

Languages in a globalising world

Editors

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1 Introduction

Jacques Maurais and Michael A. Morris

This book, *Languages in a globalising world*, addresses language changes in the global arena from several interrelated perspectives. Global communication challenges (Part I) are becoming increasingly prominent in a rapidly changing world characterised by rising interdependence. In Part I as well as elsewhere in this volume, theoretical and practical aspects of these challenges are assessed and interrelated. Rising language competition on a global scale varies from geographical region to region as does the spread of the English language (Part II), so that the ongoing impact of globalisation must be examined in general terms as well as from the perspective of the various geographical regions. To a considerable extent, the hierarchy and status of the major languages cut across geographical regions, so that attention must be addressed to them as well (Part III). The status of a number of major languages is analysed as well as how they impact on and are impacted by a rapidly changing international order. The status and resulting hierarchy of major languages encompasses a number of key issues affecting the new global linguistic order. Vitally important as well is how ongoing globalisation affects linguistic diversity or the fate of lesser languages.

This introduction poses several key considerations about each of the three parts of the book as well as the component chapters of each part. A summary follows about the contribution of each chapter towards the part in which it is located as well as towards furthering the overall purpose of the book. Since the interrelation between languages and a globalising world is a very complex one, it is well to stress individual and overall contributions of the various chapters and parts of the book. Many issues are surveyed, numerous regions are covered and a variety of major languages are considered. Such a broad-based survey aspires to assess representative aspects of languages in a globalising world. For example, while the thousands of local languages located in pockets around the world can only be grouped together here to assess the generally adverse impact of globalisation on linguistic diversity, the major languages that have international influence are all given attention. Similarly, every single region around the world cannot be covered fully, but the most prominent regions are assessed here.

Part I: Global communication challenges

Part I surveys the major issues shaping global communication challenges. Moreover, theory and practice are integrated in assessing the present and future of the new global linguistic order while giving due attention to the historical legacy of language competition and interaction. While this survey of the issues identifies the major challenges, at the same time the authors suggest how difficult and even divisive responses may be. For example, how much will English continue to spread and how will this affect lesser languages in different ways and different places (Maurais)? It is possible that a measured spread of ‘world English’ can promote cooperation and equity, but longstanding linguistic competition threatens to be even more divisive in a globalising world (Fettes). Dominant theoretical paradigms shape thinking about linguistic competition and cooperation, but in practice often lead to distortions in making policy recommendations (Kibbee). Theories such as ‘territoriality’ provide powerful theoretical underpinning for some language policies, but in fact need to be heavily qualified to adapt effectively to a globalising world (Laponce). Forecasting the fate of languages offers the hope of resolving some of these challenges for policy makers, but in fact such forecasting is very uncertain (Mackey).

Jacques Maurais (Chapter 2) assesses the massive impact of a number of key global events on relationships and competition between the major languages, which together are producing a new international linguistic order. The spread of the English language continues, but here as well as elsewhere trends are uneven and difficult to predict, although all languages – lesser languages like major ones – are generally facing greater competition.

Mark Fettes (Chapter 3) argues for reversing the longstanding approach or practice where nations compete with one another to promote their own languages, which is all the more pressing in a globalising world where linguistic competition threatens to escalate. Instead, he advocates developing geostrategies of interlingualism, i.e. linguistic strategies to foster global communication in cooperative, equitable ways which promote linguistic diversity. A cooperative approach might take any of a number of forms including measured spread of ‘world English’, promotion of plurilingualism, support for technical solutions enabling easier access to other languages, and greater reliance on an invented language such as Esperanto.

Douglas A. Kibbee (Chapter 4) addresses several major relationships between language policy and linguistic theory. Free-market theorists of global language strategy justify domination by major international languages as a kind of natural selection, while ecological theorists regard the loss of any language as constituting a permanent, irrevocable loss. Both theoretical orientations are based on many linguistic presuppositions that are rarely examined, and lead to distortions in making policy recommendations. For example, promotion of

linguistic diversity is a worthy goal, but awareness of shortcomings of theory can help correct inappropriate policy recommendations.

Jean Laponce (Chapter 5) is a very well-known advocate of 'territoriality', i.e. defence of minority languages through consolidation of a solid geographical base. Chapter 5 adds important qualifications regarding the most appropriate kind of defence of minority languages in a highly competitive, globalising world. A pragmatic approach is recommended involving promotion of minority languages in certain kinds of situations while relying on English in others.

The future of major languages as well as lesser ones is of great interest to all concerned, but William F. Mackey (Chapter 6) argues that forecasting the fate of languages is very uncertain. Present predictions may go wrong for a variety of reasons just as past ones have, and pitfalls in each of four broad categories affecting predictions are surveyed. A reliable model for prediction would need to reflect the multidimensional and multifunctional nature of language dynamics.

