

# Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion

EDITED BY TOPE OMONIYI AND JOSHUA A. FISHMAN

DISCOURSE APPROACHES TO  
POLITICS, SOCIETY AND CULTURE



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## Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion

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### Volume 20

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*To the memories of  
Charles A. Ferguson and Efurosibina Adegbija*

*We walk in the glimmer of lightbearers  
long gone  
The scroll in our grip through this loop  
on to eternity  
That the words from every clean mouth  
And the meditations of all sane hearts  
May confluence and in conference  
Unleash the glory of mankind.*



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## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

This introductory chapter is divided into two parts: Part I and Part II. In Part I, we, in our role as editors, provide a general overview of the theoretical and methodological conceptualization of the sociology of language and religion. In Part II, Bernard Spolsky presents a discussion and summary of the papers in the volume and suggests a thematic structure which we have adopted. The volume concludes with an epilogue in which some of the obvious and not so obvious problems faced by exploratory projects of this kind are discussed and suggestions are made on possible ways of progressing research in the field.

### Part I

One of the many tasks that confront interdisciplinary research is how to harmoniously manage and integrate the delicate interface between two or more theoretical traditions such that a critical paradigm of analysis is established. Haynes (1996), for example, resolves this problem with reference to the interdisciplinary engagement between religion and politics by distinguishing between religion in the material sense which takes the form of institutions and establishments, and a spiritual sense which 'pertains to models of social and individual behavior that help believers to organize their everyday lives.' Issues of appropriateness that arise in the determination of communicative competence become significant in attempting to characterize the behavior of the 'good guys' and 'bad guys' in society. Ethnographers would seek to decipher between modes of subcultural socialization that violate religious norms, which frame and define 'proper' and 'improper' language behavior. Such body of data may equally be subjected to critical analysis within the framework of interactional sociolinguistics in the Gumperz and Hymes tradition, as well as the works of Sacks and Schegloff, and Ervin-Tripp among others.

Karl Marx described religion as the 'opium of the people' (1884) and thus introduced an ideological and critical dimension to its discussion both as an academic discipline and as social practice. It is in this vein that establishing how language may serve as a tool in the manufacture and distribution of this 'drug' and characterizing religion in the process becomes legitimized scholarship. Ferguson (1982) is a testimony to this claim. The analysis of religion within a Marxist structural-functional framework works on a similar separation of the material from the ideal as Haynes (1996) proposed. In such analyses, the subject of religion is explained using the dynamics of the economics of production and distribution, which are used for arguing

the existence of classes in society. Thus, does 'religious capital' exist in the same sense as 'linguistic capital? Access and exclusion that are determined by religious subscription as much as by language skills will suggest this. The geographical spread of the relevance of these issues can be monitored within the context of expanded notions of 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1999).

From the pioneering work of Fishman, Cooper and Ma on bilingualism in the barrio (1971), Samarin (1972) and Goodman (1972) on glossolalia to contemporary pre-occupation with identity, the sociology of language straddles the subject domains of language, religion and sociology. Debates about language spread, maintenance and death, linguistic imperialism and linguistic human rights, multiculturalism and more recently linguistic genocide, post-imperial English, language and globalization and language policy matters in bilingual education, ebonics and racial identity generally all underline varying aspects of the ideological dimension of the sociology of language. The discipline has the unique capability to sponsor social intervention schemes by proffering specialist advice and influencing social theory and policy significantly (recall the ebonics debate which culminated in Senate Bill 205 and the bilingual education debate through the storm of Proposition 227 in the US). Race, ethnicity, nationality constantly shape the framework for sociology of language projects anchored to the themes of individual or group identity, micro- or macro-level politics of control and access in formal and informal spheres.

Within the broad field of the sociology of language further specializations have emerged with theories that stretch out to embrace other disciplinary interests out of necessity as in, for instance, language issues relating to refugee populations being anchored to social, economic, political, psychological or sociological theories.

The sociology of religion, which is the interface between sociology and religion, has two central concerns: determining the role and significance of religion in society and, studying the beliefs and practices of particular groups and societies (Hamilton, 1995). In the pursuit of these tasks, the discipline covers various issues of interest including secularization, ideology, solidarity, identity, diversity and the impact of globalization on religious practice. Billy Graham's television ministry in the USA flourished via satellite technology to grip other parts of the world as an extension of Bernard Shaw's observation in 1912 when he said 'What has been happening in my life-time is the Americanization of the world'. Today, what may be called the 'Dot.com Evangelization Project' has added another dimension to the sociology of religion by setting up a whole new community of practice based on digital technology. But then there is the issue of access. In what language(s) are people able to access digital salvation? Which languages by inference then may lead to damnation? If technology is borne out of rationality and empirical science, how do we explain its function as a tool in the spread of 'irrational' religion? For instance, the World Christian Mission's Bishop David Oyedepo preaches on Sunday mornings at the Faith Tabernacle in Ota, Lagos State, Nigeria, followers across the English-speaking world worship with him at <http://www.winnerscanaanland.org>. This collaboration between science and religion comes across as the resolution of the conflict between their underlying philosophies –

on one hand 'seeing is believing' and on the other 'believing is seeing'. Also, there are two categories of worshippers – those participating on location and those in virtual link with the bishop, the absent-present members of the congregation. Between these two modes, religious worship as social practice is redefined with a slightly different language use demand.

There is an inevitable link between the spread of religion and the spread of language (Ferguson 1982). The presence of Spanish and English on one hand and Catholicism and Protestantism on the other in Latin America, Africa and Asia illustrate this link. The process has further gained momentum under the more politically correct tag of 'globalization'. Similarly, throughout history, human migration has altered the cultural texture of societies to create new tensions around issues of language and identity. In a substantial number of cases, religion has been equally implicated. The Exodus and the Hijra in ancient times and refugee cum asylum-seekers in contemporary times readily come to mind. There are evidences of competition and conflict between religious groups in the same way that there is conflict and competition between ethnolinguistic groups. These variables are by no stretch of the imagination entirely exclusive. Rather, they interconnect in interesting ways. The term 'ethnoreligious identity' allows us to theorise diversity that derives from the existence of multiple religions and ethnicities within a polity (see Modood 1997). The term has ethnolinguistic identities subsumed in it.

