COST Action IS1306

New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe: Opportunities and Challenges

Position paper on research themes and profiles related to new speakers of indigenous minority languages

Output of Working Group 1

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Introduction

The purposes of this paper are (1) to outline research themes identified by members of WG1 in the first phase of the Action and (2) to outline labels, categories or profiles of new speakers of minority languages from both community and academic perspectives. The paper will guide the second phase of the COST Action, when the original Working Groups 1-3 will cease to exist and new groups will be formed on the basis of themes. It draws on the work of the *2nd International Symposium on New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe: Opportunities and Challenges* which was held from November 20-22 2014 under the auspices of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya in Barcelona (http://www.uoc.edu/portal/en/symposia/newspeakers2014/index.html). The chairs of the five panels related to WG1 were asked to submit brief reports about how the panels shed light both on research themes and profiles. The chairs and panels were as follows:

- Dr. Noel Ó Murchadha (University College Dublin): *The Making of New Speakers Between the Home and School*
- Dr. Máiréad Moriarty (University of Limerick): *Practices and New Speakers of Minority Languages*
- Dr. Julia de Bres (University of Luxembourg): *Hegemonic Struggles over Speakerness*
- Dr. Michael Hornsby (Adam Mickiewicz University): *Ideologies and New Speakers of Minority Languages*
- Dr. Cassie Smith-Christmas (University of the Highlands and Islands): *Language Planning and its Consequences*

Themes

1. Ideologisation of target varieties of new speakers

The ideologisation of linguistic variation among new speakers of minority languages is a recurring theme. The research refers to social hierarchies constructed around different groups of speakers of minority languages. In general, traditional speakers tend to be placed at the top of the hierarchy and post-traditional new speakers below, but more complex hierarchies also exist or co-exist. Such hierarchies are interwoven with discourses around purism and authenticity. Throughout the network, a familiar division is described between traditional native speaker communities and post-traditional new speakers. Although native speaker communities in minority languages undergoing shift display an array of traditional and post-traditional variation in the minority language, these communities are generally perceived (by themselves or others) to speak more authentic, pure and legitimate traditional varieties of the language. On the other hand, while new speakers of minority languages can align themselves with traditional native speaker linguistic norms to greater or lesser extents, new speakers tend to be seen as a cohort who practice post-traditional varieties which may be deemed deficient and defective or transgressive and innovative. In this context, the issue of language ownership emerges as a site of contestation, as do conflicts between written and spoken models. A key research theme for the future of the network will be the investigation of issues related to the appropriateness and sustainability of alternative linguistic models to traditional speech.

2. Register and linguistic proficiency

Related to the ideologisation of target varieties of new speakers of minority languages is a linguistic analysis of such varieties. With some rare exceptions, formal linguistic analysis to date has either ignored non-native speech or has tended to present it as deficient or aberrant. There is scope within the future development of this network for the description and analysis of the linguistic features of post-traditional varieties of minority languages. We can distinguish here between new speakers who ideologically and linguistically align themselves with traditional, native speech practices and new speakers who question the authority of traditional speech practices through their propensity to practice a more post-

traditional variety of the minority language. A linguistic analysis of new speaker practices would identify which traditional linguistic features are maintained by which people, and the extent to which post-traditional features are emerging among new speakers and among which social groups.

Investigations of linguistic variation will allow researchers to show how the attitudes and ideologies[1] surrounding new speakers are negotiated through linguistic production. Questions arise here in relation to new speakers' desired linguistic convergence and divergence with native speaker norms, both in specific sociolinguistic contexts or as a target variety more generally. A new speaker paradigm that investigates linguistic production can potentially reveal how particular traditional and post-traditional linguistic features are recruited by new speakers to indicate desired stances and social memberships. Such linguistic choices implicitly, if not explicitly, allow speakers to align themselves with, or distance themselves from, traditional, native speaker models and identities. Additionally, such research will further promote the importance of the new speaker model by bringing its usage to other areas of linguistics.

The investigation of linguistic production could productively answer questions within the new speaker paradigm that are currently unanswered. For example, the current definition of a new speaker is unclear. Examining linguistic productions of new speakers would help identify common behaviours across different social contexts and contribute to the existing wealth of knowledge about common ideologies and other kinds of social practices. Furthermore, language production data would demonstrate how new speakers operationalise the ideologies that are being identified in current research. How do such macro processes feed down into the minutiae of speech? For example, Piller's (2002) work aims to understand the relationship between high proficiency in a second language and identification as an individual who "passes" as a native speaker, pointing out that new speakers may wish to "pass" in only a limited range of contexts. As such, they may model their speech on any range of non-standard varieties of the TL, depending on their particular goals in any given context. An exploration of the manner in which traditional and post-traditional linguistic variation is employed by new speakers in seeking to "pass" or not to "pass", and the features that allow new speakers to "pass", would allow researchers to explicate why some traditional features are maintained by new speakers while others are jettisoned.

