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1

Introduction: Central Europe as a Multilingual Space

Patrick Stevenson and Jenny Carl

Where *is* Central Europe? Or indeed, where is the centre of Europe? These are rather different questions, but they are equally problematic. Posing either question presupposes the possibility and availability of an answer, but this in turn suggests the existence of discrete spaces and places that can be identified, demarcated and designated. Stanisław Mucha's documentary film *Die Mitte* (2004), in which he travels the length and breadth of Europe in search of an answer to the second of these questions, shows at one level the futility of such a quest – not because he finds no answers, but because he finds so many. Eschewing attempts to determine a cartographically measurable centre, and ignoring the dictates of cultural traditions that would point to the metropolis of Vienna or Berlin, Prague or Budapest, he unearths claimants in unlikely locations scattered across six countries: from Hessen, the Teutoburger Wald, Cölbe and Tirschenreuth in Germany through Braunau am Inn in Austria, Krahula in Slovakia, Suchowola, Kutno and Piątek in Poland, Purnuškes and the Mountain of Crosses in Lithuania to Rachiv in Ukraine. However, the journey also opens up perspectives on the meaning of such concepts as 'the centre of Europe' or 'Central Europe' as deriving from discourses that are always both *of* (or *on/about*) and *in* (or *from*) particular places (Blommaert 2005: 223).

The first question – where is Central Europe? – is not about identifying a location at all, but rather about drawing boundaries. A better question might therefore be 'where does Central Europe stop?' Furthermore, this question can be asked independently of the second one, since Central Europe may or may not focus on (or emanate from) a centre. It is a plastic, flexible construct that is not tied to physical, political or historical frontiers, and may not even be a single continuous, uninterrupted space; on the contrary, it is almost endlessly polysemic. Yet its physical

extent is determinable, if at all, in political and historical terms as well as in relation to cultural traditions and human (social and individual) experiences. 'Central' here is apparently to be defined not in opposition to 'peripheral', but to east/west and/or north/south. However, these again are only secondarily geographical dimensions: they are primarily categories that have evolved historically and are conditioned in terms of sedimentations of political, economic and cultural allegiances and conflicts.

These sedimentations arise from a multiplicity of cultural traditions and languages in a space where borders have constantly been changing. During the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nation-states emerged and vanished, they were partitioned, usually as a consequence of war, and were caught between allegiances to the various different and competing, often multinational and multilingual, powers of Prussia, the Habsburg, Russian and Napoleonic empires and later the Soviet Union and – relatively briefly – Nazi Germany. All these powers represented particular linguistic and religious hegemonies as well as patterns of administrative, legal and economic organization, and they demanded to varying degrees allegiance to 'their' values from the countries and people they ruled. Their values, or ideologies, were not originally representative of 'east' or 'west' respectively, but after the end of the Second World War certain patterns became associated with either 'side', so that one way of conceiving of Central Europe, at least until 1989, was the space in which these spheres of influence confronted each other.

As the spheres of influence of these empires shifted, so did administrative and legal borders, but this fluidity – and often contingency – was mostly triggered and accompanied by ideological conflict and often war. The nation-states of Poland, the then Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania (as well as the Baltic and Balkan states, for that matter) emerged from nineteenth-century opposition to those hegemonic powers, and reached independence after the First World War, although for Hungary this 'resettlement' meant that it lost about two thirds of its territory and significant parts of its population in the 1920 Treaty of Trianon.

This period, however, lasted only approximately 20 years until the eve of the Second World War, when Hitler and Stalin rearranged this geographic territory, including the area of what is now western Ukraine. As a consequence of their pact, they abolished the Polish state and divided it between the Soviet and Nazi empires; at the same time Czechoslovakia was annexed by Germany. The Hungarian and

Romanian states, by contrast, remained formally independent and this distinction has proved to be significant for bilateral relations with Germany until the present day. Territorially, formally, these states in Central Europe achieved lasting independence only after 1945, but they then fell under Soviet ideological and military hegemony which lasted until the transformations of 1989. The aftermath of those transformations, however, also signified the end of the 'territorial lid' on Central Europe, which reignited tensions between the Czech and Slovak populations in Czechoslovakia, and 1993 saw the creation of two independent republics, which represents one of the most recent changes to the borders in Central Europe.¹