The sociology of language and religion as a discipline must aim then to revisit the themes that these disciplines have common interest in with a view to constructing new methodologies and theoretical paradigms appropriate for the interface and how the shared interests impact social practices in various communities around the world. The ultimate objectives of the sociology of language and religion however will be to demonstrate the closeness of the two fields, help us understand the relationship between them better and fashion tools for creating a body of new knowledge that supports the emergence of a better society. Israeli authorities described the military attack on the Palestinian town of Ramala in November 2000 as 'limited action' in retaliation for the murder of two of their soldiers. Palestinian authorities called the same event 'a declaration of war' to justify their own consequent declaration of the intifadah. This is a clear illustration of the link between language, religion, national identity, ideology and representation. Similarly, what to the US State department is widespread terrorism is described across the ideological divide as a jihad thus setting the context for examining the identity conflicts inherent in British Muslims fighting on the side of the Taliban post-September 11th and the British government's decision to try those who survive the war and return to Britain for treason.

Social constructionism gets a peep into the project and allows us to debate essentialism and relativism in relation to identity, language and religion in the era of globalization. The ordination of female priests in the Church of England as an element of social change creates a whole new perspective for the examination of the sociology of language and religion in the way that pronominal references, mental and visual

images, Church discourse and the definition and expectations of interlocutors are caused to change.

This volume represents only an initial effort to provide an overview of the nature of the interface that is the sociology of language and religion. Tentative and exploratory in parts, as is the nature of pioneering scholarship, nevertheless, the richness of the individual contributions are attested to by the critical engagement with the issues that they address and they definitely raise useful questions we need to ponder over as we consider possible areas for further investigation. It is our hope that the volume and the project in general will chart a new path of scholarship that is dedicated to advancing our knowledge of human society and the workings of the structures that we put in place for the objective of making our world a better place. Next, Bernard Spolsky offers what he calls a parsimonious grouping of the essays to give the volume its four-part structure.

## Part II

Bernard Spolsky

My approaches to the disciplines that we are tackling are diverse, for although I study the sociology of language, I tend to practice religion unsociologically rather than study it. However, my interest in the intersection of these fields is not altogether new (Spolsky, 1983; Spolsky & Walters, 1985)

It is quite recently that scholars have started to take note of the possible overlap between the study of religion and the study of language. Recent research is summarized in Spolsky (2003). Apart from this review and the authors' workshop (2002) preparatory to writing the papers in this volume, this has most recently been recognized by the publication of the Concise Encyclopaedia of Language and Religion, edited by Sawyer and Simpson (2001) and published as a spin-off volume based on the 1994 Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics. It combines articles written over a decade ago with a hundred specifically written for the new volume.

The organization of articles in Sawyer and Simpson (2001) offers one framework for the task of studying language and religion. The first section goes through a list of recognized religions and reports briefly on the role of language in each: it assumes in other words that religions regularly have a language associated with them. This assumption, not expressed explicitly in Fishman's Decalogue, perhaps because of his necessary caution in defining "religion," underlies all work in the field. While it becomes clear that there is no one-to-one correspondence so that each religion is associated with one and one-only language, it is nonetheless the case that each religious variety has, as Fishman's first principle proclaims, a variety or cluster of varieties associated with it.

The second section of the Encyclopedia deals with sacred texts and transla-

tions, accounting thus for part of the stability of religious varieties of language that Fishman's third principle includes. The third includes specific religious languages and scripts. The fourth is labelled "special language uses" and deals with such topics as blasphemy, blessing, hymns, metaphor, preaching, and silence. The fifth section is beliefs about language, including such topics as Gematria, naming, taboo. The sixth deals with religiously-initiated study of language, including of course the Arabic and Sanskrit linguistic traditions, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, missionaries and Plato. The last section gives biographies of relevant scholars.

In an article in Mesthrie (2001), Sawyer (2001) repeats a limited version of this classification: sacred texts, special languages, beliefs about language and influence of religion on linguistics. Expanding this, Lewis (2001) deals largely with the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in applied linguistics and Bible translation, and notes its controversial role with endangered languages. These taxonomies, however, claim no theoretical basis and simply offer a way of grouping under broad heading the issues that may be studied.

Fishman's Decalogue in this volume offers a more challenging and theoretical approach. Without venturing into definitions of religion, language and sociology, he proposes using the model of a sociology of language (which he more than any other scholar has defined and developed) as a basis for studying a sociology of language and religion (that is clearly more than just a sociology of religious language. Admitting the newness and unformed nature of the field he sets out two handfuls of tightly worded principles as hypotheses deserving of detailed study, based on his own wide and deep experience of the field. In these, the languages (or varieties of religious language) are seen interacting in complex (but orderly) ways with religions (or varieties of religions), setting exciting challenges for those who seek empirical support for claimed generalizations.

Recognizing that both language and religion are dynamic and ever-changing adds to the challenge. In his paper, Omoniyi also tries for a generalization, exploring the notion of looking in sociolinguistics for an approach to the sociology of religion, and claiming that societal diversity in both provides a basis for the comparison.

Few if any of the other contributions attempt this degree of generalization; most are satisfied with detailed studies of areas where there is some interaction between language and religion.

I have tried to come up with my own reasonably parsimonious framework. The easiest seemed to be to assume that the papers would deal with the relations between language and religion, or the sociology of language and the sociology of religion, or language and religion and society. From this point of view, a tentative structure did emerge.

A group of papers deals specifically with the effect of religion (or a specific religion) on language (or a specific language.) In this group, Meyjes on Baha'i straightforwardly asked about the choice of language within the religion. Fishman's paper is a theoretical expedition that borrows from the guiding principles of the sociology of language.

