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Identity and multilingualism

Suzanne Romaine
University of Oxford

We live in a world where identity matters. It matters both as a concept, theoretically, and as a contested fact of contemporary political life. The word itself has acquired a huge contemporary resonance, inside and outside the academic world (Gilroy 1997:301).

1. Introduction

The study of identity is a topic straddling numerous disciplines, including for instance, psychology, sociology, politics, gender studies, anthropology, and linguistics, to name only a few making contributions to a substantial literature spanning decades. Within these research traditions scholars dealing with various aspects of identity have examined the ways in which people relate to their environment and how they perceive their own position within it, both as individuals or as members of a group. Thus, identities based on age, social class, gender, occupation, etc. may be deemed social, those based on membership in cultural groups may be deemed cultural, etc. So-called national identity is concerned with membership in national groups, ethnic identity with membership in ethnic groups, etc. For sociolinguists, a key issue is the role language plays in constructing the identities of individuals and groups (Joseph 2004).

The study of the relationships between identity and multilingualism is more timely than ever in view of the fact that most of the world's population is multilingual and that globalization of economies and intensification of migration have facilitated a mixture of languages, cultures and identities to an unprecedented degree (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). Despite Friedman's (1999:211) contention that "the great issues of identity politics and self-determination are becoming fewer and fewer these days", Gilroy's (1997) remarks cited at the opening of this chapter are more in line with contemporary realities. The breakup of established identities, re-emergence and reconstitution of old identities and continuing creation of new ones over the last

half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st provide ample evidence that identity matters more than ever in today's globalizing world. Language is a critical nexus in this on-going dynamic, as noted by Kroskrity (2000:1), who by contrast to Friedman, believes that "never before have the relations of language, politics and identity seemed so relevant to so many." The recent upsurge in migration and transnational diasporic populations has brought about increasing linguistic and cultural diversity to much of the globe, along with new challenges to traditional linkages between languages and identities.

Friedman is certainly not the first (nor will he likely be the last) to suggest that identity politics will be a casualty of globalization and its supposedly relentless forces of homogenization. His assertion is reminiscent of prognostications of earlier sociologists who confidently predicted the demise of ethnicity in tandem with the rise in modernity. The resurgence of ethnic identities supposedly doomed to disappear took some by surprise in the 1970s when the United States was forced to awaken from the fallacy of the melting pot. In similar fashion, Marx and his followers, who believed that the whole basis for ethnicity and separate nationhood would be eliminated under socialism, would have found unimaginable the wave of resurgent nationalisms in the post-Soviet era of the 1990s. Indeed, a dramatic restructuring of societies on the basis of ethnic, cultural and linguistic identities over class-based ones is still unfolding. Thus, Friedman's "great issues of identity politics and self-determination" loom larger and larger in the post-communist and postcolonial era.

This chapter will show how at both the macro- and micro- sociolinguistic level language has probably always played and will continue to play a critical role not simply in articulating identities, but also in actively constructing them as speakers make choices in their social interactions in favor of some varieties over others (and likewise, within those varieties, of some

variant forms over others). Macro-level processes such as language maintenance and shift are the long-term, collective consequences of consistent patterns of language choices (both conscious and unconscious) made by speakers at the micro-level. Thus, the everyday forces that shape people's linguistic repertoires drive language change and the evolution of language more generally. These repertoires can be regarded as sets of communicative practices embedded in networks of relationships linked into larger networks. Changes in global networks of communication have recently transformed the world's linguistic landscape in unprecedented ways as high-tech, cheap forms of computer-mediated communication offer a variety of unanticipated possibilities for articulating and transforming identities and languages. After examining some of the ways in which identities linked to language are constructed at both the macro and micro level, the chapter concludes with some reflections on why identities matter and identifies some of the challenges ahead.

2. The construction of identities linked to language

Although the word *identity* comes historically from Latin *idem* 'same', identity is primarily about constructing differences between ourselves and others. Indeed, it can be seen as the driving force of evolution over the course of human history. Although language is only one of many features (e.g. dress, behavior patterns, race, religion, nationality, occupation, etc.) that may mark identity, either individually or collectively, many regard languages as a benchmark for cultural diversity because virtually every major aspect of human culture ranging from kinship classification to religion is dependent on language for its transmission (Haarmann 2004). People hold strong beliefs and deeply felt emotions concerning their language, culture, and identity, about who we are similar to as well as who we are different from. Not being able to speak a particular language restricts our ability to communicate and identify with speakers of that language. For

this reason, language has played a key role in constructing and maintaining distinctive human identities by serving an important boundary-marking function between groups. Someone who does not speak our language is different. The ancient Greeks called those who could not speak Greek properly 'barbarians'; even before them, the Aztecs of ancient Mexico called those who could not speak their language 'savages' or 'mutes'.

The more distinct a language or variety is from some other, the more effectively it can serve as an identity marker. Even communities sharing what is ostensibly the 'same' language will tend to develop distinctive varieties of it as a way of distinguishing themselves from their neighbors. Thus, the English spoken in England will be different from that spoken in the United States, Australia and South Africa, just as within each country there will be locally distinct varieties tied to specific regions and subcultures. The English of New York City will be different from the English of Pittsburgh, just as the English of African Americans is distinct from that spoken by white Americans.

Languages stand in part-whole symbolic relationships with particular ethnic, cultural, social and/or national groups that speak them. In this sense they resemble flags, which are emblematic of national identities. Although many features can mark identity, language is the only one carrying extensive cultural content. Because a large part of any language is culture-specific, people feel that an important part of their traditional culture and identity is also lost when that language disappears. Moreover, once lost, a language is far less easily recoverable than other identity markers that might stand in its stead. Because identities are dynamic and relational, rather than static and fixed, the relevance and centrality of language to cultural and ethnic identity may vary from group to group and be more or less pronounced at different times (Smolicz 1981). Some groups see their existence as distinct cultural entities dependent on the

maintenance of their language. Others regard religion, ethnic or racial affiliation as more important.

