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Introduction: Regional and international perspectives on language activism

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Koottu Joshua Fishmanin kunniaksi. Fishman tuli tunnetuksi erityisesti kielisosiologian pioneerina. Sen piiriin kuuluvat kielivähemmistöt ja vähemmistökielet, joita tässä kokoelmassa tutkaillaan kieliaktiivisuuden perspektiivistä. Teeman hengen mukaisesti, ja koska olisi suorastaan tekopyhää kirjoittaa näistä aiheista ainoastaan englanniksi, päätimme valita näiden alkusanojen kieleksi suomen.

[Compiled in honor of Joshua Fishman. Fishman became known as a pioneer of the sociology of language, a field that includes language minorities and minority languages, both of which are examined in this issue through the lens of language activism. In the spirit of this issue's theme, and because it would be hypocritical to write about these issues in English only, we decided to write this foreword in Finnish.]

This special issue is written in honor of the late Joshua Fishman, specifically, his life and academic contributions.

Joshua Fishman (1926–2015) taught at a number of institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University, and held the position of visiting scholar at a number of universities around the world. He is regarded, in some circles, as the founding father of the sociology of language. He concentrated on a number of aspects of the sociology of language, including language policy and planning, language and identity, and language and ethnicity as well as others. He viewed the sociology of language through a minority lens and framed scholarship as a form of social action, influencing scholars and researchers worldwide. In light of Fishman's interest in social action and activism, we decided to compile a special issue on language activism. Consistent with his global perspectives on the sociology of language and the status of minority languages, we invited scholars from different regions of the globe, including Canada, New Zealand, and Africa. We view issues of language activism through different lenses, including minority and indigenous languages,

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such as Maori in New Zealand and Khoi-San in southern Africa. We explore the multiple ways in which language activism is understood in different contexts across the globe and the positive and negative impacts of activism and how paradoxically in some cases language activism may reinforce social class differences between language activists (the advocates) and the communities on whose behalf they are advocating. Activism may accentuate differences within the language communities because not all segments of the community will benefit equally from the efforts of language activists. If language activism in some cases entails promoting a specific (male) variety of language, members of the community who are least proficient in the standard, or have a different gender identity, may find themselves in a less favorable position as a consequence of language activism than before the language advocacy campaign began.

Drawing on the literature of language activism, in this introduction, we seek to address the following questions:

1. Who is a language activist?
2. What are the different dimensions of language activism?
3. What are the effects of language activism on local communities?
4. What do language activist who succeed in their quest to enshrine their own language do with former rival language communities?

At a general level, language activism is a form of linguistic, political, and social intervention whose major objectives are to revive, promote, and develop languages and, in some cases, reverse language loss. Language activism frequently occurs in indigenous and other marginalized communities (Fishman 1997). Language activism is carried out by groups and individuals, including missionary organizations such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL); linguists from the local communities or, at times, from other communities, but both of whom generally receive training in Western countries; and scholars from western countries, including the United States. Another group of language activists includes indigenous peoples who are part of language academies or local associations with an interest in the preservation and documentation of indigenous languages.

The most powerful and widely pervasive institutions for the promotion and revival of languages are language academies, sometimes referred to as language boards. In some cases, the language academies that provide institutional support for language activists may be constitutionally determined, while, in other cases, they arise organically from the interests and concerns of local communities. In some cases, they may be driven by one individual only. Some of the most prominent academies are the Arabic Language Academies, the Pan South African Language Board, Académie française

(The French Academy), and the Portuguese *Camoes Institute*. Although all these academies play prominent roles in the preservation of languages, including the imposition of what may be regarded as correct forms of writing and speaking, these language academies also can develop into powerful political institutions.

