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Language conflict research: a state of the art

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Abstract: After a broad overview of the history and the areas of focus of research on language conflict, this article pays particular attention to a number of selected features of societal language conflict. A discussion of the causes, the visibility, the manifestations, the discursive focal points, the management and the outcomes of the management of societal language conflict precedes a sketch of methodological approaches in language conflict research. The snapshot of language conflict research ends with a list of research desiderata.

Keywords: language conflict, language contact, language policy, language planning, macrosociolinguistics

1 Introduction

Although language conflict as a topic is dealt with in linguistic literature prior to the second half of the twentieth century (cf. Kremnitz 1990), it took until the 1960s before it started to be more prominently explored. Scholars such as Haugen (1966), Inglehart and Woodward (1972[1967]), Joy (1972 [1967]), Mackey (1967) and Das Gupta (1970) contributed to putting it on the research map in North America. In the European realm, Catalan sociolinguists (cf. Aracil 1966; Ninyoles 1969) as well as Occitan sociolinguists (cf. Lafont 1971) helped to boost a multidisciplinary approach to the study of language conflict. During the 1970s and 1980s political scientists (e.g. McRae see below), sociologists (e.g. Braga and Monti Civelli 1982; Strassoldo and Delli Zotti 1982), and social psychologists (e.g. Bourhis 1984) started to uncover and analyse the multiple dimensions of linguistic strife in a systematic way. They were joined by the geolinguist Williams (1984) and sociolinguists including Calvet (1999 [1987]), Haarmann (cf. infra), Kremnitz (cf. infra), Mattheier (cf. infra) and Nelde (cf. infra), all of whom developed a special interest in linguistic strife in situations of societal multilingualism. Especially McRae, Haarmann, Kremnitz and Nelde made major contributions to secure a prominent place

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for language conflict within research on language contact and societal multilingualism. McRae started a book series on Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies (with volumes on Switzerland, Belgium and Finland that were published in 1983, 1986 and 1997, respectively). Haarmann (1990) introduced a general theory on language conflict inspired by Haugen’s ideas on language planning and the ecology of language. Kremnitz (1979, 1990) kept the legacy of the Catalan sociolinguists alive and elaborated their ideas by means of contemporary and historical case studies in the field of Romance linguistics. Nelde, finally, launched a series of international conferences on Contact & Conflict in June 1979 (cf. Nelde 1980: 3) and devoted eight out of 30 volumes of his Plurilingua series explicitly to the topic of language conflict.

Despite of all these research efforts in a community that got closely knit in the slipstream of the successive Contact & Conflict conferences, research on language conflict lost some of its momentum in the second half of the 1990s. From a present day perspective and notwithstanding valuable interdisciplinary contributions to the field by Mac Giolla Chriost (2003), Rindler Schjerve (2003, 2007) and Conill (2007), Haarmann’s observation that language conflict theory and methodology would deserve to be fleshed out a bit more, still holds (cf. Haarmann 1990: 1–2). In an attempt to contribute to the constructive development of research on language conflict this contribution provides a systematic state of the art of language conflict research. Rooted in what some would refer to as “traditional” macrosociolinguistics, the sociology of language or contact linguistics (cf. Wildgen [2005] on the overlap), it first of all provides a sketch of the main areas of focus of research on language conflict. Building on ideas previously expressed in Darquennes (2013a, 2015) it then continues to explore different features of societal language conflict. Before rounding off with a number of research desiderata that could help to align the more traditional approaches to language conflict with current trends in critical (micro)

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1 Section 3 of this article takes up ideas expressed in Darquennes (2013a: 109–113) which more generally deals with aspects of language policy and planning in the context of indigenous European language minorities. This contribution is also to be considered as a revised and expanded version of Darquennes (2015) in the sense that an additional scan of the available literature has resulted in a considerable expansion of the number of references in the text (more than 40 references have been added), a revision of the ideas expressed in Section 2.2, an enlargement of Section 4, a total make-over of Section 5 and the addition of relevant footnotes. Also quite some examples have been changed in this contribution as compared to Darquennes (2015). The reason for adding this contribution to this issue despite the overlap with Darquennes (2013a, 2015) is that it adds to the coherence of this issue and gives readers who are not that familiar with language conflict literature an insight into its dimensions and its development from the second half of the twentieth century until the present day.
sociolinguistics (cf. also the contributions of Gasquet-Cyrus and Vetter to this issue) it offers an overview of existing methodological approaches to language conflict research.

2 Research on language conflict: Main areas of focus

Given the close connection between (research on) language contact and (research on) language conflict (cf. Nelde 1997), it is hardly surprising that the main areas of focus of research on language conflict closely resemble those of research on language contact. Drawing on Nelde (1992) and Clyne (1996), these interrelated areas can be described as “language”, “the individual language user(s)” and “society”.

