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### Endangering multilingualism

Blommaert, Jan; Leppänen, Sirpa; Spotti, Max

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## Paper 56

### Endangering multilingualism

by

*Jan Blommaert, Sirpa Leppänen & Massimiliano Spotti*

[j.blommaert@tilburguniversity.edu](mailto:j.blommaert@tilburguniversity.edu)

[sirpa.h.leppanen@jyu.fi](mailto:sirpa.h.leppanen@jyu.fi)

[m.spotti@tilburguniversity.edu](mailto:m.spotti@tilburguniversity.edu)

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## **ENDANGERING MULTILINGUALISM**

Jan Blommaert, Sirpa Leppänen and Massimiliano Spotti

### **INTRODUCTION**

To the extent that every science has its banner and rallying cry, multilingualism would be that of sociolinguistics. In the face of a widespread societal dismissal, degradation, denial or abnormalization of multilingualism, sociolinguistics has since the 1960s made the claim that multilingualism is a positive thing in societies. It represents the richness of cultural diversity in language and so enriches society, and it is beneficial for individuals too. These arguments have, to some extent, now penetrated political institutions, and the EU, for instance, now celebrates and champions multilingualism in the Union. There is no need to provide an emblematic string of references here: most of sociolinguistics has shared these assumptions and has, often with vigour and passion, broadcast them to whoever was likely to listen.

The record speaks for itself on this point. It would be hard to find a sociolinguist who would seriously doubt that multilingualism is a positive thing. The point here is therefore not to deny or challenge this; rather we want to draw attention to the fact that even if multilingualism is in general and in principle a positive thing, it can in actual fact be a problem for individuals and social groups. Not all forms of multilingualism are productive, empowering and nice to contemplate. Some – many – are still unwanted, disqualified or actively endangering to people. And while sociolinguistics should by all means go on proclaiming the positive sides of multilingualism, it should not turn a blind eye to its negative sides. It is good to champion equality among people and their languages, but the best way of doing that (and we echo Hymes, 1996 here) is to actively combat the actual inequalities that exist between them.

Rather than to present such forms of dangerous multilingualism as an aberration or as the product of silly language policy makers, we should see them as an integral part of social and sociolinguistic reality. They are features of a sociolinguistic system; more precisely they are systemic and structural features of the sociolinguistic system of high modernity (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Baumann, 1991). High modern forms of management of multilingualism, notably those forms organized by the nation-state, define much of multilingualism as problematic. Now that globalization challenges the foundations of high modernity, such features are more than ever anachronisms. But every social system contains anachronisms at any point of its existence, and so with sociolinguistic systems. The tension between high modernity and what has been called postmodernity or late modernity remains unsolved. And, as we shall see throughout the essays in this book, the dominant response to post or late modernity, at least in large parts of the West and in the field of language, consists of typical

high-modern measures: denying or combating hybridity, multiplicity and 'mixing', 'crossing' and related expressions of impurity (Hymes, 1996; Silverstein, 1998; Blommaert, 2009). The increasing importance of language testing in the context of immigration and 'integration' policies, for instance, represents a form of modernist linguistic border control in which 'modern' (and thus essentialist) regimes of identity-attribution are central, and in which a static, mono-normative and artefactualised concept of language is used (see the essays in Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero & Stevenson, 2009 and Extra, Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009). Similar language-ideological foundations underlie the Common European Framework of Reference on Language (CEFR), an amazingly modernist instrument for addressing (i.e. measuring and comparing) language competences across Europe and increasingly elsewhere (Van Avermaet, 2009).

We thus set the problematic of dangerous multilingualism in this historical frame: as anachronisms that reflect the ongoing and unresolved tensions between high modernity and post- or late modernity. This to some extent shifts the debate and moves it into another intellectual field of force: a historical and political one, not just a synchronic-sociolinguistic one, concerned mainly with the operational demands of things like education, policy-making or media. The space into which we bring these issues is a macroscopic one, a space of slow changes in a social system – changes that make visible (and often accentuate) paradoxes, fissures and fields of struggle. And our aim is therefore not just documentary but analytical. It is to provide a particular diagnostic of why language is such a big problem to so many people in the present world; a diagnostic that does not just look at language but even more at society (as a place of order guaranteed through loyalty from those who are part of it) and that tries to do justice to the deep social forces of inclusion and exclusion that determine sociolinguistic systems.

## **MODERNIST IDEOLOGIES OF LANGUAGE**

This macroscopic angle makes our approach complimentary to, but also an extension of those forms of critique that already circulate intensely in the sociolinguistic literature, notably the critique of what we could broadly describe as the ethnolinguistic assumption – the assumption that aligns language use and ethnic or cultural group identity in a linear and one-on-one relationship, and in which the modern subject is defined as monolingual and monocultural.