3. Linguistic *mudes*

A major theme emerging from the research relates to linguistic *mudes* (Pujolar & Gonzàlez,2012; Walsh & O'Rourke, 2014), critical junctures during a speaker's life leading to the adoption of the target language. Existing research on *mudes* in the network illustrates

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[1] A discussion on *ideology* by Julia de Bres is available in Appendix 1.

that myriad factors contribute to the transition between learner and new speaker. This theme encompasses issues of both linguistic and social competence in becoming a new speaker of a language, questions of ideology and motivation as well as the effects of language policy. While the research on *mudes* has been limited to minority languages to date, such an approach could also be applied to immigrants as new speakers of their own heritage languages. In the context of increasing geographical mobility within Europe, migration of individuals and families creates a situation whereby heritage languages are frequently used by immigrants in their new environment even though that heritage language is generally not the language of broader communication, e.g. Polish immigrants to Ireland. Second generation users, for example, who acquire the heritage language in the home, or who experience linguistic *mudes* that lead them to acquire the heritage language later in life, comprise a particular cohort of new speakers of a language that can be considered a minority language in this new environment.

4. Home-community-school nexus

The theme of *mudes* is also linked to the complex interplay between the home, the school and the community in the course of speakers' journeys to new speakerness. This area has been relatively unexplored and is another possible area for future investigation that might be investigated through micro-level ethnographic research. It is widely attested, for instance, that schooling alone, either in the form of minority language immersion programmes or language as a subject only, tends not to lead to the widespread adoption of the minority language as a language of general communication outside of the school that many hope for. For many new speakers of minority languages, the journey to new speakerhood meanders through a combination of different but related spaces including home, school and community settings. There is scope within the new speaker enterprise to assess the relative importance of each of these spaces and to examine the dynamic interplay between them and the manner in which this interplay can facilitate the transition from learner to new speaker. For instance, an ethnographic approach investigating the transitions and borders between different sociolinguitic spaces e.g. between the school and the home, between the classroom and the school playground, would allow us to empirically investigate how one space complements another and facilitates, or hinders, a learner in the journey towards becoming a new speaker of a minority languages.

5. Performance of new speakerness

The diversity of performing new speakerness encapsulates key concerns such as reflexivity, agency and identity leading to an investigation of the perceived authenticity of new speakers. Performance also relates to the spaces available (or not available) to new speakers to use their given language and have their type of language accepted as legitimate. Such varieties may be restricted in terms of complexity (speakers or users with lower levels of competence employing translanguaging in non-traditional domains such as social media).

6. Group integration and identity

Group identity and integration are core motivations for becoming new speakers of minority languages but conversely, these issues may form exclusionary barriers to becoming a new speaker. This theme is linked to notions of language and place, as the territorialisation of language and speaker is a key research concern. This may manifest itself as an impetus for becoming a new speaker (e.g. I live in Wales, so I should speak Welsh) or as a barrier to so doing (you're not from here, so therefore you don't have a legitimate claim to speak this language). Identities of new speakerness may also intersect with other social variables such as gender, ethnic affiliation and sexual orientation.

7. New speakers and language policy

An overarching research theme relates to the complex interactions between new speakers and language policy. New speakers both emerge from language policies aimed at revitalising minoritised languages and influence policy formation. Such policies may ameliorate the social position of the minoritised language and facilitate its incorporation into a wider variety of domains. Enhanced participation may increase the economic value of the language if it becomes more integral to labour markets in education, media or public administration. As new speakers gain critical mass in some communities, tensions may emerge about their role in language revitalisation or about hierarchies of speakers promoted by existing language policies. Perceptions of the enhanced economic value of minoritised languages have led to lay and academic discussions on the emergence of new speakers of such languages as a (counter) elite, sometimes practising what is perceived as a new prestige variety. The interactions between new speakers and language policy are complex and varied and could be further explored in the future work of this network.

