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1

Managing and Maintaining Minority Languages in the Era of Globalization: Challenges for Europe and Australia

Anne Pauwels

The University of Western Australia

Globalization, transnational movement and linguistic diversity

Whilst economic forces have been the primary drivers of globalization, socio-political changes as well as technical developments have contributed to shaping and speeding up the process. These included the political changes affecting Eastern Europe with the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, the strengthening and expansion of the European Union, to name some northern hemisphere examples. The rapid expansion and increasing sophistication of communication technologies and means of transportation further assisted the process of globalization by facilitating virtual and actual transnational movement. With the mass production of communication software, a much greater number of people can communicate cheaper, more often, faster and in more diverse ways with people around the globe. These developments are likely to impact also on the ways in which transnational movers, that is migrants, refugees and other sojourners, keep in touch with their home or former communities. Similarly long-distance travel has become within reach of many more people on a more frequent basis. This has impacted on migration and settlement patterns. For example, there is greater evidence of transnational movement and mobility by 'migrating' people who perhaps 20 years ago would have settled in a new environment with limited travel to and from their previous country. Since the late 1990s, migration scholars (e.g., Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Castles, 2000; Vertovec, 1999) have started to focus more on the *transnational* aspect of

migration examining not only adaptation processes to the new society, but also the maintenance of social relations and connections with the 'home' country thus investigating migrant lives across international borders (e.g., Baldassar, 2001). This change in transnational movement and migration does not only affect the 'professional' sector of migrants, but also the unskilled, manual and even illegal sector (Koser, 2001).

With globalization becoming or being the buzzword of the new millennium, it is not surprising that the academy has become involved in its critical study. Language and linguistic scholarship have not been immune from this focus. The period from the mid-1980s to 2005 have seen an expansion in studies examining the role of English in the process of globalization, the status of English as a global language and the impact of this development on the status, function and sometimes 'survival' of other languages in the world. Particularly contested and controversial are the investigations of the role of English in the globalizing process with scholars taking up radically different positions ranging from a belief that English was incidental to the process (Crystal, 1997) to views of linguistic imperialism (Philipson, 1992) and linguistic hegemony (Pennycook, 1994). Furthermore, if English continues its ascendancy as the global lingua franca, we may see a steep increase in the study of English as a second or foreign language possibly impacting on the study of other (foreign) languages. To date this trend is already visible in many European countries where English is becoming the first foreign language to be studied displacing languages like French and German. Other areas of language study, which are clearly affected by this development, include the study of multilingualism and linguistic diversity as well as that of language policy. For example, there is a need to examine thoroughly the impact of improved and cheaper transportation modes and communication technologies on the language maintenance efforts of migrants and other sojourners.

Investigating the 'threat' to linguistic diversity by the expanding role of English is also starting to shape the study of multilingualism. This is a question of examining situations not only where English is in direct contact with other languages, but also where English poses an indirect 'threat' to linguistic diversity. An example of the latter involves English acquiring functions previously held solely by the national language (e.g., as a major language of education, business and trade). This could put pressure on the national status of that language which may try to recapture its preferred status by curbing the use and functions of other languages used in the community and country. Most affected by these worldwide developments (e.g., globalization, global movements, 'global' terrorism) as well

as regional trends (e.g., the expansion of the EU, the 'demise' of the Soviet Union) is of course the field of language policy and planning as its *raison d'être* is the study of the management of language and communication issues and problems. Applied linguistic scholars of language planning and policy continue to be at the forefront of identifying the issues, alerting and advising agencies and polities on language management matters as well as critically analysing and commenting on various policy developments and decisions. It is within this context that a group of Australian and European scholars working on language policy, language maintenance and multilingualism gathered in Perth in June 2003 to discuss the impact of some of these developments and trends in their respective spheres of operation: Australia, Europe and specific entities within Europe.

Australian and European scholars working together on minority language policies in a globalizing world

The Perth symposium continued as well as renewed the long-standing dialogue and collaboration that Australian and European scholars have had in relation to the study of language contact, linguistic diversity and the management thereof. In the past, such exchanges have focused on linguistic demography, on the analysis of language contact phenomena such as code-switching, on language maintenance efforts and on specific aspects of language policy. This affinity between Australian and European scholars is not surprising given the historical links between the two continents with regard to language. Until the late twentieth century, Europe was the main provider of immigrants to Australia shaping its linguistic diversity to a large extent. Although the period from the mid-1980s to 2005 have seen a shift from an Australian language scene dominated by European languages to one in which Asian and Middle Eastern languages are more prevalent (see Chapter 2), the latest Census data (2001) continue to show the presence of many European languages including Italian (still the most widely spoken European language other than English today), Greek, German, Polish, Dutch, the languages of the former Yugoslavia, Czech and Slovak as well as Frisian, Basque, Norwegian, Latvian and Lithuanian. Furthermore, Australian language policy practitioners such as Joseph Lo Bianco have strengthened this relationship by being actively involved in language planning and policy initiatives in Europe (see Chapter 5).

