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Language, Education and Society in a Changing World

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*For Tim and Cairíona
and Tony and Tommy*

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Preface

This collection draws on papers given at a conference in June 1994 hosted by the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics (IRAAL) with the theme *Language, Education and Society in a Changing World*. The conference, held in Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, attracted over one hundred papers from all five continents. The contributions in this volume are representative of the major issues discussed at the conference, and cover a wide geographical and theoretical range. The conference was organised under the auspices of AILA (Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée), and marked the thirtieth anniversary of its founding.

IRAAL is grateful to the LINGUA programme for the financial assistance and guidance it provided under Action VA. This support greatly facilitated both the organisation of the conference and the publication of this book, which makes the significant contribution of the conference to language teaching, research and planning available to a wider audience. The opinions expressed in the book are the sole responsibility of the authors themselves.

The editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of the IRAAL Conference Organising Committee, the Scientific Programme Committee and the Executive Committee. We are also grateful to Eoghan Mac Aogáin, the director of Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, and ITÉ staff, for their help. We would like to thank the contributors for their co-operation and we also wish to record our gratitude to Anne O'Neill for her invaluable assistance during the conference and in preparing this manuscript.

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Introduction

Tina Hickey and Jenny Williams

The papers in this volume are a selection from those presented at a conference whose theme was *Language, Education and Society in a Changing World*. This conference provided a forum for the discussion of some of the major issues facing language planners, policy makers, researchers and teachers, in a world where languages are becoming extinct at an alarming rate and are frequently a focus for dispute and conflict, where foreign language teaching and learning are confronted by new technological and practical demands, and where modern communication media require the development of new linguistic techniques. These factors, together with the continued slow economic and educational development in the third world, where access to a 'world language' is often promoted as an educational panacea, present applied linguistics with major philosophical as well as practical problems.

Mitchell addresses some of the issues relating to language and education and brings a refreshingly broad vision to a field which is too often viewed in a fragmentary way. She sees applied linguistics as the product of a liberal socio-political era, which must now review its role in the context of a politically less stable world. Ranging across mother-tongue teaching, foreign language education, language and learning across the curriculum, as well as language rights and language education policy, Mitchell argues for an integrative approach and outlines a strategy for applied linguistics into the twenty-first century. Ruane, responding to Mitchell, reflects on issues raised by Mitchell in relation to the current situation in language education in Ireland, and discusses the implications of Mitchell's approach.

Edwards considers the sociolinguistic implications of painful but inevitable social change, and argues that the question of identity (with language as one of its major markers), with its attendant socio-political unrest, constitutes a central issue for our times. He cautions applied linguists against simplistic formulations of current sociolinguistic problems, such as the view that 'authenticity' exists only in opposition to the 'mainstream'. He argues for the

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inclusion in the debate about endangered minority languages an acknowledgement that the linguist is not always a disinterested observer, but can be strongly committed to principles such as the maintenance of diversity. He calls for greater efforts at developing a multidisciplinary approach to languages and language settings, in order to understand more fully the factors influencing language maintenance and shift, and allow for greater breadth of vision in the formulation of language policy. Ó Murchú, responding to Edwards, considers the situation of the Irish language in the light of Edwards's arguments. She looks to sociolinguistics to provide the tools of empowerment for minority language policy makers and makes a plea for more collaborative research.

A number of papers consider the implications for *language policy* of major social and political change. 1994 was a significant year for the Israeli Palestinian peace process and this situation of conflict also presents its unique language planning requirements. Spolsky discusses language policy, past and present, in the multilingual state of Israel, where for political, commercial, cultural and heritage reasons a wide range of languages must be offered. He stresses the need to build on the existing linguistic diversity and outlines some of the major questions facing language policy makers in Israel. 1994 was also a significant year in the history of Ireland, with the declaration of paramilitary ceasefires. Farren discusses recent language policy developments in Northern Ireland, a society undergoing substantial change. Here segregated schooling has produced two very different perspectives on education in general and on language education in particular. He outlines recent changes in British government education policy in Northern Ireland and considers the impact of the cross-cultural themes of 'cultural heritage' and 'education for mutual understanding' which have been implemented in all schools since 1989. Farren compares and contrasts the effect of the new policy on the teaching of English and Irish in a range of schools throughout Northern Ireland. He also discusses the more positive policies towards the teaching of Irish resulting from political pressures which seek parity of esteem for both cultural traditions.