René Lévesque (1968:14), former leader of the Parti Québécois and Quebec Prime Minister, stressed the centrality of French to Québécois identity when he said:

Being ourselves is essentially a matter of keeping and developing a personality that has survived for three and a half centuries. At the core of this personality is the fact that we speak French... To be unable to live as ourselves, as we should live, in our own language and according to our own ways, would be like living without a heart.

Sir James Henare expressed similar feelings about Maori when he said “Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori.” ‘The language is the essence of Maori identity.’ (Waitangi Tribunal 1989:34).

Although distinct cultural and ethnic identities can survive language shift, a Québécois or Maori identity expressed through English is not the same as one expressed through French or Maori. To say they are different does not imply that one is necessarily better than the other. It does mean, however, that to argue for the preservation of French in Quebec or Maori in New Zealand is to argue for a people’s right to choose the language in which they want to express their cultural identity.

Identifying with a culture normally implies positive attitudes toward the language used in its associated community, but for various reasons this may not always be the case. Although the Irish language stands for being Irish, for some its symbolic values are positive, while for others they may be negative; Irish is symbolic of what some regard as an old-fashioned, impoverished way of life based on agriculture that many abandoned long ago. Stereotypes about groups are projected onto their language and cultures, so that where an ethnic or cultural identity is stigmatized, the use of the associated language may be abandoned as a way of distancing oneself from the negative identity. Many stop speaking their languages as an act of survival or self-

defense in situations where they feel threatened. Many older generation Quechua speakers, for instance, recall being made fun of for speaking the language. To avoid embarrassment and harassment, they avoided speaking the language during their regular trips to town. Indeed, only 40 years ago Quechua, Aymara and other native people from the eastern part of the Bolivia were not allowed to enter the Government Palace, or allowed to walk on the sidewalks in certain important cities. Although the pressure not to speak Quechua originally came from outside the community, eventually it came from within it as well. Many older people also recall being laughed at by friends or family for speaking Quechua in their own communities (King 2001:73).

Many parents stopped speaking their native languages at home in order to prepare their children for school in the dominant language so that they would not face the same difficulties they once encountered as monolinguals in a language that was stigmatized and forbidden at school. Writing of Scottish Gaelic speakers who emigrated to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Mertz (1989:12) remarked that young people's denials of any knowledge of Gaelic represented attempts to deny an image of themselves as poor or lower-class. As knowledge of English was required for assimilation to and social mobility within mainstream English-speaking Canadian society, the symbolic linkage between Gaelic, rural 'backwardness' and economic hardship propelled language shift.

When the link between language and culture is intact, boundaries and identities may be taken for granted. However, because identities emerge in response to economic, cultural and political forces, perceptions realign themselves to changing situations. In some groups there may be debate about which particular aspect of their culture is of prime significance, or whether someone can be a 'real' member of the cultural group without speaking the associated language. When asked whether a knowledge of Scottish Gaelic was necessary to being a 'true Highlander',

those who spoke the language said it was, but people of Highland birth and ancestry who did not speak Gaelic said it wasn't (Dorian 1998:20-1). In the Canadian eastern Arctic Inuktitut is linked to local economic, cultural, and kinship practices persisting over centuries, but for some young Inuk in Iqaluit, Igloolik and Kimmirut identity is predominantly defined by genealogy and way of life; one can be Inuk without speaking the language (Dorais 2005).

In countries where Quechua is spoken, on-going shift to Spanish has led to changing perceptions of the role of Quechua in defining traditional indigenous identities. Among the Saraguros, for example, who number roughly 22,000 and reside primarily in approximately 60 rural communities scattered around the largely white town of Saraguro in the southern Andean highlands of Ecuador, deciding who or what is indigenous is no longer an easy task. With over two million speakers, the Quechua are the largest of Ecuador's ten indigenous groups. Although they were once marked locally and nationally by speaking Quechua, by their distinct hair and clothing styles, as well as lifestyles based on agriculture, many now find themselves in the awkward position of regarding Quechua to be an essential component of their ethnic identity, but not speaking the language themselves. As people have given up traditional lifestyles and become more similar to the white townspeople, the cultural features marking the boundaries between them and others have changed. This has led to a desire for revitalization in order to reinvest language with a boundary marking function that it has lost. In other communities, however, where clothing and traditional agricultural work still mark people as indigenous, there is little need for language to function as an identity marker and the maintenance of Quechua is not seen as essential to group identity. Thus, communities differ in the extent to which Quechua is regarded as a core value of culture. Communities still speaking Quechua but about to lose it are not concerned, but others further along the road to shift are worried about its loss. While the

referential and communicative functions of Quechua may have weakened, its value as an indexical sign of ethnic membership has strengthened (King 2001).

In some places where traditional languages have disappeared, people may vest their identity in a new language, in some cases in a distinctive variety of the dominant language, or in other cases, a creole language. In large parts of Australia many Aboriginal people speak Aboriginal English, Torres Strait Creole, or Kriol (an English lexicon creole), as their first language. In other parts of the world too many people speak English or another language as a second or additional language without a loss of cultural identity. Because acquisition of the dominant language proceeds in tandem with the loss of the minority language, distinctive features of a receding language may also be transferred to and survive in an equally distinctive form of the dominant language replacing it. The Highland variety of English to which terminal Scottish Gaelic speakers shifted incorporates a large number of the most distinctive phonetic traits of their Gaelic. Similarly, some aspects of Aboriginal identity and ways of speaking live on in the local and highly distinctive (though stigmatized) varieties of English spoken among many young people now in parts of Australia. In the absence of indigenous languages in most parts of the Caribbean due to the extermination of indigenous populations by colonization, creoles are able to unify diverse groups, and serve as a badge of authenticity validating a new local identity. In parts of the French Caribbean, for instance, debates about the role and status of creole languages assumed a prominent place in the cultural identity and political status of the islands vis-à-vis France, just as in newly independent nations such as India, Tanzania and Malaysia, shifting from the colonizers' language to the local vernacular(s) was seen as fundamental for building a new nation out of a former colony.