Although the symposium focused mostly on the challenges faced by Australia, the EU and some of its constituent parts in the light of globalization and other large-scale socio-political developments, it is

inevitable that comparisons are made of how these different polities react in terms of worldwide developments. Comparing European and Australian language policies is a problematic exercise as stated by Joseph Lo Bianco (see Chapter 5) not least because of the very different nature of the respective polities. Australia is a sovereign national (federated) polity whereas Europe, though moving towards some form of political union, is still made up of many sovereign national states. This fundamental difference affects the processes of policy-making and policy implementation, as is demonstrated in the contributions by Guus Extra, Joseph Lo Bianco and Peter Nelde. More useful comparisons continue to be those made between Australia and specific states within Europe as has been done by Sally Boyd in her comparison of language policy developments in Sweden and Australia. Nevertheless, Europe and Australia both face the challenges of globalization and of changing patterns in transnational movements which demand linguistic responses and adjustments. Comparing how these 'polities' deal with these challenges is the topic of this collection: it is a valuable exercise, which furthers insights into the complexities of language planning and language policy.

Common challenges: Australia–Europe

Linguistic demography data

Fundamental to any examination of multilingualism and subsequent planning or policy initiatives is access to data documenting the linguistic diversity of a particular entity, region or community. Having access to data, let alone accurate or optimal data, about linguistic diversity continues to be a major challenge for most nations, states or supranational bodies. Although researchers (see Chapters 2 and 3) have highlighted some of the problems surrounding the collection of language data through a national Census in Australia, there is no doubt that Australian language researchers have been fortunate in having been able to use a national survey (Census) since 1976 to detail the linguistic demography of Australia. Sandra Kipp's contribution to this book clearly demonstrates the immense resource that this type of data collection has been for understanding as well as planning multilingualism in Australia. To date, European scholars have been less well equipped to work on linguistic demography: collection of language data at European level is not yet a reality although information on population figures in EU member states can be obtained from the Statistical Office of the EU in Luxembourg (*EuroStat*). At the level of individual countries,

the situation is very disparate with some countries such as Belgium opposing the inclusion of a language question in national census surveys (see Chapter 4) and others only collecting information about particular groups. Indeed the contributions by Tove Bull, Sally Boyd and Guus Extra show the disparities in data available on speakers of minority languages. Furthermore, it also shows that language information on non-European immigrant groups is particularly scant. Extra's contribution provides some suggestions for improving collection of language data.

Educational provisions for minority languages and minority language speakers

Central to language management and planning is the way in which the polity or state deals with speakers of minority languages in the educational domain. Does the state recognize the need to provide assistance to these inhabitants, and if so what is the nature of that assistance and who can access it? The contributions to this book provide a rich palette of approaches to these questions in relation to Australia (Boyd, Lo Bianco, Pauwels, Winter and Pauwels) and several states in Europe including Norway (Bull), Sweden (Boyd, Extra), Scotland (Lo Bianco), Belgium (Extra, Nelde), France (Extra), Germany (Extra, Nelde), the Netherlands and Spain (Extra). The European contributions show clearly that the treatment of minority languages in education aligns with the status assigned to these languages at both national and European level: for example, minority languages covered and protected by the European *Charter for regional or minority languages* and the *Framework convention for the protection of national minorities* have more (consistent) coverage in education and are better provided for than those of immigrant minorities, especially if the latter are of non-European origin. In fact, Bull points out that in the context of Norway there is definitely a hierarchical principle governing the treatment of languages and especially minority languages, which places the immigrant languages at the bottom of the pile. This is in contrast to Australia where the status and plight of indigenous languages (Australian Aboriginal Languages) are very precarious with limited maintenance or revival programmes available in schools. In Australia hierarchies of languages in education also exist and have been subject to both drastic and subtle changes since the post-Second World War period. Joanne Winter and Anne Pauwels document four dominant institutional voices that have regulated and/or guided language education initiatives in Australia vis-à-vis immigrant community languages.

A similarity between Australia and Europe lies in the policy and scholarly preoccupation with educational provisions for minority/community languages at the primary and/or secondary level of schooling. Anne Pauwels discusses how tertiary (university) education in Australia has largely ignored its potential to play a significant role in community language education (especially from a language maintenance perspective) and makes some suggestions how this role could be actualized. A similar observation could be made for Europe where significant provisions are made at tertiary level to enable students to acquire competence in another language of the EU through studying in another EU country (e.g., Erasmus programme). However, such educational programs are not extended to cover non-EU languages or the many non-European immigrant languages.

