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LANGUAGE ECOLOGY AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

An ecological approach to language in society requires investigation of the relationship of languages to each other, to the speakers of those languages, and to the social structures in the society in which the languages are spoken (Creese and Martin, 2003). These relationships are visible in the ways in which languages are used, and in social actors' attitudes to, and beliefs about, languages. Relationships between languages and their speakers, and languages and societal structures, are subject to their social, political and historical contexts. Language ecologies include the discourse which constructs values and beliefs about languages at state, institutional, national and global levels. That is, ecologies of languages may be better understood when complemented with discussion of ideologies of language.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

In developing the notion of language ecology, Haugen (1972) argued that the ecology of a language is partly psychological, partly sociological, and is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others. Haugen viewed language ecology as a natural extension of the kind of study pursued in the name of psycholinguistics, ethnolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and the sociology of language. Haugen defined language ecology as the study of interactions between any given language and its environment, and considered that what was necessary was an analysis of the effect of the social and psychological situation of each language. Haugen saw the value of the language ecology model in the requirement to describe not only the social and psychological situation of a language, but also the effect of this situation on the language itself.

Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001, p. 3) argue that the ecological metaphor is useful in illuminating 'the diversity of inhabitants of an ecology', and 'the functional interrelationships between the inhabitants of an ecology'. Fill and Mühlhäusler suggest that the ecological metaphor contributes to our understanding of the diversity of inhabitants in an ecology, the factors that sustain that diversity, the housekeeping that is needed, and the interrelationships between the inhabitants of an ecology. These

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early developments in the field of language ecology contributed to the development of research theory and method in language policy and planning, linguistic human rights, and language ideologies. It is to the latter of these features of the ecological metaphor that this chapter centrally attends. However, in reviewing major contributions to the field I also briefly consider language policy and planning, and linguistic human rights, as these fields of research are not easily separable from discussions of language ideologies.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

Hornberger (2003a) notes that scholars are increasingly turning to the metaphor of ecology to discuss language planning, teaching, and learning in multilingual settings. Hornberger cogently argues that multilingual language policies are about opening up ideological and implementational space in the environment for as many languages as possible to evolve and flourish rather than disappear. In the language ecology paradigm multilingualism is viewed as a resource rather than as a problem. Hornberger (2002, 2003a, b) focuses on three key aspects of the language ecology metaphor: language evolution, language environment, and language endangerment. She argues that languages, like living species, evolve, grow, change, live, and die in relation to other languages and in relation to their environment, and some languages, like some species, may be endangered. For Hornberger the language ecology movement has a practical role to play in contributing to the survival of endangered languages. Summarising the language ecology metaphor, Hornberger suggests that languages are understood to live and evolve in an ecosystem along with other languages, to interact with their socio-political, economic and cultural environments, and to become endangered if there is inadequate environmental support for them in relation to other languages in the ecosystem (2003b, p. 323). Hornberger (2002) extends the concept of ecology of language to the field of language planning, pointing out that the ecology of language metaphor underpins a multilingual approach to language planning and policy. In this paradigm, language policy and planning aims to maintain and cultivate languages and cultures, from a linguistic human rights perspective. Ricento (2000, p. 208) suggests that the jury is still out on the question of whether the ecology of languages paradigm will emerge as the most important conceptual framework for language policy and planning research. What Ricento argues, however, is that language policy and planning research must deal with issues of language behaviour and identity at the micro, individual level, as well as at the level of macro investigations.

Often linked to language ecology is the linguistic human rights movement. Similarly exploring the relationships of languages to their environment, and to each other, scholars in linguistic human rights have focused explicitly on the rights of indigenous peoples and various dominated groups, including linguistic minorities (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1997; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, A Human Rights Perspective on Language Ecology, Volume 9). Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1997, p. 39) propose that the ecology of language paradigm is characterised by a human rights perspective, and a commitment to equality in communication, multilingualism, maintenance of languages and cultures, protection of national sovereignties, and promotion of foreign language education. Here Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas argue that what is needed, in place of policies that extend the global expansion of dominant languages such as English, is an ecology of language perspective which embraces all languages. In the present volume, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson point to the following core elements of linguistic human rights: positive identification with a minority language by its users, learning a minority language in education, additive bilingual education, and public services. They argue that a balanced linguistic ecology does not allow some languages to spread at the cost of others. In such an ecology, linguistic diversity is maintained 'for the long-term survival of humankind' (p. 4). Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson make the point that there are correlations between biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity, and that small indigenous languages should be protected in order to transmit knowledge about the maintenance of delicate ecosystems. They make the case that biodiversity, linguistic diversity and cultural diversity can be conflated in the term 'biocultural diversity', which is essential for long-term planetary survival.

