Susan Samata, *The cultural memory of language: contemporary applied linguistics Volume 5*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Pp. xi, 187. Hb. £75.00.

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Susan Samata has written a book that is interesting and accessible to both the specialist and the more interested and informed general reader. Delivered in a style that is highly engaging, as well as thought provoking, *The Cultural Memory of Language* offers a fascinating insight into the experience of people who do not share the same first language of their parents (PL1). Samata takes the reader on a journey that combines academic insight with a personal connection to the project. That current of personalisation, which recurs throughout the research, is a refreshing perspective that brings to life what could otherwise have been quite a dry piece of scholarship. The books format is a standard five part structure – introduction; literature review; methods; findings; discussion & conclusions – apart from the splitting of the literature review into two chapters: *Exploring the Background* and *A Category Marked Miscellaneous*.

The book’s introduction makes it clear that the location of its investigation in the experience of people who do not share PL1 is one that is primarily concerned with the identified individuals’ personal experience. From the beginning it is clear that the journeys we will read about are personal, often intimate, encounters with wider cultural memory. There is no suggestion that the study is speculating about the connection of its topic with wider narratives that might seek to use its participants simply as token representatives of, for example, different genders, social classes or ethnicities. The concentration on individual experience reinforces the author’s quest for personal understanding, which forms part of a strong undercurrent that persists throughout the whole work.

Dividing the literature review into two chapters works well. The content of the second chapter fulfilling the standard role of the literature review. It locates the books central topic in a familiar context of research and theory pertinent to language acquisition and understanding to the experience of people non-sharing PL1. Her discussion of the connection between cultural memory and linguistics is articulated clearly, providing a robust rationale for her project.

Though more could have been made of the third chapter in the books later discussion, it adds substantial theoretical weight to her positioning the research as truly multi-disciplinary. Exploring the books aims and objectives through reflecting on its core motif in fiction, poetry, non-fiction, visual arts and the *philosophic imagination* adds a richness, and depth, to the picture of estrangement from PL1 that the writer is developing.

Methodologically the research uses an adaptation of Straub’s ‘horizons of comparison’ approach. Within the interview analysis this requires a detailed reading, re-reading, and reflection of the interview transcriptions. The transcriptions themselves contain a basic mark-up, but are illuminated well through the personal reflections of the researcher. The process highlights several emergent themes (inauthenticity/ imposture; ambivalence; blame/resentment; change over time, and feelings of participation): these are discussed with the differences and points of commonality highlighted. What brings the interviews to life, however, are the numerous personal observations of the interviewees that Samata also incorporates into her analysis. Her conclusions, whilst recognised as being based on too small a sample for too much generalisation, suggest that the significance of considering the personal impact that not sharing PL1 has on the individual is one that warrants substantial further investigation.

What this book does well is its humanising of applied linguistics through embracing it as a multi-disciplinary field that works with the whole person. It is written in a style that informs the specialist, as well as the intelligent general reader, and provides a highly useful addition to an under researched area. Importantly it treats its research participants as human beings and collaborators in its project; not simply linguistic machines there to provide data for some remote academic who will then crunch the numbers, only to come up with something mildly interesting.