Part II: Major Areas

Part II is broad-ranging, covering five geographical regions (Chapters 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14) as well as the three most prominent examples of regional economic integration in the world (Chapters 8, 9 and 10). While the focus of each chapter is broad-based and distinctive, taken together they are also mutually reinforcing. For example, the three chapters on regional economic integration not only offer a strong basis for deriving relationships between globalisation, regionalism and languages, but they also contrast major features of language dynamics in Europe, North America and South America.

The European Union (EU) and Mercosur (South American Common Market or *Mercado del Sur*) include language policy within regional integration while the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) does not. Further complicating comparisons between different regional integration approaches, the EU and Mercosur have themselves become major vehicles for promoting major languages with much more success in the case of the former regional grouping than the latter one. A further contrast is that the EU has taken some active measures to promote minority languages while Mercosur has not (and, to repeat, NAFTA has no jurisdiction over language issues other than declaring three official languages). Challenges posed by the continuing spread of English affect all three regional economic integration groupings, but implications seem to diverge. In the EU, the spread of English may have contributed to loosening of the traditional hegemony of major languages such as French and Spanish within national territory thereby helping permit greater leeway for lesser languages such as Corsican, Basque and Catalan. The continuing spread of English in North America does not yet appear to have endangered French in Quebec nor Spanish in Mexico and Puerto Rico but does seem to have further threatened

lesser languages within the United States. In South America, Mercosur's efforts to promote Spanish and Portuguese have not reached fruition nor halted the spread of English, but neither of these Iberian tongues is yet threatened.

The intention here is simply to highlight the importance of regional economic integration for the future of languages, and to suggest how comparisons can help yield insights. Comparative regional integration has been recognised as an increasingly important dimension of a globalising world, but comparisons about its related linguistic dimension have been largely neglected.

Similarly, from different perspectives pairs of articles complement one another in assessing language trends in Europe (Fodor/Pelua and Truchot grouped as Chapters 7 and 8), the Americas (Hamel and Morris grouped as Chapters 9 and 10) and Asia (Schlyter and Kaiser grouped as Chapters 11 and 12). Chapter 13 on sub-Saharan Africa by Breton has global as well as regional implications in identifying threats to local languages while English-, French- and Portuguese-speaking zones remain vibrant. Regional as well as global implications are evident as well in Chapter 14 on Australasia and the South Pacific by Baldauf/Djité, which documents the strong position of English.

There is also broad coverage of countries within regions. For example, there is a total of 23 full members in the three regional integration pacts that are assessed in separate chapters (Mercosur: 5; EU: 15; and NAFTA: 3), and all three have some kind of associate membership that adds well over a dozen and perhaps over two dozen countries depending on how associate membership is defined. In addition, as a dependent territory of the USA, Puerto Rico is part of NAFTA, just as some European dependencies are part of the Euro zone. Another example of impressive coverage is Chapter 14 on Australasia and the South Pacific, where Baldauf and Djité compare language patterns of 20 countries. In Chapter 13, Roland Breton includes about twice as many countries in his survey of sub-Saharan Africa.

The broad-based survey covers major countries of the world along with consideration of many lesser countries. For example, a major consideration of Morris is the position of the USA in North America, Truchot includes the European great powers (Britain, France and Germany) in his survey of European Union language trends, and Schlyter analyses the legacy of the language policy of the Soviet Union on former Soviet republics in Central Asia as well as the current position of Russia (see also a complementary chapter on Russia and Russian in Part III by Mikhalchenko/Trushkova). Contemporary linguistic challenges for East Asia including Japan and China are assessed by Kaiser, and the chapter on Central Asia by Schlyter also includes part of China.

Rising powers and their languages in a globalising world are also assessed. For example, Hamel focuses on Argentina and Brazil, Morris considers the

linguistic situations of Canada and Mexico (in addition to that of the USA), and Baldauf/Djité include Australia in their assessment of Australasia and the South Pacific. Schlyter suggests that Turkey may have an increasingly important linguistic impact in Central Asia. Various chapters in the book address South Asian linguistic issues. While Hindi has considerable stature within India, it should be emphasised that the international impact of this language is limited whether measured by the number of students studying Hindi abroad, the number of Hindi-speaking migrants abroad who exert some linguistic impact on the countries where they are located, or more generally by the international reach of the language. Even within the South Asian region, English as well as local languages all remain important.