2.1 Language

The first area of focus concerns the existence of possible conflicts arising at the level of the contact languages themselves. Of interest here are mechanisms that hamper or block the processes by which one language (or, in broader terms: a language variety) borrows morphological, phonological, phonetic, lexical and syntactic features from another language or language variety (cf. Wölck 1997; Görlach 2009). With or without reference to the notion of conflict, examples of this kind of research can be found in literature on contact-induced language change and code-switching. Meyers-Scotton’s discussion of morphosyntactic constraints on codeswitching in her Duelling Languages (1993) particularly appeals to those interested in the study of the linguistic features of language conflict. The same counts for discussions of whether or not some linguistic features would be unborrowable (cf., e.g., Thomason 2001; Treffers-Daller 2010).

Much in line with the ideas of the founding fathers of sociolinguistics, present-day literature on contact-induced change and code switching points to the importance of recognizing the “interrelationship between socio-cultural conditions and linguistic phenomena” (Weinreich (1968 [1953]: 83). Languages are seen as “a product of, and a vehicle for, communication among people” (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 4). The individual language users are seen as “the locus of language contact” (Weinreich 1968 [1953]: 1). Translating these general principles of language contact to language conflict, Haarmann (1990: 2–3) notes that “a language conflict is not a state of affairs where one linguistic system is in conflict...
with another system”. Language conflicts rather result “from contact settings whose conditions are controversially evaluated by people who are involved”. Without the capacity to evaluate events in his/her environment “the individual would not be capable of even identifying a language contact as a conflict”. The fact that “the evaluation of a situation in terms of language conflict is an activity in the individual’s mind” brings Haarmann to the conclusion that “the actual language conflict exists in the person’s consciousness”. When studying linguistic features of language conflict, one therefore needs to be aware of the intimate and intricate interplay that in every situation of language contact exists between intra-linguistic phenomena, the socio-psychological disposition of the language users and the sociolinguistic environment in which the language users are active.

2.2 The individual language user(s)

In the second area of focus of research on language conflict, the attention shifts from a focus on conflict at the intra-linguistic level to the study of conflicts related to language use in interaction. At the centre of attention here is language conflict both in situations of interpersonal language contact in which persons use different languages belonging to different diasystems as well as in situations of interpersonal language contact in which persons use varieties belonging to the same diasystem. Language conflict in interpersonal communication concerns both intracultural as well as intercultural communication. Werlen (1997), e.g., illustrates intracultural “Kontaktkonflikte” by referring to a situation of “dialect contact” in Switzerland. Examples of language conflict in the case of intercultural communication can be found in the work of Ehlich (1994) who prefers the notion of “communication disruptions” to refer to language conflict. In much of her work, Oksaar (1984, 1997) approaches both intra- and intercultural language conflicts through the lens of cultureme theory.²

² It is worth mentioning at this point that research on language conflict related to language use in interaction as portrayed here is closely related to research that focuses on the study of languages in conflict or the study of the language of conflict. The use of language in conflict is dealt with in the contributions of Wright (1997), Chilton (1997) and Smith (1997) to Volume 4 of Current issues in language and society. It is also dealt with in volumes of the Palgrave studies in languages at war (cf. Footitt and Kelly 2012; Kelly and Baker 2013). Furthermore, it is the central topic of the languages in conflict group at the University of Huddersfield (cf. www.language-sinconflict.org). The language of conflict is treated, e.g., in Hawes-Bilger’s account of linguistic aspects of the conflict in Northern Ireland (Hawes-Bilger 2007) as well as in the Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict (John Benjamins) that was launched in 2013. In view of the further development of language conflict theory, it might be useful to reflect on the question
That research on language conflict in the area of interpersonal communication is not just interesting in and of itself is convincingly illustrated by Watts (1988). Watts analyses the socio-communicative interaction of German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss participants in a half-an hour television discussion in German-speaking Swiss television. His analysis illustrates how micro-socio-linguistic studies focusing on communicative interaction help to provide a more fine-grained understanding of the relationship between language, ethnic identity and national identity that is at the centre of focus in many macro-studies dealing with language conflict at the societal level.

2.3 Society

Language conflict at the level of society is without any doubt the area of focus research on language conflict is mostly associated with. Case studies that come to mind are the French-English language conflict in Québec (cf. Larrivée 2003), the Basque-Spanish language conflict in the Basque Autonomous Community (cf. Urla 2003), the Irish-English conflict in Northern Ireland (cf. Muller 2010) and the French-Corsican language conflict (cf. Fabellini 2010). These (and other) conflicts have received quite some attention in literature exploring the links between language, nationalism and ethnic identity. By contrast, macro-level research on language conflict in societal settings where historically grown ethnolinguistic tensions played little or no role did not really gain momentum. Quite recently, Ammon (2006) has made an attempt to study such forms of “artificial language conflicts” (Nelde 1997: 294) at the institutional level of the European Union. Such research is, however, still in its infancy. The remainder of this paper therefore exclusively deals with what Nelde (1997: 293) refers to as “natural” societal language conflict emerging from the (long-standing) coexistence of different speech communities.