3. Languages as acts of cultural, ethnic and national identities

The notion that 'language-equals-culture equals identity' is too simple to account for the intricate linkages between languages and cultural identities, especially in view of widespread multilingualism; nor does it provide a useful model for understanding actual everyday interactions. The once prevailing idea of identities, cultures and languages as essential, primordial, and natural attributes given from birth and transmitted in stable and unchanging form throughout the lifespan has given way to a different view in which they are seen as constructed, dynamic and hybrid. As constructed categories, they are subject to change in a never ending process of symbolic boundary construction and reconstruction. Within the field of cultural studies Hall (1990:225) challenged much of the received wisdom on the notion of cultural identities when he wrote that

Cultural identity...is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation.

People negotiate their identities when they come into contact so as to align or distance themselves from one another. They will be motivated to emphasize what distinguishes them from others if they strongly identify with their in-group and derive positive status from their membership in it. Language plays a key role in this process of convergence or divergence. By diverging or emphasizing their accent, dialect, or language people accentuate differences between themselves and others. Some Welsh people exaggerated or broadened their Welsh-accented English in order to sound more Welsh when confronted with negative comments about Welsh and Wales made by a person with a strong English accent (Bourhis and Giles 1977).

Bi/multilinguals use the different languages/varieties they know to index more than one identity, or even to avoid aligning themselves with only one identity. In 1997 just before the end of more than 160 years of colonial British rule in Hong Kong, a heated debate took place over whether the speech by the first new chief executive, Tung Chee Wah, in the handover ceremony to China should be delivered in Putonghua or Cantonese, each of which was symbolic of different alignments and identities. In the end Tung chose Putonghua, the official language of mainland China, but delivered his first policy address in Cantonese, which has always been the lingua franca for all Chinese ethnic groups in Hong Kong as well as the spoken medium of instruction in primary schools and Chinese-medium secondary schools (Tsui 2007).

The fact that speakers select different languages or varieties for use in different situations shows that not all languages/varieties are equal or regarded as equally appropriate or adequate for all speech events. Through the selection of one language/variety over another speakers display what may be called 'acts of identity', choosing the groups with whom they wish to identify (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985). An American Jewish woman living in New York City may at times place priority on her perceived Jewishness and her shared bond with other Jews around the world transcending national borders, while at others she may align herself with New Yorkers, or women, or even more specifically with American women. Knowledge of different languages and varieties may reinforce these shared bonds. As an American woman she will almost certainly speak a variety of American English, but her Jewish identity may involve knowledge of a language shared by other Jews such as Hebrew or Yiddish. If she is Ultra-Orthodox, she may share the use of Yiddish as a language of everyday interaction in common with her Ultra-Orthodox counterparts in Israel, while the larger communities in which they reside use another language, English and Modern Hebrew respectively. Modern Hebrew is learned by Ultra-Orthodox Israelis

only because it is the language of the state, just as Ultra Orthodox New Yorkers learn English. For both communities, however, Yiddish is the language representing the continuity of the Jewish experience.

Our understanding of our own and others' identities develops from birth and is shaped by the values and attitudes learned at home and through growing up in the surrounding community. Identities become more complex and fluid over time as we develop allegiances to different groups within broader society. Like the American Jewish New Yorker we are all simultaneously members of various social groups (e.g. cultural, ethnic, religious, national, etc.) defined in different ways that shape and influence who we are and how we perceive ourselves. In modern times most of us interact to various degrees in local as well as global cultural systems that have arisen through mass communication, technology, social mobility and migration.

From time to time, however, we may feel conflicting pulls on our attachments to different identities that may be in real or imagined conflict. State hegemony often severely constrains individual choice in the construction of identity through overt and covert policies that sanction some varieties of language and prohibit others. Circumstances may require people to choose or prioritize one identity, e.g. nationality, race, religion, gender etc. over another, or even deny choice altogether. The Malaysian constitution, for instance, fuses into one a link between Malay ethnic identity, Malay culture and language and Islam when it defines a Malay as 'a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, and conforms to Malay custom' (Article 160). Under the apartheid regime in South Africa people were classified primarily into official racial categories of white, Colored and black, with the non-white population excluded from citizenship. These classifications determined the language of schooling, residence, access to employment, etc. In Singapore, a person's mother tongue is

defined as identical with the person's official race (Chinese, Malay or Indian); a child's mother tongue is automatically determined by the father's race. Hence, a child born to a Hokkien-speaking father and a Malay-speaking mother will be classified officially as Chinese and have Mandarin Chinese as its mother tongue regardless of which languages and varieties the family actually uses.

Legally-defined categories such as these often conflict with members' conceptions of their own ethno-linguistic identities. In Finland, a country which is constitutionally bilingual in Finnish and Swedish, citizens may register either as Swedish or Finnish speakers, but there is no official category for bilinguals. The situation for Saami is even more complex due to the fact that the designation 'Saami' covers a wide range of groups speaking at least 10 Saami languages across four countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia), with the legal position and status of Saami differing in each jurisdiction. In Norway (which has the largest Saami population) and Finland the rights and status of Saami persons are constitutionally guaranteed, but legal definitions of who is Saami differ. In Sweden one is not legally Saami unless engaged in reindeer herding. In Finland, the establishment of a Saami Parliament in 1973, triggered the need for a legal definition of Saami to draw up an electoral list of eligible voters. Finland's basis for official recognition, however, rested primarily on language, with a Saami being defined as a person whose (grand)parents or one of the (grand)parents speaks, or has spoken Sami as a language in the home and himself speaks Sami (Finnish Saami Parliament 1997). Formulated in this way, the definition allowed the exclusion of descendants of Saami from elections to the Saami parliament on the grounds that they have not maintained ties to the language. Moreover, non-Saami immigrants who have learned Saami and/or are engaged in reindeer herding can be considered officially Saami because any EU citizen can now live in Saami areas and obtain herding rights. Although reindeer herding still remains a distinctly Saami occupation, and most reindeer are in

fact owned by Saami, fewer than 10% of Saami derive their livelihoods from it today and many Saami lived in the past from hunting and fishing, as some still do today.

