Language, Power and Identity Politics

edited by Máiréad Nic Craith

Palgrave Studies in Minority Languages and Communities
Series Editor: Gabrielle Hogan-Brun

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Máiréad Nic Craith
Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages
University of Ulster

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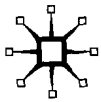

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Series Editor's Preface

Worldwide migration and unprecedented economic, political and social integration in Europe present serious challenges to the nature and position of language minorities. Some communities enjoy protective legislation and active support from states through policies that promote and sustain cultural and linguistic diversity; others succumb to global homogenisation and assimilation. At the same time, discourses on diversity and emancipation have produced greater demands for the management of difference.

This book series has been designed to bring together different strands of work on minority languages in regions with immigrant or traditional minorities or with shifting borders. We give prominence to case studies of particular language groups or varieties, focusing on their vitality, status and prospects within and beyond their communities. Considering this insider picture from a broader perspective, the series explores the effectiveness, desirability and viability of worldwide initiatives at various levels of policy and planning to promote cultural and linguistic pluralism. Thus it touches on cross-theme issues of citizenship, social inclusion and exclusion, empowerment and mutual tolerance.

Work in the above areas is drawn together in this series to provide books that are interdisciplinary and international in scope, considering a wide range of minority contexts. Furthermore, by combining single and comparative case studies that provide in-depth analyses of particular aspects of the socio-political and cultural contexts in which languages are used, we intend to take significant steps towards the fusing of theoretical and practical discourses on linguistic and cultural heterogeneity.

Gabrielle Hogan-Brun
University of Bristol

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Two chapters in this book draw on previously published material. Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost is grateful to Routledge for permission to use material from his book *Language, Identity and Conflict*, which was published in 2003. Parts of John Dunlop's chapter in this book draws on material in his *A Precarious Belonging – Presbyterians and the Conflict in Ireland*, published by Blackstaff Press in Belfast in 1995. That material has been used with the permission of the publisher.

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Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost is a Lecturer in the School of Welsh at Cardiff University, UK. A native of Ireland, he is an authority on linguistic minorities and language planning. He has a range of research interests, which include the situation of the Irish language and the nature of the relationship between language and conflict from a comparative, European perspective and also language in city contexts. He is the author of numerous books including *Language and the City* (2007), *The Irish Language in Ireland from Goídel to Globalisation* (2005) and *Language, Identity and Conflict* (2003). Dr Mac Giolla Chríost has published numerous scholarly papers in learned journals on Irish studies, the social sciences, human geography, material culture studies and the sociology of language. He is a Fellow of both The Royal Geographical Society and The Royal Historical Society.

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Robert Phillipson is a graduate of Cambridge and Leeds Universities, United Kingdom, and has a doctorate from the Faculty of Education of the University of Amsterdam. He worked for the British Council in Spain, Algeria, Yugoslavia and London before settling in Denmark. He currently holds a Chair at the Faculty of Languages, Culture and Communication of Copenhagen Business School. Prof. Phillipson previously worked as Head of the Department of Languages and Culture at the University of Roskilde. He has also held attachments to universities in Australia, Hungary and India, and in 2005 was a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), of the University of Cambridge. Author and editor of many distinguished books, his recent publications include *English-only Europe?* (2003), *Rights to Language: Equity, Power and Education* (2000) and *Language: a Right and a Resource* (1999) co-edited with Kontra, Skutnabb-Kangas and Várady.

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Tezukayama and Kagawa Universities, Peshawar University and University of Maine. Author and editor of many books, his recent publications include *Religion and Human Rights Law: A Critical Examination of Islamic Law and Practices* (2006), co-edited with Susan Breau, *Islamic State Practices, International Law and the Threat from Terrorism: A Critique of the 'Clash of Civilizations' in the New World Order* (2005), and *International Human Rights Law* (2003). He is also the editor of the *Journal of Islamic State Practices in International Law* (JISPIL).

Jane Saville is a Senior Lecturer in English as a Foreign Language and European Studies at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. As part of her MSc in Development Studies, she started to explore the political and socio-economic aspects of language teaching and policy and contributed a chapter entitled 'Language and Equity: A Development Perspective' to *Culture and Economy. Contemporary Perspectives* (edited Kockel, 2002). Her other current research and teaching interests are aspects of identity such as transnational identities, liminality and regionalism from the perspective of social and cultural anthropology. Jane is an exponent of an increasing move towards a multi-disciplinary approach in research and teaching.