Profiles

The difficulties associated with categorisation were discussed in the synthesis document about the conceptualisation of new speakerness. We desired that the concept of new speaker would be sufficiently focussed to serve as an analytical tool but sufficiently broad to capture the diversity of the experience of new speakerness across the range of languages included in our network (Walsh & Lane, 2014). Based on the Barcelona symposium, panel chairs were asked to collate examples of 'emic' (community) and 'etic' (technical research) new speaker labels, in order to provide a sense of the categories currently circulating in academic and community discourse.

The most common 'emic' label, circulating among new and traditional speakers alike, is that of the 'native speaker'. This term is rooted and naturalised as a category in many minority language communities (e.g. 'euskaldunzaharra' ('old Basque speaker') in Basque, 'cainteoir dúchais' ('native speaker') in Irish, 'bretonnants de naissance' ('Breton speakers from birth') in Breton) and tends to dominate among traditional and new speakers alike. The 'native speaker' tends to be juxtaposed with the 'non-native speaker' or the 'learner'. A dichotomous discourse of 'insider' and 'outsider' may circulate or speakers perceived as traditional or 'native' may be given ethnolinguistic labels such as 'Gael' in the case of Scotland (or occasionally in Ireland). However, 'native' and 'fluent' speech are sometimes conflated, hinting that even as an emic label there may be awareness of the problematic nature of 'native speaker' in minority language contexts. Some speakers of Irish who were socialised with Irish in early childhood but grew up outside the traditional Gaeltacht community have described themselves as 'cainteoirí dúchais' (native speakers) but expressed a view that they were neither as competent or authentic as 'cainteoirí dúchais Gaeltachta' (Gaeltacht native speakers, i.e. traditional speakers from the Irish-speaking districts).

'New speaker' has very little currency as an emic category, although this may change as greater academic attention to the concept influences the discourses and categorisations of new speakers themselves. Not all communities have explicit labels for new speakers and may use either 'learner' itself or qualify it with an adjective ('good learner', 'fluent learner') in order to categorise a person deemed competent enough to be a speaker of a given language. Others have naturalised terms which circulate freely such as 'neofalante' in Galician, 'euskaldunberri' in Basque or 'néo-bretonnant' in Breton (these speakers may also be described as speaking a 'learned Breton'). Some new speakers of Irish have been described as speaking a 'bastardised' variety, indicating the stigmatisation of some post-traditional variety of Irish in the public view in stark contrast to the valorisation of traditional speech varieties. Other terms include 'Gaeilge Bhaile Átha Cliath' (Dublin Irish), indicating a non-traditional variety spoken outside the Gaeltacht or 'Gaeilge na Leabhar' (book Irish), referring to a (semi-)standardised variety perceived as artificial or constructed.

'Chysti Lemky' ('pure' Lemkos) has been used as an emic label to refer to competent speakers, whether traditional or post-traditional, a possible indication of a blurring of the distinction in the eyes of speakers of that language.

As is to be expected, the dominant 'etic' or technical research category is that of 'new speaker' itself and its equivalents in other languages (for instance 'nuachainteoir' in Irish, 'neach-labhairt ùr' in Scottish Gaelic, 'nou parlant' in Catalan, 'neofalante' in Galician (also an emic label), 'euskaldunberri' in Basque (also emic), 'néo-bretonnant' in Breton (also emic); see Walsh & Lane 2014 for a detailed discussion). The terms 'traditional' and 'post-traditional' speakers are used widely within this network and are consistent with our epistemological approaches to new speakerness. Similarly, the notion of 'expert speaker' places the current competence of the speaker to the fore, rather than his or her linguistic background. 'Heritage speakers' refer to those who (re-)acquire the language(s) spoken by previous generations of their families (for instance, some new speakers of Scottish Gaelic who were raised speaking English by Gaelic-speaking parents or grandparents in the Western Isles). Terms such as 'early bilingual' and 'late bilingual' are useful in describing life stages at which speakers acquire additional languages (see the discussion on 'mudes' above), although they tend to be founded on the primacy of a 'mother tongue' or 'first language'. Other etic labels which pre-exist the establishment of this network include those based on a binary division of speakers into L1/L2. 'L2 user' may be used to indicate someone sufficiently competent to be considered a speaker of the target language, albeit with less authority than a 'native' speaker. The terms 'semi-speaker' or 'laggard semi-speaker' are based on perceived deficiencies in the speaker's competence when compared to the native speaker ideal. 'Native speaker' is also used uncritically as an etic category although not by researchers in this network.

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Appendix 1

Foreword

As it has been observed that there are many different approaches to linguistic ideologies within the network, it has been considered germane to refine our understanding of this area of inquiry as an important next step for the network. As an example of one approach to ideologies, below is a discussion of ideologies by Julia de Bres of the University of Luxembourg.

