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INNOVATIONS OR ILLUSIONS? A Review of Slogonization in Language Education Discourse: Conceptual Thinking in the Age of Academic Marketization

(Edited by: Barbara Schmenk, Stephan Breidbach, and Lutz Kuster). –
Multilingual Matters, 2018. – 184 pages



*“Truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions,
metaphors that have become worn-out and deprived of their sensuous force,
coins that have lost their imprint and are now no longer seen as coins but as metal”.*

Friedrich NIETZSCHE, On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense

The word “innovation” has become a hot modifier in recent times. But is it always what it seems? Does every new trend, an emergent phenomenon or ostensibly pioneering area of study justify such claims? Educational theory, like any other field of science, has offered – and implemented – many novel ideas and coined a plethora of new terms, for that matter. Some have even become slogans. And slogans...sell. This simple truth lies behind the fancy words. But fear not: it is still possible to differentiate between innovation and empty slogans, between the fruits of the research and fruitlooper, between education and edubabble, between truth and untruth.

The book *Slogonization in Language Education Discourse: Conceptual Thinking in the Age of Academic Marketization* does just this. It addresses slogonization as an avalanche of newly coined terms to cover a number of widely used concepts, specifically, in the realm of language education. Several renowned scholars have compiled this volume to show the essence of slogonization process and its results in the field of language education:

the area, that has claimed many innovative ideas and methods since its inception. It should be emphasized that this book actually covers so much more, namely, the global issue of academic marketization. That’s why it is of interest to us all, because scientists, like educators, do teach and do sell their ideas, the currency of the 21st century.

Let us briefly highlight the major sections of the book. *Slogonization* contains 9 chapters, each dedicated to a specific educational trend that has become a slogan. Chapter 1, *Slogonization in Language Education Discourse: Introduction*, by Barbara Schmenk, Stephan Breidbach and Lutz Kuster discusses the abundance of slogans in our lives, touches upon the issue of self-branding, and the development of language education discourse in general. The authors note the ubiquity of the terms and buzzwords like “turn” and “learner autonomy”. Several important traits of a slogan are singled out: its idealization, its frequency of use, its common-sense appeal, its decontextualization and popularity in other educational, scholarly, political discourses and in other disciplines. Later

in the volume, David Block and Aneta Pavlenko add such slogan features as simplicity, memorability, emotionality, institutionalization, adoption of the slogan promoting the brand, its “endless recycling” in publications and at conferences, intentionally vague and affective rhetoric. Chapter 2, *We Innovators*, by David Gramling, addresses the sloganization of the term “innovation”. Part 3, *The Only Turn Worth Watching in the 20th Century is Tina Turner’s: How the Sloganization of Foreign Language Research Can Impede the Furthering of Knowledge and Make Life Difficult for Practitioners*, by Dietmar Rösler, critically analyzes such terms-slogans as “paradigm shift” and “turn”. We could not agree with him more on the necessity of reviving the original meaning of “paradigm shift” as suggested by Thomas Kuhn (viewed in light of his scientific revolutions theory). Chapter 4, *Slo(w)-ization. Against the Constant Need for Re-inventing the Discourse on Language Education: The Case of ‘Multiple Intelligences*, by Gerhard Bach studies Gardner’s “multiple intelligences” (once “innovative”) slogan to conclude that it was a merely new label for the already existing things. Here, we would tend to agree, too. Chapter 5, *Just Another Prefix? From Inter- to Transcultural Foreign Language Learning and Beyond*, by Britta Viebrock, studies the “intercultural and transcultural learning” notions. In Chapter 6, *On Common ‘Exposure’ and Expert ‘Input’ in Second Language Education and Study Abroad*, John L. Plews notes the polysemy of the notion-slogan “exposure” as related to Krashenian, more scientific term “input”. Chapter 7, *What on Earth is “Language Commodification”?*, by David Block, addresses language commodification (yes, in economic and, specifically, marketing sense of the word). Chapter 8, *Superdiversity and Why It Isn’t: Reflections on Terminological Innovation and Academic Branding*, by Aneta Pavlenko, deals with the term-slogan “superdiversity”, touches upon “linguistic landscapes”, proprietary branding (“Universal Grammar”, “bilingual advantage”, “positive psychology) and related issues. Chapter 9, *Sloganization: Yet Another Slogan?*, by Barbara Schmenk, Stephan Breidbach, and Lutz Küster,

claims “sloganization” as the novel term (and we would like to add, it could be called a new *turn*) in educational research: “sloganization rests on the assumption that there are a number of terms in language education discourse that appear under-theorized, fuzzy, often trivialized and simplified, yet also appealing and catchy”. Hence the need to analyze the phenomenon critically. The volume is based on rigorous research, thorough analysis, and meticulous literature reviews. We were immensely pleased to find references to the seminal papers of B. Kumaravadivelu, whose works have withstood the test of time. His articles and books on post-method education in post-modern world resonate with us as language teachers.

What we need today, is critical approach science’s fads and fashions, and not falling for illusions. That’s why *Sloganization* can become a true eye-opener for many scholars. This book is a well-written, engaging narrative, with lots of useful and thought-provoking material. The authors generously share their ideas, and make their readers think.

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ІННОВАЦІЇ ЧИ ІЛЮЗІЇ?

Рецензія на книгу “Слоганізація дискурсу мовної освіти: концептуальне мислення в епоху академічної маркетингізації” (за ред. Б. Шменк, С. Брідбаха, Л. Кюстера). — *Multilingual Matters*, 2018. — 184 с.

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