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Review: Socioling/Lang Policy: Schjerve (2003)

Editor for this issue: Naomi Ogasawara <naomi@linguistlist.org>

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Directory

1. Wim Vandebussche, *Diglossia and Power*

Message 1: Diglossia and Power

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From: Wim Vandebussche <wvdbussc@vub.ac.be>

Subject: Diglossia and Power

EDITOR: Rosita Rindler Schjerve
 TITLE: Diglossia and Power
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 SERIES: Language, Power and Social Process 9
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Wim Vandebussche, FWO-Vlaanderen & Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

All chapters in this edited volume deal with multilingual and multi-ethnic areas in the Western (German-dominated) part of the 19th century Habsburg Empire and address basically the same question: which were the consequences for language choice and discourse of this multilingual and/or polyglossic situation in which the German language was the prototypical prestigious H-variety of the rulers? Contrary to earlier contributions on the Habsburg language policy, the editor explicitly aims at a multidisciplinary and multilingual approach of this issue, bringing together insights from historical pedagogy and social history with analyses from Slavic, Romance and Germanic linguists.

OVERVIEW

In the introduction (1–11) Rosita Rindler Schjerve defines the rationale behind the present book. In order to understand the interaction between language and social power in the specific setting of the 19th century Habsburg empire, it is necessary to analyse the interplay between centripetal and –fugal forces in the Empire during the long 19th century, an era that was 'crucial for the political and cultural development of Europe.'

This basically concerns the opposition between the objectives of the central Imperial supranational power ('Austria') with German as its *lingua franca*, and national linguistic tendencies in the peripheral 'Crownlands'. The volume is composed of four major parts. An introduction about the socio–historical background of the Habsburg empire is followed by a concise discussion of theoretical and methodological aspects of historical sociolinguistics. The third (and largest) part consists of two sets of three case studies. The first are studies of language use and language choice reflecting the power relations between centre and peripheral powers, based on traditional diglossia research methodology. The latter series of case studies shows how text/linguistic structures reflect/reinforce issues of power and to this end discourse–analytical methodology is used. In a concluding chapter the editor summarises the insights from the case studies and relates these to the book's central questions.

Chapter one by Thomas Wallnig (15–32) provides the necessary socio–historical and political background for a sound understanding of language issues in the period and area under discussion. Wallnig most notably introduces and defines a number of crucial concepts ('long 19th century', 'Austria', 'state', 'nation', etc.) which had a specific (and sometimes evolving) significance in the Habsburg context. He makes it clear that 'the' 'Habsburg' 'Empire' is not to be interpreted as a monolithic nationalist block but rather as an overall a–nationalist power structure which underwent great changes throughout the period under discussion, incorporating great geographical and institutional differences.

According to Wallnig, the conflicts described in the volume 'break out simultaneously along the same fault lines that run through the entire political fabric of the 19th century'. These fault lines were political (national rulers vs. local elites), religious (+/– catholic) and, finally, sociolinguistic (+/– German). The 19th century evolution of the 'bureaucratized' state and the rise of the 'nation state' idea interfered with these conflict issues. Regarding actual language planning and language policy, Wallnig elaborates on a selection of crucial dates and decisions (1849, for example, when all ethnic groups in the empire were guaranteed equality and the right to use and foster their own language). It might have been interesting to add a clear overview of ALL language measures taken by the Empire and the local authorities in the various regions of the Habsburg Empire (be it in a table or in a separate chapter), although I do realise that this is a time– consuming undertaking worthy of a book of its own. However, the indications that in certain regions minority languages were promoted in order to downplay the importance of other national language, whereas in other areas there was a type of equality installed between German and a local language, does inspire curiosity about the overall picture in the Empire. The separate chapters in the present volume do provide full information on language planning measures for the regions they deal with.

In chapter 2 (35–66), Rosita Rindler Schjerve and Eva Vetter outline the theoretical and methodological rationale behind the present work's approach to the study of multilingualism in a socio–historical context.