Moreover, the end of the Cold War meant not only that people in Central Europe embraced the freedoms and promises of western liberal democracies and market economies, but they also abandoned the formerly compulsory learning of Russian in favour of the formerly restricted German and English. Their appeal did not only derive from the fact that English had by then become the world lingua franca of science, economy and entertainment (most notably popular music and film) and that German had a long history of regional cultural and economic ties, but it was also a statement of opposition to the imposed language ideology of 'Russian only' under the communist regimes (see Földes 2002: 341). The influence of and opposition to language ideologies, however, is not a new phenomenon of the post-1989 period; on the contrary, it has played a crucial role in the social, cultural and political development of the region over the last two centuries. This question has been particularly relevant in relation to the position of the German language, and the following chapters all deal with this in some way, either in terms of its present status and contact with other languages or in terms of the legacy of its past. If we consider the historical footprint of the German language, it is clear that it was for a long time the language of power in Central Europe, culminating in the nineteenth century, when it was not only the language of the political elites in the Prussian and Habsburg empires but also the language of trade, advances in science and cultural innovation across the region (see Rindler Schjerve 2003). Speaking German – even without having an ethnic German family background – was considered to be a sign of 'good breeding', whereas the 'native' languages did not possess as much symbolic capital. However, the Herderian ideology of linguistic homogeneity, according to which 'languages' and 'nations' are mutually defining and coterminous and which fuelled nineteenth-century German nationalism (Gardt 2000; Stevenson 2002: 15–24; Gal 2006),

was also enthusiastically embraced by consistent opposition movements in most Central European countries (see Barbour and Carmichael 2000). The linguistic dimension was important for these emerging nationalisms in the struggle against monarchic hegemony, and with growing administrative emancipation laws were passed in several countries which increasingly marginalized German for public purposes (see Maitz and Sándor, this volume) and subsequently changed patterns of language education and transmission to younger generations. None the less, the German language did retain a foothold in the region, even during the communist era when it was the language of one of the sister states (the GDR) and thus a legitimate foreign language that could be learnt at school.

On another level, however, it was also the language of national minorities across Central Europe (see Eichinger et al. 2008). As a result of the frequent shifting of borders linguistic communities and cultural traditions came to straddle nation-states in the form of residual national minorities that were either 'left behind' by the moving borders or displaced or migrated into other, sometimes neighbouring territories. The sizeable Magyar minorities in countries adjacent to the modern Hungarian state are one such case, but the most widely dispersed were the German minorities whose ancestors had migrated within the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg Empire from German lands to Bohemia, Silesia and Hungary among other places from the Middle Ages onwards. When the Central European territories were resettled in the early part of the twentieth century, these residual German populations stayed in their host countries. However, their language was highly concentrated in the domestic and rural spheres, and sometimes also in other sectors such as mining, and was able to survive in these niches even during the twentieth century because it did not pose a challenge to the newly dominant linguistic nationalisms. But then in the aftermath of the Second World War the numbers of members of German minorities in Central European countries were significantly reduced, since people were expelled from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania because of their nationality and their real or alleged association with the Nazi regime. Furthermore, for several years after 1945 it was not opportune, in some places even illegal, to speak German in public. Yet, the language survived in enough places to foster the re-emergence of the demand for learning it after 1989, and many efforts were made (more or less successfully) to rekindle historic cultural ties and linguistic traditions. Very recently, the demand for German has declined, mostly in favour of English, but whereas English is the dominant global language

and as such unrivalled in this area, German is still a significant regional language for economic and cultural relationships (StADaF 2006: 5).

But while the recent enlargements of the European Union, incorporating most of Central Europe, and the deepening of integration in the areas of border control and the movement of people have fostered hopes that intra-European borders would diminish in importance, there is apparently no getting away from national and/or state-oriented conceptions of space in Europe, since even activities and practices that transcend the boundaries of nations or states are defined and categorized precisely in terms of their border-crossing particularity (Meinhof and Galasiński 2005). For this reason, the studies in this book are all in some sense 'located' either within the political, historical and cultural frames constituted by individual states or in the marginal, liminal spaces between them. At the same time, however, it is this constraint that allows the authors of these studies to problematize and explore the apparent stability and fixity of these arbitrary limits.

