

Summary of 'The Porosity of multilingual spaces', Carmen Pérez del Pulgar (University of Amsterdam, MSc. Human Geography)

This thesis is an original contribution to the understanding of the relation between language, space and identity and aims to shed light into the complex set of conditions that influence linguistic practices and ideologies in contemporary European cities.

It does so by studying the contextual factors that influence the production and reproduction of specific language ideologies and language practices in a multilingual Europe, where the increasing diversity of citizen's linguistic backgrounds is challenging the robustness of monolingual normative discourses. Language ideologies are defined as explicit or implicit cultural representations of language and its relation to space, identity and culture; which not only have an impact on human linguistic practices, but are also at the core of many of our fundamental geographical imaginaries, social institutions and notions of belonging and identity.

The specific cases of French and German migrants living in the cities of Madrid and Amsterdam are selected with the aim of understanding the nature, conformation and development of their language ideologies and linguistic practices across time and space. Particularly the impact of two variables in the conformation of their language ideologies will be analysed: first; the dominant language ideology of both, their state of origin and the state/city where they are currently living – here referred to as contextual dominant language ideologies – and second; the very experience of migration. The methodology used was mainly qualitative, conducting life-histories with all participants.

Participant's language practices and ideologies proved to be very much influenced by the morphology of the space in which their linguistic practices take place and by the limits with regards to what is possible in terms of linguistic performance within its borders. The concept of 'porosity of multilingual spaces' was introduced to describe the different morphologies of the spaces daily navigated by multilinguals. The level of porosity refers to the extent to which alternative language uses and meanings (e.g. multilingualism, code-switching, hybrid identities, etc.) are accepted and deployed within specific spaces across scales (e.g. micro-spaces, the city, the state); with a non-porous space referring to a monolingual (one language-one space) normative hegemony.