In contrast, McCarron dealt with the secularization of a religious variety. 19th-

century temperance writings show the secularization of religious language. The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous make use of spiritual language, but with no acceptance of religion. One narrator, for instance, pointed out how much easier it was to deal with the notion of God “with the religious reference removed.” The Alcoholics Anonymous community, he argues, uses spiritual and religious language but is strictly secular in its philosophy.

Wolf, writing about religion and traditional belief in West African English, showed how religion affects the borrowing of lexical items. In a detailed historical study of the way that Georgian became accepted as a religious language and won out over Greek, Bolkvadze shows the triumph of nationalism through the application of the Eastern Christian acceptance of the use of the vernacular for religious texts.

Dzialtviatie, in a study of Lithuanian immigrants in Scotland, argues that religion is an important factor in encouraging language maintenance. In similar vein, Kamwangamalu argues that religion may be able to help indigenous languages resist English diffusion in South Africa. Finally, Salami shows how earlier religious ideas have been embedded in the Yoruba language in such a way as to preserve them when Christianity is added. Essentially, then, this group can be considered as dealing with religious effects on language.

A second category of papers looked at mutual relationships between language and religion. Two papers, Pandharipande (on the language of religion in South Asia), and Joseph (on languages used by Moslems and Christians in Lebanon) do this by asking about language choice in situations where generally there are several religions and several languages involved. Amara too describes the interplay between various religions and languages in the changing sociolinguistic repertoire of the town of Bethlehem. Woods asks about the influence of language in ethnic churches in Australia. Chew analyzes the complex changes following the diffusion of English in Singapore, and the subsequent reaction of the various relevant religions and their sociolinguistic reorganization. This cluster is closer to the central theme, and follows Omoniyi’s implied question about the interrelations of multilingualism and religious pluralism.

A third category of papers may be said to deal with the influence of language on religion. In one, Zuckerman finds in folk etymologies and creative adaptation of words borrowed from languages associated with other religions a process of dealing with cultural contact. In another, Chruszczewski analyzes what he defines as Jewish religious discourse, and attempts to show how certain prayers facilitate community integration. Here understandably as it is the nature of exploratory studies, I think theory needs further elaboration. The conflict between early Zionists and the orthodox establishment and the fact that only a minority of Israelis are religiously observant must be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, he makes a valiant effort to establish the role of prayer in the formation of a religious community. Mooney looks at religion and the language of law. Carrasco and Riegelhaupt go beyond language matters when they discuss the problem of a science curriculum for Native Americans.

Finally, two papers chose to focus on literacy, Rosowsky discussing liturgical literacy among UK Muslims and Menezes de Souza describing Shamanic literacy in a Brazilian indigenous community; they thus look at the influence of religion and language, combining through literacy, on a society.

This organization may be parsimonious, perhaps, but it is not terribly revealing, for it is no more than a grouping. If we are to find some unifying principle apart from the highest level of generalization, we need a much more powerful method of analysis. But consider what we are dealing with. The parent fields, the sociology of religion and sociolinguistics or the sociology of language, are neither of them sufficiently established to have developed a generally accepted theory and methodology. What benefit can come from trying to build a new unifying field, such as the sociolinguistics of religious language? Rather, I think that what we have to be satisfied with is the extra breadth and depth provided in systematic studies such as those presented in the chapters that follow that add language to studies of the sociology of religion, and religious contacts and issues to the study of sociolinguistics. Thus, sociological studies of religion are enriched if they add language, and sociolinguistics is enriched when it considers religious language and religious domains for language use.

Let me give an example. Studies of language policy have tended to concentrate on such topics as language choice and language cultivation. Opening our eyes to the religious aspect, we quickly realize, as Ferguson (1982) noted, that the diffusion of religions, usually accompanied by diffusion of a specific variety of literacy, has been one of the major causes for language diffusion. The Islamic spread of Arabic is the most obvious case, followed by the Christian missionaries who brought literacy and European languages to much of the world. Some scholars are starting to recognize this. What is particularly noteworthy is the way that scholar-missionaries of SIL International have of recent started to add innovative studies of language policy and shift to their former detailed language description. But, reflecting perhaps the apparent secularization of the Western European academy, a recent book on motivation in language planning and language policy does not include religion as any of its chapter headings or even as an index item.

There are, I believe, two related lines of research that will help investigate the relations between religion and language policy. One concerns the specific influence of religion on various aspects of language policy. In some cases, this is explicit: Middle Eastern Arabic countries usually have a single clause in the Constitution stating that the official religion is Islam and the official language is Arabic. Of course, this sets up the need for detailed study of what such an explicit policy statement means in practice, and another study of the linguistic influence of Islam in the many parts of the world where Arabic is not widely spoken. More generally, the interesting question is the extent to which the diffusion of missionizing religions has affected indigenous languages, a topic that Bolkvadze treats. In very many cases, Christian missionaries (especially Protestant ones) have provided support for the development of indigenous vernacular literacy, but it looks as though the general effect of this has been to encourage shifting away from the indigenous language.

A second line of research might well focus on religious literacy policy. Very commonly, the preservation of sacred religious texts has been undertaken as a central task of religious institutions. However, there is a clear division between those cases where it has been and is considered essential to maintain the text in the original language, and those cases where translation is permitted or encouraged. Each of these ideological positions obviously has marked influence on the development of language policy. There are a number of intriguing questions about various religions. For example, how did Persian with its own strong language loyalty accept the use of Arabic for all Islamic purposes? Under what conditions did Judaism accede on the one hand to the writing down of sacred texts, and on the other hand to the use of languages other than Hebrew? And why did it return to Hebrew? Why did Christianity after a long tradition of accepting translation suddenly freeze sacred texts in Latin, and why was this policy changed? How do the various indigenous religions handle the writing down of the sacred traditions?