3 Societal language conflict

So as to allow for a better understanding of the multifaceted nature of societal language conflict in traditional language contact settings, available literature has been analyzed with the aim of identifying a number of features that allow for a systematic description of language conflict. In what follows, the focus will whether it would be worthwhile to make a distinction between research on language conflict, research on languages in conflict and research on the language of conflict.
be on “causes”, “visibility”, “manifestations”, “focal points” and “management” of societal language conflict as well as on “outcomes of language conflict management”. Readers should be aware that the list of features is nowhere near exhaustive (cf. Section 5). Furthermore, it is also important to realize that the discussion of the features of language conflict as presented here is a tentative one. Not all of the available literature has been consulted (cf. also Section 5). Besides that, language conflict is being approached mainly from a European point of view.

### 3.1 Causes of language conflict

Literature on societal language conflict emphasizes that language conflict at the societal level comes about in situations of societal language contact (cf. Haugen 1980). These situations are characterized by asymmetrical rather than symmetrical multilingualism. This means that the differences in prestige, status, power, social organization, values and beliefs as they exist between a speech community A and a speech community B are reflected in the prestige, status, legitimation and institutionalization of language (or: language variety) A vis-à-vis language (variety) B (cf. Nelde et al. 1996). As a consequence of these differences – others refer to them as “divisions” or “cleavages” (cf. McRae 1983: 16–23; Labrie 2003: 41) – language often develops into a significant symbol of social conflict, even if it is not the direct cause of the conflict. In that sense, it is possible to characterize language conflicts as “umgeleitete Sozialkonflikte” [diverted social conflicts] (Mattheier 1989: 1) or as conflicts that are “at bottom social conflicts of one kind or another (ethnic, economic, cultural, ideological, political, etc.)” (Bugarski 1990: 41). In order to track down the causes of a language conflict one needs to carefully consider the ecology of the language contact situation (cf. also Section 4) which reveals a lot about the nature of the social or other cleavages that characterize a situation of language contact. It also reveals a lot about the way in which these differences are perceived.

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3 The close connection between “language contact” and “language conflict” as put forward in early sociolinguistic, language sociological and contact linguistic writings mirrors the attention given to the connection between “ethnic contact” and “ethnic conflict” in sociological literature dealing with the study of the interrelatedness of ethnic contact and racial tensions (cf., e.g., Lieberson 1961).

4 In her study of conflict in American society, Schmid (2001: 4) notes that language has rarely been the major source of conflict, but instead “has been the proxy for other conditions that have challenged the power relations of the dominant group(s)”.

3.2 Visibility of language conflict

Essential for a good understanding of societal language conflict is that in some cases the social or other divisions that in other cases would lead to language conflict either go unnoticed or are not experienced as being problematic. Dua (1996: 10) expresses this as follows:

Social groups in a given community often show distinct objective differences in social organization, cultural values and beliefs, independently of their use of language varieties, dialects or registers. Not only do people live with these differences, but under normal circumstances they may even fail to notice them, let alone consider them responsible for their grievances. Only when they become aware of these differences, consider them to be responsible for their grievances, and feel that their identity is being threatened, do the differences and inequalities become a source of conflict.

In this quote, Dua very adequately clarifies the distinction which the Congrés de Cultura Catalana (1978: 13; quoted in Klug 2000: 2) made between “latent” and “acute” conflicts and the one which Nelde (1987a), based on the writings of Krysmanski (1971), made between “latent” (or: subcutaneous) and “manifest” language conflict. It is precisely this dichotomy that inspired Nelde (1987b) to claim that “language contact means language conflict”. At first sight, Nelde’s one-liner might indeed seem somewhat far-fetched or exaggerated (cf. the criticism raised by de Bot [1997]). However, if one takes into account the asymmetrical nature that, albeit to different degrees, characterizes every situation of language contact, one has to conclude that language conflict is pre-programmed, yet might not always be visible (cf. Haarmann 2001: 204). In that sense, there is indeed no language contact without language conflict, since the latter can either be latent, manifest or latent on the way of becoming manifest. And once a language conflict is manifest, then the question is how it manifests itself.

3.3 Manifestations of language conflict

The word “conflict” conjures up images of violence, i.e. the sort of violence typical of war, riots or terrorism. In some cases language conflict has indeed been accompanied by or has given cause to language riots or violent actions. Belgium is known for its language riots, for example those in the 1970s when Flemish people protested in Schaerbeek (a suburb of Brussels) because the mayor refused to treat Dutch-speaking inhabitants on equal footing with the French-speaking inhabitants in the town hall (cf. Defoort 1998). The Austrian Land of Carinthia was the scene of screaming rows over the use of Slovene on street nameplates (cf. Jodlbauer 1996). And language conflict in Québec in the
1960s and 1970s was accompanied by terrorist actions of members of the Front de Libération du Québec (cf. Levine 1990: 40–41). Yet, despite of these outbursts of language conflict related violence (examples could be added from the Basque Country, Canada, Greece, South Tyrol, Wales, etc.), one can go along with Laitin (1999: 24) who states that in cases of language conflict in the OECD states “none of them was linked in any way to significant guerrilla activity”. Whether this claim can be generalized with respect to other parts of the world is something to be left aside for lack of sufficient research findings. However, as Rindler Schjerve (2003: 49–50) argues, it does seem to be the case that in democratic societies conflicts in general, and language conflicts in particular, are “battled out” on a discursive level (cf. also Chilton 1997). The study of language conflict – most certainly in the present-day European realm – is thus more to be seen as the study of differences of opinion or incompatibilities between two or more opinions over language in society. That makes it worthwhile to try and shed some light on the discursive focal points around which language conflict centres.