This question of indeterminate or fuzzy boundaries separating what are conventionally (that is, by arbitrary consensus) perceived as discrete entities is well recognized in linguistics (for a recent critique of the 'invention' of languages, see Makoni and Pennycook 2007; and Horner, this volume). Here, a typical and indeed often asked question might be 'where does German stop?' (see, for example, Barbour and Stevenson 1998: 7-13). Linguistic answers to such questions can only ever be partially adequate and require confirmation through an appeal to the perceptions and interests of language users or to the claims of political authorities, but the answers may then be circular and contestable and therefore inconclusive: 'I speak German and she doesn't, because I'm a German-speaker and she isn't', or 'This land is German-speaking territory because we declare it to be so'. Furthermore, as such declarations suggest, identifying the limits of languages and their legitimate domains entails a presumption of authority based on beliefs about the salience and value of particular linguistic forms (Blommaert 2006: 243).

There is a long tradition of wrestling with these ultimately insoluble riddles, and although the search for answers has been shown to be worth while because of the very uncertainty of the outcome and thus the questioning of previously unchallenged ideas, it is not our intention here to tilt at these particular windmills. The authors contributing to this book work with the convenient fictions of the terms ('Central Europe/Mitteleuropa', 'the German language') that we have cast, in a precautionary way, into doubt. Our collective aim is not to revisit this well-travelled path of enquiry. Rather, we will suspend our disbelief in

the adequacy of such concepts and categories and pursue a different set of questions.

In Central Europe, then, the German language has long played a key role in processes of identification. However, while the historical and contemporary footprint of German across this region underpins all the studies presented here, and is the principal focus of the chapters by Jaworska on Poland and by Maitz and Sándor on Hungary, the main aim of this book as a whole is not to evaluate the role or future prospects of this or any other language. These are issues that have already been extensively researched by many scholars.² Nor is it intended to be representative in its coverage of those parts of Europe where German is in common use: this would, at the very least, have demanded chapters on language use in Austria and Switzerland in addition to those relating to Germany. As the book's title indicates, our perspective is different. Our principal aim is to explore some of the many ways in which language(s) is (are) conscripted into discourses on identity in this region. There are two common strands, with different degrees of emphasis, running through all these discussions. The first is the tension between, on the one hand, the persistence of national – or rather state – frames of reference and concomitant monolingual ideologies in discourses on identity in Europe (Blommaert 2005, 2006), and, on the other hand, a growing pressure – especially at the level of the local politics of personal interaction, but also at the pan-European level of language and cultural policy – towards practices that subvert, challenge or transcend this obstinately anachronistic structure (Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2006). The second is the encounter between German – whether as the dominant, officially legitimated language, as the minority language of migrations (past and present) or as a (potential) regional lingua franca occupying the middle ground between global English and 'national' languages – and other languages (or in one case between different varieties of German).

Thus, the focus on the German language is not an end in itself but a means of showing, by taking different perspectives on language use involving this and other languages in multilingual 'contact zones' (Pratt 1992), some of the ways in which language contributes to contemporary social change in this region, 20 years after it began to be reconfigured following the end of the Cold War. On a still wider level, the book aims to make a contribution to the growing literature on language and globalization (see, for example, Fairclough 2006; Pennycook 2007; Coupland forthcoming; as well as the other books in the *Language and Globalization* series) by demonstrating and investigating local effects of global processes such as migration, transnational cultural production

and institutional communication, and changes in the political economy of regions. The kinds of question driving the studies in the book, therefore, are: What role is the relationship between (speakers of different) languages playing today in the reshaping of societies and communities in this region? How is this relationship articulated in discourses and narratives on language? How is it manifested in individual repertoires and social practices? How is it determined by social and cultural policies, and vice versa?

The more locally focused studies are framed by two chapters that explore issues arising from attempts to shore up and promote the formation of a European identity which remains only weakly articulated and has so far failed to take root in the public consciousness. While questions of economic, social and security policy dominate the political agenda of the EU, they have little purchase on the imagination of individual people, and the institutions charged with developing, debating and implementing policies appear remote and disengaged from the realities of EU citizens' daily lives. Aspirations to enhance social cohesion and integration are not best served through the introduction of a common currency or a shared constitution – on the contrary, the experience of recent years has shown the capacity of such measures to divide rather than unite Europeans – or by regulating the labelling of food or harmonizing the structures of higher education. And as the EU expands incrementally towards a point at which it could become synonymous with Europe, while migration across its external and internal boundaries increases, the challenges of social and cultural diversity inevitably grow. In this context, questions of communication and representation take on greater urgency: how can the institutional centre be brought closer to the people and how can the people be brought closer to each other?

