Multilingualism and the Periphery
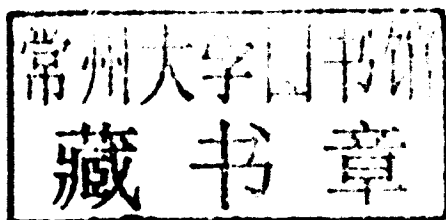
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Multilingualism and the Periphery

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Multilingualism and the Periphery

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CHAPTER 1

Multilingualism and the Periphery

SARI PIETIKÄINEN AND HELEN KELLY-HOLMES

This book is an exploration of the ways in which centre–periphery dynamics shape multilingualism. This exploration focuses on peripheral sites, which are defined as such by a relationship (be it geographic, political, economic, etc.) to some perceived centre. Viewing multilingualism through the lens of centre–periphery dynamics helps to bring forth the language ideological tensions which are evident in issues of language boundary-making, language ownership, commodification, and authenticity. It also highlights the ways in which speakers seek novel solutions in adapting their linguistic resources to new situations and developing innovative and creative language practices.

The sites of concern to us in this volume involve complex multilingualism and minority languages—the minoritization of languages being part of peripheralization processes—and as such are subject to the dynamics of renegotiation and contestation characteristic of the centre–periphery relationship. In this volume, we explore multilingualism in minority language sites in order to examine how the dynamics of centre–periphery relations might shape language practices, and how these practices might, in turn, have wider resonance beyond the sites under investigation. We see these peripheral contexts as 'crucial sites' (Philips 2000) for understanding the current sociolinguistics of globalization (Coupland 2003, 2010; Blommaert 2010), although they are often neglected sites in sociolinguistic research, with the focus predominantly on urban spaces for understanding the linguistic dimension to contemporary globalization (cf. e.g. Block 2005; Harris 2006; Rampton 2006; Mac Giolla Chríost 2007; Pennycook 2010).

Centre–periphery dynamics—and how they are imagined—have a significant impact on the way that multilingualism in minority language contexts is conceptualized and practised. An unstable model of centre–periphery calls for a reassessment of what linguistic and cultural peripheries are, under globalization, and an exploration of how people evaluate and work discursively with these reconfigurations. Minority

language sites are subject, by necessity, to various—and often conflicting—language ideologies, norms, and practices. These are spaces where tensions between various language ideologies are often made explicit, and their logics and borders are being tested (see e.g. da Silva, McLaughlin, and Richards 2006; Jaffe 2009; Pietikäinen 2010). Despite the fact that linguistic minority sites are often constructed from the centre as linguistically and culturally homogeneous, and while they may also be constructed internally in this way in order to pursue particular rights and economic benefits, the everyday language practices tend to be mixed, flexible, and diverse. What we want to explore in this book is the evolution of language practices which, on the one hand, challenge and disregard the centrist ideology and the normativity of parallel monolingualisms (cf. Heller 1999, 2003, 2006; Jaffe 2006), whilst, on the other hand, relying on it as a necessary resource (Moore, Pietikäinen, and Blommaert 2010; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011).

In consequence, this volume is concerned with processes of *peripheralization* and of *centralization*, since the centre–periphery relationship is never fixed, but instead constantly renegotiated and mutually constitutive. Key to this examination is the problematizing of two clashing perspectives on multilingualism in relation to minority languages: the standard language perspective, which is still largely informed by a view of languages and speech communities as bounded entities, so-called segregational linguistics (cf. Harris 1996); in contrast with the heteroglossic or polynomic perspective (e.g. Dufva 2004; Jaffe 2007; Zarate, Levy, and Kramsch 2008; Pennycook 2010), which emphasizes hybridity, fluidity, partial repertoires, and communities of practice. Given the complexity of contemporary multilingual processes, we see an inherent problem in adopting either of these approaches exclusively, and we see the peripheral perspective as a way of highlighting this and moving forward our thinking on multilingualism. Furthermore, the current globalizing processes call for examination of the different ways in which peripheralization and centralization happen, forcing us to ask how a particular kind of multilingualism in a particular kind of site becomes constructed as peripheral or as central, with what kind of consequences, driven by whom, and with effects for whom.