### **The ethnolinguistic assumption**

The ethnolinguistic assumption was already quite conclusively critiqued by Edward Sapir in his 1921 *Language* ("Totally unrelated languages share in one culture, closely related languages – even a single language – belong to distinct cultural spheres", Sapir, 1921, p. 213). The same assumption was crippled by Dell Hymes in his famous paper on the 'tribe' (Hymes, 1968), and more recent work has developed entirely different lines into the analysis of language and ethnic or cultural belonging (e.g. Rampton, 2006; Harris, 2006). The long lineage of such critiques can be explained by the fact that

the ethnolinguistic assumption was the cornerstone of the classic Herderian language ideologies of the nation-state (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; essays in Blommaert, 1999; Kroskrity, 2000 and especially Silverstein, 2000) and has lived a long life in a variety of versions in the context of state-managed language and culture policies throughout the 20th century, one of its most prominent versions being 'classic' multiculturalism (Vertovec, 2010; for illustrations see Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; essays in Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2002).

As the central assumption of modern governmentality in the field of language and culture, it was through the ethnolinguistic assumption that governments addressed national minorities, immigrants and colonial subjects – 'them' – as well as their own 'native' class, gender and other sociolinguistic distinctions – 'us'. Full membership of a nation was predicated on full (and exclusive) membership of an ethnolinguistic community: a community defined by one language and one culture. Speaking another language than the 'national' one, when seen from within the ethnolinguistic assumption, creates a fundamental problem of otherness for which a range of solutions was designed, from extinction and expulsion over assimilation to integration – because a 'normal' person naturally belongs to only one language and culture unit.

This assumption thus organized several forms of social, cultural and political rejection and oppression in the modern nation-state. The evidence for these practices is sufficiently known: Native American children had to wash their mouths with soap when they were heard speaking their native language; similar forms of punishment were administered to Aboriginals in Australia and Africans in the colonial empires. The Finnish Sámi people had Finnish as their official medium of instruction until 1995, and native minority languages as media of instruction are still in a nascent and fragile stage across the world.

Remarkably, the ethnolinguistic assumption has experienced a revival of sorts in the context of a theme that, since at least the 1980s, became a fundamental attack on the language and culture hierarchies of the nation-state: the recognition and empowerment of linguistic minorities and endangered languages (e.g. Phillipson, 1992; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; May, 2001). Respect for national minorities, indigenous peoples and endangered cultural heritage became part of the postcolonial world order, and it represents a historical discontinuity with the era of the classic nation-state. It is in the context of this discontinuity that the Sámi and many other minorities acquired the right to use their language in education. Yet, those who would have expected that this recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity within the nation-state would have caused an ideological adjustment to a more relaxed and flexible view of language and culture were wrong; if anything, this development has strengthened the power and scope of the ethnolinguistic assumption, which is now eagerly adopted by minorities and used as a crucial, compelling and compulsory defining feature of minorities' own purity (see Spotti, 2011). Indeed, as Michael Silverstein observes, "Groups of people are increasingly challenged to have newly active, positive cultural processes emanating from centring institutions, so that what we have here termed the relative and seemingly residual fact of locality gets semiotically turned into a positive attribute of their identity" (Silverstein, 1998, p. 404; also Silverstein, 2003; Moore, Pietikäinen & Blommaert, 2010).

Thus, while the recognition and empowerment of minorities is a discontinuity with earlier stages, it is at the same time a factor of continuity. The attention to empowerment of minorities and

endangered linguistic and cultural groups is a distinct late-modern feature that shoots through the high-modern nation-state constructions and results in what can appear like a politically and ideologically haphazard assemblage of different positions and orientations (see the work by Duchêne, 2008 on how linguistic minorities become entextualised in the discursive practices of supra-national institutions). What we see, however, and what the essays in this book establish, is that both the classic high-modernity nation-state and the late-modern recognition and empowerment of linguistic and cultural minorities within the nation-state (or interstate systems such as the EU) proceed along very similar lines in practice. The upshot of this is that the hybrid nation-state of late modernity operates very much within a modernist hegemonic discursive framework. In short, the nation-state was, is and remains the terrain on which this hegemony is played out, and we will come back to this below.

### **Policing modern sociolinguistic systems**

We must be more precise with regard to what we understand by the modernist language ideologies that will inform the analyses in this book. Even if the ethnolinguistic assumption underlies much of it (and has its roots in Enlightenment ideas of Natural Law), it is in itself not sufficient to delineate the space of modernist language ideologies.

For Bauman and Briggs (2003), modernist ideas of language revolved around the rejection of 'hybridity', and hybridity is used as shorthand for every form of 'impurity' and 'disorder' in language. Languages, according to this modernist view, were only worthy of that label when they were pure, uninfluenced by outside forces, and clear and linear features of authenticity. This connection between language purity and authenticity emerged out of a romantic preoccupation with local cultures of the bucolic type: local or regional traditions that were seen as the roots of the cultures of the emerging nation-states. We of course recognize the traces of the ethnolinguistic assumption here.

The emerging field of dialectology was one of the main providers of scientific evidence for such local cultures, and linguistic structuralism became the methodology for studies of such cultures' languages. Languages and dialects were given shape and scientific (as well as, soon, political) reality as soon as they could be delineated and identified on the basis of a descriptive apparatus that emphasized the pure, correct and unique features of such units. A structural-descriptive grammar and a dictionary became the codified objectives for such exercises, in which modern languages obtained their official existence – an existence 'on record' as an artefactualised object of study, and as an essential ingredient of the recognition of cultures (Blommaert, 2008).