Government attempts to restrict Saami identity either by occupation and/or language have not worked well and conflict with practices Saami use among themselves to identify in-group members. In a study of Vuotso, a village in Finnish Saamiland, where Saami were asked to rank eleven criteria in deciding whether to identify themselves and others as Saami, almost all gave precedence to ancestry and kinship over other components such as language, cultural practices, etc. (McNulty and Magga 1987). The right to decide for itself the composition of its membership constitutes a fundamental principle of self-determination on the part of a people or a nation that is widely recognized in international law. Hence, usurping this prerogative represents one further way in which a state can oppress a minority by denying it the right even to define its identity on its own terms. Transforming a civil right into an occupational or linguistic privilege restricts the status of Saaminess to only a few. Moreover, occupational and linguistic criteria are meaningless in view of the fact that both the Finnish and Swedish states in effect controlled the reproduction of Saami ethnicity, language and culture through repressive assimilationist policies which continue to deny Saami the right to develop and maintain their language, culture and livelihood. Although the Finnish government added a section to the constitution in 1995 guaranteeing the Saami as an indigenous group the right to maintain and develop their language and culture, and Sweden established a Saami parliament in 1993, neither country has ratified the ILO Convention 169 (1989) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, a key instrument in international law relating to indigenous peoples. Ratification of the convention requires states (among other things) to address land rights and safeguard rights to natural resources. Because neither Sweden nor Finland guarantees Saami rights to land, water and other natural resources, which are

prerequisites to guaranteeing Saami rights to livelihoods that traditionally transmitted language and culture, many of the Saami languages are now seriously endangered, some with only a few hundred speakers. Tying Saaminess to language entails the risk that there may one day be no Saami.

Saami have for a long time tried to challenge the singularity of these definitions regulating Saaminess and the authority with which national governments have enforced them by challenging state sovereignty from within as well as beyond national boundaries, in transnational areas such as the European Court of Human Rights, and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Korsmo 1993). The Finnish Saami Parliament opposed the government's attempt in 1995 to widen the definition of Saami by privileging self-identity over descent and language, arguing that self-definition opened the way for members of the majority group with no Saami ancestry to claim they are Saami in order to enjoy what they perceive as special privileges and benefits (Finnish Saami Parliament 1997).

In proposing that “a correctly understood theory of [citizenship] rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed”, Habermas (1994:113) seems to suggest that rights take precedence over status. Nevertheless, many countries operate with the opposite system, where status determines rights. Now that migration has become the main component of demographic growth in the EU (Eurostat 2008) and other countries such as Australia and the US, the tension between status and rights has heightened anxieties that have come to be expressed in policies on citizenship. Despite the push towards EU harmonization policies and Europeanization of citizenship expressed in CERF (Common European Framework of Reference), citizenship has remained a national issue with wide variation in criteria for eligibility among member states. In Austria, for instance, a child

born to Austrian parents is automatically an Austrian citizen, but laws are extremely restrictive for immigrants and their descendants, who must wait ten years and renounce their citizenship before being eligible for naturalization as Austrian citizens. At least 9% of the population, many of whom were born in Austria and grew up speaking German, are excluded from political participation and 'foreigner status' is perpetuated across generations. Italy also has a ten year residence requirement for naturalization of immigrants, but allows its diaspora to maintain ties with their origin countries through generous policies recognizing dual citizenship. A fourth generation Italian-American may more easily gain Italian citizenship by virtue of being descended from Italian great grandparents than a child born in Italy to Roma or Albanian parents. Requiring nationality of an EU state as a precondition for pan-EU citizenship which confers the right to free movement and residence leaves millions of legal residents throughout the EU without citizenship and basic rights. Although official rhetoric portrays EU citizenship as inclusive in theory, in practice it is exclusionary in so far as populations historically present in Europe are included, but 'others' are excluded' from belonging. Thus, the notion of 'European' rests on "a social organisation of cultural difference and the essence of European identity emphasises the boundary between insiders and outsiders" (NicCraith 2006:7).

Moreover, testing regimes focused on language and culture adopted in many EU and other countries like Australia spell out narrow definitions of what being British, Dutch or Australian entails, and thus raise the status of cultural identity to a normative value in its own right by assuming that knowledge of language and adherence to core cultural values are preconditions for discharging the obligations of citizenship. Applicants for naturalization in the UK and the Netherlands are required to pass a test demonstrating proficiency in the respective national languages and an understanding of British/Dutch cultural values. Ironically, in 2001

when then UK Home Secretary David Blunkett stressed that immigrants needed to become “more British” and should be required to speak English (Griffith and Leonard 2002), in the same year Foreign Secretary Robin Cook declared chicken tikka massala as the true British national dish after it replaced fish and chips as the most popular food in England. Such ironies illustrate how distinctive food, dress, song, etc. are often accepted and allowed to be part of the mainstream, but language much less so. Attitudes in Britain towards South Asian languages such as Panjabi, Bengali, etc. and the creole languages spoken by those of Caribbean origin are still largely negative. Majority populations elsewhere have typically displayed little enthusiasm for the languages of minorities, even when the language concerned is a world language such as Spanish (as in the US) or Arabic (the language of many immigrants in France and the Netherlands). Despite its minority status in the US, Spanish is the language of political power and social mobility throughout much of Latin America, as is Arabic in the Middle East.