FRAMING PERIPHERAL MULTILINGUALISM

The current volume is embedded in and further develops a number of key interdisciplinary concepts and literatures. First of all, there is the concept of centre-periphery and the dynamics between centre and periphery; secondly, there is the concept of multilingualism, and the rethinking of multilingualism, particularly in relation to the sociolinguistics of globalization; thirdly, the notion of language ideologies, particularly in relation to a changing conceptualization of language as system to language as practice (cf. Rampton 2006; Pennycook 2010, Pietikäinen 2010; Kelly-Holmes and Milani 2011) and the implications of this for the concept

of minority languages. We will now examine each of these to show how the volume both derives from and contributes to expanding these three areas.

Centre–Periphery

Centre–periphery is a common spatial metaphor used to describe and explain the unequal distribution of power in the economy, society, and polity. The centre–periphery is metaphorized, for example, in the division of the nation states of the world into First, Second, and Third worlds, and in emphasizing the difference between 'South' and 'North', or in describing 'West' or 'urban cities' as power bases (cf. Ang and Stratton 1996; Potter 2001; Vanolo 2010). Also communities and groups from the 'margins' of nations—or as Graburn (1976) describes it 'engulfed by the nations'—have employed this metaphor in constructing an alternative view of the centre–periphery relations, using concepts such as 'Fourth World' or 'First Nations'.

The centre is typically defined in terms of its advancement, metropolitanism, and political, economic, and trade power, while the periphery is characterized as marginal, the opposite of the centre, the boundary or outer part of it. Johnston et al. (2000: 48) conclude that 'the centre dominates whilst the periphery is dependent, and this dependence may be structured through the relations of exchange, production or evaluation between centre and periphery'. The use of the centre–periphery metaphor is common in political geography, political sociology, and studies of labour markets to explain both the concentration and the dispersion of mainly economic activity (Friedmann 1966; Centre–periphery model 1998; Andrew and Feiock 2010); but it is also used in history, cultural studies, and education to describe and explain disparities in uneven development (cf. e.g. Chakravorty 2003; Hayter 2003).

The centre–periphery model is also implicated in various types of world-system theories. Its first major articulation, and a classic example of this approach, is associated with Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1980, 2004). His world-systems theory provided a model for understanding both change in the global system and the relationship between its parts, referred to as centre, semi-periphery, and periphery. Wallerstein conceptualized a world system, comprised of centres and the periphery, which are tied together by a network of economic exchange processes (Goldfrank 2000). His work has had a major impact on sociological and historical thought and triggered numerous reactions, and inspired many to build on his ideas (cf. e.g. Blommaert 2010; Schubert and Sooryamoorthy 2010).

At the current moment of globalization, the fixed centre/periphery divide that was relatively clearly identifiable in the period of modernity, has become problematic. As, for example, Appadurai (1990: 6) points out, 'The global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models.' To capture this transition, concepts such as 'flow', 'networks', 'rhizome', and

'translocality' have been used to describe and explain movement and circulation (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Appadurai 1996; Pennycook 2007) of resources, including languages, in the contemporary era. Importantly, from this point of view 'centre' and 'periphery' (as well as locality, authenticity, tradition, and other key terms in this volume) are not given, but are instead understood as discursive constructs, products of social interaction, reflecting the circumstances and dynamics of their construction (see e.g. Pennycook 2010). The centre–periphery relationship is thus always constructed and subject to complex, socio-political and economic processes and practices. By no means a one-way relationship, it is both reciprocal and dynamic, and rarely stable or predictable in its nature or effects (Burke 2000; McCulloch and Lowe 2003).