Bauman and Briggs' viewpoint gels with the classic discussion of modernity by Zygmund Baumann (1991), in which he sees the rejection of ambivalence as the key to understanding modernity. To be more precise,

[a]mong the multitude of impossible tasks that modernity set itself and that made modernity into what it is, the task of order (more precisely and most importantly, of order as a task) stands out – as the least possible among the impossible and the least disposable among the indispensable; indeed,

as the archetype for all other tasks, one that renders all other tasks mere metaphors of itself (Baumann, 1991, p. 4, emphasis in the original).

It was in the context of the emergence of modernity that the preoccupation with order became a major political, social, cultural and scientific objective: “[o]rder is what is not chaos; chaos is what is not orderly” (ibid), and this binary opposition between order and chaos became the driving force behind the different projects of modernity. Order, or the quest for order, became a feature of another dominant binary opposition of modernity: that of ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’. According to Foucault (2003), modernity was organized around the rise of an intellectual and political paradigm – an episteme and a governmentality – in which the ‘normal’ subject was an ‘ordered’ subject, someone who behaved according to the norms of modern society, and such norms were heavily policed by state institutions such as schools and the legal system as well as by the scientific edifices of modern medicine and psychiatry. The ‘abnormal’ subject was someone who defied, either in defect or in excess, the clear categories that were used to describe and police the social system, and defining the ‘abnormal’ as an identifiable category in its own right was the task of modernist humanities. In the field of language, as we have seen, the normal was the normative – normal languages were pure, uninfluenced by other languages, and markers of non-ambivalent authentic identities. Three important axes thus defined the policing of linguistic normality; we shall use them as the organizing principles of this book:

- 1 the axis of order versus disorder in language use, often leading to modernist language policies in which languages were hierarchically ordered in relation to one another;
- 2 that of purity versus impurity, in which judgments about language ‘quality’ were made on the basis of modernist (i.e. structuralist) appraisals of the purity of a language form, projected onto the purity of its speakers (if you speak a ‘pure’ language X, you are a ‘real’ member of a culture Y); and
- 3 that of normality versus abnormality, in which identity judgments depended on judgments of normal versus abnormal language use.

These axes dominated both the public debates and policies on language in society (and to a large extent still do, see the references to recent work on language testing above), as well as assessments of individual language proficiencies, competences and skills (as can be seen from the expanding success of the CEFR, also mentioned earlier).

### **Modernist language policy and planning**

It is not an overstatement to claim that these language-ideological features of modernity have determined the sociolinguistic face of large parts of the world. Or at least, it is not an overstatement to claim that they have determined our current understanding of the sociolinguistics of large parts of the world, and that this understanding is shared by many expert and lay voices about language in society (see Williams, 1992 for a trenchant critique of modernist sociolinguistics and Makoni & Pennycook, 2007 for an influential recent statement). The tradition of language policy and planning studies, for instance, rests upon solid modernist principles. Multilingual societies, first, needed to reduce the number of (societally, and thus economically, valuable) languages in use on their territory – the principle of oligolingualism. Second, because of the efficiency and loyalty principle, the

remaining languages needed to be ranked, hierarchically ordered across different domains in society (see for a fuller discussion Blommaert, 1996, and also 1999).

Thus, in many postcolonial African states a number of local languages could be used in primary education, a smaller number in (parts of) secondary education, and one language – invariably the ex-colonial one – in higher education (see Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998; also the essays in Ricento, 2006). The general idea was that the high number of languages in postcolonial countries such as Cameroon or Nigeria was a form of ‘chaos’, which required a (modernist) effort to bring order. Indigenous languages also needed to be ‘developed’, and the model for such development was the former metropolitan language or classical languages such as Latin; exercises such as status and corpus planning always started from the assumption that what needed to be planned was a pure, uninfluenced, stable authentic language. Such forms of planning again mirrored the kinds of language policies that were in vigour in ‘developed’ regions such as Europe and North America, where ‘monoglot’ ideologies had dominated the sociolinguistic scene for about a century and had saturated state nationalisms as well as sub-state nationalisms (Silverstein, 1996; see also the essays in Kroskrity, 2000). The hierarchical ranking of languages within such monoglot sociolinguistic formations later gave rise to the linguistic minorities and linguistic rights paradigm, which, as we already noted, again adopts a fundamentally modernist vocabulary (May, 2001). And it is within such a modernist language regime that Bourdieu identified the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate language use – between *bouche* and *gueule* (Bourdieu, 1991). ‘*Bouche*’, as we know, was the normative and hence normal form of language use – the standard – while ‘*gueule*’ was the deviant, abnormal and substandard form (note the hierarchical order in the current sociolinguistic term ‘sub’-standard). Note that until fairly recently, widespread (and sociolinguistically highly salient) forms of linguistic ‘impurity’ such as code-switching were also seen as substandard forms of language use, and most of the early influential research on code-switching saw it as a deviation of normal monolingual language use, a curious, perhaps intriguing and surely somewhat amusing freak form of language (see the essays in Auer, 1998 for a critique).