Far from converging upon a common standard or policy for citizenship, most EU member states reinforce traditional constructions of citizenship centered on nationality and statehood, in which a dominant majority culture prevails as national. Such policies thus rebuild and reconsolidate the nation-state within the EU by reaffirming the premise of ‘one state-one people-one language’, the foundation upon which the great nation-building projects undertaken in the 18th and 19th centuries created new national identities along with the languages and cultures linked to them. Amidst new streams of migration and security concerns, the trend in both the US and Europe has been toward tightening traditional linkages between culture, language and national identity. Newly implemented language and culture tests recall past abuses of literacy and language used as bars to citizenship targeted against groups such as Irish and Italians in the US, Asians in Australia, etc. Because the state still reserves the power to set criteria for membership in national

communities by retaining control over policies on citizenship, asylum, etc., the creation of regional and supranational forms of governance and transnational organizations along with the emergence of multinational companies have not rendered the nation-state obsolete or led to a borderless world as some pundits of globalization predicted.

4. Why identities linked to languages matter

Despite the fact that there is no intrinsic or inevitable one-to-one link between language and identity, or between language and culture, the connections cannot be dismissed as unimportant. Racial, ethnic, cultural and religious identities are bound up with linguistic identities in exceedingly powerful ways. They engender a potent shared sense of belonging that people are willing to die to defend. In 1980 Plaid Cymru leader Gwynfor Evans was prepared to fast to the death when Margaret Thatcher's newly elected conservative government decided not to go ahead with plans to establish a Welsh television channel. The woman who declared herself to be the 'lady not for turning', did just that: S4C (Sianel Pedwar Cymru 'Channel 4 Wales') began broadcasting in 1982.

In so far as components of cultural identities may become rallying points for furthering the interests (political or otherwise) of a group of people, the very notion of identity has sometimes taken on negative connotations and been referred to as 'identity politics'. When a group feels threatened, it may try to resist by emphasizing a number of emblematic culture traits (among them language, but also religion, race, ethnicity) in order to justify its distinctiveness and political claims within the nation-state to which its members belong. As the nationalist movement in Ireland gathered steam in the last quarter of the 19th century, the project of restoring Irish as a vernacular by establishing an independent Irish state figured prominently in Douglas Hyde's formation of *Conradh na Gaeilge* (Gaelic League) in 1893. Although most

people had already abandoned Irish long before independence, even in the Gaeltacht (i.e. Irish-speaking areas), Irish was declared the national language in the constitution framed in 1922 for the newly formed Irish Free State. In their quest to assert an identity and a voice that is independent from that of the perceived oppressor, people are willing to die for different constructions or visions of their linguistic-based identity.

In such contexts language revitalization is often seen as a key to recovering a group's cultural identity. Indeed, Fishman (2001:17) stressed that "only the conviction that one's own-language-in-culture is crucially different" is what makes the effort worthwhile. For revitalization to succeed, however, the community must revalorize the very cultural traits and identities that were once despised and stigmatized. The enterprise of language revitalization thus depends crucially on the mobilization and manipulation of identities. Identity planning goes hand in hand with language planning. Even in cases where transmission of the language has ceased altogether or been interrupted for a long period, some have tried to reclaim so-called 'sleeping languages' such as Kurna, once used by Aboriginal people in what is now the area of Adelaide in South Australia. Despite the fact that Kurna has not been spoken for more than a century, some people are now using the language for limited activities such as greetings, songs, and naming activities relying on earlier documents and records of the language. Although such reclaimed languages are likely to be substantially different from the languages historically spoken, and some have dismissed these less than fluent uses as purely symbolic, they clearly have the potential to serve important community and cultural functions for many groups in Australia and other parts of the world. Such reclamation efforts will become increasingly important as long as there are people who claim a link to a linguistic heritage no longer actively transmitted. Indeed, the case of Kurna serves to emphasize Gilroy's (1997:301, 341) observation that "people do make their own

identities but not in circumstances of their own choosing and from resources they inherit that will always be incomplete". Karna reclamation relies on a very small fragmentary corpus comprising about 3,000-5,000 words. Because there are no sound recordings, even pronunciation needed to be reconstructed from written historical resources (Amery 2001).

Processes of cultural and linguistic reaffirmation are not a return to past traditions or simple revivals of previously existing customs or practices, but often involve active re-creation and refashioning of languages, cultures and identities, whose functions in current contexts differ from those of the past. In addition, the identities people ascribe to themselves are often challenged or even rejected by others. This is particularly the case for claims of minorities which are often ignored, suppressed or discounted as merely 'ethnic' or 'identity' politics. The survival of many indigenous peoples is now often dependent on modern means of production. Many appreciate that there are some benefits arising from increased interaction with the dominant society, but want to preserve some cultural autonomy for themselves and to have some say in determining their own fate, in particular, the right to educate their children in their own way, and maintain their language and culture. In order to preserve their distinctive identities, however, most need and want economic resources gained in the dominant market. Today the maintenance of Inuktitut in the eastern Canadian Arctic is partly a product of its integration into the dominant linguistic market and political economy, where it has been standardized and promoted in education, government publications, and other written forms. Some western practices have come to be defined as Inuit, such as the syllabic writing system introduced by Christian missionaries. However, the idea of Inuit living in houses with running water, using snowmobiles, and shopping in supermarkets violates the dominant culture's stereotypical images of Inuit living in igloos, hunting with dogsleds, and living off the land. The adoption of so many western practices

appears to suggest that they have assimilated and therefore generates resentment when Inuit demand what outsiders see as ‘special’ rights in order to maintain their language and culture. Nevertheless, despite these tensions, paradoxes and transformations in traditional lifestyles, it is possible for indigenous peoples to find a new niche within dominant cultures and still maintain their language and culture. Driving snowmobiles instead of sleds drawn by dogs or reindeer, wearing jeans and listening to pop music are not inherently incompatible with cultural continuity and indigenous identity any more than speaking English need be at odds with speaking Inuktitut or Navajo.