Michał Krzyżanowski opens this discussion by analysing media coverage of the 2004 EU enlargement process from the perspective of the extent to which it included consideration of specific linguistic consequences in particular and of multilingualism within the EU in general. The inauguration in January 2007 of a new portfolio for multilingualism in the European Commission signalled a recognition at this level of the salience of linguistic diversity, and the first incumbent of the new post of Commissioner for Multilingualism, the Romanian Leonard Orban, declared in a speech on 27 April 2007 that multilingualism 'has been, from the very beginning, part of the genetic code of the European Union' (Orban 2007). He has also published a 'political agenda for multilingualism' with the key objective of 'providing access to online information services and EU legislation to citizens *in their own languages*'

(our emphasis),³ and a plethora of reports (most recently by the High Level Group on Multilingualism: see Commission 2007, as well as the Commission's 2008 Communication) has reiterated the strategic necessity of establishing individual multilingual competence as a core skill of European citizens (for a critical discussion, see Stevenson 2008). However, responsibility for developing the policies that would convert these strategies into practice lies with member states.

Krzyżanowski therefore focuses his investigation on the national media of two neighbouring member states with significant stakes in the development of language policy in the EU: Poland, the largest 'new' member in terms of population and of 'native speakers' of a 'national language' (Polish),⁴ and Germany, itself recently transformed into the largest 'old' member whose 'national language', German, has the highest number of 'native speakers' in the EU as a whole (see Eurobarometer 2006). He argues that the EU should be seen as 'both a political organism and a communicative space' (p. 24) which should therefore create structures that ensure the democratic legitimacy of its institutions and create conditions that enable democratic debates in both national and supranational public spheres. The perception of EU institutions as representative and inclusive thus depends in part on how far they are seen to reflect the linguistic diversity of their constituents. However, his sample survey of national newspapers suggests that very little attention is paid to these issues in these influential public fora and that both multilingualism and specific language issues remain under-politicized at the national level. To the extent that these questions are debated at all, the media discourses analysed here tend to support the prevailing language ideologies of monolingualism in 'national languages' within member states and of what Krzyżanowski calls 'hegemonic multilingualism' – that is, the continued institutional dominance of English, French and German – at the supra-national level.

In the closing chapter of the book, Kristine Horner resumes Krzyżanowski's critique of the ways in which the development of a representative 'cultural space' is managed in the EU, focusing in this case on discourses on European cultural identities in the context of institutionalized attempts to construct symbolic links between the extreme margins of the EU: Luxembourg (and adjacent areas of Germany, France and Belgium, together forming the so-called 'Grande Région') in the north-west and the Transylvanian region of Romania in the south-east. Her point of departure is the decision to designate the Grande Région and Sibiu/Hermannstadt jointly the European Capital of Culture (ECC) for 2007, the year in which the most recent enlargement of the

EU took place with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria. Promotional materials produced to proclaim and celebrate this joint venture sought to rationalize this otherwise arbitrary coupling by giving prominence to somewhat tenuous linguistic connections in the form of different Germanic varieties. While Poland and Germany, with their long history of mutual antagonism, sit in more or less uncomfortable proximity on either side of the imagined meridian that divided (and, some would say, continues to divide) east from west in Europe – and that is therefore a linear contender for the location of the ‘centre’ – Luxembourg and Romania face each other across the vast expanse of Central Europe with apparently very little in common. As Horner argues, however, precisely this disjunction is discursively manoeuvred into a demonstration of the cohesive capacity of the EU, in which language plays a crucial role: ‘This foregrounding of presupposed shared linguistic repertoires pre-dating the era of the nation-state serves to construct a continuity between historical patterns of migration and current transformations in Europe, as well as the unity or “integration” of the space traversing the north-western and south-eastern stretches of imagined European place’ (p. 242). She also shows how such optimistically pan-European discourses counteract the ideology of (national) monolingualism by exploiting the blurring of linguistic boundaries, in conjunction with visual representations of European regions in which state boundaries are faint, to decentre the state as a unit of difference in favour of the border-transcending region with its primordial traditions and potential for cultural exchange.

