

REVIEW

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LANE-MERCIER, G., MERKLE, D. & KOUSTAS, J. (eds.), *Minority Languages, National Languages, and Official Language Policies*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018, 360 pp.

Multilingualism, as a fact of life across all continents (Maher 2017), has turned into a new area of research in the field of sociolinguistics. This area of research interwoven with the field of language policy (Lo Bianco 2010) has been accompanied by the publication of a growing number of significant works in recent years. Among them, *Minority Languages, National Languages, and Official Language Policies* can be introduced as an authoritative source of information which critically deals with the topic. Organized around an Introduction, eleven chapters headed by six intersecting parts, and an Afterword, the volume mainly attempts to answer this question: "to what degree and in what ways have official multilingualism and multiculturalism policies actually succeeded in attaining their goals?" (p. 12). Doing so, its contributors attempted to examine the implementation of official policies of multilingualism at different geographical levels through a series of case studies.

In Introduction entitled "Toward an Ethos of Diversity", Merkle & Lane-Mercier, the editors, firstly highlight the significance of cultural and linguistic diversity in the current world. Presenting a comparison between biodiversity and linguistic diversity, they maintain that human activity is the main cause of affecting biodiversity as well as linguistic diversity in the modern world. In their words, "the habitat of cultures and languages, like

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that of flora and fauna, must be preserved to ensure the survival of their specificity” (p. 3). Conceiving the importance of their preservation, Merkle and Lane-Mercier point out that the modern nation-state system which promotes the hegemonic slogan of “one nation, one language” has led to the reduction in global, cultural and linguistic diversity over the past two centuries through the devaluing and eradication of countless languages. Criticizing the policies and rules which their implementation has resulted in the loss of linguistic and cultural diversity, they assert that such homogenizing and regulating policies are in contrast with the democratic principles of equality, freedom, and citizens’ rights.

In the following, Merkle & Lane-Mercier introduce the four models of official multilingualism common in the world today. In fact, through introducing these models, they intended to offer a basis for comparison with the case studies that the book’s chapters have examined. After that, the main question remains that “to what point and in which ways have these models of official multilingualism and multiculturalism (Haque 2012) actually succeeded in attaining their political, socio-cultural, and linguistic goals? Are contemporary language and cultural management models in fact contributing to cultural diversity?” (p. 12).

Part 1 entitled “Diversity is Diverse: Complex Diversity and Deep Diversity” includes one chapter. The opening chapter, “Choosing Concepts for Sustainable Diversity Management Policies” written by François Grin, presents a critical reflection on the choice and interpretation of key concepts that inform how cultural and linguistic policies are selected, designed, implemented and assessed. While he maintains that in any policy choice, sustainability must be the primary driver, reviewing the current policies in many parts of the world reveals that “erroneous concepts, or erroneous interpretations thereof, can lead to unsustainable policy decisions from a social, political, economic, or ethical perspective” (p. 16). In this regard, his basic claim is that while sustainability, which has material and symbolic dimensions, is a crucial aspect of the success of a public policy in the long run, mostly due to ideological and conceptual causes, insufficient attention has been paid to the symbolic dimension. Emphasizing on the point that “wrong concepts can lead us down blind alleys or even make a problem worse” (p. 35), Grin attempts to critically examine some concepts, notably the notions of *simple* and *dynamic sustainability*, *diversity*, *superdiversity* and *linguaging*. Through examining these concepts

along with resorting to the results of a unique, large-scale survey of attitudes toward linguistic and cultural diversity, taken by over 40,000 Swiss young men, he provides the readers with valuable theoretical and practical considerations on the topic which have significant implications for public policies on multilingualism and multiculturalism as complex phenomena. Grin concludes that in the era of globalization such official policies are more necessary, but also more complex than ever.

Part 2 entitled “Problematizing the Ethos of Diversity: Majority National Languages and Official Language Policy” consists of two chapters. Chapter two, “Multilingualism without Multiculturalism? The Case of Luxembourg” written by Núria Garcia examines Luxembourg’s model of official multilingualism. According to the report of European Commission released in 2012, around 84% of Luxembourg’s population speak at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue, and 61% declare mastering three languages in addition to their mother tongue. This generalized individual multilingualism – which, broadly speaking, covers Luxembourgish, French, and German, as the three most widely spoken languages, and increasingly English – is another distinctive feature which sets Luxembourg apart from most officially multilingual countries. After presenting the origins and history of the Luxembourgish multilingual model and examining the formal and informal rules governing language use in Luxembourg, Garcia asserts that despite the fact that 45% of the population are foreign residents, through educational and citizenship policies, Luxembourg’s regulation of languages has reinforced historical multilingualism (German, French, Luxembourgish) and historical monoculturalism (Luxembourgish). She argues that “contrary to popular belief, the Luxembourgish model of multilingualism functions as a vector of exclusion instead of favouring the inclusion of the newly arrived” (p. 65). In her words, it is due to the fact that the multilingual language regime of the country is not accompanied by multicultural policies accommodating the language rights of minorities. As a result, the inequalities between Luxembourgish citizens and foreign residents are deepening.