However—and importantly from the point of view of this volume—these flows and shifts are not constituted randomly; mobility and circulation do not take place in empty space, but always in already constituted space. Moreover, space itself, as Lefebvre (1991/1974) tells us, is a complex and dynamic social construction, produced and experienced in human interaction (see also e.g. Scollon and Scollon 2004; Pennycook 2010; Thurlow and Jaworski 2010). This means that the historical and cultural situatedness of spaces crossed by these flows has a great impact on current processes and practices. Past structures and ideas remain powerful elements in the present-day trajectories of cultural flows and emerging practices. From this point of view, Ang and Stratton (1996: 28) argue that 'we should perhaps not so much replace the centre/periphery structure with that of flow, but rather articulate the two, to account for the ongoing, always shifting, multidimensional, heterogeneous and ambiguous relationalities which constitute our current global predicament'.

In this volume, we want to examine this theoretical transition from the notion of a fixed centre and periphery to notions of fluid, negotiated, and reconfigured ideas of centres and peripheries in relation to multilingualism. We suggest that this transition does not perhaps so much eliminate old bases of relations between centre and periphery, but rather situates them in a new, more complex configuration (cf. Ang and Stratton 1996). Consequently, the idea of the 'centre' and 'periphery' are still powerful; they are both the organizing factors in a system of global power relations and the organizing concept in a whole way of thinking and speaking (cf. Hall 1992). Peripheries could move to become part of the centre, and vice versa, as centre sites and locations became less dominant, they would move to the periphery of the system. As the cases in this volume show, some of the peripheral sites have already had their 'days of glory' while some sites are on the brink of being the centre themselves. There is an on-going dynamic between what is perceived as a periphery and what is perceived as a centre. Also in our understanding of peripherality, rather than changing over time, relative peripherality is changing constantly, so that one location, practice, or process can be at one and the same time both peripheral and central. Sites, areas, and processes which may be peripheral in one sense (e.g. distance from a national capital, large economic centre, or urban population centres

or from established norms) may be central in others (e.g. in terms of their role and importance for national and international tourists, niche markets, and specialized industries, language and cultural politics and policies, etc.).

It is this simultaneous, shifting and ambiguous position between peripherality and centrality, and the tensions that arise from these transformations that make the examination of peripheral sites interesting and revealing. It is the contradictions and tensions between these two tendencies—on the one hand, the fact that centre/periphery relations are both multiplying and no longer fixed, and, on the other hand, the continuing discursive power of the 'centre' as the all-powerful centre—which have important implications for the sites, processes, and practices under study in this volume. We want to explore this further by focusing on regions, spaces, communities, and practices that are simultaneously perceived to be *peripheries for particular centres and centres for particular peripheries, or on the move from one to the other.*

Peripheries are, we argue, ambiguous and interesting spaces; they are spaces of transformation and negotiation, rendering them novel and revealing spaces to examine contemporary complexities in multilingualism. While the role of cities and urban centres in the globalized world system has been widely examined, as mentioned above, the peripheries are rarely examined in terms of their contribution to globalization; instead, they are often seen to follow rather than lead. We would like to examine the potential for peripheral sites to become centres of normativity rather than places to which norms are disseminated. In this way, we hope that the book provides an original perspective to the relationship between 'centre' and 'periphery' in general, and in relation to multilingualism in particular.

Multilingualism

In this volume, we start from the premise that changing centre–periphery relations play an important role in understanding and reconfiguring multilingualism in minority language spaces. A concern with centre–periphery relations is, of course, nothing new in sociolinguistics or in understanding multilingualism. For example, Kachru's (1996) model of the three circles of English involves an inner circle (a centre), which is both norm defining and controlling, and disseminates norms and practices to the outer circle of countries with English as a second language, and also to the expanding circle of countries with English as a foreign language. The three circles model has been challenged by increasing focus on hybridity and polycentric normativities (cf. Park and Wee 2009; Pennycook 2010) in both the outer and expanding circles, and the two-way flows between the three circles, which characterize the contemporary world. Another sociolinguistic thesis that uses the central–peripheral model to explain multilingualism is de Swaan's (2001) world language system, which also focuses on mobility and sees the more central languages as the more mobile. In his model, de Swaan categorizes languages across the globe as central, supercentral, or peripheral. Central languages are those which