Ó Laoire takes up the question of the Irish language in the context of the Republic of Ireland. He reviews the efforts to revive Irish in the last two hundred years, and draws instructive comparisons with the revitalisation of Hebrew in Israel. By highlighting crucial dissimilarities between the successful Hebrew and less successful Irish experiences, Ó Laoire makes proposals for a more effective Irish language policy in the 1990s. Sarhimaa considers *language revitalisation* in the context of the Republic of Karelia, part of the former Soviet Union. She charts the language policies pursued by Soviet and, for a brief period Finnish, governments between 1917 and the present day. She discusses the results of these policies and reflects pessimistically on

the future of Karelian. Still within the former Soviet Union, Ter-Minasova outlines the legacy of teaching modern languages as though they were dead languages, in her discussion of the *planning of foreign language teaching* in the new political and social realities of today's Russia. She describes the challenges facing foreign language teachers as the result of the momentous changes of recent years. Despite the current difficulties, Ter-Minasova is confident that teachers will be able to build on the strengths of the past and adapt to the requirements of the future.

Mann addresses *language planning* issues in the post-colonial situation of Nigeria, and argues for the recognition of Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin (ANP) as an inter-ethnic *lingua franca*, and an appropriate means of empowering Nigerians. He bases his argument on an empirical study of attitudes towards ANP and its use, which provides evidence of a high level of acceptance of the language. Langan further explores the issue of empowerment through support for indigenous languages in Guatemala. She presents an ethnographic study of Mayan students, speakers of a range of Mayan languages, focusing on their role as agents of language change and maintenance. In her discussion of the Mayan situation she takes up the issue, raised by Edwards and Ó Murchú, of the linguist as participant rather than as disinterested observer.

Spoelders *et al.* return to the issue of *identity* in their study of *pronunciation in bilinguals*. They report on recent research which replicated in Belgium an Israeli study testing the hypothesis that bilinguals can only have fully native pronunciation in one language. The results obtained by Spoelders and the other members of the Ghent Bilingualism Research Group pose fundamental questions about the definition of a 'dominant' language and cast doubt on the widely accepted assumption that pronunciation is the ultimate marker of a person's linguistic identity. On the basis of this study, they recommend further research into syntactic and lexical markers of the linguistic ego. Backus examines a different type of *bilingualism*: that caused by recent population movements within Europe. Using the concept of *prototype*, he analyses the discourse of three generations of Turkish immigrants in The Netherlands, with particular reference to the type and frequency of code-switching. His analysis charts the emergence of a mixed lect in an immigrant community.

The notion of *prototypes* is taken up by Anderman, who relates recent work on prototypicality in psycholinguistics to *translation studies*. Anderman argues that insights from research in first and second language acquisition, for example in the area of the differences in verb typicality between languages, is of relevance for students and teachers of translation. Olohan and Zähler also discuss prototype theory in their attempt to develop a theoretical

framework for translation studies which goes beyond the prescriptive and fragmentary approaches of the last few years. Rejecting the introspective method as theoretically unsound, they build on recent work in cognitive linguistics to delineate the parameters of a cognitive theory of translation. Focusing on another challenge for translation studies, O'Connell discusses the European-wide demand for media translation, with reference to her own experience in sub-titling. She touches on the technical aspects of translating for film and television, and draws out the implications of media translation for language policy and planning.

Gunnarsson deals with the issue of language planning with reference to Swedish and its relationship to a world language such as English. Within the framework of text analysis, she examines the *cultural and ideological dimensions of text patterns* and text production. On the basis of a corpus of medical texts she demonstrates the influence of English on Swedish scientific texts and raises questions about the future status of languages such as Swedish. Gibbon, too, analyses the cultural and ideological dimensions of texts, on the basis of a corpus of French, Belgian, Irish and English medical texts in the field of infertility treatment. Her contribution exposes the assumptions which underlie the syntactic and lexical choices made by the text producers.

A different aspect of *cultural awareness* is explored by Mac Mathúna in relation to language teaching. He describes the neglect of the cultural dimension in the teaching of Irish, and proposes the implementation of cultural awareness components in the Irish classroom. He views these as enriching *per se*, as well as being a means of sensitising pupils to the Irish culture around them in everyday life. Heffernan analyses the *cultural content* of French- and English-language history school-books in immersion and non-immersion classrooms in Canada. On the basis of a study of four groups of teachers and learners he draws conclusions about the effectiveness of different strategies of teaching culturally loaded material and considers the implications of his results for immersion education.