3.4 Focal points of language conflict

One way of coming to terms with the discursive focal points of language conflict is to focus on the aspects of “language” to which the differences of opinion pertain. The distinction which Dua (1996: 8–9) makes between what language “is” and what language “has” can be taken as a useful starting point. In the latter sense (what language “has”), the distribution of a language (variety) in society is at the center. In the former sense (what language “is”), the structural properties of a language (variety) are addressed. A discourse that emphasizes structural properties seems to prevail in the case of contact between speech communities using a language variety that belongs to the same diasystem. Discussions on language use seem to be more typical of language contact involving speech communities that use a language (variety) belonging to a different diasystem. Surely, differences exist as to the intensity with which language conflicts are discursively battled out as well as to the actors that take part in the conflict. These differences will, however, not be elaborated here. The following paragraphs provide a more general description of how language conflict discursively tends to pivot primarily on the “is” or the “has” of language.

3.4.1 Structural properties of language as a focal point

The examples of language conflicts that discursively center around structural language features are manifold. Most of them are documented in literature on
linguistic nationalism or language standardization. A case that is often discussed in literature is the Norwegian language conflict over the development of a national standard written idiom different from the other Nordic languages (cf. Haugen 1966, 1980; Jahr 1993, 2003). Other examples include the debates over the development of written standards in minority settings such as those of the Bretons in Brittany (Jones 1995) or the Sardinians and the Ladin in Italy (cf. Darquennes 2012; Tufi 2013).

Typical of quarrels over the development of a written standard is the existence of competing varieties that belong to the same diasystem, yet are associated with different social, political, economic, religious, cultural, historical or other forces in society. In the case of the examples mentioned, the debates over the selection of a standard variety (the first stage in Haugen’s language planning model, cf. Haugen [1987: 627]) are not only colored by discussions on what the “most authentic” or “purest” basis for the new standard is or ought to be. The debates (most of them fought out in the media or viva voce in language commissions, governmental assemblies, cultural committees, etc.) are also loaded with what Haugen (1987: 630) refers to as “power brokerage”. Especially the analysis of processes of language standardization shows how different forces in society attach emotional values to specific historically grown linguistic varieties and sometimes experience the rejection of their own variety (or even the rejection of specific features of it) almost as a denial of their linguistic identity. These emotions interfere with the process of codification (the second stage in Haugen’s language planning model). They certainly also have an impact when it comes to implementing the codified version of the selected variety with the aim of diffusing it and having it accepted across society. Given the “power measurements” that surround it, the implementation stage (i.e. the third stage in Haugen’s language planning model) can therefore indeed be seen as the “Achilles heel” of the standardization process (Deumert and Vandenbussche 2003: 7). It is the implementation stage that decides on the success or the failure of the decisions made during the preceding stages of selection and codification.

Turning to the final stage of the standardization process as described by Haugen, i.e. elaboration, research shows that this stage is not debate-proof either. Especially the modernization of the lexicon is again likely to lead to discussions on the “authenticity” and the “purity” of the selected, codified and implemented standard variety (cf. also Fishman [2006] in this respect). Confronted with the task of language elaboration, the question arises whether one should rely on the word stock of the own language to build new words or whether one should rather rely on neighbouring or more distant languages. That is a point of discussion in the case of so-called “Ausbau”-languages such as
Luxembourgish, Croatian and Serbian (cf. Kloss 1952, 1978) since language elaboration can be used to increase the distance with the “roofing” language the Ausbau-language community tries to get away from (cf. Fishman 2003: 107–108). Language elaboration is also debated in many language minority settings where the question is to what extent one should allow the language of the surrounding majority to influence the vocabulary of the minority language or whether one should rather try to refrain from doing that so as not to deliberately reproduce the social pressure which the majority exerts on the minority in the language itself (cf. the topic of “new speakers” in minority language settings as described, for example, in O’Rourke and Ramallo [2011]).

3.4.2 Language use as a focal point

Language use in a language contact setting concerns the use of a language (or, again, in broader terms: a language variety) A and a language (variety) B in so-called private, semi-public or public domains or contexts of language use. The question is to what extent the use of language (variety) A versus language (variety) B is institutionalized (i.e.: taken for granted or not in particular contexts) and the way in which the use of A versus B is legitimised by means of laws or (in)formal language policies that support the use of a language in a specific context or not. The degree of institutionalization and legitimization of a language mirrors its status and prestige in society and is obviously also linked to the status, prestige, social power, and balance of the group that uses the language. Discussions about the use of language in a particular context are thus not discussions about the languages themselves but about the weight that languages have in society, about the relationship between language and social mobility, and about the social pressure exerted by one speech community on another speech community (cf. most of the contributions in Gasquet-Cyrus and Petitjean [2009]).