The nine chapters that are embraced by these discussions of European discourses on language and identity are linked to them and to each other in many ways, but above all by their exploration of language contact in relation to the two complementary phenomena (of stasis and movement) that underlie and define the tensions between the local, the national and the supranational in contemporary Europe: borders and migration. Borders exist in order to separate and contain, but their categorical fixity creates, at least potentially, opportunities for negotiation, and Chapters 3–6 consider different ways in which the recent transformations in Central Europe have given new salience to language contact across historical state borders. Migration involves movement, across or within bounded space, and from one place to another, but rather than making place irrelevant it emphasizes its importance, together with time, for the structuring and (in the case of multiple or continuous migrations) punctuation of experience. It also entails cultural and linguistic contact and exchange, sometimes transient and

ephemeral, sometimes with long-lasting consequences. Chapters 7–11 thus deal with ways in which discourses on language and linguistic practices are marked by contemporary migration processes and by traces of past migrations.

Sylvia Jaworska picks up Krzyżanowski's theme of multilingualism and language contact in the context of Poland and Germany as debated in Polish national media discourses, but she reverses the focus of attention from an outward gaze across Europe as a whole to relations between the two neighbouring states. Her discussion acknowledges statistical data that indicate the continuing importance of German in Poland in terms of the demand for it among learners as a language with high investment potential, as cultural capital. However, she offsets this optimistic account against the growing clamour of media discourses in which the resurgence of hostility towards the western neighbour is increasingly challenging the positive rhetoric of reconciliation that characterized the early post-Cold War years. Jaworska argues that increasing disillusionment and resentment at perceived inequalities in the new economic environment, in which restrictions on access to material resources and employment opportunities and discrimination against Polish migrants in Germany are contrasted with the relatively generous treatment of the German minority in Poland, have led to a shift in public attitudes towards Germany and a re-evaluation of the returns on investing in learning German. At its worst, the discourse of good-neighbourliness has been replaced by a 'dialogue of the deaf' and the River Oder/Odra, marking the border between the two countries and already laden with a heavy cargo of historical tensions, is recast as the mythological River Styx.

Jane Wilkinson's chapter investigates attempts to overcome these new or renewed social boundaries between Poles and Germans through the organization of cultural activities in border areas which explicitly thematize transborder interaction. Starting from the ambiguity of borders as both markers of separation and zones of contact, she explores the potential of the theatre in particular to act as a third space in which the very 'edginess' of life in geographically and politically marginal communities can take centre stage. One of the most sensitive issues facing cultural entrepreneurs in such contexts is the choice of language or languages to be used in the performance, and, as Jaworska shows, the use of both German and Polish in this region is deeply imbued with mistrust and resentment built up over centuries (see also Meinhof and Galasiński 2005). Wilkinson argues that the 're-imagining of borderland spaces' (p. 76) represents a major cultural challenge that is often more intractable than that posed by the need for closer economic

and political relations between neighbouring states and communities since it depends less on structural harmonization than on the capacity and the desire of individuals and societies to 'commune' with each other. One of the problems she finds in this respect is a deep-seated asymmetry in the linguistic and therefore communicative repertoires of Germans and Poles in the region, weighted heavily in favour of German as the language with more widespread currency. The symbolic domination accruing from this unequal distribution of linguistic resources reinforces historically conditioned tensions, which optimistic initiatives in theatrical innovation – such as staging plays in Polish in German theatres, promoting bilingual productions or displacing language altogether through dance and street theatre – have so far failed to mitigate.

The Czech-German border is, of course, no less highly charged than the Polish-German border and, like Wilkinson, Kateřina Černá scrutinizes attempts to open up a social space in which linguistic resources can be pooled as a means of fostering relationships less encumbered by the baggage of historical antipathies. She too identifies asymmetries in linguistic competence as a major stumbling block in this process (see Holly et al. 2003), but in this case argues that institutionally driven policies, specifically in the form of cross-border educational programmes, have better prospects of achieving reciprocal competence in 'partner languages' among members of neighbouring speech communities. Focusing on interaction between Czech and German schoolchildren and their teachers on a collaborative bilingual project between primary schools in the borderland, Černá's study combines methods from the ethnography of communication and ethnomethodology to explore in detail the patterns of linguistic behaviour exhibited by both children and adults and to tease out ways in which the participants use their linguistic resources (and their perceptions of each other's language use) as elements in social identity formation. Using the framework of membership categorization analysis, she shows how different identities are made relevant and prioritized by individual speakers in conversational interaction and how the choice of particular linguistic forms and references to language function as contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982), that is, as indicators that reference particular social contexts within which meanings can be inferred. Her analysis suggests that ethnic categories are more salient than others (such as age or gender) in the interactions studied, that language competence plays a key role in constituting these categories, and that deep-seated attitudes towards the asymmetrical nature of competence in each other's language are fundamental

to this categorization process. By the same token, however, there is evidence that the salience of ethnic categories may decrease when linguistic asymmetry is reduced.