The concepts of diglossia and hegemony are central to the study. Diglossia is explicitly understood as a manifestation of a power balance used to construct, confirm and/or reinforce political, social or other dominance. As such, their study of language distribution in various contexts and areas within the Habsburg empire is to be understood as an analysis of power mechanisms and strategies. This 'engaged' approach to language history is reconfirmed in the first pages of the chapter, where both authors stress that their study may contribute to a better understanding of present-day language planning issues in Europe.

In order to reconstruct the creation of social identities, ideologies and plain power balances through discourse (rather than through language choice), the book draws heavily on the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (as developed by Fairclough, Wodak and others). It is worth pointing out that this methodology has rarely been used, so far, in the domain of historical sociolinguistics. As such, the present volume has the merit of consistently attempting to broaden the methodological array of the discipline.

These studies may also contribute to a fairer assessment of CDA, a frequently controversial and polarizing methodology which has too often been abused, so far, to suit and serve the overt political agendas of authors under the veil of scholarly discipline.

In chapter three (69–105) Suzanne Czeitschner discusses the linguistic situation in 19th century Trieste. She explains that German, Italian and Slovenian co-existed in this region, a situation which affected language choice in the judicial domain. In order to monitor the language distribution in this domain no less than 43 laws and decrees were published during Habsburg's long 19th century (1781–1918). The author analyses the use of the aforementioned languages in a number of distinct judicial contexts, taking into account variables like addressee (higher/lower power), topic (local/national issues) and nature of the correspondence (internal/external). Her analysis of nearly 55000 (!) original documents shows that the linguistic legislation had little effect: Italian remained very much the overall dominant language, regardless of the official attempts at language planning. It appears that this legislation was only put into practice at a very slow pace – the first signs of a change in favour of Slovenian, for example, only appeared towards the end of the 19th century. It is also remarkable that hardly any bilingual documents were produced (less than 2%). A study of the languages used in distinct role contexts (higher/equal/lower authority) does show that German predominates in communication with lower rank authorities (as opposed to Italian) and criminal court cases (as opposed to Italian in civil court cases). Slavic languages only managed to break the Italo-German dominance towards the very end of the Habsburg empire.

Jan Fellerer deals with the situation of the Ukrainian language in Galicia during the long 19th century in an elaborate fourth chapter (107–166). This region was characterized by religious (Roman- vs. Greek-Catholic) and linguistic diversity. He explains how the functional distribution of spoken Polish, Ukrainian dialects, written Polish, Latin, Church Slavonic and written Galician (or Ukrainian) assigned status to these languages and their speakers. German remained, of course, in place as the language of the rulers.

Fellerer focuses on the domain of public administration; following Fishman, he analyses 'who spoke what language to whom and when' with special attention to the use of Ukrainian in this domain. As far as language planning is concerned, his focus is on whether language policy affected the status of the whole language community or only of specific

social strata within that community. Fellerer compares documents from 3 communicative settings: official correspondence (and internal matters) between officials of the imperial authorities, official correspondence addressed to 'the public' (i.e. 'non-officials') and, finally, 'non-imperial' correspondence. He looks at the language distribution before and after the 1848 revolution, on the basis of a 3500 text corpus covering the whole period.

An impressive 40-page analysis brings him to the following conclusions (restrictions in space force me to oversimplify – I strongly encourage the interested reader to consult the original article). Up until 1848 Ukrainian was systematically excluded from the public domain of administration in Galicia (resulting in a de facto exclusion of the speakers of Ukrainian). German (the language of the emperor) remained very much the prime administrative language. Polish got certain privileges as 'the language of the province' for communication with non-German speakers; these privileges mainly served the Polish provincial elites, not the speakers of Ukrainian. For a few years after the 1848 revolution, there was a modest increase of written Ukrainian documents (translations of laws and decrees, e.g) in a period of 'unstable polyglossia' backed by series of language planning measures that granted the various ethnic groups in the Empire the right to preserve their language. This apparent activity in favour of linguistic diversity and equality, however, gave way to a gradually increasing support for Polish (because of political-strategic reasons, Fellerer suggests).