Among the papers dealing with second language learning, Cohen also discusses issues relating to *immersion*. With the aid of introspective reports, he explores the effect of linguistic interference on the performance of mathematical (i.e. non-linguistic) tasks. His results pose some fundamental questions about the nature and definition of immersion. Harris and Murtagh report on a different type of language learning situation in elementary school, with the results of their *classroom observation study* of the teaching of Irish in primary school. Using an adaptation of the Stirling system of lesson analysis, they analyse the nature of language interaction and use in the learning situation. Their conclusions draw out the implications of variation in lesson structure and content for second language achievement.

Computer Assisted Language Learning has attracted much interest in recent times. Buchholz and Düsterhöft discuss some of the developments in relation to databases, and assess their potential as a language teaching tool. They present a programme developed in Rostock for teaching English as a foreign language, which incorporates a number of linguistic and cultural features in a user-friendly way. Chambers discusses another recently burgeoning area, that of *Languages for Specific Purposes*. She takes as her starting point research in English for Specific Purposes and considers the relevance of the ESP experience for the much more recent developments in LSP. She assesses the relevance of the concept of discourse community, the importance of needs analysis and the role of cultural studies in each field. Her conclusions provide fruitful insights into the complex relationship between ESP and other Languages for Specific Purposes and highlight not only areas of significant difference but also areas for potential collaboration.

The L2 language learner arrives in the language class with a complex set of *motivations*, which recent research shows to be as much a result of successful learning as its cause. Ushioda's paper demonstrates just how diverse and variable these motivations are, using qualitative data from a group of learners. She points to changes over time in different aspects of motivation and takes a holistic approach to the learner by acknowledging the influence of competing interests and life events on the language learning process. Singleton also draws on data from the Trinity Modern Languages Research Project to analyse the way in which language learners store lexical items. He rejects both the separatist and integrationist model of bilingual *lexical organisation* and argues for a more flexible model of L1 and L2 lexical interaction.

First and second language reading skills have begun in recent years to receive more attention within applied linguistics, rather than being seen as peripheral disciplines, and the field is represented by three contributions in this collection. Tomlinson reports on the teaching of visualisation skills to second language readers, and outlines a number of methods of teaching such skills. He argues that visualisation improves L2 reading comprehension, by forcing learners to draw on their knowledge of the world and to make deductions from the preceding text. Masuhara *et al.* consider the relative merits of extensive reading as opposed to strategy training in L2 reading. Their results, based on a study of Japanese college students, indicate that both interventions improved reading performance, but the extensive reading group showed a greater improvement. They speculate about the factors influencing these results, and suggest that the success of strategy training may depend on learner variables such as developmental stage, learning style and their language learning experience. They suggest future research into the questions about why extensive reading works. Walker brings the discussion of language,

education and society to a close by 'thinking crazy' about mother tongue literacy. In so doing he ranges across a number of issues raised by Mitchell and Edwards. He argues for mother-tongue education and literacy programmes which are generated by local communities, rather than by external aid agencies, and suggests the outlines of such an innovative approach.

The contributors to this volume present a number of the central challenges facing applied linguistics world-wide at the end of the twentieth century. Language is shown to be crucial to questions of identity, education, science, technology and culture. Applied linguistics emerges as an inter-discipline whose brief goes far beyond the narrow confines of academia, and embraces the major social and political issues of our time. This collection underlines the need for applied linguistics to avoid its traditionally compartmentalized and somewhat fragmentary approach and marshal the combined forces of its subdisciplines in order to meet the challenges of a changing world.

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Language, Education and Applied Linguistics in a Changing World

Rosamond Mitchell

Introduction

In this paper my aim is to bring an applied linguistics perspective to bear on a selection of educational issues concerning language, most of which are as old as organised schooling itself. In each case, we will scrutinise the contribution which applied linguistics has so far made to the development both of theory and of educational practice, and then go on to consider how applied linguists can most usefully contribute to further development, building on established strengths but also moving into relatively neglected areas.

Historically, mid-twentieth-century applied linguistics appears as the product of a relatively liberal era in education, in which progressivism vied with social reconstructionism as dominant philosophies. It can be seen as a largely scientific/rationalist project, with a reforming ethos in which greater knowledge and understanding of language and language learning would more or less unproblematically inform educational change and improvement. While a minority group within applied linguistics has questioned this view (e.g. Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994), many applied linguistics texts may be cited to illustrate it; for example, some clear examples are to be found in the recent AILA publication, *Language Teaching in the Twenty-first Century* (Matter, 1992).

