BOOK REVIEW

Super- or Supra-diversity: A Review of Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton, and Spotti's (2016) *Language and Superdiversity*

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Language and Superdiversity is a valuable volume that brings together contributors working in the fields of sociolinguistics and ethnography. This volume is a collection of voices from scholars who are concerned about complexities and fluidities in a way that notions like multilingualism and multiculturalism fail to describe. Instead, the authors find that "superdiversity" as a cover term can be a more accurate descriptor. In the introduction, the authors adopt Steven Vertovec's (2007) definition of superdiversity as "a term intended to underline … a dynamic interplay of variables including country of origin, migration channel, legal status, migrants' human capital (particularly educational background), access to employment, locality and responses by local authorities, services provides and local residents" (p. 2). Superdiversity is a term that was born of two major events: the fluid spread of new technologies (such as internet, cell phones, etc.) and the flows of migration since the 1990s. Superdiversity looks into the fluid, fragmented, nuanced, and complex outcomes that these two events have created. It is noted that the term superdiversity does not stand alone in diversity studies; there have been other terms that serve the same or similar purposes such as "translocality", "liquid modernity", or "global complexity." However, the authors prefer to use superdiversity because, they claim, it covers an extended range of topics pertaining to diversity from more than one angle: linguistic, anthropologic, political, and economical. The term also highlights the "diversification of diversity."

Sketching the paradigm for superdiversity, Blommaert and Rampton help readers understand how superdiversity can challenge the traditional understanding of language, knowledge, and bilingualism. They argue that languages can no longer be seen as discrete or autonomous entities and that language is an "ideological artifact with very considerable power" (p. 25). Instead, they explicate that language, rather than a language or languages, is a group of linguistic features that get associated with social and cultural features in a communication moment. Superdiversity is then about these associations and clusters rather than about a named language. The authors are critical of notions such as "native speaker," "mother tongue," or "linguistic groups." They consider these notions as forces of ideology and binaries that have no place in superdiversity. Rampton continues to reject these binaries (majority/minority, migrant/host, etc.) on the grounds that these no longer work, and in order to dispose these binaries, we need to understand the social identification complexities.

Agreeing with Blommaert and Rampton, Jens Normann Jorgensen, Lian Malai Madsen, Martha Sif Karrebæk and Janus Spindler Møller, explain how superdiversity challenges the notion that language is a social or human phenomenon that can be separated into names such as Arabic,

English, French, etc. These authors argue that languages are "socio-cultural abstractions" in which level of feature is better used than level of language to analyze everyday use of the language in the superdiverse societies (p. 137). They reject the sociolinguistic concepts of languages, varieties, sociolects, dialects, registers, etc. and replace these with the linguistics features as semiotic resources. Hence, for them, learning a language is not possible if done purely in a linguistic arena, and schools cannot decide how their students become Spanish speakers, for instance, because there is no linguistic criterion that can decide what Spanish is. The European Educational systems would "break down over night if they were forced to teach language the way people really use language" (p. 152).

Moving from language in abstract into language in practice, Blommaert and Maly investigate the linguistic landscape of the central shopping street Wondelgemstraat of the historic city of Ghent in Belguim that has become a superdiverse space due to migration flows. The area now is composed of different ethnicities and languages including Arabic, English, Turkish, Chinese, French, Spanish, Dutch, Bulgarian, Slovak, Polish, and Italian. However, Dutch functions as the lingua franca among the superdiverse groups. It is hence superdiverse from demographic and linguistic perspectives. The authors conclude that these processes of superdiversity change the used-to-be rural, non-diverse places into superdiverse spaces that have no one set of forces (p. 215). In another interesting language practice, Leppanen and Elo investigate the phenomenon of buffalaxing using superdiversity as a lens. Buffalaxing is a term used to refer to Youtube videos that are intentionally mistranslated for the sake of creating humor. Although the aim of these buffalaxed videos is to draw a smile on the face of the viewers, the authors argue that this practice reveals something about cultures' tendency to coalesce. Producers of buffalaxed videos no longer consider them foreign but localize these 'alien' videos by giving them a local identity through mistranslated subtitles. In another chapter, Varis and Wang investigate the case of a Chinese rapper, MC Liangliang, and his online activities. They analyze his webpage and songs in which language-mixing (English, Chinese, and Korean) appear to be a creative aspect.