In 1869 a law was passed that made Polish (not German) the prime language for official correspondence and internal matters in imperial Galicia. After this 'polonisation' decision Ukrainian lost the increased attention it had enjoyed during the preceding two decades (apart from law translations). As such, language legislation (and the accompanying discourse) favouring and protecting the use of Ukrainian stood in sharp contrast with linguistic reality.

In chapter 5 (167–195) Stephan Michael Newerkla discusses the intended and actual language use/choice in the educational system in Plzen (Bohemia). Plzen was the centre of Czech/German bilingualism in 19th century Bohemia, although the Czech-speaking population outnumbered the German-speaking group by far (roughly 82/18% around 1870, 87/12% in 1910). Newerkla studies the implementation of the diglossic/bilingual dimension in the domain of education. Borrowing William Mackey's typological model for the description of bilingual education in Quebec, he compares the oldest Czech and German grammar schools in Plzen. The language practices in these schools are assessed on the basis of a corpus of several thousands of documents including (but not limited to) law texts and decrees, directives in original teaching manuals, class books and real life school documents.

The research results show how the (linguistic and religious) profile of the population in both schools changed over time, from mixed multilingual schools before 1869 to monolingual schools towards the end of the century. The monolingual character was reached earlier in the Czech grammar school: it attracted a mixed group (both language- and religion-wise) until 1878, and became virtually exclusively Czech and Catholic afterwards. The German grammar school always attracted a mixed Czech/German public, but the Czech group dropped from 50% in 1865 to 20% in 1875 and disappeared in 1924). As far as religion is concerned, a smaller Jewish school population joined the predominantly Catholic pupils.

Newerkla relates this evolution to the official educational policy in the Empire at the time, and especially to the apparently opposed underlying aims of the imperial government (in favour of the official hegemony) and

the local authorities (in favour of a bilingual mutual understanding between communities). In order to keep its power base the imperial Viennese government granted educational rights to other language communities. The result in the end in Bohemia, however, was a situation in which German had become a minority obsolete school language and Czech took over as the dominant school language.

In chapter 6 (199–232) Gualtiero Boaglio looks at the language-related discourse in an official newspaper during the 1850s in Lombardy, a virtually exclusive monolingual Italian region in the Habsburg Empire (barely 0,25 % of the population in 1851 was of German ethnic origin) enjoying a 'liberal' Habsburg language regime. Italian dominated all prestigious domains of public life (excluding police & military) and was accepted/tolerated as the de facto official language by the imperial powers. German only came into the picture when communication with the central authorities was concerned. As such, language choice and planning as a means for settling conflicts between local and imperial interests were replaced by varying discursive practices in Italian (here labelled 'invisible diglossia'). Boaglio looks at the way in which the hegemonic power used linguistic strategies in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale di Milano* to represent itself as positive as possible; he contrasts these strategies with the more negative portrayal of 'the other' (i.e. the enemies of the Empire) in the same publication. The first objective was realised by systematically using terms from the word field 'peace' to describe the nature of the Empire. This strategy was complemented by repeated attempts to present the imperial forces as powerful keepers of justice and strength through the use of the vocabulary from the 'punishment' sphere. The Habsburg empire was also described as a territory with excellent transport facilities, hence a political space that was effectively organised and characterised by great cohesion and civilisation, but also very well protected (enabling easy transport for military troops to any part of the empire if necessary, e.g.). The cohesion element was further reinforced through using the imagery of the supra-national Emperor and by stressing trans-national elements of local and imperial pride.

Individuals perceived as enemies of the empire, on the contrary, were represented as underworld figures (with all negative connotations attached to this imagery: marginal, violent, criminal elements). States that were considered as enemies were described in equally negative terms: England, e.g., was consistently described in stereotypes of misbehaving citizens with low morality, on the one hand, and as a country with a chaotic, impotent and paralyzed political system on the other. All these techniques contributed to the implicit suggestion that the unity of the Habsburg Empire has to be preserved and, accordingly, that any decentralised power within Lombardy was to be dismissed.