## **CHALLENGES TO MODERNISM**

The ideological space of sociolinguistic modernism has now been described; changes in the social and cultural patterns in society, however, gradually undercut the explanatory power of these ideologies of language and empirically challenged them. Modernity, as we have seen, rejected ambivalence, the fact that things can have multiple forms, functions and meanings. In the field of language in society, it rejected sociolinguistic diversity, and if such rejection was impossible it ordered, regimented and policed such ‘chaotic’ sociolinguistic realities by means of modernist language policies and planning efforts. Behind such efforts we could usually discern an assumption, that oligolingual or monolingual language policies reflected the total or partial uniformity of the people – the people of a nation-state, of a region or of a minority group. Such uniformity, needless to underscore, was and is a sociological illusion, and the failure of modernist language regimes



became overt as soon as societies got manifestly confronted with and acknowledged societal diversity.

Migration, in particular, offered critical challenges to monoglot state policies in domains such as education, welfare and public administration, and these challenges were identified early in the game (we can think of Jim Cummins' work here, see Baker & Hornberger, 2001). Immigrants as a rule introduced different linguistic resources into areas dominated by state or sub-state monoglot regimes; as soon as they entered the education system or other state-sponsored systems, these systems became confronted with multilingualism as a reality which posed a range of operational, political and ideological problems. The complex patterns of multilingualism did not go well with a monolingual education policy (the dominant issue in Cummins' work), and a widening gap emerged between the regime of language in schools and that outside schools and in the informal learning environments in which children dwelled (for the latter, see Heath, 1983). This gap was long seen as a deficit for the immigrant children and as a major factor in explaining the widespread academic underachievement and lack of upward social mobility of minority students (and still is, see Crawford, 2001 and essays in Gorter & Extra, 2008 for critiques). At the same time, it was demonstrated that this gap offered a rich terrain for inspecting the social dynamics of language contact, for instance in providing an almost infinite and dynamic range of identity resources for young people, often connected with popular culture and with subcultural patterns of conduct (Rampton, 1995; Harris, 2006; Leppänen et al., 2009).

These subcultural patterns of conduct were, in effect, patterns of conduct typical of a late-modern society affected by globalization flows of people, images and symbolic resources such as language (Rampton, 2006; also Blommaert, 2010). Globalization has given a profound make-over of contemporary societies and this make-over included a sociolinguistic change, both in terms of quantity (more languages being present in migration centres such as the metropolis of the west) and of quality (languages being used differently in such centres). Vertovec (2006, 2007) coined the term 'super-diversity' for these changes, suggesting that the post-Cold War forms of diversity (thus, the forms of diversity we associate with contemporary globalization processes) are of a different order than those of generated by the previous waves of immigration.

The fact can hardly be denied: at least sociolinguistically, we see an escalating diversity, not only in western urban centres but also elsewhere around the globe, and the new discipline of linguistic landscaping does its best to map the quantitative dimensions of these forms of diversity (see Extra & Barni, 2008 for examples). Qualitatively, sociolinguistic life is also changing. The introduction and success of new media such as satellite television, the internet and the mobile phone (the latter being far more democratically distributed than the two former ones) enable migrants to maintain patterns of native language usage that in the previous generation would be very difficult to sustain. These new media also generate new issues with respect to language and literacy norms, as they are forums for hetero-normative experiments with language varieties and with literacy forms (Kress, 2003; Green & Haddon, 2009). Complex forms of language, genre and style mixing emerge, and the late-modern urban subject is distinctly and intensely polyglot – where 'glot' replaces 'language', because very often such forms of mixing are not predicated on the 'full' knowledge of one or more language, but rather on 'truncated' bits and pieces of language (Blommaert, 2010, pp. 102–36; Leppänen, 2012).

Such new forms of diversity raise theoretical and descriptive issues that cannot be addressed by means of the modernist paradigm discussed in the previous section. The modernist conception of language (and of the language using subject) was based on clearly identifiable boundaries between languages and on standard indexical attributive links between languages and identities. Widespread 'impurity' of language, as in super-diversity, does not fit that picture, and, of course, a theoretical universe in which everyone is sociolinguistically abnormal is a universe in dramatic need of revision. Such a revision is long overdue, because as we said at the outset, the realities of late modernity are perpetually (and perhaps increasingly) confronted with sociolinguistic recipes from the modernist kitchen. The effect is dangerous multilingualism: particular forms of late-modern multilingualism are effectively endangering because, even if they define the sociolinguistic realities of contemporary western societies, they are imagined as being disordered, impure and abnormal. Those who use such forms are at risk of being disqualified, marginalized, stigmatized or excluded.

## **THE NATION-STATE: FOCUS ON FINLAND**

This is the macroscopic and historical field of tension in which this book will be placed: the tension between a late-modern sociolinguistic phenomenology and a high-modern ideological instrumentarium by means of which these phenomena are being addressed and handled. This instrumentarium operates along the axes specified earlier: those of order versus disorder, purity versus impurity and normality versus abnormality. This tension yields a wide variety of concrete problems, ranging from language-political anomalies, over inefficient and discriminating systems of 'integration' and education, to individual uncertainty and unease about language and language use. We believe that this tension is discernible in numerous regions across the world, even though it may assume a variety of actual shapes, and the growing literature on this topic supports this.