Whether language activities are educated in Western countries or locally trained, they share a belief in the need to preserve and understand standard languages. In this regard, speakers are linked in extremely complex ways to other individuals and members of society in terms of gender, race, generation, social class, and other social categories. As such, interventions on behalf of a threatened minority language that leave intact all other aspects of social evolution that link the community with the world have generally resulted in failure. The contributors to this volume are acutely aware of these complex relationships and these interventions. They understand that language activists are likely to succeed only if they resist framing languages as free-standing (Edwards 2010), independent, asocial entities. Language activism is a type of language advocacy, a form of political social intervention in which boundaries between pure scholarship and ideological engagement are tenuous. As noted, advocates can be members of the community or outside individuals who value a certain community. In this volume, Ka'ai is a Maori who advocates for the promotion of Maori. In this volume, Ka'ai is a Maori who advocates for the promotion of Maori in a manner which echoes Fishman's strong and passionate interest in advocating on behalf of one's own ethnicity (Fishman et al. 1985).

To succeed, language activists must be sensitive to their Western ideology of social engagement. In this ideology, the objective of language activism is for the communities to subsequently be autonomous and to manage and carry out issues related to activism, including developing teaching materials for language use in education. Nevertheless, some local communities might feel that, because language activism was initially instigated by outsiders, their withdrawal reflects the outsiders' lack of interest in the projects, which may cause a concomitant loss of interest by the local communities. In most cases, however, communities are interested in and advocate for their languages. The success of language policies will be partially dependent on whether the language is viewed in a positive light by those who speak it, as is the case with the Maori community in this volume.

Language activism, whether it is aimed to reverse language shift, revive a language, or preempt language death, cannot succeed if the interventions of the communities who are expected to use that language do not regard using or reviving that language as meeting their needs or if they do not regard the language activists or language advocates as legitimate. In this regard, the right

to language choice includes the right to choose against a language. The concept of language revival also must be understood in view of local social practices and issues and their associated communication practices. Communicative practices, such as the songs, dances, rituals, and ways of linguistically addressing each other, carry symbolic meanings. This means that any politics of language revival also must be seen as politics of social practices, reinforcing the deep relationship between language and discourse. Languages, therefore, are evolving products of historically modes of sharing life together. Understanding of and respect for all modes of linguistic practices is an important political and ethical issue for any language activist.

Language activists are engaged in a wide range of activities. Language activists can also succeed in having their own languages enshrined as official languages as happened in Quebec in which after winning elections they made French an official language, thereby enhancing the status of French. Paradoxically, the French separatists are intolerant of other minority languages. Language activists may engage with communities as a means to develop the expertise of local community members. For example, in language documentation, activists need to develop the expertise of local linguists so that they can document their own languages (or decide not to). This local documentation, however, must not include an imposed linguistic framework, and local concepts and methodologies, resulting from a dialogue between top-down and bottom-up policies, must be taken into consideration. Further, in claiming the importance of local protagonism in language activism, we also must recognize that power relations in modern societies may create some difficulties for such protagonism. One example is the capturing of indigenous languages in Brazil for the purpose of constructing a Brazilian cultural reference that takes into account nationalism, territorialization, and politics of cultural heritage. Because this process involves power asymmetries, it must include a dialogue between the local people and intellectuals.

Articles in the special issue

This volume on language activism comprises six articles and a book review, in addition to this introduction. The chapters range from a focus on the promotion of language by individuals, such as Maori in New Zealand, to government intervention in language promotion, as in the case of the Canadian government. A description of each article is presented below:

1 Great-grandfather, please teach me my language

T. Ka'ai

Ka'ai, in an emotionally compelling essay written in both personal narrative and academic prose, reports the ways in which a single mother seeks to transmit the use of Maori language usage across different generations. The teaching of Maori to a child by a single mother also illustrates one of the strategies which some communities adopt to transmit language and reverse intergenerational language shift across different generations. The transmission of language usage is necessary in post-colonial contexts because of the imposition of British colonization, which led to a substantial demise of Maori and other indigenous languages.