are the official languages of countries and which have the greatest communicative power in those countries, but less mobility between countries. Supercentral languages are modern-day lingua francas, with use and power beyond the borders of the countries in which they are located. English has special status as a hypercentral language, which holds the system together. At the other end of the scale are peripheral languages, which are the least mobile of the languages in the system and which generally have the least power and may not have a written form, and so on. Like Kachru's model, there are problems with de Swaan's system, since it is hard to classify many of the languages discussed in this volume in terms of this system. For example, where would regional minority languages which have official status (e.g. Welsh and Irish) be located? These are privileged, minoritized languages—peripheral and minoritized in some contexts and domains, and privileged and central in others. Furthermore, neither languages nor their speakers 'stay' in these categories but rather there is constant movement between and across categories: for example, regional minority languages may gain worldwide mobility through genres (hip-hop, advertisements) and practices (tourism, cultural production). The lived reality and actual everyday practices are far messier than these models suggest.

The current era of globalization has further challenged us to rethink multilingualism. For example, Dor (2004: 97) argues that

> most writers view today's linguistic world as a site of contestation between the *global* and the *local*: the spread of English as the lingua franca of the information age is viewed as the linguistic counterpart to the process of economic globalization; the causal factors working against the process of Englishization are thought of as locally bound and are equated with patterns of local resistance to economic (and cultural) globalization. This conception also determines the structure of the discourse on linguistic human rights: the need for *negotiated multilingualism* and the rights of speakers to resist global pressures and to use, maintain, and develop their local languages. (97)

This interest in global and local languages (echoing the centre–periphery distinction) has resulted in a wealth of studies on English as a lingua franca and linguistic imperialism, on the one hand, and an extensive literature on language endangerment, loss, and linguistic rights (e.g. Crystal 2002; Freeland and Patrick 2004; García, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Torres Guzmán 2006; Jenkins 2007; May 2007; Ostler 2010.)

From the point of view of multilingualism, the current era of globalization can be seen as a new kind of order, impacting on how languages and their relations are constructed and are resulting in emerging ways of organizing and exploiting linguistic resources (Coupland 2010). Contemporary globalization also impacts, we argue, on what kind of multilingualism is perceived as 'central' (i.e. normal, desirable, and valuable) and what is considered 'peripheral' (i.e., marginal, devalued, and useless). With this view, the volume engages with the recent upsurge in language and globalization studies (see e.g. Coupland 2003; Heller 2003, 2011; Canagarajah 2005; Fairclough 2006; Heller and Duchene 2007; Blommaert 2010; Pennycook

2010). Further, contemporary globalization processes, particularly changing economic conditions and increased mobility, both open up new opportunities and create novel types of opportunities and restrictions for multilingualism and new multilingual spaces where individuals, communities, and institutions adapt to these changing conditions. One example of this, we argue in the volume, is the current valorization of certain types of bilingualism and the commodification of the periphery as a site of authenticity. In this context, the periphery has come to have a new value, perceived to offer experiences of authenticity, slow(er) lifestyle, solitude, and living with the challenges and opportunities afforded by the local environment. In this process, centres are constructed as predictable and unremarkable, whereas peripheries are seen as different, exotic, and other-worldly. The centre–periphery tension together with reconfigurations and mobilization of linguistic resources has led to novel types of diversity and tensions in peripheral sites under examination in this volume, with several contradictions and complexities which can then result in creative crossings. Further, the circulation and emergence of language practices show how fluidity and hybridity are part of language use and make it necessary to rethink and redefine many key concepts of language studies as these clearly acquire new meanings under new circumstances (cf. Canagarajah 2007; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Indeed, the current conditions have put to the test the conceptualizations of languages as unified, bounded entities separate from the social world (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003). These notions have been challenged both from the inside by the integrational linguistics of Harris (1981), and by studies of language ideologies (Blommaert 1999; Kroskrity 2002; Woolard 2004) and heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981; Dufva 2010), which aim to understand how language and multilingualism may be understood differently in different contexts.