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1

Languages and Power: Accommodation and Resistance

Máiréad Nic Craith

Interconnections between language and power in the context of identity politics provide the focus for this book. One of the primary issues for contributors is the process of globalisation and its consequences for languages at all levels, major, regional and migrant. The emerging deterritorialisation of all languages is a new and important consideration in the process of language planning. This applies not just to major world languages such as Chinese or Spanish, but is relevant at all levels. Minorities are no longer restrained by a national geographical context and are not dependent solely on national state bureaucracies for recognition. Speakers of all languages operate in a modern transnational framework which has been considerably enhanced by the development of new media and technology. People and their languages are 'on the move'. As individuals and communities migrate from one location to another, new linguistic minorities are formed and fresh issues arise. There are novel cultural contexts which are not easily translated and the field of intercultural communication has important resonances for language planners.

Globalisation has sparked numerous debates on religious issues and Samuel Huntington's seminal essay in 1993 suggested that civilisational identity would become increasingly significant in the twenty-first century. The world would be shaped by a number of major civilisations such as Western and Islamic. Moreover, the most significant conflicts of the future would occur 'along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another' (1993: 25). The predicted 'Clash of Civilisations' has linguistic as well as religious implications and in an age of increasing anxiety, certain languages have become associated with particular religious perspectives and terrorist atrocities. While such implications are of current import for speakers of languages such as

Arabic, the association of violence with languages is hardly original, and minority languages such as Irish and Basque have suffered from such connotations in the past (Conversi 1997, Kockel 1999, Nic Craith 2006).

Globalisation and global languages

Concepts of language and power are inherently related and strongly connected with the notion of 'cultural capital' – an idea that was first proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in the early 1970s. Bourdieu extended the concept of capital beyond its traditional economic categories and broadened it to include social as well as linguistic capital. For Bourdieu, the concept of 'cultural capital' is not an economic term. It involves a broad range of linguistic abilities as well as orientations which are present in the family and nation-state. In the case of the state it may exist in an institutionalised form (such as educational qualifications) or in the form of cultural artefacts such as books (Bourdieu 1991, 1997).

Language is also a form of cultural capital, and linguistic capital can be defined as 'fluency in, and comfort with, a high-status, worldwide language which is used by groups who possess economic, social, cultural and political power and status in local and global society' (Morrison 2000: 471). This implies that individuals and groups speaking global and majority languages have considerable advantages over their counterparts whose mother tongues are ranked low on the social scale – a matter which is hardly a point for debate in an economic context. Many benefits accrue to those speaking a major language. These include prestige, honour and educational credentials, that is speaking the 'right' language becomes a form of capital or investment which can consolidate or enhance one's credibility in the non-material sector. 'Moreover, privilege and prestige can be transmitted intergenerationally through forms of cultural capital' (Swarz 1996: 76).

In the twenty-first century we tend to think of languages in international rather than national terms and there are many sources of information on languages spoken at a global level. Although many assume that English is the most widely spoken language in the world, it has not yet attained that position. The most widely spoken languages in the world according to the Global Language Monitor Service are outlined in Table 1.1. Not surprisingly, the six official languages of the United Nations are all included on this list.

There are incredible difficulties with statistics such as these. How does one define the concept of a speaker of a language? Does one count native and non-native speakers alike? How does one assess fluency?

Table 1.1 Most Widely Spoken Languages in the World

Language	Approx. Number of Speakers
Chinese (Mandarin)	1,075,000,000
English	514,000,000
Hindustani	1,496,000,000
Spanish	425,000,000
Russian	275,000,000
Arabic	256,000,000
Bengali	215,000,000
Portuguese	194,000,000
Malay-Indonesian	176,000,000
French	129,000,000

Source: Global Language Monitor (http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0775272.html)

Nevertheless such statistics are useful as a guide to the escalation in numbers of speakers of certain languages and to the spread of particular tongues at a global scale.

Moreover, there is the issue of international languages which are interlingual versus those that are intralingual. This distinction put forward by Ammon (1991) proposes that languages can only be deemed to be international in a rigorous sense if different nation-states with diverse languages use the same international language in addition to their own. Here one could cite the example of English which is widely used in international communications by many nation-states in addition to or instead of their national language. In contrast, Ammon reserves the concept of international-intralingual languages for forms of communication such as German which are spoken in different nation-states such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. These states are unified by the same language which is spoken as a first rather than as an additional language (Ammon 1991; see also Ussai 2003). Such distinctions may be useful in predicting the future status of many 'international' languages – especially when used as an indicator along with statistics such as those cited in Table 1.1.

Linguistic capital is closely tied to the process of globalisation and especially with the spread of online technology. Speakers of many languages are united across the globe through the Internet in an imagined virtual community. The Global Language Monitor outlines the top ten languages currently used on the Internet as shown in Table 1.2. It is interesting to note that certain languages such as Hindustani and Malay-Indonesian which currently feature on the list of the top ten

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