Language Ideology and National Identity

Language ideologies include the values, practices and beliefs associated with language use by speakers, and the discourse that constructs values and beliefs at state, institutional, national and global levels. Recently, studies of multilingualism in societies have drawn attention to the social positioning, partiality, contestability, instability and mutability of the ways in which language uses and beliefs are linked to relations of power and political arrangements in societies (Blackledge, 2005; Blackledge and Pavlenko, 2002; Blommaert, 1999; Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998a, b; Gal, 1998; Gal and Woolard, 1995; Heller, 1995, 1999; Kroskrity, 1998; Woolard, 1998). Attitudes to, and beliefs about, language, are often not only about language. Gal and Woolard (1995) persuasively argue that ideologies that appear to be about language

are often about political systems, while ideologies that seem to be about political theory are often implicitly about linguistic practices and beliefs. Debates about language are therefore not about language alone (Woolard, 1998), but are socially situated and tied to questions of identity and power in societies.

Language ideologies are positioned in, and subject to, their social, political and historical contexts. Nor are language ideologies always fixed, stable, or immutable. They may be multiple, and influenced by changes at local, national, state and global levels. Moreover, language ideologies are often contested, and become symbolic battlegrounds on which broader debates over race, state and nation are played out. However, to say that language ideologies are contested and changeable over time is not to assert that they are necessarily always negotiable. As I have suggested elsewhere (Blackledge and Pavlenko, 2001; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004a), there is often a dynamic tension between identities asserted and chosen by the self, and identities asserted and chosen for the individual by state, nation or institution.

In public discourse, language often becomes inseparably associated with a territorially bounded identity in a relationship that takes language, territory, and identity to be isomorphic (Freeland and Patrick, 2004). One implication of this is that ideally the nation should be monolingual, with adherence to another language often (mis)read as a lack of loyalty to the national identity. Claims to minority language rights effectively challenge the very basis on which states are founded, in demanding the institutionalisation of diversity. Nation-states are not founded on 'objective' criteria, such as the possession of a single language. Rather, they have to be 'imagined' as communities (Anderson, 1983, Billig, 1995). Billig (1995, p. 29) argues that the creation of a national hegemony often involves a hegemony of language. However, it is not sufficient to say that speakers of the same language belong to the same nation-state. This common-sense understanding of the relationship between language and nation ignores the diversity and variety of the language(s) spoken within many states. As Rampton's (1995) work has made clear, even the notion of a single 'English' language is an over-simplification, as new varieties emerge from different cultural and social contexts.

A relatively recent construct, national identities gained particular importance with the appearance of nation-states, the fundamental unit of world political organisation, since a nation in a modern sense cannot exist without a shared sense of identity (Anderson, 1983). However, even though nation-state boundaries may be clearly defined, national identities are far from unproblematic. Nations are ideological creations, caught up in the historical processes of nationhood (Billig, 1995). Billig argues that national identity is constantly being discursively

'flagged', with "banal words, jingling in the ears of the citizens, or passing before their eyes" (1995, p. 93). Words which reproduce dominant ideologies of nationalism are banal because they are familiar, routine, habitual, and hardly noticed. "Small words" offer constant but hardly conscious reminders of national identity.

The notion of a 'nation' carries the meanings both of the nation-state, and the nation of people living within the state. Of course, not all of the people living in a state view themselves as each others' equals. Nor do all inhabitants of a particular nation-state, or a particular state, see themselves—or each other—as a part of the dominant national identity narrative. I have previously (Blackledge, 2002) suggested that in Britain the media frequently constructs an oppositional national identity at the expense of some of the country's citizens and non-citizen residents. Furthermore, national identities and narratives may change within the span of one generation when nation-states collapse or redefine their boundaries and political allegiances, as happened in the case of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, or Hong Kong, or when ethnic mobilisation comes into play, as in Canada in the 1960s (Heller, 1992). In this case, the inhabitants of a particular place have to struggle with redefining their own allegiances and identities within the new range of options—including linguistic ones—offered to them. In some cases, local, religious, ethnic or alternative national identities may override those offered by the state. For instance, due to the dominance of ideologies steeped in Islam, many citizens of Arab countries may feel they belong to an Arab nation rather than to a nation defined by their state (Barbour, 2000). Billig points out that "The battle for nationhood is a battle for hegemony, by which a part claims to speak for the whole nation and to represent the national essence" (1995, p. 27). The achievement of national hegemony is well illustrated by the triumph of official national languages and the suppression of rivals.