Interpreting the title of the volume more strictly, our topic is presumably the interplay of two major social systems, each with its own special structural constraints. Both have bodies of practice whose structure is analyzable, as Omoniyi asserts, in not dissimilar terms; both have a set of beliefs and ideologies that may or may not influence practice; both may or may not have institutional systems that attempt to control practice and belief. Studying various aspects of this complex inter-relationship provides an excellent opportunity for exploring the ways that human beings have developed institutions intended to remedy evolutionary deficiency. As the papers here suggest, there are very rich and varied data to study, and as Fishman demonstrates, at least ten intriguing hypotheses to explore. All that remains is to develop a sociolinguistics of religion.

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PART I

**Effects of religion  
on language**



# A decalogue of basic theoretical perspectives for a sociology of language and religion<sup>1</sup>

Joshua A. Fishman

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## 1. Introduction

With respect to basic theory, we stand now in the sociology of language and religion just about where we were relative to the sociology of language per se some 40 or more years ago. Insofar as our most relevant “mother discipline”, the sociology of religion, is concerned, an examination of several highly regarded recent works (e.g., Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Fenn 2001, Bruce 2002, McGrath 2002a) reveals that “language”, as such, does not even exist, neither as an explanatory variable nor as a variable to be explained. Insofar as we ourselves are concerned, judging by our own initial efforts thus far, even sociology does not exist, neither as a body of foundational theory, methods, nor systematic empirical findings. How can this mutual disregard be overcome? I suggest that we must do today in the sociology of language and religion that which we tried to do before in the sociology of language: find a theoretical parental home for ourselves. Only those who have a parental home can mature and leave it to build one of their own! Relative to other orphans, we are fortunate in only one respect: we can adopt a parental home rather than needing to wait to be assigned to one by others (such as happened in the assignment of sociolinguistics to linguistics).

For me, the parental home that I would like to adopt is one that consists of a sociology of language that is richly informed by sociology proper. I have reason to hope that such a combination will provide a nurturing point of departure. This is so not only because I am convinced that any disciplinary point of departure is better than none, but because both of the above mentioned prospective “parents” (sociology and the sociology of language) have already provided much evidence of the stimulation that they could provide for our fledgling enterprise. Among the founders of modern sociology, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim., were quite clearly very much interested in religion (note, e.g., Weber’s *Sociology of Religion* [tr. 1963], and Durkheim’s clear demonstration that all social norms are essentially “religious in nature in his *Elements of the Religious Life* [ tr. 1915]). Among the founders of the modern sociology of language, Charles Ferguson stands out for repeatedly stressing the centrality of reli-

gion in connection with understanding such central sociolinguistic topics as diglossia (1959) and language planning (1968), as well as in connection with his groundbreaking inquiries in many major areas of the world (e.g., 1969 and across centuries and millennia (1982, 1986) So, in accord with at least some religious traditions, I will now proceed to propose a decalogue of theoretical principles for the sociology of language and religion, drawing heavily on both of its parents. Nevertheless, I am not prepared to define “religion” per se, accepting that the behaviors, beliefs and values that are deemed to be religious are more diverse than any of us are currently aware of.

## 2. A decalogue of theoretical principles

- i. *The language (or “variety”)<sup>2</sup> of religion always functions within a larger multilingual/multivarietal repertoire.* This principle assumes that the members of any socioculture, or, at least, those who have been fully enculturated and socialized into membership in a speech-community, can and do differentiate between religion and non-religion, or, in settings where what the West calls religion permeates and is not separable from the entire culture, more and less sanctified contexts and pursuits. No matter how difficult it may be for outsiders (definitely including most Western researchers) to find the exact boundaries, and no matter how greatly religion permeates everyday life or how restricted the role and domain repertoire available in any community may be, the (most-) religious language or variety is not the only one available to its members. If this is true for pre-modern cultures (e.g., the Kung!) and for anti-modern cultures (e.g., the Old Order Amish) then it must be all the more true of modern societies with a larger role and domain repertoires and with the peripheralization (or “cornerization”) of religion that tend to obtain in such societies. This principle is an appropriate one from which to undertake a sociology of language and religion. It not only permits but expects diversity and, in this sense, provides for a desideratum of social inquiry. Sociology is not greatly interested in uniformities (“All humans are mortal”). Indeed, its central task is to analyze (describe, understand and predict) societally patterned variance in all human behavior. To posit *Principle 1*, therefore, is merely to posit that the development of a sociology of language and religion is a fitting topic for sociolinguistic inquiry, both in its “socio-” and in its “linguistic” concerns. The positivistic (Edward) Thorstonian dictum that “whatever exists, exists to some degree, and if it exists to some degree it can be measured” applies to the sociology of language and religion, regardless of whether the measurement that a researcher prefers is qualitative, quantitative or a combination of the two. For our analyses to proceed we must be able at least to differentiate between religion and non-religion (or between varieties

or degrees of religion) as well as between the varieties of language with which each is generally associated (Samarin 1976).