The studies by Jaworska, Wilkinson and Černá emphasize, among other things, how differing degrees of reciprocal language competence can in themselves constitute borders between members of neighbouring societies, but formal encounters between such speakers are obviously not confined to geographically marginal territories. In their chapter, Jiří Nekvapil and Tamah Sherman again discuss ways of drawing on multilingual repertoires to develop communicative practices within a common endeavour, but in this case their focus is on the institutional setting of multinational businesses. Like most states in this region, the Czech Republic has attracted substantial inward investment from many other countries over the last 20 years and many large companies based elsewhere have established subsidiaries there. The efficient operation of a company with a multinational workforce whose members speak different languages clearly requires some form of corporate language policy, whether in the form of a company-wide lingua franca (as is the case in some major German firms in which English is stipulated for internal communication) or in the form of locally negotiated arrangements. Using the framework of Language Management Theory, Nekvapil and Sherman investigate ways in which linguistic practices involving three languages – Czech, German and English – are managed in the Czech subsidiary of a German company. As their analysis shows, although company policy specifies English as the ‘official corporate language’, in practice both German and Czech are used for various functions, often within the same setting. By comparing policy documents, interviews with senior managers and observations of actual language use in different contexts, they demonstrate how the distribution of the three languages can be accounted for in largely functional terms, in which communicative needs may conflict with symbolic, social, emotional or privacy functions. They argue, therefore, that effective management of language use in multinational businesses cannot be achieved by the top-down imposition of a monolingual policy, but rather requires an understanding and analysis of complex local needs.

The recent expansion of multinational companies in new member states of the EU has, then, of necessity increased the cross-border traffic not only of goods, services and capital but also of people. This is, of course, not an exclusively contemporary phenomenon; indeed, as we have shown earlier in this chapter, Central Europe has been characterized by multiple migrations over the centuries. The remaining

chapters therefore explore some further effects of present migrations as well as various ways in which past migrations have left their trace on the sociolinguistic and sociocultural landscape of this region. Péter Maitz and Klára Sándor begin with an historical account of changing sociolinguistic constellations in Hungary, focusing on the roles of the German language in the context of migration processes dating back to the Middle Ages. Their wide-ranging discussion is grounded in the development of language ideologies, especially the ideology of linguistic nationalism, which led first to the dominance of German and subsequently to its subordination and marginalization. A crucial aspect of their argument is the importance of distinguishing between different groups or categories of German speakers and avoiding the tendency, still prevalent in many sociolinguistic accounts of multilingual societies, to construct a homogeneous speech community on the basis of a supposedly shared language. In the case of Hungary, Maitz and Sándor draw a fundamental distinction between two 'layers' of German-speaking populations that had formed by the end of the eighteenth century: on the one hand, urban, bourgeois populations, descendants of the earliest German settlers in Hungary, who were generally literate and therefore predominantly used standard forms of German; on the other hand, rural, peasant populations, descendants of more recent migrants, who were clustered largely in monolingual German-speaking villages and almost exclusively used non-standard varieties of spoken German. It was the first of these two layers that was most profoundly affected by the shifting language ideologies of the nineteenth century: the Germanization policies practised under the Habsburg Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had led to the dominance of German but under the nascent Hungarian nationalism of the mid-nineteenth century it was cast as the language of oppression and an obstacle to aspirations of national unity. The discourses of linguistic purity and homogeneity that were mobilized at the same time in the interests of German nationalism (see, for example, Gardt 2000, 2004; Langer and Davies 2005; Durrell 2007) were therefore instrumental in the demise of standard German as a vehicle of power in Hungary. Maitz and Sándor go on to show how the political crises of the twentieth century contributed to the further decline of German, resulting, on the one hand, in a reconfiguration of relationships between Hungarian and the different varieties of German, and, on the other hand, a distinction between German as a mother tongue (that is, local traditional dialects), now the dwindling heritage language of the remaining Hungarian-German populations, and German

as a foreign language (that is, the standard variety) taught and learned in formal education by Hungarian-Germans and members of other ethnic groups alike.