While national identities can be negotiated in a variety of ways, current research privileges language and literacy policies as increasingly important means of social control which allow nation-states to define 'who is in' and 'who is out'. Bourdieu argues that the official language is bound up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social uses: "It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language" (1991, p. 45). In order for one language to impose itself as the only legitimate one, the linguistic market has to be unified and the different languages (and dialects) of the people measured practically against the legitimate language:

> Integration into a single 'linguistic community', which is a product of the political domination that is endlessly reproduced

> by institutions capable of imposing universal recognition of the dominant language, is the condition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 46)

This linking of language, literacy, and national identity happens in a number of sites which include language planning, standardisation, educational policy, citizenship testing, and language instruction for immigrants (Blackledge, 2005; Stevenson, 2006). Recent work on language testing for citizenship has demonstrated that in a broad range of national contexts particular languages and language varieties become gatekeeping devices to determine who is permitted to become a member of the community of citizens (Blackledge, 2005; Mar-Molinero, 2006; Maryns and Blommaert, 2006; Stevenson, 2006).

Another, related way to impose national identities is through educational policies that decide which languages are to be employed—and thus legitimised—in the public school system. Recent research has clearly documented the interpenetration of the ideological with the local, in institutional, nationalist, and political dimensions. When a language is symbolically linked to national identity, the bureaucratic nation-state faced with a multilingual population may exhibit 'monolingualising tendencies' (Heller, 1995, p. 374). Heller's (1995, 1999) study of a Francophone school in Ontario observed tensions between the monolingual ideology of the school, and the language use and ideologies of at least some of its students, and found that some of the students resisted the linguistic ideology of the school. Also, in a school which was concerned with using French to resist the domination of English, students set up their resistance to the school through the very language which was oppressing them. Pavlenko (2002) demonstrates that when monolingualism in English emerged as an emblem of American national identity following World War I, this ideology resulted in laws, which delegitimised the use of languages other than English in the public school system in 34 states. The historical approach exemplified in Pavlenko's work is crucial to a critical understanding of how language ideologies are produced and reproduced. May (2005) argues that the question of language rights should be addressed in the context of the fact that the establishment of state-mandated or national languages is a deliberate political act, and one that clearly advantages some individuals and groups at the expense of others. That is, issues of language rights can better be understood when viewed through a language ideological lens.

WORK IN PROGRESS

May (2004, 2005) acknowledges post-structuralist research which proposes that for some individuals and groups language may not be a

defining feature of identity, but argues that for others it may indeed be a salient feature. If identities are now theorised as multiple, hybrid, and contingent, they nevertheless are clearly important features of identity claims for some individuals and groups. If the loss of a particular language is not necessarily the end of the world for a particular ethnic identity, for some individuals and groups language certainly *is* a key ideological battleground in the assertion of identities. We can hardly argue theoretically that for students who died protesting the right to establish Bengali as the national language of East Pakistan in 1952, language was not a key feature of identity. There are of course many other examples in present-day Europe. May (2005, p. 330) points out that in these conflicts 'particular languages clearly *are* for many people an important and constitutive factor of their individual, and at times, collective identities'. May (2004, p. 43) argues elsewhere that while theoretically language may be just one of many markers of identity, in practice it is much more than that, as 'the link between language and identity encompasses both significant cultural and political dimensions'. Identities are inevitably mediated in and through languages, which (whether we like it or not) come to be associated with particular ethnic and/or national characteristics. Of course, some languages and language varieties are important for speakers' identities without national or ethnic associations.

May argues that Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990, 1998) provides a useful way of understanding relations between language(s) and ethnicities. The relation between *habitus* and *field* creates the conditions in which existing shared self-evidences are produced and reproduced. In this context, 'self-evidences' are those apparently common-sense misrecognitions which constantly construct and reinforce hegemonic ideologies. This process of *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu, 1998, 2000), of production and reproduction of common-sense consensus, occurs in discourses in the media, education, politics, the economy, and the law, to mention only institutional contexts. Language ideologies contribute to the production and reproduction of social difference, constructing some languages and varieties as of greater worth than other languages and varieties. This process can only succeed when, in the 'institutionalised circle of collective misrecognition' (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 153), dominant and dominated groups alike accept the greater value of certain languages and varieties.