Language ideologies

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[edited version by John Walsh & Noel Ó Murchadha]

My approach to language ideologies

Language ideologies are defined in a wide range of ways. For my own research I take an approach summarized below (this is taken from de Bres 2013, see also de Bres 2014). This is not intended to influence others, just to provide an example of how one approach might differ quite a lot from another within our network (which is fine! I just think we need to all be clear about where we stand). My own approach, summarised below, is inspired by selected approaches within linguistic anthropology (especially work by Kroskrity, Woolard and Gal).

The first feature of this conception of ideology is that language ideologies are inherently *normative*. Although often masquerading as common-sense descriptions of matters relating to language, language ideologies promote an evaluative and prescriptive view of language; they involve 'beliefs about the way the world is, the way it should be, and the way it has to be with respect to language' (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006)[1]. Any analysis of language ideologies must therefore involve attention to the underlying normative orientation of the holder of the ideology, and this distinguishes language ideologies research from other fields of research such as language attitudes, which, although also relating to metalanguage, may not be conceived as inherently normative in nature.

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[1] The distinction between ideology and common sense is variously defined in the literature. The point being emphasised here is that ideologies (which are fundamentally prescriptive) can become naturalized to the point of being accepted as 'common sense' (seen as 'merely' descriptive). In this sense, language ideologies lie concealed behind what is regarded as common sense in relation to language. See e.g. Boudreau and Dubois (2007: 104): ['language ideologies] come to be so well established that their origin is often forgotten by speakers, and are therefore socially reproduced and end up being 'naturalized' or perceived as natural or as common sense, thereby masking the social construction processes at work'.

A second distinctive feature is that language ideologies represent a *system* of related beliefs about language, that is, a cluster of positions used to explain or justify a perceived linguistic phenomenon. For example, those who adhere to a monolingual English ideology in the United States (be this official promoters of 'English Only' laws or members of civil society) will likely hold a range of related beliefs, such as that language diversity promotes social disharmony, that bilingual education inhibits children's performance at school, and that first language maintenance interferes with English language competence more generally. When one belief is expressed, another can often be expected to follow. Moreover, these sets of beliefs will often be expressed by different individuals in similar ways, using similar discursive features (specific terms, metaphors, constructions, etc), lending an appearance of coherence and authority to the ideology. This patterning of language ideologies into broader systems, recurring (to varying degrees) between different individuals, and taking more or less coherent forms, reveals their socially constructed nature and makes it possible to analyse their distribution across different social groups.

A third key feature is the notion of *interest*. Kroskrity (2004: 501) claims that language ideologies 'represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group' (be this policymakers, members of a ethnolinguistic group, or individuals of a particular gender, etc, all of whom may have different interests to maintain). Similarly, Woolard (1998: 6) refers to 'a conceptualization of ideology as derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experience or interests of a particular social position'. This makes language ideologies normative with a purpose: they are self-interested in nature. As Kroskrity (2000: 8) observes: 'A [society] member's notion of what is 'true', 'morally good', or 'aesthetically pleasing' about language and discourse are grounded in social experience and often demonstrably tied to his or her political-economic interests. These notions often underlie attempts to use language as the site at which to promote, protect, and legitimate those interests.' This explains why, as noted frequently within the literature, language ideologies may be expressed in terms of language but do not relate solely to language (Woolard 1998, Kulick 1998).

A fourth feature is that, given their normative nature and relationship to interests, language ideologies always relate to *power relations* within society. This distinguishes the approach adopted here from that of some other language ideology theorists, who may view language ideologies in less 'political' terms, e.g. as merely shared cultural background (for a discussion, see Woolard 1998). This overtly theorised link of language ideologies to issues of power gives language ideologies a critical theoretical thrust that is not inherent to other forms of research on metalanguage (e.g. language attitudes, folk linguistics, etc) and this makes language ideologies a more useful overall theoretical framework for research topics where the relationship between language and power is of central concern. Unlike some critical approaches to language ideology, however, the process of analysis advocated here does not assume pre-existing power relations between groups, but examines the power relations revealed by the ideologies themselves. Or, rather, the process is seen as bi-directional: language ideologies are both 'determined by and productive of power relations' (Seargeant 2009: 27). This cautious approach to assigning power differences up front is particularly important, given that it may not always be apparent where power differences lie in some language situations, and perceptions of who 'has' the power may vary between groups.