In chapter 7 (233–269) Petrea Lindenbauer deals with discourse in Romanian textbooks in Bukovina, an area in the farthest eastern fringe of the Habsburg area with a large Romanian-speaking population. A whole series of smaller ethnic groups lived in the area as well (including Ruthenians, Jews, Armenians and others). As far as language is concerned in Bukovina one can say that Ruthenian was the important vernacular next to Romanian. German served as the main and imperial language of administration, jurisdiction, military issues and higher education. Romanian was, in the author's words, 'the language of a majority group that was a minority only at the political level'.

She analyses how implicit discursive practices were used in the local language teaching textbooks and grammars (intended to teach the Romanian language) to create/sustain the specific attitudes and identities that

were considered necessary for the preservation of the power balance in the Empire. Before doing so, she provides the reader with ample background data on the historical, political and educational situation in the area. This introduction makes it very clear that the Bukovina region a fascinating case as far as multilingualism is concerned, deserving a close analysis of social and political language distribution. A description of 12 case-studies (out of a whole series of analysed school books) illustrates that it is not easy to define an overall image of the hegemonic or nationalist underlying tendencies in these school books. Certain grammars in the corpus were relatively 'neutral', for example, whereas the textbooks contained either explicit pro-Viennese texts reflecting the mindset of the imperial powers or implicit pro-Romanian texts. Certain texts seem to be intended to be read as fables or double-layered parables which the reader might have interpreted as accounts of the Romanian opposition against the foreign rulers. Explicit references to the Romanian national identity are rare whereas Vienna's greatness, on the other hand, is frequently referred to. Certain school books present the Romanian mentality in a positive light, others explicitly define Bukovina as belonging to the Empire, and in yet another the occupation of Bukovina by the Austrians is represented as aggressive.

The conclusion which may be drawn from this chapter is that pro-Austrian texts and assessments of the Romanian nationality both occurred in schoolbooks at the time and that, accordingly, the underlying representation of the imperial power is ambiguous. This may reflect changing the power relations between centre and periphery at the time.

The last case study by Eva Vetter (Chapter 8, 271-307) is a comparative discussion of two important imperial government documents from 1849 and 1859 relating to language choice in education. It is the first time these texts are submitted to discourse analysis and Vetter's work shows that this method can be an interesting and rewarding tool to (re)shape our understanding of historical sociolinguistic situations. In addition to this methodological challenge, a further added value of this chapter lies in the close link with Newerla's chapter 5: the latter discussed actual bilingual practices in the schools whereas Vetter looks at the discourse through which these practices were shaped.

The main rationale behind the Habsburg language policy in school matters up until 1849 was the spread of German, combined with varying degrees of tolerance versus other languages. Despite the aftermath of 1848 revolution, a 'neo-absolutist' return to the supremacy of German set in soon afterwards (early 1850s). This restoration was made explicit in higher education; for the lower grades the mother tongue could be used to varying degrees in different areas (cf. Italian vs. Slavic, e.g.). In 1859, however, this neo-absolutist phase was turned back to some extent. From 1860 onwards the periphery in the empire acquired more autonomy when it came to defining educational linguistic policies; this was confirmed by the 1867 recognition of the right to be educated in one's own language without any pressure to learn a second language. An increasing number of monolingual schools was the result. Vetter's texts date from the very beginning and end of the neo-absolutist period. The 1849 text defines the language question in education as 'complex and delicate' and is construed to underline the exceptional status of the German language compared to the 'other' languages involved in the language-of-education debate. Vetter shows how word choice, rhetorical strategies and the text structure are all used to achieve this impression and to reflect and continue the central hegemonic discourse of the Empire. The 1859 text announced changes to the 1849 language policy: students still had to master German but this goal could be achieved via other ways than German-dominant schooling. This entailed a shift in power balance from the central (German-favouring)

Empire to the local peripheral powers (who favoured their local language). Through the application of CDA to the text, it becomes clear how the discourse had subtly changed by 1859. Although no radical shift towards the discourse of the nationalities could be noted, one now found a mixed hegemonic/national discourse reflecting the changed power relations between centre and periphery.