Part II is justified by traditional practice in examining relationships between geography and language, which include how language groups are embedded in different geographical areas as well as how languages cut across geographical regions. While geography may suggest a static relationship with language, in fact ongoing competition between languages within and across regions is by its essence dynamic in nature. At the same time, competition between languages in a globalising world is considerably more fluid and susceptible to change than in a less technologically advanced world. A recurring theme in Part II as well as elsewhere in this volume is that in a globalising world virtual space (or cyberspace) is increasingly impacting on languages, in fact often posing the challenge that languages must either adapt to modern technology or lose ground. For example, this theme is prominent in Chapter 12 by Kaiser (in Part II) and in Chapter 16 by Laroussi (in Part III); it is also addressed by other authors including Maurais and Mikhalchenko/Trushkova.

Ferenc Fodor and Sandrine Peluau (Chapter 7) assess changing language patterns in eastern and central Europe. Substantial documentation in this chapter reveals a general rise in the learning of English and decline of Russian, but language-learning trends vary significantly from country to country. As appropriate, regional, sub-regional and national trends are identified and interrelated in order to determine linguistic realities and their political implications.

Claude Truchot (Chapter 8) focuses on the multiple linguistic dimensions and influence of the EU. The EU approach to economic and political integration will likely have a decisive impact on the linguistic balance in Europe and beyond, so that the future linguistic influence of the EU assumes great political importance for all concerned. The implications of the continuing ascendancy of English within the EU will need to be addressed one way or the other. At the same time, French has managed to retain considerable influence within the EU and German will need to be given a more important role within the EU, all the more so since the influence of the German language has been increasing informally since the collapse of the Soviet Union and unification of Germany.

Rainer Enrique Hamel (Chapter 9) addresses language issues within the major South American integration grouping, Mercosur. The title of this chapter, 'Regional blocs as a barrier against English hegemony?', reflects the aspiration that regional integration can promote regional languages (in this case, particularly Portuguese and Spanish). However, a survey of regional integration practice reveals that in spite of ambitions little has been done to promote mutual reinforcement of the two major regional languages or to curb the continuing spread of English in the eventuality of a Pan-American integration project. The author proposes complementary emphasis on all these languages in Mercosur while cautioning that the other two examples of regional integration covered in this book, the EU and NAFTA, have distinctive settings.

Michael Morris (Chapter 10) analyses and contrasts positive and negative effects of North American integration on linguistic diversity. Effects are considered as positive if they maintain or promote North American linguistic diversity, while negative effects limit linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity respects language rights of minorities and supports their distinctive cultural contributions. Integration in North America through NAFTA has been fairly well structured to achieve specific economic and political results, but all too often linguistic diversity has not even been considered as an issue.

Birgit N. Schlyter (Chapter 11) analyses the multifaceted sociolinguistic changes in transformed Central Asian societies. Broadly speaking, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of new independent states have increased consciousness of peoples' linguistic destiny and language identities. New legislation has accorded official status to certain local languages, but implementation has been halting. The future of other local languages remains uncertain, as does the fate of the Russian language. Turkey has been emerging as a newly influential actor on linguistic issues in Central Asia. English is becoming more popular, but here, too, future prospects are unclear. What is clear is that languages have acquired greater political importance, and that competition among languages adds to the uncertainty about the future.

Stefan Kaiser (Chapter 12) surveys complexities of languages and script in East Asian countries and resulting problems in adapting to modern information technologies. Japan's situation is given special attention, and the record is mixed. There are some important initiatives to promote Japanese and adapt the language to the needs of the information age, but English continues to spread here as elsewhere.

Roland Breton (Chapter 13) assesses the legacy and future of languages in sub-Saharan Africa. There is a politicolinguistic tripartition (a three-fold partition with political and linguistic implications) between English-, French- and Portuguese-speaking zones, which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. In contrast, the future of African languages is generally very troubled, particularly the future of hundreds of local languages. Modernisation, including

the spread of education, is therefore likely to end the exceptional African linguistic diversity. Some subregional languages may reach an accommodation with the three ex-colonial languages and survive.

Richard B. Baldauf Jr. and Paulin G. Djité (Chapter 14) survey the past, present and future language situation in Australasia and the South Pacific, which is characterised by marked language diversity in numerous polities. English is and promises to remain the dominant international language in the region, although the prospects of certain regional languages (such as Chinese, Indonesian/Malay¹, pidgins) are good. Linguistic diversity in the region has nonetheless been declining, especially local languages. A certain degree of linguistic diversity will continue including various regional languages, some continuation of local languages, and increasing diversity of English.

Part III: Languages of wider communication

Part III covers half a dozen major international languages. In addition, inasmuch as Spanish is included in the chapters by Hamel and Morris in Part II, seven languages in an international leadership position are included. All of these languages are spoken in a number of countries, all have the potential for expansion although some or all may end up declining in a highly competitive, globalising world, and all enjoy some degree of international status. The languages covered are the most important ones in international organisations.

