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The study of minority languages and communities is a topic of diffuse dimensions, and it is thus no surprise that the editors of this 7-part, 22-chapter handbook draw on contributors from a wide range of disciplines – sociolinguistics, education, international law, politics, anthropology.

Following the editors' introduction, a legally-orientated chapter by de Varennes and Kuzborska addresses the fundamental yet troublesome issues of the definition of minorities and the nature and scope of their putative linguistic rights. The authors review the history of supranational efforts to safeguard minority-language rights, from the interwar period up to the recent proliferation of various international treaties and guidelines – which, broadly speaking, conceive language rights as applying to individuals in a human-rights framework. Three categories of rights provision in international law are distinguished: linguistic liberty, the freedom to private use of a language; fundamental fairness, most centrally the right to understand court proceedings in which one is a defendant; and third, 'proportionality and public services', covering the extent to which the state has obligations to provide administrative, educational and other public services in a minority language.

Chapter 3 (by Bowring) is narrower in scope. It offers a historical overview of language-rights measures in the Russian Federation, from the Soviet period through to Putin's presidency, which has seen the strong promotion of Russian as the foremost state language and a steady erosion in the status of 'ethnic' varieties, including one of the strongest: Tatar. In Chapter 4, Williams and Walsh take up issues of language regulation, starting from the premise that even where legislation protects the status of the minority language, as in Wales, this does not guarantee that citizens can actually access services in that language. Pursuing this theme, the authors examine the regulative machinery for the implementation of minority-language rights, focusing on the role of language commissioners at the national level, as well as the International Association of Language Commissioners. They conclude with a case study of Irish, showing that, despite a supportive infrastructure, the language remains low on the government's scale of priorities and that progress in implementing statutory obligations has therefore been slow. What is missing, it seems, is political commitment.

The stand-out contribution of the politically-orientated Part 2 is perhaps Chapter 6, in which McDermott and Nic Craith examine the routes to linguistic recognition taken in such deeply divided societies as Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Rwanda, South Africa and Bosnia, and go on to consider whether recognition of minority-language rights ameliorates tensions or actually exacerbates them by politicising ethno-linguistic identities. Unsurprisingly, the authors incline to the former view, though they acknowledge that conceding language rights does not of itself foster dialogue. Other chapters in the second section include one by Giordano (Chapter 5), who – somewhat unpersuasively – proposes Malaysia as an example of a consociation, a type of political community allegedly more flexible with regard to minorities than the classic nation-state. Another, by Prina *et al.* (Chapter 7), examines the application of non-territorial National Cultural Autonomy (NCA) – a notion first elaborated by Austro-Marxists in the late nineteenth century – to four Eastern European states (Russia, Estonia, Serbia and Hungary). The authors conclude that the level of cultural autonomy on offer is much more limited than that envisaged in the original NCA model. The final chapter of Part 2, by De Meulder *et al.* (Chapter 8) focuses on 'Sign Language Communities' (SLCs), whose members (beside traditional deaf signers) include interpreters, researchers and parents. The authors discuss various challenges facing contemporary SLCs, including medical normalisation, the lack of appropriate provision for deaf children in mainstream schools, and the inadequate numbers of well-trained interpreters.

The two chapters in Part 3, both sociological in approach, are united by a focus on some of the effects of globalisation. In Chapter 9, Pauwels reviews traditional approaches to the study of language shift and maintenance, pointing out that these do not capture the complex multilingual

realities associated with the greatly increased mobility, both real and virtual, of the contemporary age. Meanwhile, in Chapter 10, Patrick contextualises the factors affecting the Inuit peoples of the Canadian Arctic and outlines some of the initiatives underway. Among these are the unification/standardisation of Inuktitut and the extension of Inuktitut-medium education, a response to the increased dominance of English.

The key chapter of Part 4, where attention shifts to the economic forces underlying minoritisation, is that by Pietikäinen *et al.* (Chapter 11). Drawing on Irish and Sámi examples, this focuses on four domains offering opportunities for re-investing minority languages with economic or 'exchange' value. These are (i) the media, which can add prestige value as well as offer employment; (ii) work, where legislation stimulating demand for public services in minority languages can boost employment opportunities; (iii) tourism, where minority languages can be exploited to confer distinction and authenticity on the tourism product; and (iv) marketing, where, again, use of a minority language can authenticate local products and distinguish them from mass-produced commodities. Then, in Chapter 12, Kamwangamalu rightly recognises that economic incentives are needed if indigenous African languages are to be utilised more fully in education. His proposed solution, 'prestige planning', does not convince, however, as it remains unclear how prestige by itself can enhance economic utility. The causal path, surely, runs more directly from greater labour-market value to increased prestige. Finally, in Chapter 13, Le Blanc briefly considers the complex but largely positive role translation can play for minority languages, before reviewing changing translation practices and detailing how translators have become more dependent on computer-assisted tools such as translation memory and machine translation systems. An example of the latter is the Canadian Translation Bureau's Portage system: its principal use is in translating English source documents into French, to the possible detriment of that language.