However, as the century draws to a close, the optimism which informed earlier decades of applied linguistic activity must be questioned. In retrospect the relative political stability and bright prospects for economic development which characterised the post-World War II period seem much more a matter of temporary good fortune than we imagined. Our perceptions are now of a

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much more unsettled world, where the collapse of the Soviet Union and much of its sphere of influence has brought about no unproblematic transition to democracy and economic development through market forces, but instead economic dislocation, unemployment and the rise of ethnic and nationalist forces with associated regional conflicts. Parts of the world continue to make striking economic progress, including some sections of the ex-'third world', notably in the Pacific Rim. Here, the wonders of information technology, from CALL to computational linguistics to the Internet, seem to transform the possibilities for the scientific community, including applied linguistic activity. But other areas are characterised by increasing poverty, institutionalised debt and political instability. Within the developed world itself, notions of public service and the common good are weakened, with long term structural unemployment creating an underclass increasingly uncoupled from the economic prosperity of the rest, ghettoised and with little realistic prospect for collective economic improvement. Applied linguists, like other specialists, have choices to make, as to how broadly we are willing to define our remit and our responsibilities in this changing world. Do we continue to practise our scientific-rationalist project on the life raft of the developed world, or do we sustain commitments to low-tech activity elsewhere, sensitive to a much more diverse range of sociocultural and political conditions?

Against this background view of our 'changing world', the educational areas which will briefly be considered are:

Mother tongue and standard language education.

Foreign language education.

Language and learning across the curriculum.

Language rights and language education policies.

Mother Tongue and Standard Language Education

Despite aspirations to be inclusive (as evidenced for example in the wide range covered by the commissions of AILA), it seems that applied linguistics as a discipline has established its identity primarily in respect of second/ foreign language education. For example, in the AILA Review volume mentioned earlier (Matter, 1992), just two out of the six papers pay some serious attention to issues of mother tongue/national language teaching (Trim, 1992; Gonzalez, 1992); the papers on language instruction (Singleton, 1992), on assessment (de Jong, 1992) and on technology and language education (Jung, 1992), which might on the face of it have dealt with first language education, all assume an audience concerned with second/foreign languages. Scrutiny of such documents as, for example, the recent records of

AILA congresses, makes it clear that where applied linguists do occupy themselves with mother tongues, they tend to be interested mostly in the educational role and scope of 'minority' languages.

This is not to say, of course, that recognisably 'applied linguistic' activity does not take place with respect to national standard languages. The vast fields of L1 acquisition research, and of literacy research, largely have to do mostly with such languages. Yet, despite periodic efforts to incorporate literacy research within the scope of 'applied linguistics' (e.g. Grabe, 1992), researchers within these fields do not universally regard themselves as members of our applied linguistics community. Similarly, while positive connections have been made in some domains (genre studies, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis), the large and educationally influential communities of teachers of standard languages do not typically show up at applied linguistics conferences, read our journals, or seek our guidance more generally on matters of learning theory or pedagogy.

There are obvious historical reasons for this: contemporary standard language teaching derives from a wide variety of historical roots, by no means all linguistic in nature (see e.g. Michael, 1987 for English). However, a range of issues currently under contention within standard language education could clearly benefit from greater applied linguistic input. The effective teaching of 'oracy', now commonly part of the standard language curriculum (see e.g. Norman, 1992) requires applied linguistic insights into the nature of spoken language and its relationship with written standards. The renewed commitment to 'language awareness' or 'knowledge about language' in standard language education (Keith, 1990) will also benefit from applied linguistic perspectives regarding goals, developmental sequences and pedagogic approaches. If applied linguists show interest in the role of grammar instruction/consciousness-raising within the foreign language curriculum, they should recognise that a similar research agenda lies virtually untouched for standard language education.