Several additional considerations highlight the decisive role that the major languages play in a globalising world. The coverage of half a dozen major languages in Part III encompasses numerous countries inasmuch as each of these languages either cuts across and/or includes a number of countries. For example, English (Chapter 19) has global reach including three circles of speakers. The figure of 75 countries is cited by Grant McConnell in Chapter 19 for the first two circles (the 'inner' circle and the 'outer' or 'extended' circle). The concept of the third or 'expanding' circle is necessarily vague but might include an equal number of states. Similarly, dozens of countries are Arabic-speaking and/or French-speaking (Chapters 16 and 18). While there are only a few German-speaking countries, they have a powerful international impact especially in Europe.

Some major languages are not included here, such as Chinese and Hindi, but they are covered to some degree elsewhere in this book and are indeed dubious candidates for becoming major international languages. (For example, Table 15.3 in this book documents the low international economic standing of Hindi.)

¹ Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian) and Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) are the two national languages of their respective countries, but linguistically they can be considered to be dialects, somewhat more different than British English and American English.

While the new international linguistic order will be shaped to an important degree by the major languages and their interaction, lesser languages are numerous, and in the aggregate their speakers are sizable and are greatly concerned by the linguistic destiny of the languages they speak. Numerous chapters throughout the book address lesser languages and challenges to linguistic diversity that they face.

Ulrich Ammon (Chapter 15) introduces Part III by posing the general question, 'What do we mean by the international standing of a language?', which he addresses for the case of German, and subsequent chapters answer for five additional languages. Ammon offers multiple indicators comparing German with other languages to show the international standing of the German language. While a powerful case is made that German is still an important international language, it is recognised that with time the international impact of German may increasingly be limited to Europe. But even this is uncertain, since Germany is the most powerful economic country in the EU, which itself is increasingly a global actor.

Foued Laroussi (Chapter 16) assesses problems posed for Arabic by new technologies with particular emphasis on computer technologies. Linguistic challenges are described, and must be overcome if modernisation of Arabic-speaking countries is to proceed apace and the language is to achieve its due international influence. A globalising world also poses a transnational challenge for Arabic, with important Arabic-speaking populations in France and elsewhere as well as in the Middle East.

Vida Io. Mikhalchenko and Yulia Trushkova (Chapter 17) survey the multifaceted status of Russian in a globalising world. In the Russian Federation, Russian is becoming stronger as a universal means of communication. However, in the former states of the Soviet Union, Russian has lost its dominant position in most spheres of communication controlled by national authorities while maintaining its status in some other spheres. Russian may be maintained by Russian-speaking communities abroad, although study of Russian outside the former USSR will likely remain quite limited.

Robert Chaudenson (Chapter 18) assesses challenges for French in a globalising world. Among other problems, there has been a lack of rigour in determining the number and degree of competency of French speakers in the various so-called Francophone countries (a term for French-speaking countries which itself erroneously implies widespread, high-level competence in French). The international future of French will depend more on how the language fares in Africa rather than Europe, and appropriate language policies to this end must rely more on hard facts. For example, the majority of real or potential French speakers is in Africa rather than in the eastern European countries, which French foreign policy has erroneously courted in the false expectation, save perhaps Romania, that they will swell the ranks of Francophone countries.

Grant D. McConnell (Chapter 19) focuses on development of a strategy for effectively measuring the expansion, contraction and maintenance of languages, which is needed because of the lack of reliability of current data. It follows that there are significant challenges for measuring the prospects of English, since this is the most widespread of any language in the world. A tentative effort to measure the global spread of English is undertaken.

Maria da Graça Krieger (Chapter 20) calls attention to the rising importance of Portuguese as an international language with particular reference to the growing role of Portuguese in Mercosur. Brazil's rise as a major international actor has been central to propelling the ascendancy of Portuguese within Mercosur and beyond. A mutual commitment of South American Spanish-speaking members of Mercosur as well as Brazil to promote the language of each within the territory of the other has reflected a conciliatory approach to the promotion of bilingualism. However, results have been slow to occur and the spread of English has continued. More positively, Portuguese-speaking countries have now formed a Lusophone grouping somewhat similar to the association of French-speaking countries.

Conclusions

In the volume's concluding chapter, Humphrey Tonkin (Chapter 21) synthesises the broad implications of a globalising world for languages. A globalising world poses a challenge of rising interdependence for all languages, since no linguistic sphere is protected or assured and a more tightly integrated world generally favours the spread of English. Language shift is not new, but the contemporary global scope of linguistic competition is. In such a fiercely competitive context, planning for linguistic diversity is called for. This is especially difficult inasmuch as language policy has historically been nationally oriented while current international relations are global in scope. A global linguistic strategy is needed which balances the ongoing spread of English with maintenance of linguistic diversity.

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