- ii. *The variation posited in Principle 1, above, exists both intra-societally and inter-societally and may vary over time as well.* The degree and kind of socioculturally patterned variation between the language/variety of (greater) religiosity and that of (greater) non-religiosity (let us call the latter “secularism”) will itself vary from one socioculture to the other. In Socioculture A it may involve variation from a Classical to a Vernacular (e.g., among Moslem Arabs or among devout Hindu Tamils); in Socioculture B, it may involve variation from Vernacular 1 to Vernacular 2 (e.g., among Christian Tamils); in Socioculture C, it may involve variation between two different varieties of the same Vernacular (e.g., among English speaking Quakers or among Lutheran speakers of German, or among speakers of Turkish of widely different political views). Each of these three types of inter-societal variation *between* the languages/varieties of religiosity and those of secularism are then further modified by the intra-societal variation *within* any given socioculture. Avowed atheists and extreme religionists, both of whom usually constitute speech-networks of their own, may vary less in their speech repertoires than do members of middle-range religious bodies. Additional modifying factors with respect to linguistic repertoire-range are historical circumstances (e.g., warfare with the speakers of a language that is very similar to the religious variety of ones own vernacular, as for example the use of German in German-American Churches during World War I), the politicization of repertoires and organized governmental support or opposition toward religion per se (e.g., in the pre-perestrojka Soviet Union or the Zionist movement’s opposition to the allocation of any functions whatsoever to Yiddish). In addition, adherence to religion and membership in “churches” also varies over time, particularly as modernization increases and as disappointment with modernity also grows or recedes. Even more general societal change (such as changes in the economic cycle, social mobility possibilities) may also effect between-group and the within-group variation vis-à-vis the languages/ varieties of religion and those of secular life. Because the repertoires of religiosity and secularism may be unstable, they are, therefore, not necessarily diglossic, and even those that are, can and do undergo slow but constant “leakage” and change.
- iii. *Religious languages/varieties are more stable than others and impact their secular counterparts more than the latter do the former.* Even long-established diglossic patterns (and even those involving classical and vernaculars) “leak”, i.e., the varieties involved influence each other, whether in subtle or in obvious ways. Latin has influenced the languages of Western Christianity, not only in legal and medical terminology, but in terms and expressions that were initially “learned” but that have entered everyday life as education and literacy became more generally available. (Note, however, that the medieval Latin of English-speaking clerics

and scholars reveals that they were exactly that, English speakers, both lexically and grammatically, and differed, therefore, from the Latin of French counterparts.) The same can be said of the interaction between Old Church Slavonic (or Slavonics, for there were several of them, each in its own area within the Slavic world) and the various vernaculars of the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic worlds. Also, the influences of Classical Hebrew on vernacular Hebrew (as well as upon other Jewish vernaculars), of Classical Tamil on the spoken and written Tamil of the well-educated, and of Sanscrit upon all of the vernaculars derived from it, fit this same paradigm. The situation in the Arabic speaking Islamic world is somewhat different, since the Classical (Koranic) variety is still the basis of secular literacy, and even of careful speech, thus more greatly influencing and even controlling all but the most popular varieties of spoken and written communication. A “middle Arabic” variety, in terms of degree of classicization, has developed in more recent years for use among educated speakers of Arabic across political boundaries, but even here the degree of classicization remains an effective stylistic variable for both situational and metaphorical purposes. The Chinese pattern, vis-à-vis Mandarin and the local vernaculars is quite similar to the foregoing Arabic one, most particularly for writing and reading among languages of the Han group and, even more broadly, among all languages of the Sinosphere, whether they now use Mandarin characters or not. Also, in each of the above cases where classical are involved, the reverse direction of influence (of the vernaculars upon the classical) is proportionately more minor. In the Hebrew case the modern variety’s revernacularization of the classical is only a century old and, therefore, less distancing has occurred even under secular auspices. This imbalance in directions of influence is a byproduct of the common lack of informal vernacular functions (it is in vernacular functions, after all, that languages most decidedly interact and in which least correction can occur), as well as a function of the hallowed status of eternal and immutable texts, truths and traditions more generally. Even where these contain obvious spelling errors these are retained, at least in script if not in oral rendition. The impact of the varieties of languages of religion upon varieties of their commonly associated secular vernaculars is not limited to classical, however. The most religiously impacted vernaculars of former centuries continue to influence the current counterparts with which they have remained associated. Thus Luther Bible German vis-à-vis modern German, King James Bible English vis-à-vis modern English, Yehoash Bible Yiddish vis-à-vis modern Yiddish and other famous bible translations of former centuries remain living metaphorical influences in the speech and writing within their counterpart spheres of secular use to this very day. These “citation varieties” remain a rich reservoir of religion-derived linguistic permeation of everyday life, extending far beyond learned or pious circles. In each community of users, they serve as metaphorical modifiers of the religious (or even less-religious) varieties, whereas the “citation originals”

themselves, fixed in their texts, change rarely if at all. Thoroughly revised and updated translations of sacred texts do come to pass, of course, but their inevitably greater proximity to the spoken vernacular robs them of the metaphoric advantages of the earlier versions that they attempt to replace. Their greater understandability and similarity to secular usage of the day make them more understandable, but in the minds of some, makes them less suitable for the sacred functions with which their predecessors were long associated.

- iv. *A byproduct of all of the forgoing characteristics of long-standing vernacular translations* (“saintly” translatorship, greater linguistic contrastivity and the sheer weight of traditional usage itself), *is their acquisition of a degree of sanctity of their own.* They come to be associated with the holy liturgy (even though the latter may continue to be in the classical) itself, or with certain parts thereof that are deemed worthy of a higher level of lay understanding or of more active parishioner participation. In some cases the long-established translation varieties also come to be utilized for sermons or for extra-liturgical ceremonies (viz., the continued attempted use of Luther German in Old Order Pennsylvania German sermons, even when either Pennsylvanisch and/or English are the language[s] of parishioner everyday life; the synagogue announcement of the precise time of the new moon in Yiddish, even when modern Hebrew and/or English have become the language[s] of parishioner everyday life; the singing of certain parts of the Sephardi liturgy in Ladino/ Judezmo, even when Arabic and/or English have become the language[s] of parishioner everyday life, the retention of Unkelos’ Judeo-Aramaic (Aramaic) translation within the weekly lection of Yemenite services, even though Aramaic, which once rendered the Masoretic text more understandable, is now far less widely understood than the original, etc., etc.). As a result of the partial use of varieties of vernaculars for sanctified purposes, these varieties often come to be viewed as co-sanctified themselves. The latter half of the 20th century has witnessed the spread of sanctity claims for vernaculars outside of the Euromediterranean area of their initial appearance into Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Whorfian and Herderian imagery has accompanied the above spread of sanctity claims for vernaculars far beyond their initial venues (Fishman 1997, 2002a, 2002b).
- v. *The rise and spread of newly sanctified and co-sanctified varieties (or also of less sanctified ones) within the sociolinguistic repertoire of a speech community renders that repertoire more complex and more functionally differentiated than heretofore.* Differentiations as to degree and type of sanctification may obtain, as may intra-cultural disagreements and conflict vis-à-vis acceptance and utilization (or rejection and detachment) of vernacular varieties’ [newly] sanctified statuses. Further differentiation of the repertoire results from other areas of social change (including the resulting pressures on religion to change). Sociocultural change fuels the processes of language shift but also elicits efforts on behalf of language maintenance and even of reversing language shift. To the extent

