



## **Book Review**

**Alwin Fill & Hermine Penz (Eds.), *The Handbook of Ecolinguistics*.  
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Reviewed by

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*The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics* (hereafter RHE) is an edited collection consisting of 29 chapters suitable “for students and researchers interested in language and the environment, language contact and beyond” (back cover). Totalling 443 pages, RHE presents chapters in a comprehensive, academic writing style and containing up-to-date theories, methodologies, analyses and point of views about Ecolinguistics by some of the most prominent ecolinguists in activity around the world. RHE is a key addition to a small but growing list of Ecolinguistics publications and can be considered the first reference book in the area, which includes significant collected works (see, e.g. Fill, 1996; Kettemann & Penz, 2000; Fill, Penz & Trampe, 2002; Fill & Penz, 2007; Döring, Penz & Trampe, 2008) and anthologies (e.g. Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001; Couto et al., 2016) in three main languages, namely, English, German and Portuguese.

RHE is divided in *Languages in Their Social and Individual Environment*, *The Role of Language Concerning the Environment* and *Philosophical and Transdisciplinary Ecolinguistics*. This subdivision is discussed in the following paragraphs, and is related to the levels of Ecolinguistics listed by Fill and Penz (p. 441-442).

As has been shown, the future of ecolinguistics must be seen at least on three levels: (1) The level of language diversity and all related topics, including minority languages, language endangerment and language death. The link between the loss of languages and the loss of species will provide further insights into language diversity and environmental diversity. Language diversity will also be looked at in areas of the Earth which have not yet been in the center of linguistic research.

(2) The level of language, discourse and the environment, where the role of language and discourse in describing, creating, aggravating, but more importantly helping to solve environmental problems will have to be discussed in more detail. On the level of discourse, both negative and positive aspects should be considered, and future investigations should increasingly consider different media (images, film, social

media) and how they are combined with language in the traditional sense. In addition, the focus should lie on analyzing and enabling participatory discourses which allow the affected public to contribute their perspectives to those of science and politics.

(3) Ecolinguistics as a transdisciplinary science (or a dialectical philosophy) which transcends traditional linguistics and creates an awareness of the interdependency of all things and ideas (cf. Finke, 2014). Ecolinguistics, on this level, will be seen by many scholars as a philosophy of interaction and harmony. In this context, the development of ecolinguistics in China will deserve particular attention as there appear to be rapid developments in this country.

Thus, RHE tries to cover this recent and complex field completely, at least insofar that it presents main theories, sub-disciplines, applications and relation of Ecolinguistics to other fields. Only the future will tell whether RHE is going to thrive in longevity through the application of these theories in ecolinguists' investigations, or be outdated with the need of reevaluation and further publications with fresh and contemporary ideas.

In the following paragraphs, I will only be able to comment briefly on each chapter due to RHE's length, but I hope to provide a comprehensive overview. In addition, I intend to do so by elaborating a critical evaluation of the volume.

After preliminary information, as acknowledgments, dedication and notes on the contributors, the *Introduction* to this volume is written by one of the editors, Alwin Fill, who is one of the main authors in the area and published the first book dedicated to Ecolinguistics (FILL, 1993). In his introduction, Fill offers a brief history, some definitions and emphasizes the growth of Ecolinguistics worldwide.

The first part of RHE is called *Languages in Their Social and Individual Environment* and is divided in two sections. Section A (*A Linguistic and Biological Diversity: Minority and Majority Languages, Endangerment and Revival*) contains chapters dedicated to the themes included in the title: Skutnabb-Kangas and Harmon start off the section with a discussion on the relationship between biological and language diversity (p. 11), this is followed by chapters covering minority languages from different perspectives, as language contact in Bastardas-Boadas' contribution (p. 26), language endangerment and death in Romaine's text (p. 40) and economy in Fill's chapter (p. 56). This part ends with Mufwene's work on language evolution (p. 73) and Kaplan's about language planning (p. 89), all of whom relate to these stable Linguistics areas through Ecolinguistics. Section B – *Language Contact (Bilingualism and Multilingualism) and Contact Languages* – presents texts through historically distant themes, these are Ehrhart's on Multilingualism (p. 109), Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas' on linguistic imperialism (p. 121), Mühlhäusler's on Creolistics and Ecolinguistics (p. 135) and Couto's conspicuous theory of Ecosystemic Linguistics (p. 149).