Gilroy’s point about the incompleteness of inherited resources is particularly relevant to multilingualism in migration contexts, especially the maintenance or loss of heritage languages. Although bilingualism for many immigrant groups has been largely subtractive rather than additive resulting in the loss of their native tongues through a process of shift over several and sometimes even one generation, unprecedented mobility the world over is creating new hybridized language varieties, cultures and identities. Dismissal of what is variously called Spanglish, *español tuerco* (‘twisted’) or *mochó* (‘broken’) as a transient phenomenon ignores the fact that in spite of negative attitudes, such mixed modes of speaking can persist over long periods of time partly because they serve important functions as markers of in-group identity and solidarity. For some Latinos, Spanglish is more than just a habitual strategy of speaking to other bilinguals, it embodies the linguistic and cultural hybridity of its speakers, as suggested by Anzaldúa (1999:77):

For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to

themselves – a language with terms that are neither español ni inglés, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages.

Finding herself at odds with the community of both English and Spanish speakers who regarded her language as wrong, Anzaldúa contended that until she could accept the legitimacy of Tex-Mex (the Texas form of Chicano Spanish), she could not accept her own legitimacy.

Such hybrid communicative practices and the meanings ascribed to them vary considerably across different contexts and they may shift over time in conjunction with shifting identity politics. The younger generation in Brussels, for instance, is switching and code-mixing less than the older generation due to the political polarization of French and Flemish speakers, which makes a joint Flemish-French identity performed through code-switching less tenable (Treffers-Dallers 1992). The situation in the US with respect to the position and status of Spanglish vis-à-vis English and Spanish is rather different. With continuing immigration (both legal and illegal) replenishing the Spanish-speaking population, it is doubtful whether Spanglish will replace Spanish in the US. Nor, however, is it likely to disappear. Rapidly evolving patterns of Spanish-English bilingualism make it difficult to predict the future of Spanish in the US. Just as Pease-Alvarez (2002) calls for sociolinguistics to move beyond what she calls ‘linear trajectories of language shift’, researchers and their methodologies need to move beyond similar unilinear conceptualizations of identity. If the twilight of one ethnicity precedes the dawn of another, and there is no non-ethnic tomorrow (Fishman et al. 1985), it behooves us to understand better the shifting contexts and contents of identity and ethnicity. Despite rapid processes of language change affecting language maintenance among the adult population, and disrupting transmission to the younger generation, a number of developments provide increased prospects for

maintaining and renewing minority languages. Opportunities for travel and cultural exchange with their countries of origin, access to new media in the form of satellite broadcasts, and an ever-increasing variety of forms of computer-mediated communication (chat rooms, email, instant messaging) open up avenues not available to earlier immigrants and diasporic populations for maintaining language, culture and identity.

Before concluding prematurely that the aggressive assimilative influences at work in US will eventually and inevitably result in the loss of both indigenous and immigrant languages, it is worth reflecting briefly on the outcome of the past 100 some years of the American immigrant experience for one of the oldest, largest and once most despised immigrant groups. Italian-Americans have long represented a test case for theoretical assumptions concerning the nature and fate of ethnicity, language and identity. Thirteen million Italians emigrated to North and South America, Europe, and the Mediterranean Basin between 1880 and 1915, launching the largest emigration from any country in recorded world history. More than 6 million Italians came to the US between 1880 and 1924 at a time when the enormous increase in immigrants ethnically, linguistically and culturally distinct from the Anglo-Saxon mainstream intensified fears that unless newcomers were quickly Americanized, national culture would be endangered. These xenophobic anxieties resonate all too loudly in the general climate of hostility with respect to current waves of immigration and the continuing hegemony of rhetoric constructing multilingualism as problematic and divisive to American national unity. Then as now, tensions arose between the image of the US as a nation of immigrants and the construction of English monolingualism as a symbol of American identity (Pavlenko 2002).

By some accounts, even the second generation of Italian-Americans evidenced little identification with Italy, Italian culture or their parents' localities of origin (Gans 1962). Beyond

the shift from predominantly peasant agriculturalists to urban white ethnics (Luconi 2001), some saw nothing but “just white folks”, as the third generation and their children underwent supposed terminal de-ethnicization by assimilating into an unmarked American mainstream. If ethnicity survived at all, it was merely symbolic, a nostalgic, intermittent and undemanding leisure activity. Alba (2000) contended that an identity focused on symbols of ethnic cultures rather than on cultures themselves did not constitute membership in an ethnic group, but was a matter of personal style.

After first having to forget who they were, many descendants of these Italians are now trying desperately to remember. Between the 1990 and 2000 censuses the number of people who identified themselves as being of Italian descent increased by more than four million despite the fact that the great Italian migration to the New World had long before come to an end in 1924 when the US Congress imposed a harsh quota. Even as some aspects of culture and language are fading in the absence of new waves of Italian-born to maintain them, 3rd and 4th generation Italian-Americans can situationally choose to invoke their ethnic identities by participating in a rising number of clubs and language classes (De Fina 2007). Dismissing these new ways of connecting to and maintaining an Italian self-identity as a symbolic afterglow of ethnicity, yet another ‘ethnic revival’, and not the ‘real’ thing overlooks strategic opportunities for examining how Italian-Americans have adapted their ethnicity to fit ever-evolving social contexts. The cycle of assimilation and revitalization, resentment and resurgence that is still unfolding is evident in the autobiographies of individuals such as Jerre (Gernaldo) Mangione, American-born son of Sicilian immigrants, who described how he coped with the “ever recurring sensation of being a foreigner in my own native land”, by becoming “an ethnic at large, with one foot in my Sicilian heritage, the other in the American mainstream” (Mangione 1978:367, 369). As long as

manifestations of the vitality of Italian-American identity continue to rise Phoenix-like even in what Alba (2000) and others have dubbed the 'twilight of ethnicity', they will challenge claims that contemporary ethnic identity is merely symbolic and subjective, and not based in lived culture or social networks. Moreover, deeming such identities to be merely 'symbolic', 'private' and 'voluntary' does not make them unimportant, inauthentic or contentless (Vecoli 2000).

