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Issues in Applied Linguistics

Title
Addressing Heterogeneity: Language Use in Urban Environments

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/93x1w8g5

Journal
Issues in Applied Linguistics, 8(1)

ISSN
1050-4273

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Publication Date
1997-06-30

DOI
10.5070/L481005250

Peer reviewed

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Editorial

Addressing Heterogeneity: Language Use in Urban Environments

Languages, cultures, communities, and infinite ways of living meet in Los Angeles. Home to over 80 languages, this city of 3.5 million emanates its own unique brand of urban intensity. A strategically routed twenty-mile drive across the city can take one through the Armenian community in Glendale, past the Mexican-American community of East Los Angeles, and into downtown's Little Tokyo. Driving west from Downtown leads one through Koreatown, then on to the Russian Jewish Fairfax district, through Beverly Hills and the boutiques of Rodeo Drive, past the Persian stores in Westwood and finally, with luck, to a parking space near the UCLA campus. Though this imaginary drive suggests clear borders between these communities, every day members of different parts of LA interact and the communities themselves are heterogeneous. What maintains the intensity of the LA experience is not so much these communities' separate existence, but the interaction between and within them.

LA's unique intersection of cultures, languages, and multiple ethnic communities has provided a wealth of opportunities for the study of language use in context; and at UCLA, another intersection—that between the fields of Applied Linguistics, Anthropology, Education, and Sociology—makes its intellectual home in the Center for Language, Interaction, and Culture (CLIC). Much of the research being done by graduate students and faculty at the Center examines language use in Los Angeles communities, and given this interest, the organizers of the second UCLA Conference on Language, Interaction, and Culture chose to focus on heterogeneity in urban environments. This one-day conference provided a forum for discussing, across disciplines, work on diverse language communities, and two two-hour workshops which focused on videotaped interactions enabled presenters and audience alike to share their views and analytic techniques.

Three of the papers given at this conference make up this issue of *ial*, and taken together they crack the surface of Los Angeles to reveal the complex worlds of language and culture here. The article by Patricia Baquedano-López takes us inside a church in West Los Angeles where both Spanish language and English language religious education classes are held. Her analysis illuminates how Mexican American children construct their identities through the telling of the religious narrative of *Nuestra Señora de Guadelupe*. By weaving analysis of children's identity construction together with a discussion of the internal politics of the church, this article also reveals the tension between the use of Spanish and English and the associated teaching practices in this community.

Issues in Applied Linguistics
ISSN 1050-4273
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Vol. 8 No. 1, 1-2

The article by Andrew Roth and David Olsher also compares different language practices and their institutional genesis: They compare language use of an LA public affairs radio program with that of a nationally broadcast TV interview show and illustrate how the LA program's unique ideology is reflected in the way the interviewer uses different types of "what about" questions. In doing so, Roth and Olsher begin to reflect on one of the conversational mechanisms through which ideology is enacted.

In the last article, Adrienne Lo examines how even single words can evoke entire ideologies as she analyzes the use of Korean, Japanese, English, and African American English Vernacular as they co-occur in a single conversation. By delving into each participant's different interpretation of particular words and the cultural practices that surround them, Lo's article illuminates how two Asian American men draw upon their local knowledge of the LA Korean American community in constituting ethnic identities.

Adrienne Lo, in addition to presenting at the conference, had already been working as part of *ial*'s editorial team, and is co-editor of this special issue. This issue of *ial* also marks Betsy Rymes' seventh and last as an *ial* editor. Taking her place will be Tanya Stivers and Anna Guthrie, who have both already spent considerable time acclimating themselves to the *ial* office and scrutinizing the pile of incoming manuscripts. In addition, they have both helped to organize this year's CLIC conference, the proceedings of which will comprise the next issue of *ial*. Best of luck to them, and here's to the continued prosperity (and temerity) of the journal.

June 1997

Betsy Rymes
Adrienne Lo