We repeatedly stressed the importance of the nation-state in this story. While there is an abundance of literature on globalization in which the end of the nation-state is proclaimed, there is very little evidence for this in the sociolinguistic field. Quite the contrary: the increase of late-modern super-diversity in Western societies appears to go hand in hand with a strengthening of the nation-state (or of inter-state systems) as a guardian of order – something we can see clearly in fields such as immigration and asylum, security policies, welfare and education – and language emerges as a critical battlefield in almost all of these fields (e.g. Blommaert, 2009). Language, thus, becomes the object upon which the tension of late-modern realities and high-modern – this hybrid of the contemporary nation-state – is played out and by means of which it is articulated; it is through language that we see the continuity of the high-modern nation-state in a late-modern society, and in which the high-modern nation-state deploys its full apparatus for creating, restoring or maintaining sociolinguistic order.

This book attempts to provide a panorama of various aspects of this issue in one nation-state, Finland. Confining the studies to Finland offers us several advantages. The first one is that the studies cumulatively construct a rather comprehensive and detailed picture of dangerous

multilingualism in one country, thus allowing levels of detail and deepening in demonstration hard to achieve in a comparative project. In addition, Finland is a relatively young and homogeneous nation-state in the geographical periphery of Europe. Its rapid post-war development to a modern, urban and highly technologized society highlights many uneasy collusions of tenacious high-modern aspirations and well-honed instrumentarium for order and disorderly processes of change ensuing from late modernity and globalization.

Before gaining independence in 1917, Finland had been a part of two empires. From the 12th century to 1809, it formed the eastern part of the Kingdom of Sweden (or Sweden-Finland), and from 1809 to 1917 it was the autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire.

Thus, Finnish history is marked by extended periods of colonisation by foreign powers, but even as a sovereign state, Finland was the child of the crises. After gaining its independence, the new nation was deeply scarred and divided by a civil war in 1918. The warring parties were the Social Democrats, “the Reds”, who were mainly Finnish-speaking working class, and the forces of the non-socialist, conservative-led Senate, “the Whites”, dominated by farmers and middle- and upper-class Swedish speakers. While the Second World War to an extent managed to unify the nation against a common enemy, it also brought along another trauma: large areas of what used to be the easternmost parts of Finland were lost to the new neighbouring empire in the east, the USSR. These conflicts and traumas of the new nation and nation state explain part of the historical mistrust of the foreign in Finland. As the essays in this volume will illustrate, this mistrust also manifests in the sense of danger that foreign languages and multilingualism have often been taken to pose on Finland.

Since 1922, Finland has been an officially bilingual country with two ‘national’ languages, Finnish and Swedish. Currently, out of the 5.3 million citizens, 90.7 per cent speak Finnish as their first language and 5.4 per cent speak Swedish. Swedish is offered as an obligatory second language to Finnish-speaking students. In addition, Finland hosts several other minorities: besides the Swedish minority in the South West of the country, the Sámi populations in the North are the most prominent ones, while the small resident Roma minority population is quite visible as well. The Finnish constitution ensures that the Sámi and Roma and other groups are entitled to maintain and develop their own languages. The Sami have a legal right to use their own languages in communication with Finnish authorities, and also the rights of Sign Language users or other individuals in need for interpreting and translation services are protected by law. Each of these minority languages has a relatively low number of L1 users. For instance, only 0.03 of the population speak Sámi as their mother tongue (Statistics Finland, 2010a). However, many of the speakers of these minority languages are bi/multilinguals, having either Finnish or Swedish as their first language.

Immigration to Finland from the rest of the world is still quite modest. Finland has the lowest percentage of non-EU migrants in the European Union: during the past ten years, the number of immigrants to Finland has fluctuated between 20,000 and 30,000 per year (Statistics Finland, 2010b). Although a slow process, Finland is gradually becoming a multilingual society: according to the Ministry of Justice (2009) 120 languages are currently spoken in the country. Speakers of Russian make up the largest group with circa 52,000 L1 speakers (in 2009), comprising up to 25 per cent of all foreign-language speakers. Speakers of Estonian form the second largest group with circa 24,000 speakers, while speakers of English (ca 12,000) come in third place (Statistics Finland, 2009).

In this changing sociolinguistic terrain, English has rapidly acquired the status of international vernacular (Leppänen et al., 2011), and Russian is repeatedly mentioned as a language of importance for the future generation. Finland is an EU member state and is also cooperating with other Nordic and Baltic countries in a variety of institutional contexts (see Martin, this volume; Blomberg & Okk, 2008).

In addition to the political, historical and social developments of the Finnish society, the notion of multilingualism as a disruptive, impure and abnormal state of affairs highlighted in the present analysis is also an outcome of a strong nationalist cultural tradition (see also Salo in this volume). Its origins date to the days of the new Finnish nation and nation state and the establishment of its own version of the ethnolinguistic ideology. A particularly influential formulation of this ideology can be located in the writings of the Finnish 'national' philosopher, J.V. Snellmann, who was strongly influenced by for example von Herder's ideas<sup>6</sup>. In 1844, Snellman wrote that

It is often thought that it does not matter which sound or language you use, they just express the same thoughts. But human beings do not only express their thoughts in their words, but they also believe, feel, know and desire in their words, and their thoughts, the whole of their rational being moves and lives in a language. How could the spirit of a nation express itself in any other language except in its own? [transl. by SL]

It is largely thanks to Snellman that in Finland national identity has for long been seen as crucially dependent on what were coined as the national language/s (see also Mantila, 2005, 2006). In this ideology language has been taken to capture and express the fundamental essence of the nation.