Bourdieu's representation of the symbolic value of one language or language variety above others rests on his notion that a symbolically dominated group is complicit in the misrecognition, or valorisation, of that language or variety. The official language or standard variety becomes the language of hegemonic institutions because the dominant and the subordinated group both misrecognise it as a superior language.

For Bourdieu, this misrecognition of the arbitrary nature of the legitimacy of the dominant language (and culture) 'contributes towards reproducing existing power relations' (1977, p. 30). Irvine and Gal (2000) note that there are striking similarities in the ways ideologies misrecognise differences among linguistic practices in different contexts, often identifying linguistic varieties with 'typical' persons and activities and accounting for the differentiation among them. In these processes, the linguistic behaviours of others are simplified and are seen as deriving from speakers' character or moral virtue, rather than from historical accident or evolution. Irvine and Gal offer the example of nineteenth-century Macedonia, which was unusually multilingual, with language use not falling within expected ethnic boundaries. Outsiders thus positioned Macedonians as untrustworthy, since apparently shifting linguistic allegiances were construed as shifting political allegiances and unreliable moral commitments. The official language, or standard variety, often comes to be misrecognised as having greater moral, aesthetic and/or intellectual worth than contesting languages or varieties (Blackledge, 2005; Bokhorst-Heng, 1999; Heller, 1999; Jaffe, 1999; Schieffelin and Doucet, 1998; Spitulnik, 1998; Watts, 1999). In Bourdieu's terms, those who are not speakers of the official language or standard variety are subject to symbolic domination, as they believe in the legitimacy of that language or variety, and 'Symbolic power is misrecognised as (and therefore transformed into) legitimate power' (1991, p. 170).

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES

The discussion so far has more-or-less assumed that the 'ecology' metaphor is an appropriate one to account for and understand linguistic diversity and its relation to speakers of languages and powerful structures in society. However, Freeland and Patrick (2004) convincingly argue that whereas the biological metaphor implies that languages are 'species' or objects in the world, the focus of linguists is better targeted at the speakers of those languages, and the complex social, political and cultural practices for which they use them. Freeland and Patrick suggest that if the parallel between languages and species is to be taken as a real reason for preserving languages and as a basis for developing policy, its identification of linguistic elements as kinds of biological elements must be made more plausible (2004, p. 9). They suggest that the metaphor which likens languages to species, endangered languages to endangered species, and linguistic diversity to biological diversity, has become naturalised due to the dominant discourse which views languages as discrete objects. Ricento (2006, p. 46) argues that while linguistic diversity is a fact, analogies between biological ecosystems and

linguistic ecosystems break down very quickly on close inspection. Among other differences, language contact, shift and loss are not comparable to, nor do they involve, species extinction. Ricento suggests that such an analogy weakens the credibility of linguistic ecology as a model to resist the increasing dominance of global languages such as English.

While acknowledging that there are useful links to be made between linguistic diversity and biological diversity, Freeland and Patrick suggest that the 'invasion' of a linguistic habitat by an alien language-as-species need not be harmful to that environment. The dominant, 'host' language is (or should be) as open to change as dominated, minority languages. There is no intrinsic reason why cultural and linguistic change and adaptation should always be from a minority language/culture to a majority one (May, 2004). Freeland and Patrick argue that the 'conservation' approach, rather than countering oppressive practices, may act to restrict the social, economic and even geographical mobility of those who are tied to a linguistic niche which is subject to consistent discrimination. That is, it may not inevitably be the case that speakers of minority, marginalised languages wish to continue to be speakers of these languages. The argument that speaking a minority language rather than the majority language constrains the social mobility of the speaker is well-rehearsed, and is certainly quite convincing. However, May (2005) points out that speakers of minority languages are often also from ethnic minority groups, and are also subject to discrimination other than linguistic. Furthermore, to simply accept that social mobility is constrained by speaking minority languages is to accept rather than challenge this hegemonic situation. It is not inevitable that speaking minority languages in some public settings must disadvantage the speaker, even if it is usually the case at present.