that a variety is religiously encumbered, its associated religious institutions and their designated officers and local representatives and personnel can provide valuable intellectual, cultural and fiscal protection on behalf of organized and ideologized language maintenance for threatened religious varieties and their tradition-related functions. On the other hand, the very organized nature of many religious traditions is potentially a two-edged sword vis-à-vis the continuation of religiously encumbered varieties. When higher order religious authorities reach a decision that a change in allocation of languages/varieties to religious functions is required (for example, when the Western Catholic Church's authorities reached the decision to perform the Mass in (sufficiently represented) vernacular languages, rather than in Latin alone, this resulted in the overwhelming and rapid abandonment of Latin for this purpose. When the less centralized Missouri Synod Lutheran Church's authorities reached their decision to permit the use of English (thereby effectively abandoning German) as the language of its devotional, educational and social efforts, half a century or more was required for this decision to be generally implemented among its member-churches. In the latter case, there were noteworthy regional differences between "heartland" and "secondary settlement" member-churches of the Synod, but in the former case (that of the Western Catholic Church) no such regional differences were apparent, although a few straggler holdouts for the status quo ante conspicuously occurred in both instances. The abandonment or loss of heretofore religious varieties in favor of less religiously-linked varieties, initially temporarily contracts the sociolinguistic repertoire of the socio- (and ethno-) cultural communities affected. However, the long-term differentiation of the hitherto non-religiously encumbered repertoire into more religious and less religious varieties may once more restore or expand the balance of complexity vis-à-vis the balance that existed previously.

- vi. *All sources of sociocultural change are also sources of change in the sociolinguistic repertoire vis-à-vis religion, including religious change per se.* Language spread itself is, of course, the most common carrier of sociocultural change. The current spotlight is on the worldwide spread of English (McGrath 2002b), but the recurring strong social class restrictions upon its functional acquisition still limits it as a language of religion in most settings where English is not also the language of the local mainstream. Even this limitation still leaves immigrants, Hispanics and Amerindians in the USA, immigrants and Aborigines in Australia, Maoris in New Zealand, a long list of immigrant minorities in Anglo-Canada and even Anglo-Indians fully exposed to the creeping impact of English in one aspect or another of religion. Other larger languages are also still spreading into religious functions: Spanish and Portuguese accompanying the introduction of Catholicism into the areas of hard-to-reach indigenous populations in Latin America, as does French among aboriginal populations in Quebec and Francophone Africa. Eastern Orthodoxy accompanies the introduction of processes

linked to the spread of Russian in the Siberian interior as well as in much of the former Sovietosphere. Doubtlessly (though still largely undocumented), there is an ongoing spread of Mandarin in the Sinosphere and Arabic is still spreading as well (specifically as the language of Islamic prayer and study, but, at times, also that of other formal and literacy/education related sociocultural functions among Muslims). Extensive sociocultural change always accompanies instances of religious intrusion (“spread”). Language spread is actually rarely, if ever, a self-propelled phenomenon. The underlying dynamic for the acceptance of a “new” language into religious functions is often modernization under Western auspices, via economic penetration or invasion (colonization). Following in the footsteps of modernization, with or without actual invasion, are soft-sell or hard-sell (i.e., forced) missionizing and conversion efforts. Voluntary immigration and forced relocation or exchange of populations have been historically another source of severe dislocation in the formerly obtaining allocations of varieties to sociocultural functions. In most of the above scenarios, whether when a population moves and encounters a religion hitherto foreign to it, or when a religion moves and discovers a population hitherto unknown to it, the total sociolinguistic repertoire (i.e., above and beyond religion per se) may also be seriously impacted and altered. New sociocultural functions and lifestyles may be introduced (e.g., urbanization, formal education, wider adult literacy, mass-media and communication technology access, participation in local and extra-local democratic processes, new methods of production, the industrialization of agriculture, a cash economy, consumerism, and a growing sense of national, regional and even world-community membership and involvement). It is not realistic to expect that such new functions, carried as they commonly are by a new language, will not effect the language of religion as well. This has been true of the intimate relationship between sociocultural change more generally and the spread of religion from the earliest times through to today. The introduction of Judeo-Aramaic (Aramic) into Jewish religious life followed upon the devernacularization of Hebrew more generally under the social, economic and intellectual impact of Hellenism and the physical dislocation of the Jewish population by the Babylonian captivity. The Christianization of Western Europe, largely through warfare, occupation, building of roads and missionizing, brought with it Latin in legal, intellectual and educational functions as well. The Islamization of North Africa and various parts of Asia, stretching rather continuously from the Atlantic through to Indonesia, has often provided a similar functional spread for Arabic, above and beyond its required use in prayer and Koranic study. The complete or partial Protestantization of Northern and parts of Central Europe was itself a *by-product* of the commercial, industrial and urbanization revolutions and a contributory cause of the recognition of the major vernaculars for all public and symbolic functions. Each case of language spread or functional elevation is simultaneously a case of social change, social

dislocation and language shift in many socio-cultural functions, even before such shift occurs in religious functions per se. Non-textified and unmediated (spontaneous) functions may well be the first to change, but textified and ritualized functions follow behind, at a greater or lesser remove in time.