As Mattheier (1984) shows, such conflicts over language use can also occur in “monolingual communities”, i.e. in communities in which different varieties of the same diasystem are used by different groups. Mattheier (1984: 202) explains the occurrence of language conflict in such a community in the “Rheinland” whereas Kachru and Bhati (1978) focus on the emerging “dialect” conflict in Hindi and Gasquet-Cyrus (this issue) describes “monolingual language conflict” in Marseille. The attention that has been given to these sorts of language conflicts is, however, rather low. More attention is given to conflicts over the use of language in situations where contact exists between speech communities that use a language (variety) belonging to a different diasystem.
Examples include studies on language conflict in bilingual cities: cf. the development of English–French language conflict in Montreal (Levine 1990), German–French language conflict in Fribourg (Haas and Loelinger 1989) and Biel (cf. Elmiger this issue), German–Czech language conflict in early twentieth century Vienna (Fischer 1989), Dutch–French language conflict in Brussels (cf. Nelde 1987c; Janssens this issue) and the Russian–Latvian language conflict in cities like Riga (cf. Schmid 2008). There are also studies describing language conflict within an entire state (such as Witte and Van Velthoven [2011] on Belgium or McRae’s already cited volumes on Switzerland, Belgium and Finland) as well as many descriptions of language contact in regional language minority settings in which it is shown that the (lack of opportunity to make) use of the minority language on public road signs, in public administration, in health care, the courts, education, etc. gives rise to emotion-laden language conflicts that cover a (whole) range of social tensions (cf. many of the articles in the Plurilingua series that was published between 1979 and 2007; cf. Darquennes [2007: 192] for an overview of the 30 volumes of this series). Especially in situations where the language conflict keeps building up, there is a demand for the elaboration of solutions that could help to settle the conflict.

3.5 The management of language conflict and its outcomes

Before briefly discussing some possible approaches to the management of language conflict, it seems useful to refer once more to the stratification of language conflict. Following Nelde (1997: 290), language conflict has both a “surface structure” and a “deep structure”. The surface structure of the language conflict (i.e. the debate about language or language use) functions as a sort of “lightning rod” in that it distracts the attention from the real social motivations behind the conflict (i.e. the “deep structure” of the conflict). As such, “language conflict appears to be the lesser evil, since apparently it can be more easily corrected and neutralized than primary socio-political conflicts” (Nelde 1997: 292). In order to correct, neutralize, or de-emotionalize a situation of language conflict, language policy and planning come into play.

In early writings on sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, one already notices how language policy and planning are closely linked to the topic of language conflict. Without explicitly using the notion of language conflict, Fishman (1972: 173), e.g., considers the relevance of what he refers to as “applied sociology of language” (of which language policy and planning are the essential parts) in that it assists “in the solution of societal language problems” (cf. also Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971: 211). Whereas attempts have
been made especially since the 1970s to distinguish policy and planning (cf. Calvet [1999 [1987]: 154–155], for an example), literature these days tends to focus on the inextricable link between policy and planning, hence the increasing use of the LPP designation (“language policy and planning”, cf. Hornberger [2006: 24–25]). As to the dimensions of LPP, there seems to be a consensus (cf. Darquennes [2013b] for a discussion) on the fact that LPP concentrates on the corpus, the status, the prestige and/or the acquisition of a language (variety). Relating language policy and planning to language conflict management now, it appears obvious that language policy and planning activities that aim at the status, the prestige and the acquisition of a language (variety) can help to find solutions to language conflicts with language use as a focal point (cf. Section 3.4.2 above). Language policy and planning activities that aim at the “corpus” of a language (variety) can help to provide solutions to language conflicts with language features as a focal point (cf. Section 3.4.1 above). Given the particularity of each language conflict, it is difficult to give a precise description of the way in which language policy and planning are or can be used to provide solutions to language conflict as a societal language problem. Therefore, the following paragraphs only provide some general examples.