The theme of the legacies of past migrations and changing relationships between particular language varieties and their speakers is taken up again in our own chapter, where we analyse ways in which the experience of the loss of language forms traditionally associated with German ethnicity is articulated in the life-stories of German speakers in Hungary and the Czech Republic. While Maitz and Sándor demonstrate the historical forces that led to the decline of German as a dominant language in Hungary and the linguistic assimilation of the ethnic German population – and an even more advanced stage of this process has taken place in the Czech Republic (see Nekvapil and Neustupný 1998; Nekvapil 2007) – our aim is to focus on individual agency and reveal a more differentiated picture of language shift by investigating different ways in which people have responded to broadly similar conditions of social and political change. We argue that while all members of these German-speaking communities share a common experience of challenges to traditional ways of life and a devaluation of their traditional forms of self-expression, their individual trajectories and the ways they process their encounters with loss are far from uniform. So, while the fact of language shift is undeniable and the master-narrative of the inexorable effects of social change on linguistic practices seems unquestionable, what (the threat of) language loss represents in people's lives, how they respond to it and how they incorporate it into their personal accounts of their lives remains to be discovered. Our analysis of individual language biographies is therefore an attempt to show how people use their recollections of such experiences to construct a particular perspective on their lives and to create a sense of coherence through assembling thematically linked fragments of their remembered pasts. Thus, in formulating their stories, the narrators not only locate their experiences of loss in relation to key events and periods in their lives, but also use these chosen moments to form a conception of time (a particular temporality) through which they situate their past in their present.

The construction of individual life-stories is one opportunity to negotiate and develop a sense of self, and to this end language biographies can draw reflexively on individual linguistic repertoires as a narrative resource. A more common process of self- or identity formation through linguistic means can be observed in terms of linguistic practices in dialogic interactions such as conversations or interviews. In their chapter, Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain and Grit Liebscher also explore relationships

between language, time and place, in this case in the context of the ways in which individuals position themselves (Davies and Harré 1999) in conversation through their selection of particular features of their linguistic repertoires. They too are interested in the constraints imposed on present identification processes by past political conditions, but the focus of their fine-grained analysis is on how people work within these constraints to achieve particular sociolinguistic effects. Unlike the other studies here, their research is concerned with linguistic practices of people migrating within a contemporary national boundary but across a social space that derives from past political divisions: western Germans now living in eastern Germany. By combining methods of variationist sociolinguistics and conversation analysis, Dailey-O'Cain and Liebscher investigate ways in which these western migrants exploit their newly acquired knowledge of local dialect features in Saxony, the area to which they have moved, together with the other components of their existing linguistic repertoires (typically standard German and dialects from their place of origin) to project different identities in relation to social categories that are relevant in their new environment. The Saxon dialect is still strongly associated for both western and eastern Germans with memories of the GDR, but also, among Saxons themselves, with a resilient sense of local loyalty. However, a crucial aspect of the analysis in this chapter is the conception of discursive identity, which is not tied in a fixed relationship to specific social categories, but rather is formulated and shaped in the context of interaction. The authors therefore aim to show how individuals overtly describe their personal affiliations and exploit the linguistic resources available to them in order to adopt or perform 'different ways of being German' (p. 186). Thus the participants variously position themselves, both by what they say and by how they speak, as identifying either with their place of origin or with their new location, or alternatively as shuttling from one to the other or occupying a 'third space' between the two.