The 'threat' or dominance of English as a global language

Both continents need to face the challenges that the increasing spread of English as the global lingua franca places on their management of languages. Of course, the challenges differ between those states that have English as their dominant (official and/or national) language and those in which it has the status of 'foreign' language. For Australia, the United Kingdom and Ireland the growing global importance of English places further stress on promoting policies and making provisions for the study of other – community or foreign – languages. Australia's language policies continue to stress the relevance and importance for all Australians of learning another language, and there is evidence that since the introduction of the National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco, 1987) the teaching of 'other' languages (community or foreign) has expanded both in terms of number of languages available for study and the number of students undertaking language study. However, the commitment of resources to maintain this level of participation has been reduced in real terms and has often become restricted to specific types of languages and studies (see Chapter 8). Furthermore, the number of students undertaking the study of another language past the compulsory stage continues to be disappointing. In fact, since the removal of a (foreign) language requirement for university entry in the 1960s, the percentage of secondary school students studying another language in their final year of schooling has hovered around 14 per cent. This compares with approximately 40 per cent of final-year students undertaking language study in the 1960s. The situation of foreign and community language learning in the British Isles could be

viewed as even less encouraging than in Australia. Despite Ireland's and the United Kingdom's membership of the EU the number of students participating in as well as the number of schools offering study in one of the EU languages continues to be low (for details, see e.g., Chapter 5; Nuffield, 2000). In addition, the rich linguistic diversity including both indigenous regional and immigrant languages which characterizes the British and Irish population is not reflected in its language offerings: only a few of the immigrant languages are available for study at A levels. In Lo Bianco's chapter, the paucity of choice in language learning in Scotland is exposed.

The challenges posed by the 'globalization' of English for European countries without English as dominant language and for the EU itself are multiple. At the level of the EU the frequent and possibly dominant use of English as a lingua franca and as working language outside the 'official' arenas of the Parliament, Council and Commission causes concern among some European member states, in particular France and Germany (see Chapter 4). The dominance of English in the 'foreign' language learning arena is seen as particularly complex: Extra's contribution outlines this complexity very well. In 1995, the European Commission opted for trilingualism as a policy goal for all European citizens. Apart from their 'mother tongue', each citizen should learn at least two other 'community' languages. Although not made explicit it was understood that the concept of 'mother tongue' referred to the *national* languages of the particular nation states and that the concept of 'community languages' similarly referred to the *national* languages of other EU member states. Later European Commission documents mentioned the importance of one of the two languages to be learnt by each citizen to be a language with high international prestige: although English was not named explicitly there was sufficient room for the interpretation that this statement referred predominantly to English. The Euro-Barometer figures on foreign languages confirm the dominance of English as the leading first foreign language studied by Europeans (32 per cent): this is far ahead of other languages such as French, German, Spanish and Italian. Currently the number of Europeans who know a second 'foreign' language is still very low (approximately 2 per cent). If English continues to dominate in the category of first foreign language studied and the number of students taking up a second foreign language remains low, then there is no doubt that the multilingual profile and capacity of Europeans will suffer.

Boyd's chapter alerts to another potential threat posed by English: the threat of English encroaching on language functions formerly

reserved for the national and/or majority language. She notes that in 1997 the Swedish Language Council published a report documenting the status of Swedish as part of its expanding role, that is from an agency concerned with corpus planning to one which also involves itself in status planning. Boyd identifies the global spread of English as one of the main triggers for this investigation: unlike the *Académie Française* which considers English loanwords in French problematic, the Swedish Language Council is not perturbed by this phenomenon but expresses concern about 'domain' loss for Swedish, that is the use of English is expanding rapidly in domains such as education (mainly tertiary), politics (especially relating to the EU), business/trade as well as the media, entertainment and through new communication technologies. Boyd reports that some members even think that this expansion may reduce Swedish to a 'home language' and ultimately to a language inadequate for use in high status and high profile domains. This sentiment about English posing a threat to the status of national languages is also expressed in countries like Norway (see Chapter 7), Denmark and the Netherlands. There is clearly a need for more research, in particular to study the extent of this 'intrusion' of English and its possible consequences not only for the national majority language, but also for the other languages spoken in a country.

Language planning in the future: Australia and Europe

With respect to future language planning, the challenges for Europe and Australia may indeed be very different. At this stage Australia is unlikely to change dramatically in political terms. There continues to be talk of Australia becoming a republic but that transition is unlikely to affect language policy matters in a significant way. Language policy and planning in Australia are driven primarily by social and economic factors and policies. The period from the mid-1970s to 2005 have shown that changes in these impact on the linguistic landscape and the language policies of Australia as documented in the chapters by Kipp, Boyd, Lo Bianco, Winter and Pauwels. These changes have not been very dramatic resulting in a reversal or a major upset in the hierarchy of languages in Australia. The supremacy of English as national, dominant and official language has not been, or is, not under threat. The impact is felt more within the category of immigrant community languages where the position and status of certain languages may increase or decrease depending on socio-political changes as well as economic movements both 'at

home' and 'on the world stage'. The rapidly increasing transnational mobility mentioned above opens up new avenues for the maintenance and even increased use of immigrant languages especially in the case of the second generation (children of migrants) (see Chapter 9).

For Europe the immediate future challenges for language planning and language management are likely to be of a magnitude not seen for a long time. This is due in part to the continuing substantial intra-European political changes and alignments. Peter Nelde's contribution outlines many of these challenges and also offers ways of managing linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Europe by proposing a pan-European language policy premised on maintaining bilingualism.

Although this book is focused on language policy and practices vis-à-vis minority languages in Europe and Australia, its contributors highlight a number of propositions and conditions which language planners in other regions or polities could benefit from in their planning exercises. As such, this book transcends the boundaries of Australia and Europe and provides some lenses on the managing of minority languages in transnational contexts.

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