3.5.1 Corpus policy and planning

A rather well-known approach to settle conflicts over the selection of a variety of a language (or to avoid them from the onset) is to resort to the method of “dialect synthesis” as Wölck (2006: 322) refers to it or “Ausgleich” as it is also called. This basically means that a standard variety is developed based on common characteristics of all the available (written) varieties of the language. In one way or another, this approach is at the basis of many standardization processes in the European realm (cf. Deumert and Vandenbussche [2003] for examples concerning Germanic languages). It has been used with a certain degree of success in Latin America (cf. the case of Quechua). It was also quite recently used in the Ladin community in Northern Italy where the corpus planners of SPELL (Servisc de Planificazion y Elaborazion dl Lingaz Ladin) tried to develop a common Ladin standard for the competing written versions of

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5 As stated by Baldauf (2004: 2), the division of LPP into activities that aim at the corpus, the status, the prestige and the acquisition of a language (variety) makes sense “for descriptive-pedagogical purposes”. One should, however, be aware of the fact that in reality the overlap and the interplay between these activities are far more complex than the neat division suggests.
Ladin as used in the Ladin valleys. Building on the work of the Swiss scholar Heinrich Schmid (1994) the SPELL team developed a grammar for and a dictionary in standard Ladin (cf. www.spell-termles.ladinia.net). Hope existed that SPELL’s endeavors would lead to a general acceptance of “Ladin Dolomitan” as a unified written variety of Ladin that could help to further status and acquisition planning measures (e.g. the production of teaching materials, the availability of laws and administrative documents in the minority language, etc.). This hope, however, was in vain. Shortly after Ladin Dolomitan was launched, the government of South Tyrol decided to formally exclude it from all its legal texts, publications and websites. At the local level, Ladin Dolomitan is also hardly used in administration and its use in schools is blocked in favor of local idioms.

As the Ladin example shows, the road to the spread of the new norm is a hard and weary one. Quite some institutional support and a positive social and political climate is needed for it to be accepted by the language community. If that climate is lacking, then corpus planning efforts meant to settle language conflict over language matters might very well intensify existing conflicts and/or lead to new language conflicts (cf. Jahr 1993: 1).

### 3.5.2 Status, prestige and acquisition policy and planning

How positive discrimination, bilingual education and the principle of territoriality can be used to try and settle language conflict over the use of languages has been shown by Labrie et al. (1993) and Nelde (1997). As far as the use and the function of status and acquisition language policy and planning for settling language conflicts in language minority settings is concerned, one could also look at the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages that was published in 1992 and entered into force in 1998. The Charter holds an important position as a frame of reference in European discussions on the preservation of linguistic diversity. It contains a catalogue of measures that could help to promote the use of the selected regional or minority languages in areas including education, the courts, administration and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life and trans-frontier exchanges. The parties that ratify the Charter have to choose 35 mutually reinforcing measures from the catalogue (cf. Darquennes [2011] for a more detailed overview).

Obviously, the success of language shift reversal in minority settings does not solely depend on the mere ratification of the Charter by a member state of the Council of Europe, nor by the mere existence of other (complementary)
policy documents or even language laws at that state’s national or regional level. It also depends a lot on the means that are put at the disposal “from above” and the way in which these means allow to facilitate and implement measures that can help to create a climate in which the minority language can flourish next to the majority language in some sort of a diglossic constellation (whereby diglossia does not necessarily have to be thought of in the sense of relatively stable diglossia as originally put forward by Ferguson and criticised in early Catalan and Occitan literature on language conflict, cf. Kremnitz [1979] and Boyer [1991]). Next to that it also depends on the willingness of the population to accept the measures in different domains of society as they are implemented from above and to complement them with grassroots initiatives “from below”. The success of language policy and planning aiming at resolving language conflict over language use depends on many factors (cf. Williams 2008). Because of that, the road to success might not be an instant one. And the danger of elaborating measures that magnify rather than reduce the language conflict is always lurking. Language policy and planning aiming at the management of language conflict is therefore best based on a careful analysis of the language conflict situation.

4 Methodological approaches

Since a comprehensive inventory of the methodological approaches applied in language conflict research would go beyond the scope of this article, only two widely used methodological approaches will be briefly discussed: “linguistic profiling” and “discourse analysis”.

The approach known as “linguistic profiling” dates back to the 1960s. At that time scholars such as Ferguson (1962), for example, promoted the idea that studies based on a profile of the broad social environment in which a language is used allow for a better judgment of the changes in the status and function of that language. Haugen soon picks up this idea and pleads for a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach to the interplay between language and its environment. He labels this approach “the ecology of language” (Haugen 1972). In his writings, he emphasizes that the ecology of language wants to cover “a broad range of interests within which linguists can cooperate significantly with all kinds of social scientists towards an understanding of the interaction of languages and their users” (Haugen 1972: 328–329). What the ecology of language (like other sorts of profiling such as Wölck’s Community Profiles, cf. Wölck [1985]) aims for is to discover major social distinctions and structural divisions in a community and to identify a subset of the population that
represents such features or structural divisions. As such, it can be shown how these divisions or structural features are paralleled by or correlate with linguistic features or differences in language use (cf. Wölck 1985: 33). Therefore, a broad (historical, demographic, political, linguistic, social, cultural, religious, etc.) description of the community investigated is necessary whereby especially such sectors of society that influence language use and language attitudes are of primary interest. Haarmann (1986) has identified the variables that should be taken into account when describing the community that is being studied in most detail. They include ethnodemographic, ethnosophiological, ethnopolitical, ethnocultural, ethnopsychological, interactional and ethnolinguistic variables. Haarmann’s approach has been constructively criticized and refined by Mac Giolla Chríost (2003). The description of the language community as called for by Haarmann and Mac Giolla Chríost can be based on a careful study of available literature and policy documents. However, it proves useful to combine this phase of “armchair linguistics” with a (quantitative and/or qualitative) empirical study of the language community under investigation (cf. Wölck [1985] for details).