Despite the seemingly unrelenting forces of homogenization, the strength and persistence of local identities and their transformative power have been consistently underestimated. In South Africa, for instance, the identities linked to Afrikaans are undergoing transformation in line with new political ideologies as the place and role of the language in the country and higher education in particular are being debated (Brink 2006). Speakers of Afrikaans (originally a transplanted form of Dutch brought to South Africa by white settlers) form a linguistic group that now crosses a racial divide. Although whites, mostly well off, comprise 42.4% of the nearly six million Afrikaans speakers, the majority (53%) are now Coloured and poor. Black Africans comprise another 4.2% of speakers, and Indians .3%. The large number of non-white speakers can be traced to apartheid policies of mandatory instruction in Afrikaans for non-whites. In this context English, a key link language used by the African National Congress, was seen as a language of liberation and resistance against apartheid, while Afrikaans was linked to white Afrikaner nationalism. The future of Afrikaans will depend on the extent to which it is possible to disengage the language from the ideology and identity of white Afrikanerdom. Once co-official with English during the apartheid era, Afrikaans is now one of 11 official languages (English plus nine indigenous African languages).

5. Challenges for identity and multilingualism

The social, political, and economic conditions accompanying globalization call for new conceptualizations of belonging within culturally and linguistically diverse communities. There are at least two big challenges. The first is to reconcile constructivist and essentialist views of identity. The second is to rethink nation-states and their related national identities in more pluralistic and inclusive ways. These two challenges are interdependent due to the close relationship between the use of a particular language, cultural values, political power, socioeconomic development, and national and local identities. In a world where cultural survival is viable only in connection with well-defined geopolitical boundaries, the nation-state plays a key role in determining which cultures and languages will survive and which will not. Despite predictions about the demise of the nation-state in tandem with globalization, the notion of the nation-state with its official standard language is still one of the greatest threats to the languages, cultures and identities of minority communities. As the bedrock of the current political world order, the nation-state is the most critical unit of analysis because it is policies pursued within national boundaries that give some languages (and their speakers) the status of majority and others that of minority. Language occupies a contested position when nations cannot ground their basis for a common identity on language, religion, or culture.

Current debates about identity, language and citizenship in today's globalized, highly mobile world require new understandings of a variety of forms of transnational nationalism. My discussion of the Europeanization of citizenship revealed that truly inclusive citizenship needs decoupling from nationality and the conception of national identity needs to be more inclusive if it is to live up to the EU motto *in varietate concordia* ('unity in diversity'). Strategic lessons can be learned from Italy's struggle to reimagine itself not as an emigrant nation but an immigrant nation as it has been transformed from a country predominantly experiencing emigration to one

battling new issues of immigration. Italy's experiences in the 19th century paralleled those of other sending countries today such as Mexico, India, South Korea, etc. as waves of emigration forever affected the demography, family and social structure of towns, especially in the poorer regions of southern Italy. After having experienced one of the greatest migrations in world history, reducing Italy's population by one third, Italy (along with Spain) now has one of the highest inflows of migrants into European Union member states between 2000 and 2005 (Eurostat 2008). As a sending country Italy became a pioneer in establishing a supranational "global or emigrant nation", a network of Italians worldwide held together by ties of language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality (Choate 2008).

Although there are no official statistics with exact numbers, the migration patterns in Italy have changed dramatically since the 1970s and especially in the last twenty years, with the majority of new migrants coming from the Eastern European countries of Albania, Romania, Ukraine and Serbia along with significant numbers of Chinese, Moroccans and Africans from former Italian colonies such as Somalia and Ethiopia (Caritas 2008). Despite the demand for immigrant labor, especially in northern industrial centers such as Milan, migrants are met with hostility and racism, reminiscent of the ways in which Italian immigrants were once treated in the US and as Latino and other immigrants are being treated today. In its annual reports and other statements the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has repeatedly criticized the government its lack of policy with respect to non-territorial minorities such as the Roma and Sinti, at the same time as it urged granting citizenship to all children born in Italy (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance 2006:6-8). In 2008 Amnesty International condemned Italian politicians for embracing increasingly racist and xenophobic language which created a climate in which vulnerable groups were targets of violence and the

European Parliament voted to condemn the government's policy of fingerprinting Roma, who are widely stereotyped as vagrants, thieves and child kidnappers. It is a sad irony of history that while the Italian government strove to adopt a more flexible definition of identity and belonging that transcended borders in order to accommodate its substantial diaspora, it seems to have forgotten these lessons when it comes to the treatment of migrants within Italian borders. Lack of policy and an institutional framework for equitable integration of minority and majority communities will only accelerate a deteriorating situation.