2 Developing a materialist anti-racist approach to language activism

N. Flores

A materialistic approach to language activism is used to refer to ways in which Language activism and language scholarship is grounded in social and political contexts. One of the main advantages of a materialistic approach is that it describes how people acquire different resources depending upon their social class, gender and race. These variations in access clearly have an impact on the nature and type of language activism they will get involved in.

3 'My tribe is the Hessequa. I am Khoi-San. I'm African': Language, desire, and performance among Cape Town's Khoi-San language activists

J. Brown and A. Deumert

Justin Brown and Ana Deumert describe the nature of language activism in Cape Town. The activists for Khoi-San, individuals referred to as "Coloreds," during

apartheid, are descendants of the European settlers and the indigenous population who inhabit the geographic area now referred to as Cape Town. Activism for Khoi-San is driven by a desire for identity in a number of areas, including linguistic, cultural, and political. The importance of identity politics is evident in the slogans of Khoi-San activism: “Khoi-San forever and ‘colored’ NEVER.” Here, the use of quotes or gestural air quotes is a means to demonstrate their uniqueness. Language activism for Khoi-San is a political program, or a program that has political consequences. The program also is aesthetic, seen in its revival or development of modes of speech and other literary genres, imagined or created, in contemporary contexts. Khoi-San activism promotes and facilitates diversity and heteroglossia in Khoi-San languages. Khoi-San does not constitute a distinct linguistic group and is more effectively described as Sprachbund, based on the speakers who occupy a geographical region. The language’s original and widespread use of clicks, however, is unique. Brown and Deumert have also engaged in a form of activism in their writing by choosing not to omit first names from their in-text citations. As Deumert pointed out during our correspondence, this is to highlight gender and the hegemonies within their discipline.

4 Linguistic landscapes and the sociolinguistics of language vitality in multilingual contexts of Zambia

F. Banda and H. Jimaima

Using linguistic landscape as a theoretical framework (initially introduced into the academic literature by Richard Bourhis and Rodrigue Landy) Banda and Jimaima demonstrate that the same minority languages may be found in both urban and rural apparent evident in a wide spread presence of linguistic signs in the public space. The fact that rural areas are so diverse shows the degree of language vitality in Zambia, which extends to rural areas. That rural areas are diverse is significant sociolinguistically because African sociolinguistics tends to create an impression that sociolinguistic diversity is confined to urban Africa. The dynamic and constantly evolving nature of diversity of Africa will continue into the future because it is also enhanced by not only the use of linguistic signage but by intergenerational language transmission and the active engagement of grassroots communities to convey their individual and group identities.

5 Assessing forty years of language policies in Quebec

R. Bourhis and R. Sioufi

This chapter, by Bourhis and Sioufi, focuses on government promotion of languages, specifically, language policies in favor of bilingualism in Canada, and in favor French as the only official language of Quebec. The authors first review the Canadian Government's efforts to provide federal bilingual services to Francophone and Anglophone minorities across Canada. The article then describes how French language activists succeeded in having the Quebec Government adopt language policies aimed at increasing the status of French relative to English in Quebec. Using the ethnolinguistic vitality framework and government census data, the se language policies are then assessed in terms of their impact on the demographic vitality of both the Francophone and Anglophone communities of Quebec. It is concluded that pro-French language laws succeeded in promoting the use of French as the dominant language of Quebec while reducing the institutional vitality of the Anglophone minority in the province. Authors conclude with the question: can Francophones accept a 'paradigm shift' by reframing their status position from a fragile majority to that of a dominant majority in Quebec?

6 Activism: Loving your languages and fighting for them

R. Peltz

The Legacy of Joshua Fishman: Concluding Reflections. This chapter, written by Rakhmiel Peltz, brings together the earlier chapters and celebrates the life and work of Joshua Fishman. A critique and commentary of all earlier chapters, as well as a way forward for language activists is provided.

7 Book review: Linguistic diversity and social justice: An introduction to applied sociolinguistics, Ingrid Piller, 2016

Written by T. Weldemichael

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