The second part of RHE – *The Role of Language Concerning the Environment (Biological and Ecological Sense)* – presents three sections dedicated to what some authors refer to as Ecological Discourse Analysis. Section A (*The Role of Language in Creating, Aggravating and Solving Environmental Problems*) opens with Stibbe's excellent chapter on Positive Discourse Analysis and its contribution to Ecolinguistics and ecological practices (p. 165) followed by three chapters which analyze visual images (p. 179), texts according to Corpus

Linguistic (p. 196) and an ecological view of metaphors (p. 211). Section B (*How Environmental Topics Appear in Texts and in the Media: Ecological and Unecological Discourse*) continues such studies with Goatly presenting Lexicogrammar theory (p. 227), followed by Kuha's analysis of how politicians talk about the environment (p. 249), Stöckl and Molnar unveiling advertisement strategies to appear greener to the public (p. 261), Penz researching climate change as shown by media reports (p. 277) and Döring doing a similar investigation, but observing natural disasters reporting practices (p.293). In Section C (*How Do Language and Discourse Transport Ecological and Unecological Ideas?*), Ecological Discourse is associated with other areas. Cook and Sealey (p. 311) discuss the language used to refer to several categories of animals, and Trampe investigates euphemisms in reference to animal killing (p. 325). The section is concluded by two chapters whose themes that differ from previous ones, namely Heuberger's analysis on anthropocentric structures and constructions in English language (p. 342) and Nash's study on Toponymy and Ecolinguistics (p. 355).

The third section (*Philosophical and Transdisciplinary Ecolinguistics*), consists of five chapters whose discussions relate Ecolinguistics to other areas, and also discuss theoretical and methodological aspects of Ecolinguistics. Larson discusses some issues about ethics and environment (p. 367), Jacobs points out the contributions that Ecolinguistics can offer to Education (p. 378), Steffensen argues the need in Ecolinguistics yet to be done to redefine the concept of Language and its studying methods to adequate them to more ecological view which by extension can change the way people see and think about the world (p. 393), Finke elaborates a study on Philosophy of Science trying to locate Ecolinguistics in a place among other sciences, emphasizing that Ecolinguistics is transdisciplinary, being developed and going beyond the frontiers of one single area or a connection of sciences (p. 406), and finally LeVasseur suggests some connections between Ecolinguistics and Religion, mainly to observe how environment is described in religious texts and by different religion beliefs (p. 420).

The final part consists of one chapter only (Ecolinguistics in the 21st Century: New Orientations and Future Directions) written by the editors, Fill and Penz (p. 437). The authors reiterate the expansion of Ecolinguistics throughout the world and its importance as a topic to be discussed in our time. Furthermore, they present the already mentioned three levels of future Ecolinguistic studies.

Overall, RHE offers a great overview of Ecolinguistics, defining its theories and fields of inquiry, but at the same time it reveals the challenges of research yet to be done. The chapters are self-contained and include all relevant references, so that one can use a chapter in a class or the whole collection as a course textbook. Moreover, there are reading suggestions, commented references, internet resources and directions for future investigations which render RHE appropriate for undergraduate students. For graduate students, I would recommend this volume only to those who are new to Ecolinguistics, as some chapters are a review of theories already used and published by the authors, which can provide a repetitive reading for the discipline experts.

Besides all the positive criticism, I must note some less favourable points. As briefly anticipated in my introduction, the logic behind the arrangement of some chapters is not evident to me. For example, some chapters from the first part would seem more suitable to the third one. These are chapters which approach other disciplines, such as Economy (Fill, Kaplan), Biology (Mufwene, Couto) and History (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas) and that could therefore form a contribution with Transdisciplinary Ecolinguistics, the main theme of the third part. Another issue is the length of some chapters which call for greater depth to give the reader an appropriate overview of the topic. Also, a glossary for key terms and an introductory text in each part would be advisable to clarify the different subjects and fields connected to Ecolinguistics, especially as RHE is intended as a reference book.

Despite these limitations, I give my compliments to the authors, editors, and Routledge's team and register here that I highly recommend RHE as a unique contribution and a genuine handbook.

## References

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