Qualitative research on language conflict can benefit from the principles of discourse analysis. As Ricento (2006: 131–132) notes, linguistic analysis using the principles of critical discourse analysis “can provide greater detail and specificity about how particular social beliefs, values and ideologies are ... reproduced (often implicitly) in a variety of written and spoken genres in defined contexts”. Rindler Schjerve and Vetter (2003), for example, have successfully applied the method of critical discourse analysis in their analysis of the interplay between diglossia and power in the Habsburg Empire. And in his monographs on conflict and compromise in Switzerland, Belgium and Finland, McRae also makes use of discourse analysis to provide contextualized data on each of the four “guide posts” which he identifies as essential for a study of language conflict situations: (1) historical and developmental patterns; (2) the social structure of the language communities and the relations between language divisions and other social divisions; (3) the perceptions and attitudes of language communities and the expression of these attitudes in political life; and (4) formal institutional arrangements concerning languages, including constitutional and legal provisions (McRae 1983: 27–33).

For a further development of research on language conflict, it would be worthwhile to take stock of existing methods that are scattered over the available literature and to try to build synergies where possible: e.g., the ones developed by Goebl (1986, based on Werlen [1984]), Labrie (1997, 2003), Dumbrava (2004) and the contributors to Joseph et al. (2003). In this respect, language conflict research would undoubtedly profit a lot from the ethnographic
approaches as they are applied in critical (micro)sociolinguistic research that approaches language conflict issues mainly through the lens of language ideological debates (cf. Blommaert 1999). That brings us to the last point of this contribution, i.e. a brief list of research desiderata that could help to fuel future research on language conflict.

5 Desiderata

(1) Taken together, the references included in this article as well as in the other contributions to this volume of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* only represent a fraction of the available literature on language conflict. The inventory of available research on language conflict needs to be enlarged. With the rise of the digital humanities, this once weary task fortunately has become far less daunting. These days, it is relatively easy to purchase or to get online access to books that for one reason or another did not make their way into mainstream literature over the past decades (examples include Joy [1972 (1967)] and Terracini [1951, 1957]). It is also much easier than ever before to comb out journals for contributions in which language conflict is either directly or indirectly dealt with. A quick search with the search engine on the webpage of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* yielded 93 potentially relevant results for “language conflict” and 498 potentially interesting results for “conflict” (the search was conducted on 16 January 2014). A more detailed query should, of course, also include notions that are related to language conflict such as “linguistic strife”, “conflicting language ideologies”, “contested language varieties”, etc.

(2) When making an inventory of research on language conflict, care should be taken to include relevant literature not only from the language sciences but also from neighboring disciplines such as sociology, political science, political philosophy and economy. Quite a number of references can be found, e.g., in Schmid (2001), Rindler Schjerve (2003, 2007), Mac Giolla Chríost (2003) and Conill (2007). These references can, however, surely be complemented by books as well as contributions to edited volumes and journals dealing with conflict from various disciplinary angles (cf., e.g., http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/resources/journals.php for a list of journals).

(3) Parallel to building a comprehensive language conflict bibliography, the theoretical foundations of language conflict research need to be further developed. One possible way of proceeding in the case of research on
societal language conflict could be to elaborate the already available knowledge on the causes, the visibility, the manifestations, the focal points, the management and the outcomes of the management of language conflict. Aspects of language conflict that were not dealt with in this contribution, yet should be added include the role of the different actors in language conflict settings. So far, too little is known about the agenda of the parties (individuals and/or groups) that “steer” language conflicts (who is responsible for labelling a particular situation of language contact as a situation of language conflict? how does this happen?). Research would also profit from a careful study of the extent, the stability and the intensity of language conflict (cf. de Vries 1990: 21–22). That could give rise to a well-grounded reflection on the existence of different “degrees” of language conflict and to a refinement of the still somewhat vaguely defined existing typologies of language conflict (cf. Weber [2003: 105–107] on ethno-linguistic conflicts, language political conflicts and politicised language conflicts). More attention should also be paid to the – in this contribution largely neglected – interrelationship between the various features of societal language conflict (i.e. the causes, the visibility, the manifestations, etc.). In the same vein, also the overlap between the main areas of focus of language conflict research (i.e. language conflict at the level of “language”, “the individual language user(s)” and “society”) deserves to be more closely examined. Of special interest here is the question how interpersonal and societal language conflict relate to each other (cf. Watts [1988], as referred to in Section 2.2). Combined research on interpersonal and societal language conflict would be an interesting exercise in merging the different views on “language” and “society” that – since the early days of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language – mark the usually more macro-oriented approaches to societal and the more micro-oriented approaches to interpersonal language questions (including questions related to language conflict).