Britta Schneider is also interested in the performance of identities through linguistic (inter)actions in a particular 'national' context (again, of Germany), but in her chapter she explores language use in relation to 'imported' cultural practices by observing linguistic and other forms of behaviour in German Salsa clubs. She characterizes this form of social organization as a transnational, multiethnic and multilingual 'community of practice' (see Meyerhoff 2004) in that it brings together individuals from different countries (from Germany and elsewhere) who aim to achieve a sense of community through their engagement in a common endeavour – learning a particular form of dance associated

with Latin America. To the extent that the social space created by these activities is constituted in part through the use of Spanish alongside the 'national' language German, these communities conflict with and confront the dominant language ideology of monolingualism. Moreover, this linguistic behaviour can be seen as transgressive in that it is adopted not only by native speakers of Spanish but also by non-native speakers, especially Germans, and that it is part of a kind of 'cultural crossing': 'German Salsa aficionados – or better: Salsa aficionados in Germany – not only meet to dance in Salsa venues, they very often also perform a particular type of identity and lifestyle' (p. 206). However, it seems that this performance has less to do with achieving a sense of belonging in relation to a specific cultural milieu than with attaining a feeling of otherness, of being temporarily apart from a society in which competence in – and especially the use of – languages other than the sole officially sanctioned one is considered legitimate only in the form of what Schneider calls 'elite bilingualism'. Furthermore, while code-switching and especially code-mixing may be seen as deviant or even subversive practices in relation to the monolingual norm, in the Salsa club they are considered emblematic of a desirable cosmopolitan lifestyle. At the same time, class, ethnicity and gender interact in complex ways that preclude generalizations about the value attached to such linguistic practices and that are instrumental in developing discourses of inclusion and exclusion within the Salsa scene itself.

Schneider's ethnography of Salsa clubs is indicative of ways in which hybridity in cultural practices may challenge the notion of 'national cultures'. In his chapter, Thomas Cooper takes up this theme and discusses the concept of transnational literatures by exploring the role of German-language literary production in relation to Romanian and Hungarian literatures in the contact zones of Transylvania and Banat in Romania, another destination of historical German migrations. He argues that rather than seeking a measure of the significance or vitality of German solely in terms of its use in functional domains of public life, such as education or commerce, we should consider its local cultural influence in its contribution to developing and sustaining a multilingual literary environment. Conventional accounts of Central European literatures typically perpetuate rather than disrupt the 'national paradigm' (p. 225), but Cooper positions his discussion of Romanian literatures within more recent scholarship that 'challenges the chauvinism of national collective identity by exploring interstices and intersections, rather than articulating (and thereby reifying) borders' (p. 226). Refusing to subscribe to essentializing conceptions of

'national literatures' in 'national languages' and rejecting the notion of a discrete German-language literature in Romania, he proposes instead a perspective that foregrounds the interaction between forms of literary production in different languages in terms of thematic and stylistic affinities, translation and intertextuality.

Cooper's critique of the concept of 'national cultures' and its use in support of 'national identities' in the Romanian context is followed by Kristine Horner's critique of attempts to orchestrate European identities through the construction of cultural associations between Transylvania and the 'Grande Région' around Luxembourg that we have discussed above.

It would be beyond the bounds of any single book to attempt a comprehensive account of the issues outlined in the first part of this chapter, and our aim is more modest. We hope to offer illustrative studies on language, discourse and identity that span the scale from the big picture of discourses on language policy to the detail of narratives in individual language biographies and that draw on a wide range of scholarly and analytical approaches (including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, textual analysis, narrative analysis and ethnographic observation) and source material (such as media texts, personal interviews and conversations, theatrical productions, literary texts, business meetings and official documentation). In doing so, we hope both to make new contributions to research on individual topics and to make research on our theme accessible to those working in other, related areas, and thereby stimulate lines of enquiry in future research that either build on individual chapters or develop cross-disciplinary routes towards a better understanding of linguistic practices in Central Europe and elsewhere.⁵

Notes

1. We are limiting our necessarily brief discussion here to the historical context of the countries that are dealt with in later chapters, which means that the Baltic and Balkan states, for example, are not taken into account in this respect.
2. See, for example, among many others Ammon (1991, 1995, 1998), Barbour (2000), Busch and de Cillia (2003), Clyne (1995, 2007), De Cillia and Wodak (2006), Eichhoff-Cyrus and Hoberg (2000), Gardt and Hüppauf (2004), Hoberg (2002), Hoffmann (2000), Krumm and Portmann-Tselikas (2006), Lüdi and Werlen (2005), Muhr and Schrodtt (1997) and Stevenson (2002).
3. See http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/orban/policies/policies_en.htm. Accessed 11 October 2007.

4. Both 'native speaker' and 'national language' are problematic concepts, but we do not elaborate on these issues here. See, for example, Davies (2003) and Millar (2005) for critical discussions.
5. See also Galasińska and Krzyżanowski (2009) for further research on these topics.

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