In the third chapter, “The Future of Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Kazakhstan”, Brian James Baer & Zhailagul Sagyndykova present an analysis of official policies in Kazakhstan, with a focus on sixteen students’ language ideologies vis-à-vis Kazakh, Russian and English. As the authors point out, the country which is maintained

as unique in the region for its language policy, often referred to as the Three Languages Policy, intends to promote the study of Kazakh, as the native language of the Kazakh people, without eliminating Russian, which was the official language of government and education in Kazakhstan throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while also encouraging English as the international language of the global economy. Despite this claim, the findings of a small-scale ethnographic study conducted by Baer shows a disconnect between what he deems a utopian official language policy, its implementation, and the everyday experiences of citizens.

Part 3 entitled “Protecting and Revitalizing Endangered Traditional Minority Languages” includes three chapters. Chapter four, “Minority Language Protection in Italy and Local Initiatives to Protect Francoprovençal in Apulia” written by Adriana Di Biase, reports the attempts in protecting and preserving Francoprovençal as a minority language in Italy. While this language is spoken in east-central France, western Switzerland, northwest Italy, and in two isolated small Apulian villages in southern Italy, the main focus of this chapter is on Apulia. In fact, the author attempts to describe and illustrate some of the initiatives in the forms of publications, translations, scholarly research, cultural events, and education promoted by local authorities to preserve and promote the use of this minority language in this small area. Such initiatives which have been divided into corpus planning, status planning, and acquisition planning have been effective, despite the presence of some obstacles including the small number of speakers, the competing presence of other local dialects, the dominance of Italian as the official language, and especially uncertainty regarding the future of Francoprovençal. Di Biase concludes that the deep pride of the local population as well as their motivation and enthusiasm have been the main components of Francoprovençal preservation.

In the fifth chapter, “*Dyw un iaith byth yn ddigon* –One Language Is Never Enough: Language Policy and Translation in Modern Wales”, Anastasia Llewellyn deals with a territory, i.e. Wales that has been under pressure of British domination with its violent linguistic and cultural oppression for many years. In this chapter, Llewellyn shows that how translation and interpretation are playing an increasingly important role in language planning and policy in Wales and, thus, in the preservation of Welsh identity. After providing the readers with a scene of language situation in the territory, the author

reports the process and incidents of implementing a mandatory language scheme and specifically an explicit translation policy, which has been the main means of the survival of the Welsh language, culture and identity. Of course, Llewellyn mentions that the implementation of this policy has faced some financial and personnel problems including the cost of translating, the lack of qualified translators, etc. Despite such problems, the Welsh situation could be surely introduced as an efficient language policy and planning supported by political will.

Chapter six, “International Models of Language Policy and Language Planning: Official Bilingualism in Ireland and Sociolinguistic Reality” written by Maeve Conrick narrates a situation in which, due to insufficient political will at the state level and weak national leadership, the outcomes have not been satisfactory. After describing the language situation of Ireland, as a country with two official languages, namely Irish and English, Conrick demonstrates that the disconnect between *de jure* and *de facto* policy on bilingualism has led to a situation in which around 98% of the population uses English as their vernacular (p. 158). In a more precise word, although the position of the Irish language is protected by a reasonably robust legislative framework, there are serious shortcomings in the observance of official language obligations. As the author concludes, “the predominance of English is unlikely to change, but that need not be a reason for neglecting to pursue the many advantages of bilingualism at both personal and collective levels” (p. 172) in Ireland.

Part 4 titled “Indigenous Languages and Official Language Policy: The Canadian Example” consists of two chapters, and as its title shows they deal with language policy in Canada. In the seventh chapter, “Language, Education, and the Structuring of Canada’s Social Sphere”, Deborah Shadd presents a comprehensive overview of the history and development of official multilingualism in Canada from 1960s onwards. Through analyzing two reports, namely *the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (1963-1969) and *the Official Languages Act* (1969) commissioned by the federal government, she reveals how the selection and implementation of official language policies, neglecting indigenous languages, reproduce the dominant political discourse and are in line with the will and privilege of two dominant European settler communities and their languages and cultures, i.e. English and French.