Even under the Swedish rule language was a key factor that contributed to the sense of Finns as a distinct people. As suggested by Upton (1980: 4), the Finno-Ugric language, structurally quite distinct from the surrounding Germanic and Slavonic languages and spoken by the majority of the population, the common people, "reminded the Finns that they were a peculiar people". The Finnish ruling class, however, had merged with the Swedish settlers and administrators and adopted the Swedish language. The situation changed radically in 1809 when Finland became a part of Russia. The old ruling class could no longer identify with the new imperial power. Language, religion, culture, and political and historical tradition divided them from the Russians, and as a result, they came to feel the need to establish a new identity as Finns. In the end this need required identifying with the language of the common people, Finnish, one outcome of which was the birth of the Fennoman movement in the latter half of the 19th century. Snellman's role in the movement was crucial: his programmatic view was that the 'nation', i.e. the common people needed to be educated (or, literally, made 'civilised'), and the civilized Swedish-speaking elite needed to be made part of the nation by learning Finnish and by making it a language of higher learning. Ultimately the goal in the Fennoman movement was to make Finland a monolingual nation and nation state. (Paunonen 2001: 227-8)

Up to this day Finland, has, indeed, been marked by a strongly monolingual and monocultural self-imagination. As was suggested above, part of this is grounded in long histories of oppression and control by foreign powers which provide a backdrop for narratives of national uniqueness. Such narratives often refer to the exceptional features of the Finnish language, a Finno-Ugric language contrasting sharply with the predominance of Indo-European languages in that part of the globe.

There is, thus, a quite well articulated nationalist undercurrent, and language is a central feature of it.

## **CONTENTS OF THE BOOK**

As already sketched above, this book is organized around three themes and is divided, accordingly, into the sections of Order and Disorder, Purity and Impurity and Normality and Abnormality. While the settings and discourses discussed in the individual essays represent a great deal of variety, they all, in their own way, tackle the danger multilingualism is taken to pose to what is taken to be the orderly, pure and normal state of affairs in the land. They also highlight aspects of the conflicts and collisions institutions, groups and individuals have with the diffusion, hybridity and fluctuations ensuing from late modernity.

The first thematic section focusing on order and disorder includes four essays. The section begins by an essay Finland's official bilingualism – a bed of roses or of Procrustes? by Olli-Pekka Salo who, after a brief history of bilingualism in Finland, discusses the complex effects of official bilingualism – the bilingual order protected by law – on a variety of fields and domains of the society. The author shows how, while seemingly well-functioning in theory, the official bilingualism in Finland also faces serious problems in some crucial societal fields, such as healthcare, law and education. The key challenge here is that the linguistic rights of the age-old Swedish-speaking minority need to be secured by educating, for instance, legal and medical experts who have a sufficient command of Swedish. On the other hand, there needs to be more willingness than there has traditionally been, to an open discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of keeping the second national language as a general school subject in basic education.

The second essay in this section, Linguistic diversity as a problem and a resource – multilingualism in European and Finnish policy documents by Tarja Nikula, Taina Saarinen, Sari Pöyhönen and Teija Kangasvieri, offers an analysis of Finnish and European language policy documents. In their essay the authors demonstrate how policies struggle coming to terms with the messy realities of increasingly multilingual everyday social life, trying to create some balance and order to societies that are under a great deal of pressure. Multilingualism and its political representations are investigated for the purpose of shedding light on the societal tensions that are brought to the surface as policy actors at different levels meet, making societal change visible. One of the key conclusions in the essay is that in the era of super-diversity there is a renewed need for more control and coercion, revealed as growing emphasis on nation-state oriented policies.

The section finishes with two essays on Finnish schools. Both of them are motivated by the fact how in globalization, increased immigration and mobility have posed a new challenge to the uniformity of the nation-state, creating new tensions between well-established systems meant for a relatively homogeneous society, and the linguistic diversification and a more heterogeneous population. In their essay Dealing with increasing linguistic diversity in schools – the Finnish example Minna Suni and Sirkku Latomaa investigate how well the Finnish society, with its long history as a bilingual country, succeeds in managing its increasing multilingualism. This they do with the help of a review

of the development of language education policies in Finland and a report on how they are currently implemented with respect to immigrant students. The essay shows how the situation is far from being ideal, as there seems to be a clear discrepancy between the ideal order purported by recent language education policies aimed at securing language instruction for immigrants, and the actual implementation of these policies. Suni and Latomaa's study is complemented by Sanna Voipio-Huovinen and Maisa Martin's essay *Problematic plurilingualism – teachers' views*, which approaches the same issue with the help of interviews of teachers of immigrant students. The authors single out and discuss teachers' typical attitudes to and evaluations of immigrant students' plurilingualism. Their analysis shows how, despite the existence of explicit policy guidelines, schools and teachers are struggling with coming to terms with the new challenges posed by the changed situation. The authors argue that one of the reasons behind the inability of schools and teachers to come to terms with the changed situation is that they are still relying on the old, pre-immigration order against which the current situation in many schools with immigrant students appears to them as problematic. Both these two essays focusing on Finnish schools thus foreground the confusion and ambivalence of teachers and schools who have long been assisted in their operations with explicit educational policies but which are now faced with an increasingly disorderly situation in which old, pre-immigration policies are no longer applicable.