The three chapters in Part 5 address matters of education and literacy. The weightiest (Chapter 16) is by Robinson, a strong advocate of the educational, cultural and social benefits of developing literacy in non-dominant local languages. He compares policies to support local-language literacy in three highly multilingual countries – Cameroon, Senegal and Papua New Guinea (PNG), all of which rely heavily on civil-society organisations and NGOs to deliver adult literacy programmes. Of the three, the strongest support for initial literacy in local vernaculars is in PNG, and the weakest in Cameroon, where government assistance is little more than rhetorical. While Robinson's arguments for multilingual literacy inclusive of non-dominant local languages are persuasive, he perhaps does not give sufficient attention to the availability of reading material, the relative absence of which can cast doubt on the utility of literacy in these local languages. The other two chapters in this fifth section are by Disbray and Wigglesworth (Chapter 14) and Sercombe (Chapter 15). The former offer a *tour d'horizon* of studies on Australian aboriginal children's language practices, covering such diverse aspects as child socialisation, language-acquisition patterns, language use in peer interaction, the use of indigenous languages as media of instruction, and English teaching for indigenous-language speakers. Given this wide scope, there necessarily remains little room to expand on any of these topics or comment on language revitalisation programmes. Sercombe, meanwhile, traces the assimilatory pressures affecting minority groups across Southeast Asia, a vast multilingual area comprising eleven very different nations whose language-education policies, he argues, tend to promote the languages of dominant ethnic groups in the service of national unity and economic efficiency. Declining linguistic diversity is one of the consequences. He concludes with a brief case study of the Penan, a poor marginalised group residing mainly in rural Sarawak, and one whose educational progress has stagnated partly due to limited exposure to the main languages of schooling, Malay and English.

Part 6 has two chapters on minority languages in the media, and a third focussed on linguistic-landscape studies. Moring (Chapter 17) first reviews the developing literature on minority-language media; while such media may give minority languages a more modern image, he notes that

scepticism persists regarding their role in language revitalisation. Then, having briefly discussed international guidelines on the supply of minority-language media, he considers their operating environment and the challenges they face – the slow development of digital services, for instance. Cunliffe's contribution (Chapter 18) benefits from a narrower focus on social media, and an argument that is easier to follow in the absence of prior acquaintance with the field. Drawing mainly on examples from Wales, he examines factors influencing the language choices of bilingual social-media users, and distinguishes 'language-apatetic' media platforms (e.g. Facebook) – which tend to perpetuate existing biases towards majority-language use, from 'language-empathetic' platforms or enclaves (e.g. Clecs) that require the exclusive use of the minority language. Finally, while social-media use by minority-language speakers, especially young people, is generally viewed as beneficial for the language, and an index of digital vitality, there are constraining prerequisites. These include appropriate technological tools and, more importantly, the prior existence of a critical mass of competent, confident social-media users. In Chapter 19, the last of Part 5, Gorter *et al.* argue forcefully for the contribution that linguistic-landscape (LL) studies can make to scholarship on minority languages. For example, the LL is said to offer empirical data on the visibility of minority languages in the public sphere and generally reflects the status of language varieties across domains. The authors go on to cite Israel, Québec, Brussels and the Basque country as fruitful sites for LL study – in that signage is a significant arena of inter-linguistic contestation in these settings.

In the lead chapter of the seventh and concluding section, Bradley usefully surveys the many factors – sociolinguistic, economic, political and attitudinal – that can contribute to minority-language endangerment, this leading to a discussion of the very difficult endeavour of reversing decline and to a conclusion that outlines types of language reclamation inclusive of revitalisation, revival and heritage reclamation. Next, Nash's Chapter 21 pursues a similar theme, but with a much narrower focus on the small and endangered languages of the Pitcairn and Norfolk Islanders. However, reviewing research on these historically stigmatised varieties, and adopting a broadly ecological approach, Nash questions whether they can usefully be classified as languages, rather than unfocused, 'ecologically embedded' ways of speaking with origins in English, the West Indies and Polynesia. What is clear, though, is that both Pitcairn and Norfolk forms of speech are in decline in both numbers of speakers and domains of use. In the final chapter of the volume, Katz follows the trajectory of Yiddish from its origins with the early nineteenth-century Ashkenazim of Eastern Europe, through the post-Holocaust period, to the modern age. He highlights disputes over types of Yiddish and arcane matters of lexis and orthography (or so they may seem to the outsider). The current twenty-first-century situation, deplored by the author as illustrating the dangers of prescriptive normativism, is one of a divide between a relatively small number of secular normativists and a much larger, flourishing Hasidic community, native speakers of a more traditional, unpurified vernacular Yiddish.

Overall, there is much to like in this volume. The editors manage to impose satisfactory order on a disparate range of chapters, allocating them to appropriately titled sections, and while there is some inevitable unevenness in their quality, interest and readability, the best are excellent in content and organisation. My personal preference, no doubt idiosyncratic, was for the more wide-ranging, general contributions rather than the more specific ones. Thus, I particularly commend those by de Varennes and Kuzborska, Williams and Walsh, McDermott and Nic Craith, Pauwels, Pietikäinen *et al.*, Robinson, Cunliffe and Bradley. As regards coverage, there are some noticeable omissions. For example, there is little on migrant communities, on the new-speaker concept and on political/moral theorising regarding minority rights. And, though it is well-nigh impossible to achieve a perfect geographical balance given the many minorities around the world – not to mention the availability of authors – the volume's contents do display a slight bias towards Europe and a corresponding neglect of such major countries as China, India, Brazil and the United States. Nonetheless, this is a serious collection that makes a very substantial and welcome contribution to the large literature on minority languages. I would imagine that it is more likely to find a place on the shelves of libraries than those

of individual readers, and, if the latter may demur at reading the book cover to cover, they will profit much from dipping into chapters according to their specific interests.