In chapter eight, “Indigenizing Language Policy in Canada: Redressing Racial Hierarchies in Language and Education” Donna Patrick addresses what is at stake linguistically and politically in Canada for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in the context of language policy, revitalization, and maintenance. Referring to above-mentioned reports and their subsequent ones, the author attempts to analyze Indigenous language policy making from an extended temporal perspective, which takes into account the legacy of colonizing and racist federal policy making. In her terms, while the subsequent reports provide opportunities for reclamation, revitalization, recognition, protection, and maintenance of Indigenous languages, the discourse of official French–English bilingualism is dominant.

Part 5 entitled “Decolonization and Official Language Policy: The African Example” includes two chapters. In chapter nine, “The Promotion of Languages in Nigeria: An Example of Problematic Official Multilingualism in Africa”, Michael Akinpelu deals with an interesting context. With over six hundred Indigenous languages, three main colonial languages (English, French, Arabic), two official languages (English and French), and three national languages (Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo), the Nigerian government has developed a National Policy on Education to ensure mother-tongue instruction for the first three years of primary school, as well as the acquisition of one of the national languages and both official languages. After providing a brief overview of the sociolinguistic situation of Nigeria as well as its language policy and planning, Akinpelu critically examines the official language policies in the country. Due to failure of the language planning activities in Nigeria which are fundamentally due to tensions among ethnolinguistic groups and vague and inappropriate language policies formulated without proper knowledge and documentation of the sociolinguistic and political realities of the country (p. 245-246), he finally argues in favor of examples of language management in Asian countries and specifically India’s model. This model as Akinpelu writes “does not seek to replace languages inherited from colonization with native languages but rather argues for complementarity from a sustainable national development perspective” (p. 247).

In chapter ten, “Denying Linguistic and Cultural Pluralism in Algeria: An Official Model of Diversity Management”, Wajih Guehria examines language policy in Algeria as another post-colonial context in Africa. Through presenting a picture of language situation

in this country along with reporting the results of a survey with ten male and female students on the topic, Guehria criticizes the language policy imposed by the Algerian governments in recent decades. His findings reveal that the imposition of classical Arabic as the official language without enough attention to many minority languages and dialects spoken in the country has led to the weakening and loss of cultural and linguistic diversity of Algeria.

The last part, “Challenging the Limits of Official Language Policy”, consists of one chapter. In “Challenging the Borders of Nation: Language and Translational Language Policy in the Plurilingual Romani Context”, Debbie Folaron reflects on some of the specificities of language and language policy in the Romani context. Referring to some features including the historical trajectory of the Romani language itself, a language of migration and in close contact with other languages which has given way to a sociolinguistic reality of multilingual repertoires by Romani speakers, the author presents one of the most fascinating instances of complex and deep diversity.

Gillian Lane-Mercier closes the volume with an Afterword entitled “Diversity Must *Remain* Diverse”. In this section, she attempts to present an overview of the book including the objectives and the findings. Referring back to one of the key questions of the book, i.e. “What language policies, or ‘legal rules’ can be developed or, if they already exist, chosen to maximize linguistic and, by extension, cultural diversity on the national and international levels?”, Lane-Mercier concludes that “there are no universal “legal rules” or best practices” (p. 316) and the rules or policies or in her words, action plans, be they essentially top-down (e.g. Nigeria, Algeria, Wales, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Canada) or bottom-up (e.g. protection of Inuktitut, Francoprovençal, Romani), should not, and indeed cannot, be generalized. Lane-Mercier reminds the readers that in spite of differences in the essence and function of language policies, “diversity is diverse, owing to the complexity of its various components, dissimilar geopolitical contexts, transnational phenomena of border crossings, translation, and dispersal, as well as the increase in subjective diversity due to globalization” (p. 317).

Summing up, as it was seen, the volume presented 10 worthwhile case studies concerning official language policies in all four corners of the world. Apart from the valuable findings applicable for language policy-makers and scholars especially with

respect to lesser-known minority languages, due to the wide range of sociolinguistic methods used in gathering data as well as the approaches adopted in analyzing them, the book can be a practical source for scholars interested in dealing with the topics. Undoubtedly, such significant contribution of the book to the research on language policy regarding minority languages as well as national and official languages is really admirable. Now back to the main question of the book, we can conclude that while in some cases the success has been attained, language policies have mostly failed to deal appropriately or adequately with the issues they are designed to solve. Thus, there is no surprise to see that the book indeed calls for further research about this extremely rich and promising field.

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