(4) The language conflict literature dealt with in this contribution is mainly rooted in “traditional” macro-sociolinguistics and the sociology of language which tend to focus on “language problems” in pre-defined social groups (for example “speech communities”; “majorities”; indigenous, immigrant, affluent or other “minorities”, etc.). These “language problems” concern the corpus, the status, the acquisition and/or the prestige of a “named language” used by the pre-defined social group(s) in a supranational, a national, regional and/or a local setting (cf. Truchot 2008; Darquennes 2010; Plasseraud 2012). This approach contrasts with the approach that marks research that is rooted in the ethnography of speaking. That kind of research takes a view on language as being dynamic, personal, free, creative, open, and constantly
evolving as a starting point (cf. Shohamy 2006) and focuses on the intricate interplay of different “repertoires”, “styles” and “registers” that color much of everyday interpersonal communication in the “transnational” and “hyperdiverse” urban “communities of practice” or “networks” as they emerge in contemporary society (cf. Keim 2006; Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Building on the work of Gumperz and Hymes this sort of research has recently been intensified by the attention of the social sciences to phenomena of migration and globalization that characterize contemporary society. It would go much too far to state that research that deals with the intricate interplay between language and society is either entirely rooted in a discourse that celebrates “homogeneity” or in one that celebrates “heterogeneity”. Nevertheless, the fact that different points of view (macro vs. micro), different methods and a different kind of vocabulary are used does not make it easy to combine these discourses. The search for possible synergies between discourses on “heterogeneity” and discourses on “homogeneity” therefore poses a challenge to research dealing with language diversity, societal multilingualism, language contact and language conflict. Backed-up by Johnson and Ricento (2013: 14) it can be claimed that currently attempts are made to combine macro- and micro-perspectives. It would be worthwhile to pursue these initiatives that are mainly to be witnessed in the “ethnography of language policy” in the study of language conflict. That would certainly help to highlight the heterogeneity and the permeability of notions such as “(standard) language”, “speech community”, “minority”, “majority”, “diglossia”, “identity” etc. (cf. much of the contributions in Coupland [2013] for a critical view on these notions from the perspective of the sociolinguistics of globalization). When doing so, advantage could be taken of the ideas expressed by Mac Giolla Chrioíst in Chapter 10 of his monograph on language conflict where he, among other things, addresses the need to take the heterogeneity and the dynamics of the groups that are at the centre of conflict into account through thickening the relationship between the “individual” and the “group” (Mac Giolla Chrioíst 2003: 167). Doing that would allow for a better view of what happens to heterogeneous features of, e.g., “language”, “groupness” or “identity” under the circumstances of conflict. It often seems that in situations of conflict the contours of the previously mentioned, under “normal” circumstances rather blurred concepts become much clearer or more “exclusive”. Through focusing on the vaporization of certain features of “language”, “groupness” or “identity” under the circumstances of conflict, language conflict research could not only very well serve the current attempts at bridging the macro-micro gap. A renewed attention for the heterogeneity of many of its central notions could also help macrosociolinguistics to change
“from within”, i.e. to discover new units of analysis that would help it to surpass the methodological nationalism (cf. Beck and Grande 2010) in which it is still largely entrapped and to provide more adequate responses to the complex challenges that language diversity poses in a society that is hardly comparable to the post-war society in which the many branches of hyphenated linguistics emerged (cf. Darquennes 2014).

(5) A final point which has not been addressed, yet deserves some consideration as well is the question whether the concept of “language conflict” is a useful or an appropriate one at all. One cannot deny that there is a “sensation-seeking” dimension to language conflict (cf. Fishman 1980: xi) and that especially non-scientific literature does not always capture the intricate – most often, if not always: secondary – role which language plays in situations that are labelled as situations of “societal language conflict”. However, that there are many conflicts that in one way or another evolve around or most certainly are perceived as evolving around language, is clear. In this respect, Cooper (1989: 178–180) writes that like other conflicts, language conflicts are endemic to society and lead to social change. A better understanding of the mechanisms of language conflict could therefore help to gain a better understanding of social change and could even help to positively influence processes of social change (cf. Nelde 1997: 292–293). That makes it worthwhile to keep investing in the potential of the sociology of language, sociolinguistics and contact linguistics as sub-disciplines of linguistics that can be of assistance in finding solutions to the many societal language problems that surround us.

References


6 Cf. Fishman’s statistical re-analysis of cross-polity data from the 1960s and the 1970s with which he counters the “widespread journalistic and popular wisdom that linguistic heterogeneity per se is necessarily conducive to civil strife” (Fishman 1989: 622).


Darquennes, Jeroen. 2014. Macrosociolinguïstisch onderzoek naar historische taalminderheden in tijden van globalisering – pleidooi voor een vernieuwing van binnenuit [Macrosociolinguistic research on historical language minorities in times of globalisation – a plea for a change from within.]. *Us Wurk* – *Tydskrif foar Frysistiek* 63(1/2). 73–92.