As much as globalization appears to be leading inexorably to homogenization of cultures, at the same time it is creating hybridization. In today's global village we all have overlapping and intersecting identities. Nevertheless, many are still trapped in the mistaken idea that all people have only a single identity - that Nigerians are only Nigerians, Muslims only Muslims, etc. The presumption that people can be uniquely classified on the basis of religion, culture, or language is a major source of conflict in the contemporary world. Sen (2006:xv) writes that "many of the conflicts and barbarities in the world are sustained through the illusion of a unique and choiceless identity". While sharing of an identity can be a source of richness and warmth, identity can also kill when it is perceived in terms of a strong and inclusive sense of belonging to only one group. Genocide in Rwanda was premised on classifying people only as Hutus or Tutsis while forgetting their shared identities as Rwandan citizens and Africans, as well as their common humanity. In similar fashion, Albanians and Bosnian Muslims were accorded no place in extreme nationalist visions of an Orthodox Christian "Greater Serbia", where the ethnic identity of a single group became a defining characteristic of nationality. In attempts to distinguish Croatian from Serbian linguistic cleansing in the form of eliminating foreign borrowings has gone hand in hand with so-called ethnic cleansing, i.e. the desire to create

ethnically pure and homogeneous nation-states force, where one language claims to be the only authentic symbol of national identity.

In order to coexist, however, our identities should be compatible; individuals and groups should not face a situation in which they are forced to choose between local, national, regional and other identities based on gender, religion, language, etc. Reducing the complex notion of identity to a simplified view of the world as a collection of cultures, religions, or civilizations facilitates the idea that violence and terrorism result from a clash of civilizations. Those fomenting global confrontations in which “the west” is pitted against “the rest” rely on reducing identity to a forced choice between two extremes (e.g. Barber’s 1995 jihad vs. Mcworld). When modernity is seen as westernization, this may pose an identity threat to indigenous peoples and other minorities. Children may feel that to achieve in school they have to give up their identity and abandon their peer group because identification with their peers means risking complete exclusion from the mainstream and social mobility. They end up caught in a vicious circle in which the dominant culture sees no place in the modern world for people who allegedly ‘choose’ not to adapt, but at the same time denies them the right to exist in modernity.

McCarty et al. (2006:672), for example, report that Navajo is linked with backwardness and English with modernity and opportunity so that “youth feel they must make an either-or choice between language affiliations”. For many young indigenous people suicide has become a choice of last resort when things go so badly wrong with identity development that youth see no viable way of linking their past, present and future selves. Suicide rates among American Indian/Alaskan Native adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 34 are 1.9 times higher (i.e. 21.4 per 100,000) than the national average for that age group (11.5 per 100,000). In this age group suicide is the second leading cause of death (Centers for Disease Control 2007).

Writing of young Yupiaq people in Alaska, where the youth suicide rate is eight times higher than US national rates, Kawagley (1995:111-112) argues that the task is to reconstruct and define a new native identity built around native traditions. At the moment young Inupiaq are like round pegs in square holes, emotionally and mentally exhausted from inability to succeed in the native world as traditionally defined or in the modern world as defined and controlled by others.

Indeed, this potential clash of values and identities was the crux of earlier debates in the US about ethnicity in the context of immigration. Whyte's (1943) classic study of Italian immigrants in Boston's North End between 1937 and 1940 characterized the dilemma of the American-born generation in terms of their inability to reconcile the channels for gaining advancement in their own community with those of mainstream American society. If a Cornerville [Whyte's pseudonym for the North End] boy advanced into the American mainstream, he is recognized by society at large as a successful businessman, but he is alien to Cornerville. If he achieves recognition in Cornerville by local standards, he is a social outcast to respectable people elsewhere. Nevertheless, Whyte acknowledged that even if a man wanted to forget his Italianness, society around him would not let him. In the past this either-or narrative of assimilation vs. maintaining non-mainstream identities and allegiances was used to forcibly assimilate people; today the process continues often by benign neglect, through failure to support pro-active policies. The result is that the American educational experience continues to cut children off from their linguistic heritage by teaching them to become American by learning how to ashamed of their parents (Covello 1958:43).

The greater the homogenizing pressures exerted by globalization in the future, the more differences are likely to be accentuated. Nevertheless, being Irish, French, or Breton is not incompatible with being a European just as being Hawaiian need not be in conflict with being

American, a member of the Republican Party, a woman, a Catholic, etc. One can clearly remain, for example, both Spanish-speaking and American, Catalan-speaking and Spanish, or Welsh-speaking and British. A new generation of well-educated fluent speakers of world languages such as English, French and Spanish now view the revitalization and maintenance of ancestral languages such as Maori, Breton and Basque as idealized expressions of contemporary political aspirations, cultural authenticity and identity. Narrower identities do not necessarily need to be traded in for broader ones, but can co-exist with them. The reformulation of traditional identities as transnational has provided a means of resisting assimilative policies of nation-states. The chairman of the Gothenburg Sami Association, for instance, declared his pan-Saami identity in this way (*The Sami* 2005:18):

I am a Saami among Swedes, but I do not feel the same sense of a common identity with them as I do together with other Saami among Norwegians or among Finns. National boundaries crisscross our Sápmi [Saamiland SR], but what do we care, they're not on our 'maps'.

One consequence of globalization has been the emergence of a new common global indigenous identity through the international movement of indigenous peoples (Niezen 2003).

Maintaining the world's languages goes hand in hand with achieving and maintaining greater self-determination as part of a larger strategy of cultural survival. Maintaining indexical and symbolic differences can reduce rather than create conflict. The world has seen the disastrous results of enforced cultural homogenization too many times in the past, and much of the world is unfortunately still inimical to pluralism. Nettle and Romaine (2000:196-197) stress that globalization on an unprecedented scale does not change the fact that most people everywhere still live their lives in local settings and feel the need to develop and express local identities to pass onto their children. There is a need for local languages for expressing local identities, and global

languages for communicating beyond local levels and expressing our identities as citizens of the world. The active cultivation of stable multilingualism can provide a harmonious pathway through the seeming clash of values in today's struggle between the global and local, between uniformity and diversity.

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