- vii. There are several reasons why *multiple religious varieties may co-exist within the same religious community*. One such reason is that social change is neither instantaneous nor evenly spread. Outlying (“peripheral”) areas, usually rural and relatively inaccessible, change more slowly and more piecemeal in all respects, including religion. They often act as a brake, restraining religious groups from across the board language shift. As a result, Aramization penetrated only partially into Jewish religious texts and services during the first five centuries of the Christian era (and several centuries before that era as well). Similarly, many immigrant-based churches pass through a bilingual phase, in which one language is used for one audience (the “youth services” or the services for “young-marrieds”, e.g.) and another for others. Such initially “special languages” may find their way into hymnals, sermons, “church”-sponsored outreach efforts, particular stage-of-life ceremonies (e.g., births, confirmations, marriages, comings of age, funerals) and, finally, even into the liturgy. With the passage of time what was originally considered “special” comes to be considered sociofunctionally natural and protected by (“haloized” by) tradition. In some cases, a functional reversal even occurs and the hitherto “special purposes” or “special audiences” varieties become the normal variety while the normal variety becomes the special (“sometimes”) one. The Greek Orthodox Church in the United States originally attempted to conduct its services in *Katarevusa* (the medieval “chancery” variety of Greek), as was the case in Greece itself. However, whereas in Greece the government and all reading and writing were in *Katarevusa* until past the middle of the 20th century, thus providing strong acquisition and reinforcement systems for *Katarevusa* in Church, no such auxiliary systems were available in the USA (or elsewhere in the Greek diaspora). Accordingly, as familiarity with *Katarevusa* waned, demotic Greek (“*demotiki*”) began to be introduced into Church services in the USA and, after a while, displaced *Katarevusa* almost entirely. Both the Greek churches and the Greek Church-schools in the USA were clearly *demotiki*-dominated well before this came to be the rule in Greece itself. Indeed, most recently the Greek Orthodox Church in the USA has received major assistance from the Church (and Government) in Greece for its efforts to continue operating in *demotiki* as English has come to the fore among the Church’s parishioners. *Demotiki* is now more haloized in the Greek diaspora (where *Katarevusa* has been well nigh lost sight of and forgotten) than it is “at home”. This strange turn of events is paralleled in certain other Orthodox churches of the diaspora, particularly those hailing from the Balkans, the Levant and the Caucasus, where the transitions and combinations of ecclesiastic holy tongues, their related and historically associated ethnic vernaculars and more

recently intrusive languages of extra-ethnic communication have both speeded up and increased in number. Nevertheless, these “nationality churches” find it extremely difficult to become entirely denationalized and equally open to all comers. Indeed, their status as churches functioning in co-sanctified languages, one of which is related to ethnoreligious origins, even if only vestigially (much like Hebrew in Reform Jewish services) seems to be destined for long-term continuation. Strangely enough, it is the international, interdenominational and interfaith status of English, which renders *possible* the intergenerational continuity of ethnoreligious repertoires that include vestigial ethnolinguistic varieties. Vestigial varieties also exist for legal and medical functions. In the West they involve Latin, the supraethnic variety of half a millennium to a millennium ago, when it had begun to lose its prior association with Christendom and begun its even longer prime association with esoteric literacy. The process of co-sanctification is particularly deserving of study because it provides contemporary evidence of sanctification as an ongoing socioreligious experience. It is much more widespread than has usually been expected (Fishman 1997), going far beyond the confines of the West (or of English) and the modernization with which it is associated. It is also widespread within that half of the globe that rejects modernization but which, nevertheless, exports so many of its sons and daughters to diaspora communities throughout the West. It is there that their ethnoreligious linguistic repertoires undergo further expansion (viz., Islam via Arabic and English, rather than just Arabic and Urdu, Sikhism via Punjabi and English, rather than just Punjabi and Urdu, etc.).

- viii. *The power and ubiquity of sanctified and co-sanctified languages exert a major conservative influence on the speed and direction of corpus planning and frequently serve as a counterweight to modernization emphases in the language planning arena.* Even religions that spread as a byproduct of the intrusion of Western power and the vernaculars associated with such power (e.g., Portuguese as a carrier of Catholicism into the interior of Brazil) ultimately produce texts that initially influence and reinforce a particular vernacular variety (be it of an indigenous or of a Western-linked language). Ironically, it is the dominance of this very variety of religion, which must be overcome if modernization is also to be pursued under secular auspices. Modernization implies increased interaction with the modern world via education, the print and non-print media, commerce, industry, sports contests and countless other secular pursuits. Such interaction may be conducted via foreign (i.e., already modernized) or via indigenous (not yet modernized) languages, with the influence of the former upon the latter becoming stronger with the passage of time. It is the variety of religion (which in most premodern settings includes the court and the scribes in addition to the priests and teachers) that frequently provides the only organized counterweight to the modernization of indigenous languages along foreign lines alone. The need for corpus planning is obvious if modernization is to proceed, but there

is no corpus planning without an overt or covert status planning agenda. If a maximum of the tradition is to be preserved (albeit modernization is to continue) then corpus planning models will attempt to do so by fostering rationales of classicization, archaization, Ausbau and sprachbund, all of them based upon notions of greater “authenticity”, “purity” and fidelity to the indigenous tradition (Fishman 2000). This feat of attaining modernization of the language but doing so along traditional lines is, of course, a difficult one to undertake, but it has been attempted in Turkey, China, Japan, Indonesia, Hindu and Dravidian India and several other, smaller, late-modernization settings. It was even the initial rationale of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, which expressed a decided preference for preserving the “true Oriental [=eastern] nature of the Hebrew language”, by devising neologisms utilizing Biblical and medieval Hebraic roots, or drawing upon Judeo-Aramaic, Arabic and other Semitic tongues, rather than upon the languages of Europe. Germany also long followed a similar “indigenist” bent during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century and influenced several neighboring Slavic language planning movements along similar lines. In every case, the language of religion was a decidedly important source (although not the only one) for the corpus planning enterprise as a means of embracing the modern West and still keeping it at arms length. This is a neat trick if you can do it! An intrusive foreign language of religion has a somewhat similar but, nevertheless, weaker impact on indigenous language planning, even if the foreign language is also the vehicle of modernization. Since such languages (e.g., of Christianity or Islam) have usually already worked out a *modus-vivendi* with modernization, and since they are generally exonormative insofar as any leverage that late-modernizers may have to influence them in any way, their greatest impact on language planning within the indigenous languages *per se* may be in connection with replacement of scripts and *vis-à-vis* the lexicons peculiar to power function interactions, rather than in connection with corpus planning more generally or corpus planning in the religious fold more specifically.

