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Peter Reimer - Restructuration des répertoires langagiers de migrant·e·s de la République du Congo en Lorraine

Abstract

The present study examines the plurilingualism of migrants of the Republic of Congo in Lorraine through the prism of the concept of restructuration of linguistic repertoires. Introduced in the 1960s by John J. Gumperz, the notion of linguistic repertoires is central in the study of sociolinguistics. It has seen an important evolution from the repertoire of a speech community supposed to be quite homogenous to the linguistic and semiotic repertoire of individuals living in a superdiverse world marked by globalization, mobility and means of electronic communication. Sharpening the conceptualization of restructuring of linguistic repertoires by the study of plurilingualism of migrants of Congolese origin, this project opens new perspectives on the research of plurilingualism, especially regarding transgenerational mobilities and the diversity of processes of restructuring shaping the linguistic repertoires.

By focusing on the linguistic and migrational biographies of 15 migrants, their social networks and language resources, this research reveals the diversity of processes and factors at the heart of the restructuring of linguistic repertoires through a multi-sited ethnographic study in Lorraine and Congo. The comprehension of the diversity in the restructuring dynamics of linguistic knowledge by the participants relies on the study of the historicity of situations of linguistic socialization in Congo, the migration routes, and the restructuring of social networks as well as linguistic repertoires in the settlement in Lorraine. Participation in the society of Lorraine and its social groups shapes identifications, social orientations, and the positioning in social networks, and vice versa.

Indeed, the diversity of linguistic socialization instances in Congo, shaped through colonization, migration of former generations and the civil wars of the 1990s, contribute considerably to the differences in linguistic knowledge and in restructuring of linguistic repertoires. The linguistic repertoires appear as enregistrements of the mobilities of the individuals as well as of those of former generations and close relatives. Among other things, restructuring concerns resources associated with French, Congolese languages and other

languages appropriated in migration. The French resources are restructured from the migrants by appropriation of the common resources in different social situations in Lorraine and by marking and/or relegating inappropriate resources appropriated elsewhere. At the same time, knowledge of differentiating resources, which include classification schemes and communicative strategies, are developed as linguistic (in)security manifests. The resources associated with Congolese languages, their social functions and their representations are restructured in processes of attrition, actualization, transformation and linguistic elaboration. Moreover, resources associated with other European languages are relegated and slowly lost because of a lack of use. Finally, knowledge of management in plurilingualism, cultural diversity and otherness, appropriated in the same situations of diversity, helps internal treatment of experiences of spatial and social mobility along the restructuring of linguistic repertoires.