The second section of this book addresses issues of purity and impurity in language/s and language use. Each essay in this section demonstrates how the danger posed by late modernity to the alleged stability and integrity of national, regional or minority languages leads to a heightened concern with purity: the need to preserve and protect the local language from disruptive 'foreign' influences. The section begins by Mika Lähtenmäki and Marjatta Vanhala-Aniszewski's essay *Hard currency or a stigma – the Russian-Finnish bilingualism among young Russian-speaking immigrants in Finland*. The essay reports on the findings of a survey of Russian-speaking students' experiences regarding the use of Russian and Finnish in Finland. The authors argue that for such reasons as the tension-ridden relationship Finns have had – and to a great extent still have – with Russia (and the former USSR), Russian continues to be an actively dispreferred language. In addition, they suggest that the discursive representations of Russia as a threat that are deeply rooted in the Herderian holy trinity of language, culture and ethnicity, also function to emphasize the unity, self-containedness and purity of Finland, the Finnish language and culture.

The still robustly advocated nationalist language ideology is also argued to be one of the driving forces behind the language ideological debates in the Finnish press about the increasing visibility and significance of English for Finns by Sirpa Leppänen and Päivi Pahta in their essay *Finnish culture and language endangered – language ideological debates on English in the Finnish press from 1995 to 2007*. The authors show how in these debates English has often been cast into the role of the other – it is depicted as both the malicious attacker and the corruptive seducer – and argue that the ways in which the pervasiveness of this image of the foreign other – in this case the English language – has been rejuvenated in recent public discourses are in fact symptomatic of the crisis of societies moving from an era of "first modernity" to late modernity. In such periods of crisis, language ideologies which fall back on national language as the essence of a nation and nation state have a certain appeal.

The third essay of this section *Multilingualism in Nordic cooperation – a view from the margin* by Maisa Martin moves outside Finland and, from the perspective of speakers of Finnish, looks at the

politically consensual language policy in pan-Nordic cooperation. The author shows how the requirement of skandinaviska ('Scandinavian') as the lingua franca in official Nordic activities and encounters is yet another example of how the ideological notion of purity is harnessed to the service of unity: skandinaviska is taken to enhance the sense of the Nordic area as culturally and ideologically unified territory where all the nationalities can come together on an equal basis. In practice, Martin argues, the choice of skandinaviska creates a new kind of inequality, whereby the participants, Finns and immigrant participants in particular, for whom a Scandinavian language is a second or foreign language, are marginalized and disempowered.

The second section concludes with an essay *The dangers of normativity – the case of minority language media* by Sari Pietikäinen and Helen Kelly-Holmes. Using the case of Sámi and Irish minority language media as their illustrative cases, the authors discuss how normativity can be both dangerous and protective for languages and speakers. They show how, in principle, minority language media challenge the abnormal status accorded to multilingualism by the official policies of most nation-states. However, in reality, in order to achieve media for minority languages, these media often adopt a typically high modern strategy, whereby impurity – hybridity, multiplicity, crossing, the use of even smaller languages – are combated and denied.

The third and final section of the book focuses on multilingualism as normality and abnormality. Despite their different foci of interest, all of the essays in this section shed light on processes, practices and ideological perceptions related to how (ab)normal multilingualism is taken to be in different domains and contexts. In the first essay of the section *Discourses of proficiency and normality – endangering aspects of English in an individual's biography of language use* by Tiina Räisänen the multilingualism appears as a problem: Räisänen shows how the value and usefulness of the multilingual repertoires of globalized employees vary and shift according to the changing normativities in operation in the different settings the employees find themselves at work. More specifically, Räisänen's chapter explores the trajectory of an individual, a young Finnish engineer, from a learner of English as a foreign language, through a stay abroad period in Germany as a student, to an employee of a globalized company operating in China. With the help of this particular case, the author shows how English actually prevents individuals, like the young Finnish employee, from fully engaging in social activities that would be important for them to manage well in globalized working life. On the basis of this case, the author also shows how in the kind of discursive work that her subject engages in language proficiency, normality and abnormality are recurrent questions the subject struggles with.

Multilingualism proves problematic also in everyday informal, interactive web discussion forums as discussed by Samu Kytölä in his chapter *Peer normativity and sanctioning of linguistic resources-in-use – on non-Standard Englishes in Finnish football forums online*. The author shows how the domain under investigation in his essay is relatively free of high modernist demands for purity, but how it, nevertheless, illustrates a heightened concern with norms and normativity: the ways in which multilingual resources can be and should be used – their normality – is heavily regulated and policed at the grassroots level by the interactants. The ascription to and use of particular language resources are taken to be a key for full participation rights, agency and belonging. With two cases, both highlighting multilingualism, Kytölä shows how they give rise to intense normative peer evaluation, harsh humour, mockery and discrimination, finally leading to the exclusion of some participants.