While the rest of the chapters revolve around describing fluidity in societies or on the Internet, two chapters are dedicated to investigating language and inequalities. Roberts investigates inequality in job interviews that raise the issue of the conflict between "institutional standards and diversity" despite the policies of equal opportunities (p. 255). Her chapter is a study that relies on 61 video-recorded interviews for UK white-collar jobs. Roberts found that there exists some power that draws "discursive regimes that position migrant applicants as less capable within the competence-based interview" (p. 240). British born candidates regardless of their local work backgrounds become better fits for the jobs than their migrant counterparts due to their linguistic competencies. The other chapter, by Spotti, troubles the effectiveness of Language Analysis for the Determination of Origin (LADO). The chapter analyzes an asylum case in the Netherlands of a Sudanese person who speaks Arabic as a first language. The asylum seeker lacked documents that proved his claims that he came from the Nuba in Sudan and he had to undergo LADO, which is a sociolinguistic interview that lasts between 30 to 45 minutes to determine the validity of the seeker's claim to their origins. In this particular case, the LADO process found that the man did

not come from where he claimed but was from Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. Spotti uses the case to show that LADO assumes that languages and customs of communities are solid rather than fluid. Spotti adds that LADO analysis seems to be driven by a belief that language is a "spatio-temporal resource, linked to macro sociopolitical events that have characterized the life and the migration history of the applicant" (p. 274).

This book is a must-read for those who are interested in diversity, racial and linguistic studies. However, since this book is spotlighting such linguistic issues (especially in Europe), it neglects the topic of language and racism against certain groups of minorities, such as Muslims. The issue of linguistic discrimination against Muslims is a type of racism that is too important to ignore in such a volume that moots diversity in its super mode. It seems to me as a reader that the term *superdiversity* is optimist that leaves behind heaps of problems within diversity, which makes us doubt the prefix *super* and probably tend to replace it with, I argue, *supra*.

The prefix *super* in *super*diversity implies social equity that is, indeed, more utopian than realistic. The term superdiversity addresses the complexity, fluidity, diversity, and the "diversification of diversity" in the modern, post-war and post-immigration Western society but discredits the widespread of different types of racism and its liquidity (Bauman, 2005; Weaver, 2010). The prefix *supra*, on the other hand, acknowledges diversity but does not deny social stratification. The *supra* in *supra*diversity acknowledges the war on multiculturalism that has been at play in Europe and North America. Sway (2005) argued that anti-religious attitudes such as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are "rooted in xenophobic Eurocentrism which was and still is a barrier in fostering a multicultural world not dominated by nationalism and national interests" (pp. 21-22), he called for other paradigms to replace the current one which has already led to vast destruction to not only Muslims but many other minorities. Some policies were passed to fight multiculturalism as banning *niqab* (a conservative form of Muslim women wear) in France and Belgium, the halal debate, the Swiss minarets ban (Gardell 2010; Lean and Esposito, 2012), banning seven Muslim countries from entering the United States, and calling for a Muslim registry in the USA. These are just cases and instances of how the existing political paradigm in the world is culturalist (Ekman, 2015; Kundnani 2012; Morgan & Poynting, 2011) and separist rather than diverse or superdiverse.

Although the definition of superdiversity the editors adopt in their volume is a "dynamic interplay of variables"— dynamism usually brings to life complex, contextualized, pluralized, and multi-faceted issues — we end up after reading this volume with more of a romanticist vision of the contemporary communities, which does not mirror many problems in those communities. I, as a person that belongs to a minority in the West, found this concept to not reflect the diversification of diversity I and others live. An alternative take on superdiversity can be found in Pavelenko's (2017) *Superdiversity and why it isn't*. To summarize, what I have argued for above does not demean the value of the book, especially when considering the purpose it was set for- I am just challenging the term.

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