist sociopolitical agenda”. Three main goals are underlined for *Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning*, which are related to a twofold agenda: language learning research, and sociopolitical commitment. She stands her rejection of descriptive neutrality against a strong attention paid to methodological rigor. Thus, she reminds her positioning at key moments in the book, and detailed methodological concerns are presented. Regarding the conceptual framework, she notably presents languaging and translanguaging. The book is not about blackness in Brazil (even if it is informative about it too), but about African American blackness arrangements while studying Portuguese in Brazil.

The analysis is undertaken through four case studies. Four multilingual Africal American aged 19-22 (three female, one male), who already took intensive language course (they reached or exceed the B level), participate to a university Portuguese language study abroad program in Brasil (Salvador de Bahia). They stay overall six months; the first three months are dedicated to the program. The language course itself lead to five hours a day during ten weeks.

The data and information collection occurred before, during, and after the program. Indeed, pre-study interviews and post-study reflexion were collected from participants. During the stay, Uju Anya, as observer and program companion, was able to assist almost all the classes of the program (except one, for which the access was not granted by the teacher) and workshops (music, dance, capoeira). The material reports this intensive field, as it includes video recorded interactions, interviews, students' journals and writings, and fieldnotes. Excerpts are inserted throughout the analysis of the book; when the language collection was Portuguese, a side-by-side translation in English is systematically offered. The analysis is conducted using thematic, descriptive and critical discourse analysis. Among the eight chapters, four are dedicated to the four cases (one by participant). While they end on a shared final section “Identity, investments and outcomes”, which is closely related to the core objectives of the research project, the majority of these chapters are dedicated to each single multiple identities negotiation and construction.

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The focus is on personal transformation experienced by participants, i.e. how they develop a “new consciousness of how to do and how to be black in this new context” while they “learn to live and speak Portuguese through living and speaking their multiple identities” (p. 3). Uju Anya’s objective is first to show how learning new language goes hand in hand with a renewed definition of identities and positioning in sociopolitical spaces. Second, from the point of view of language learning, she aims for underlying the role of the investment in communities (here the classroom, the host family, and outside places) as a key variable regarding a successful learning. Third, she contributes to the understanding of underrepresentation of African American in language learning programs, and what can be achieved (and thus is missed) during such programs.

The conclusions are particularly rich from this perspective. Indeed, the research underlines the enhancement features of participation to such a program, which invalidate the generalization and the deficit theory, and the related renunciations to a solution. Beyond the language learning objective, the overall process is related to empower multiple identities positioning, which enrich the navigation in social spaces. The specificity of confronting American and Brazilian sociopolitical context while learning Portuguese is that notably blackness belonging is defined in different ways: while the “one drop rule” prevails in the US, in Brazil it does not hold. Incidentally, while two of the participants choose to keep a black identity regarding race / skin colour in Brazil, the other two participants choose intermediary skin colour terms (*moreno*, *pardo*).¹

Also, with this book Uju Anya also supports a multilingual approach versus a monolingual approach regarding the requirements of language learning program in order to leave room for the students who are less comfortable to deal with all the implicated dimensions (own identities and positioning) while learning a new language. She also underlines that leaving out or unsaying identity issues highlight them through their absence.

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Overall, I found the volume interesting and it fostered my curiosity to learn more about these issues. Notably, I wonder how it works, for example, for Brazilian students studying English in the United States. Even, I wonder how it works whatever the intersectional combination when navigating from one language to another. Indeed, beyond the opportunity inequalities (which cannot be denied), this book reminds me to the “travel broadens the mind” saying, which could be also reformulated in “travel renegotiates the mind”. Regarding other features of *Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning. Speaking Blackness in Brazil*, I found it also relevant for various audiences. For example, its clarity makes it appropriate to be used as teaching material. I would underline the way the critical research is conducted and presented too. Finally, Uju Anya offered another way to look at language learning to shed light on sociopolitical issues.

¹ Let us notice that these terms are either considered as intermediary or as belonging to the black (*negro*) category. For the participants, it seems clear that they use *moreno* and *pardo* as intermediary terms.