There is indeed a history of attempted applied linguistic intervention in the standard language curriculum. In Britain, the 'Language in Use' project of the 1970s (Doughty, 1971) tried to promote a Hallidayan perspective on language study among English mother tongue teachers, but foundered on teachers' loyalty to literary and 'personal growth' traditions. The 'Language in the National Curriculum' project of the late 1980s (Carter, 1990; LINC, n.d.) again tried to promote a text-based perspective on systematic language study, but fell foul of the conservative cultural preoccupations of British government ministers. The genre-focused movement in Australian language education (see e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 1993) seems the most successful current

example of applied linguistics influence in standard language teaching. However, despite this mixed history, there are broader reasons why applied linguists should now seriously become engaged with the standard language teaching agenda, beyond the technical expertise they can offer on issues such as oracy or grammar teaching. Standard language teaching is necessarily entwined with social and cultural issues to do with national identities, and in a number of countries is currently an ideological battleground.

In the latest version of the British National Curriculum proposals, for example (SCAA, 1994), it is asserted that the top curriculum priority for English language is the explicit teaching of Standard English grammar and vocabulary to a population who, by implication, do not know it. These proposals have clearly lost all touch with linguistic reality. As Stubbs (1986), Trudgill & Chambers (1991), and other linguists have pointed out, the grammar of contemporary English in England is actually strikingly uniform, though working class speech is typically characterised by a small number of non-standard forms, which function as 'markers' in a classic sociolinguistic sense (Scherer & Giles, 1979). Similarly, the vocabulary of Standard English is simply not definable on linguistic grounds. The Standard/non-Standard distinction is an ideological rather than a scientific/linguistic construct (Widdowson, 1993), and it is very difficult to discern any workable pedagogic principles which could follow from it.

Applied linguists surely have a responsibility to contribute to debate in such contexts. Firstly, it is important that we equip our teacher colleagues with the fullest information on the actual nature of variation in contemporary standard languages, and its primarily sociolinguistic and generic bases, drawing for example on the recent valuable contributions of computational linguistics to genre studies (e.g. Biber, 1988) as well as on longer-established sociolinguistic traditions. Thus, we must actively engage in debate regarding the proper linguistic content of the teacher education curriculum for mother tongue/standard language teachers, as well as for foreign language teachers. But a disinterested provision of rational information will not alone be enough. In addition, we must dissect and make visible the 'language complaint' traditions which have historically been associated with standard languages (for English, see e.g. Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Crowley, 1991), and of which the current Standard English panic is one of the latest manifestations.

Foreign Language Education

In foreign language education, we turn to one of the central concerns of our discipline (Trim, 1992). We all recognise that applied linguistics has

made sustained theoretical and practical contributions to FLs education, notably through the 'communicative language teaching' and 'language for specific purposes' movements, which have systematically promoted new ideas on the nature of language proficiency, design principles for FLs curricula, and classroom methodology. The ideas that language is best learned experientially, through meaning-oriented use, and to behaviourally defined ends, have been central, and have driven e.g. the immersion and content-based instructional programmes of North America (e.g. Snow, 1990; Crandall & Tucker, 1990), as well as bilingual schooling in Europe (Baetens Beardsmore, 1993), and many smaller-scale initiatives within the traditional teaching of FLs.

After 25 years or so of development however, the communicative language teaching movement is ready for self-evaluation and critique. Researchers who have tracked the North American immersion movement have moved on from the documentation and celebration of the undoubted learning achievements of immersion students, to examine critically the limitations to their achievement, and, in particular, the issue of fossilisation. In Canada, interventionist research programmes are under way, which seek to destabilise premature fossilisation through a renewed and re-conceived 'focus on form' (e.g. Spada & Lightbown, 1993; Lyster, 1994).

Those of us who are concerned with the teaching of FLs as individual curriculum subjects are also confronting the mixed implementation and results of communicative language teaching. Functional syllabuses, and methods involving group work, role play, etc. have in some contexts led to shallow phrasebook-style learning and continued pupil dependency on teachers who have largely deleted reflection and explanation from the classroom diet, while marginalising reading and FL literacy in favour of the rehearsal of transactional talk. In an in-depth study of the teaching of English in Malaysian secondary schools, Hamid (1995) has shown that a functional syllabus and communicative style methodological package can operate well in settings where pupils have supplementary contacts with English outside school. (Though even here, there were unsolved tensions between meaning-oriented pedagogy and perceived needs for exam practice to ensure high grades in an accuracy-focused school leaving exam.) But such a package has not by any means solved the problems of rural schools where pupils typically encounter English only in the classroom, and have an insufficient language base to cope with discussions, debates, problem-solving, etc.

Two somewhat different directions seem to offer themselves in current debates as solutions for these problems. One is to break the linguistic restraints of a functional syllabus itself and to move to an entirely 'task-based' model,