May (2004) points out that while the ecology metaphor may be useful to highlight the seriousness of language loss, it potentially reinforces the view that the loss of languages is an inevitable part of social and linguistic evolution. As a result the wider political power relations which underlie language loss are lost from view: 'Language loss is not only, perhaps not even primarily, a linguistic issue—it has much more to do with power, prejudice, (unequal) competition and, in many cases, overt discrimination and subordination'. (May, 2004, p. 37). Inequalities are fundamentally social rather than linguistic. This view of course acknowledges that discrimination and prejudice are constructed and constituted in language, but proposes that arguments about which languages are validated in a society are often about more than languages alone. Some languages, and therefore the speakers of those languages, are discriminated against by speakers of majority/dominant languages. This process is powerful precisely because some

languages and varieties are misrecognised (by minority and majority groups alike) as being of greater value than others. More powerful socioeconomic groups frequently discriminate against those of lower status. When speakers of some languages are not able to activate their linguistic and cultural resources in some societal settings, the effect is one of both symbolic and material violence. Languages do not start out equal, and speakers of languages do not start out equal. Where speakers of minority languages are unable to access resources because their languages (and therefore they) are discriminated against, it is about more than the diversity of the inhabitants of an ecological system, it is a matter of social justice.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This chapter has argued that in many Western countries a dominant ideology is constantly produced and reproduced which positions the majority language (usually English) as the only language of communication in institutional and other public contexts. Minority languages associated with immigrant groups are, as Bourdieu put it, rejected into indignity (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 46). Minority languages which have historically been associated with particular ethnic identities often continue to be important for particular groups (May, 2004), but have little capital in majority-language markets. Very often, multilingual societies that apparently tolerate or promote heterogeneity in fact undervalue or appear to ignore the linguistic diversity of their populace. An apparently liberal orientation to equality of opportunity for all may mask an ideological drive towards homogeneity, a drive which potentially marginalises or excludes those who either refuse, or are unwilling, to conform.

Gal (2006, p. 15) argues that in powerful discourse monolingualism is often taken to be the natural state of human life. Furthermore, named languages are taken to be homogeneous, and to be expressions of the distinct spirit of a particular group. In this sense, where linguistic practices conform to certain norms and standards, they are effective in legitimating political arrangements. However, Gal also points out that in Europe a new elite of multilingual speakers (e.g. French, German and English) sustains a breadth of linguistic repertoires which transcends national boundaries. For such groups ethnolinguistic identity may be only an occasional issue. For multilingual speakers of languages with lower status, however, language issues may still be salient as people attempt to negotiate identities, often from relatively powerless positions.

As suggested earlier, however, language ideologies are neither simple nor monolithic. Notwithstanding the argument that minority

language speakers are subject to the symbolic violence of the dominant language ideology, some speakers who (or whose families) may traditionally have been associated with minority 'ethnic' languages are using language and languages in new ways (Rampton, 1995; 1999). While some speakers are either unable to negotiate their identities from inextricably powerless positions, and others in powerful positions have no need to do so, some speakers in modern nation-states are using their sophisticated linguistic skills to negotiate new subject positions (see also Blackledge and Pavlenko, 2001; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). In what Gal (2006, p. 27) describes as 'self-conscious, anti-standardizing moves', such negotiations may include linguistic practices which reframe previous standard varieties, incorporating, *inter alia*, urban popular cultural forms, minority linguistic forms, hybridities and inventions. Here language practices associated with immigrant groups no longer represent backward-looking traditions, but may be linked to global youth culture and urban sophistication. Languages and language practices are not necessarily equated to national identity (but may be so), and are not necessarily dominated by the standardised variety. Despite powerful ideologies of homogeneity, populations in many countries—especially countries with a history of recent immigration—continue to be heterogeneous in their practices. May (2005) proposes that linguistic identities need not be oppositional, and asks 'what exactly is wrong with linguistic complementarity?' (p. 337). May calls for further ethnographic studies that articulate and exemplify the broad linguistic principles of language ideological research in complex multilingual contexts. An example of such work is the recent and ongoing research by Creese and Martin (2006a, b) and their collaborators, which provides illustrative accounts of the complementarity of languages in 'complementary schools' in urban Britain.

Stevenson and Mar-Molinero (2006) call for more critical examination of language policies which emerge from and contribute to the contradictions between monolingual ideologies and multilingual practices. In discussing language ideologies in contexts of modernity which include transnationalism and mass immigration, there is certainly a need for such rigour. At the same time, further studies are required which critically analyse the complexity and diversity of the multilingual practices of children, young people and teachers in and out of educational settings, and of their attitudes, values and beliefs about language. Through such studies, we can come to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship of languages to each other, to the speakers of those languages, and to the social structures in the society in which the languages are spoken.

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