The third essay in this section *Experiencing multilingualism: the elderly becoming marginalized?* by Anne Pitkänen-Huhta and Marja Hujo discusses how the allegedly positive effects and outcomes of multilingualism are for some social groups unattainable and may, in fact, contribute to their social exclusion and marginalization. With the help of interviews of an elderly Finnish monolingual couple living in a remote rural area in Finland, the authors report on the couple's grassroots level story of language contact and struggle with the strange and foreign in their environment, of marginalization and coping. The essay shows how ordinary people are touched by multilingualism, how they experience it and live through it willingly or unwillingly. The authors show how the elderly may well be fully aware of the processes of globalization and multilingualism in their environment, but how this awareness is not enough to prevent their self-perception as someone abnormal in society, despite their capacity to conduct their everyday lives completely monolingually. At the societal level, the story of the elderly illustrates how increasing multilingualism may lead to a societal division of those who have the necessary skills for full participation and upward mobility in society, and those who, because of their monolingualism, are excluded.

The final essay of the section, *When one of your languages is not recognised as a language at all* by Elina Tapio and Ritva Takkinen presents an extreme case of linguistic abnormality: the case of the multilingual Deaf whose right to learn and use Sign Language is questioned, resented and made difficult by the educational and medical institutions and their dominant discourses. With the help of interviews of parents of deaf children as well as deaf adults, they show how there has recently been a conservative and oralist backlash in attitudes to and practices related to the Deaf, and how in these Sign Language and its speakers are regarded as fundamentally abnormal. This is because they are unwilling or refuse to communicate orally, although modern medicine, with the help of the cochlear implant, is now capable of converting many of them into oral communicators. The essay also describes the battles the Deaf have to go through when they seek recognition of their linguistic repertoires and, in actuality, of their right to be considered 'normal'. It also effectively foregrounds how a language is seen as a danger to the mainstream society, and how its learning and use are effectively policed and disciplined by scientific and educational discourses about language.

## **CONCLUSION**

Before we hand over this book to the reader, we need to make the following final point. In many ways, this book continues an old tradition in sociolinguistics in which multilingualism was seen as a problem to be confronted and solved. Some titles speak for themselves. The ground-breaking collection of studies by Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta (1968) was called '*Language Problems of Developing Nations*', and a leading journal on language planning, founded in 1976, is called '*Language Problems and Language Planning*'. The assumptions that multilingualism was a problem and that sociolinguistics should address that problem were uncontroversial in that era, and our book reasserts them.



At the same time, this book represents a rather fundamental break with that older tradition, and the reasons for this have been given above. In the older tradition the 'problem' of multilingualism was defined in modernist terms, and recommended solutions consequently drifted into the direction of the modernist forms of hierarchical ranking, standardization and development we discussed earlier. Thus, problems with multilingualism were generally seen as problems of (dis)order, and the solutions that emerged out of such analyses rarely brought real benefit to the multilingual subjects they were addressed to. The reason for this failure was that sociolinguists of that era tended to overlook the complexity of the phenomenology of multilingualism-on-the-ground. When people mostly speak a mixed, hybrid variety of language – a typical urban variety of language, in other words – they are not well served when their language is dissected as composed of two or three other ones, after which only one of which will then be used in schools and in public administration. They are then at risk of seeing their language disqualified, taken away from them, defined as a sub-language, a 'pidgin', 'jargon' or 'sibir'; of becoming literate in a language or variety they do not use in other parts of life and remain illiterate in the language or variety they use most; and of seeing their language disappear from linguistic maps, atlases and Ethnologue inventories. Many effectively 'endangered' languages in the world belong to this category of mixed and hybrid varieties, and the remarkable thing is that they are usually not even recognized as endangered languages. The task is therefore to come up with better, more just and more equitable solutions to problems of multilingualism.

This book consequently starts 'with its feet on the ground', so to speak, from a strong awareness that the phenomenology of language in society has changed, has become more complex and less presupposable than we thought it was. We have the advantage over earlier generations of being able to draw on a far more sophisticated battery of sociolinguistic insights and understandings, and we intend to draw these more advanced tools into our discussions. Our diagnostic, as we said before, will revolve around a tension between two historical eras, high modernity and late modernity, and the problems we investigate are problems that emerge out of this tension. The long historical development from high to late modernity is a crucial backdrop for our approach, because we see dangerous multilingualism as part of the debris of high modernity still affecting late-modern societies. High modernity has thus not disappeared, it has not been replaced by late modernity; both developments coincide and overlap, each at different levels of social structure. Late modernity defines reality-on-the-ground, while high modernity defines the ideological and institutional perception of this reality. This is why, in our view, we do not live in sociolinguistic postmodernity: the reality of language in society is to a large extent determined by the ideological and institutional responses to it, and these responses are those of high modernity. Our social and political systems are, in that sense, more modernist than ever before. The challenge for contemporary sociolinguistics is not to simply reject or dismiss these modernist reflexes and responses, but to understand them as real forces in our field and as features of any sociolinguistic reality we intend to address in the age of late modernity. This awareness (which we can call a 'post-Fishmanian' awareness) drives the discussions in this book, and to these we can now turn.

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