A fifth feature is the perception of ideology as a property of *all individuals*. Some language ideology theorists conceive of language ideologies as developed and maintained solely by dominant social groups (see Woolard 1998 for a discussion). In the view adopted here, language ideologies apply to everyone: the powerful and the powerless. They might be promoted by people in authority, for example in the form of official language policies in the workplace, or they might equally be used by individuals in their everyday interactional practices, for example when one person resists the use of gendered pronouns in a meeting.

Sixth, language ideologies are viewed here not as a static system of normative beliefs but rather as a *strategic resource* that individuals can employ to position and reinforce their own interests. By selectively adopting and promoting particular conceptions of language (through formal policies or everyday interactions), individuals can advance conceptions that benefit them, potentially at the expense of others. Ideologies are thus used as tools in the negotiation of power relationships and in the pursuit or exercise of power (Woolard 1998). Ideologies are not something static that people have, but something dynamic that they use.

Seventh, despite the more individualist conception of ideology used here, it is clear that in some cases language ideologies can develop into widely shared systems of understanding of the relationship between language and society, so that one can talk of *dominant language ideologies*. For instance, a set of dominant language ideological positions have been identified across modern Western European nation-states, including the 'one nation, one language ideology' (Woolard 1998), the 'standard language ideology' (Milroy 1999), the ideology of 'societal multilingualism as a problem' (Blommaert 1999), the ideology of 'the essentialist link between language and identity' (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998), and the ideology of the 'social hierarchy of languages' (Weber 2009).

Dominant language ideologies usually reflect the interests of powerful élites, such as governing groups within the nation-state. In such cases, individuals within these societies may be persuaded to adopt language ideologies that do not further their own interests but rather those of the dominant group. In these circumstances, as an eighth feature of ideology, one can talk of *hegemonic* language ideologies (see e.g. Gal 1998). Such ideologies may become so pervasive that they are widely seen as 'common sense', and individuals may be unaware of the socially and historically situated processes underlying their adoption. Indeed, this can be the very strength of such ideologies, which subtly perform a function of 'naturalizing relations between language and social order' (Philips 1998: 217), thereby 'masking the social construction processes at work' (Boudreau and Dubois 2007: 104).

These macro-level patterns in dominant or hegemonic language ideologies do not, however, mean these language ideologies are uncontested: a ninth feature of ideologies is that they always *subject to contestation and challenge*. This applies no less to established ideologies than to ideologies that emerge in response to them. Briggs (1998: 249) claims that 'contestation is not simply a feature of some ideologies […] or a process that emerges in special circumstances that lead people to being questioning taken-for-granted ideologies; to the contrary, contestation is a crucial facet of how particular ideologies and practices come to be dominant'. Once language ideologies are established as dominant, contestation continues to play a role, given that dominant ideologies, as social constructions rather than

'truths' about language, must continually be reproduced lest they lose their sway in the face of conflicting ideological positions: this means that 'even 'dominant' ideologies are dynamically responsive to ever-changing forms of opposition' (Kroskrity 2000: 13).

What is more, ideologies do not only vary between different groups: a tenth feature is that individuals may display *mixed language ideologies* at a given moment. Kroskrity (2000: 12) attributes this variability to the 'multiplicity of meaningful social divisions (class, gender, clan, elites, generations, and so on) within sociocultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership'.

Here emerges an eleventh key feature of the conception of ideology adopted here, the relationship between language ideologies and *identity*. Given that they involve the promotion of one set of interests over another, language ideologies can represent an important means for constructing individual and group identity. This is particularly due to the potential of language ideologies for establishing and reinforcing group boundaries on linguistic grounds, and thereby constructing the inclusion and/or exclusion of individuals within particular groups (see Kroskrity 2004, Weber 2009).

Twelfth, and finally, language ideologies are seen here as *multi-sited*. There is a distinction within language ideologies theory between those who view language ideologies as primarily an ideational phenomenon (ideas about language), those who see them as located in linguistic practice (language behaviours), and those who regard them as multi-sited, encompassing both ideas and behaviour (Woolard 1998)[1]. I adopt this third (combined) approach. Here, then, language ideologies have both ideational and behavioural aspects, and generally involve: (1) adopting ideas about language that reflect one's own interests and (2) exercising these interests, to the extent possible, in linguistic practice[2].

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[1] These distinctions also apply to approaches within language attitudes research (see e.g. Garrett et al 2003).

[2] The phrasing 'generally involve' is used in acknowledgement of the phenomenon of hegemonic language ideologies described above, according to which people are persuaded to adopt language ideologies that do not further their own interests but rather those of a dominant group.

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