In her conclusion (311–320) Rindler Schjerve relates the results of the preceding case studies to the central questions in the introduction. She further discusses the opposition between the so-called 'liberal' Habsburg legislation in favour of multilingualism, on the one hand, and the centralist German-centred Imperial political practices on the other. It also appears that the across the various regions discussed in the book, legislation did not succeed in promoting multi-ethnic co-existence, nor in sustaining the Imperial power. As a matter of fact, she points out, the 1867 decision to guarantee the equality of languages in the Habsburg Empire by law may have contributed to gradual desintegration of the centralised Habsburg power. All case studies clearly show, however, that language planning measures were a crucial element in the negotiations of centre/periphery power relations in the Habsburg era and that changing language legislations reflected changing power structures and strategies within the Empire.

EVALUATION

The present collection of articles brings together insights from diverse linguistic methodologies on various domains of language use and choice (administration, education, judiciary, etc.) in different parts of (and at different times in) the Habsburg Empire. Despite the risk to end up with a fragmented picture of a highly complex sociolinguistic period and territory, the editor's approach actually resulted in a tight, well-structured volume which is well-written and easy to read.

True, the data are not always comparable (schooling and administration can be very different as far as language planning is concerned) but the present work does make clear that 'the' Habsburg language policy (and empire, for that matter) did not exist as a single monolithic block. The discussion of these concepts calls for a highly nuanced and in-depth discussion. A major first contribution to this endeavour is provided in this work.

The blurb text promises that 'the empirical articles will be very useful for scholars of the region and others for comparative materials'. Although I, for one, can only judge the latter part of that statement, it is safe to state that scholars specifically interested in the linguistic history of the Habsburg empire will find clear, high-quality and useful corpus-driven research results in this work.

As far as the relevance of the present work for historical sociolinguists in general is concerned, Rindler Schjerve's book is an excellent example of how a large historical sociolinguistic project can be set up and how the various isolated sub-projects can combine to a relevant enhanced whole. One of its main assets for the latter discipline is the fact that it discusses the consequences of shared historical contexts on actual language use across linguistic family borders, involving Slavic, Romance and Germanic languages (whereas most studies in socio-historical linguistics so far have focussed on one language only). Moreover, the present volume provides many possibilities for comparative studies involving, for example, the impressive amount of literature on the historical sociolinguistics of German in Germany and Dutch in Flanders during the 19th century (to name but two examples).

One major plus of this book is that it creates a constant urge on the reader's side to know more about the 'sidelines' of the case studies presented in the volume. How was language education organised in these different territories? What was the quality of the written language like? What about social differences within the separate language communities? How was the scribes' linguistic competence acquired in these polyglossic and multilingual areas? These and many other questions open up possibilities for further research on the book topic and one can only hope that the involved scholars will either take their research further along these lines or inspire colleagues to continue their work now that the appetite has been wet. It is equally hoped that the volume will inspire the editors of the LPSP series to sustain their interest in historical sociolinguistics.

Finally: the report for the 2004 BAAL Linguistics Prize shortlist (on which the present work figured) stated that this volume 'deserves a wide audience, as it could be highly influential in stimulating further studies and in taking forward the theoretical and methodological issues it addresses.' The BAAL jury was right: apart from being an excellent introduction to the linguistic situation in the 19th century Habsburg empire, this volume is an inspiring, challenging and highly recommended read for any scholar involved in historical sociolinguistics.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr. Wim Vandenbussche is a postdoctoral research fellow of the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research. He is currently affiliated with the Centre for Linguistics of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) where he has worked on various projects on the historical sociolinguistics of Dutch in 18th and 19th century Flanders.

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