Language Ideologies

The reconfiguration of centre–periphery relations is, of course, a process taking place wherever people are mobilizing and reorganizing linguistic resources. It is for this reason, that the current volume examines centralizing and peripheralizing processes in changing and evolving multilingual minority language sites. Such a focus allows for the analysis and juxtaposition of sites where struggles, tensions, and innovations between various language ideologies are often made explicit, and their logics and the borders they attempt to create and maintain are being tested (see e.g. Jaffe 1999; Busch 2006; da Silva, McLaughlin, and Richards 2006; Pietikäinen 2010). Being named and categorized as a minority language is a result of centralizing and peripheralizing processes. To unpack these complexities, we draw on language ideological work on multilingual contexts (Blommaert 1999; Irvine and Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2000; Gal and Woolard 2001; Hill 2002; Gal 2006; Heller 2006; Jaffe 2007) and understand language ideologies as discursive constructs of the nature and meaning of language that are historically embedded and locally appropriated.

Language ideologies carry and convey articulations and beliefs about the nature, value, and functions of languages and are, at the same time, embedded in actual language practices of individuals and communities. This conception emphasizes the diachronic nature of any particular language ideology, its situational manifestation, and the impact it has on actual language practices.

The idea of a language ideological struggle implies the simultaneous existence of various language ideologies, particularly in contemporary evolving multilingual situations where language boundaries and norms are often dislocated, in flux, or renegotiated (cf. Nevins 2004; Meek 2007; Jaffe 2009; Pietikäinen 2010). This makes multilingual minority language sites a complex space for various ideological conflicts and contestations (cf. Lytra and Martin 2010), and consequently, important and revealing sites for examining the evolving notions of language, multilingualism, and other related concepts. As mentioned earlier, being considered and classified as a minority language is itself a result of language ideological processes and directly related to periphery/centre hierarchies. By their very existence, minority languages undermine the prevailing ideology of monolingualism and its message of 'one country, one language'. This language ideology is, of course, nurtured particularly within the context of the nation state and national identity (cf. Wright 2000), which involves creating a strong centre with its own norms and clearly defined peripheries. Minority language sites also provide evidence of what has been 'won' by minorities from the centre. This evidence typically consists of some central institutions that the centre has brought into the peripheries, and which function either fully or partly in minority languages and through the minority language community. This combination of economic, political, geographic, and ideological processes, as well as other factors, has meant that minority language sites 'have always had to invest in one form of multilingualism' (da Silva, McLaughlin, and Richards 2006: 185).

We can identity at least two language ideological formations that have structured our understanding of multilingualism and consequently have had an influence on how individuals experience 'languages' and talk about them. One powerful conceptualization, born and bred within the ideological framework of nation states and national languages, has been the idea that languages are autonomous and unified entities—often described as formal linguistic codes—with an 'essential' or natural relationship with a particular territory or the collective identity of a particular group, and essentially 'different' and 'separate' from each other (Heller 2006; Jaffe 2007). At the same time, we have also documented an alternative ideological formation—that manifests itself, for example, in discourses of plurilingual identities and competencies or 'polycentric' and 'polynomic' languages and language practices (Zarate, Levy, and Kramsch 2008; Jaffe 2009; Pietikäinen 2010). Also, as Bakhtin (1981) suggests, language can be imagined in terms of coexisting socio-ideological ways of speaking that, on one hand, emerge in a situated fashion, but, on the other, echo the past history. This heteroglossic perspective sees language as a practice, highlighting its expressive and communicative functions as opposed to linguistic form (cf. Dufva 2004; Heller 2006; Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Pennycook 2010). It can be argued that this perspective also captures the experiences of many multilingual