- ix. However, *the languages and varieties of religious functions are not as eternally unchanging as their custodians often imply*. Notwithstanding all of their conservatism and all of their impact on other more changeable varieties, the reverse direction of change also obtains. Constant efforts to “update” the variety of English in which the Bible is published are a case in point, the King James Version now having many competitors utilizing more “contemporary” varieties of English and their end is not in sight. To some extent such efforts are self-defeating, not only because language change will never cease as long as a language is alive, but also because the act of rendering mysteries more understandable also demystifies and desanctifies them. The latter experience fuels movements of return to “old fashion religion”, “the religion of our fathers and mothers” and, inevitably, movements that return to some or all of the former language(s) of religion *per se*. The impact of the cloistered lives of some clergy and of the increasingly

secular lives of others (and of much of the laity as well, of course) upon their own preferences vis-à-vis language/variety of religion is, for both populations, often a powerful one indeed. But clergy frequently need and take instruction as to how to communicate with their flocks, although the flocks do not speak with one voice and are sometimes ambivalent and even change directions in language preferences! The growing fundamentalism of our age has produced noteworthy influences in connection with the perceived languages of religion. The Jewish fold has seen the rise of Yeshivish (Yiddish and Hebrew impacted English) in both modern and, particularly, in Ultra-Orthodox student circles. Baley-tshuve (returnees to religion) assume that Yeshivish is a legitimate or even desired variety of people who take religion very seriously and they increasingly carry it over into their everyday lives, particularly with family and friends. Some educated speakers of the Queen's English have learned to speak Yeshivish too, both to signal group membership as well as for metaphorical purposes. Non-Arabic speaking Moslems have been doing the same vis-à-vis the Arabization of their vernaculars, but at the same time Koranic Arabic is being semi-vernacularized for modern intellectual, econotechnical and supra-dialectal functions, both orally and even in print. On the other hand, Latin is being used for translations of "Whinny the Poo" and "The Cat in the Hat", resulting in forms that neither Cicero nor the Vatican would find comprehensible. Neither written Sanscrit nor written Mandarin have escaped the modernization impact of Hindi or of Potinua upon recent religious publications of their respective classics. The growing modernization (and, therefore, secularization) of the Afro-Asian world cannot but produce similar result with respect to the varieties of religion within those regions. The impact of languages of secular modernization on the languages of religion in the former "Third World", may never rival that which the Protestant revolution brought about in Europe, particularly if the compartmentalization of religious behavior is better maintained there than it was in Europe, but great changes (both in the direction of greater traditionalization, for some, and in the direction of greater modernization, for others ( as the Tamil case reveals) are predictable.

- x. *Religious emphases ebb and flow and, as a result so do their religious varieties too, as well the impacts of these varieties on non-religious usage and the impact of non-religious usage upon them.* In addition, different social groups within any speech community will differ from each other in all of these respects. Although it has not yet been studied, the Sanscrit of cloistered Sanscrit-speaking communities (there are such in India!) must differ from that of communities that use Sanscrit only for traditional religious purposes such as ritual, prayer or study (Shukla 2002). What is more, the impact of Sanscrit upon the Hindi used by these two types of communities must also differ (and sometimes in surprising directions). The modern Hebrew spoken by the Ultra-Orthodox in Israel to their less religious or non-religious compatriots may actually be more

modern and less “pure” (more intermixed with Anglicisms, e.g.) than is the modern Hebrew of their interlocutors who are outside of the ultra-traditional fold. In this manner both “sides” signal group membership: the Ultra-Orthodox indicate that “real Hebrew” (= “the holy tongue”) is not to be profaned, while the less- or non-Orthodox indicate thereby that they are just as “good guys” as anyone else even though they are religious and wear yarmulkes. The expanding use of “Jewish English” among Reform Jews in New York City is a related attempt to become regular (rather than discrepant) members of the Jewish mainstream and to decisively set aside the hypercorrect English of some of their rabbis in an earlier era (and of some even now). The three communal varieties of Baghdadi Arabic (Jewish, Christian and Moslem) similarly signaled group membership (Blanc 1964), but the Jewish variety disappeared upon the resettlement of its speakers in Israel, because no “Jewish signal” was needed there, thereby robbing it of its main function. Similarly, the communal varieties of Bengali (Hindu and Moslem) first weakened with mutual secularization and then strengthened with the renewed outbreak of intergroup hostilities. The almost completely underground movement to revernacularize and modernize Geez and expand it functionally at least into within-group secular functions in home and community settings, corresponds to local Christian “resistance” to identity loss in a context of long-standing mainstream harassment in Egypt. The above examples all pertain to interactive religious sub-cultures, most of whose members have a repertoire of other varieties beyond the contrastive ones that have been mentioned. However, mainstreams also emphasize and de-emphasize religiously (or anti-religiously) tinged varieties in tandem with large-scale social change. Widespread anti-Ataturkism (=anti-secularism) in Turkey has reinstated a more tradition-anchored Turkish usage, just as anti-Shahism (=anti-secularism) in Iran has rejected the “excessive modernism” and “Americanisms” of the pre-Ayatollah regime. Resistance to and advocacy of either fundamentalism or modernization cannot but be reflected in the corpus of everyday speech. These reflections are socially patterned and it is the task of the sociology of language and religion to reveal both the linguistic patterns and the societal patterns that ubiquitously accompany one another.

### 3. Conclusions

Ten theoretical propositions, largely drawn from the sociology of language, have been proposed for the study of the *sociology of language and religion*. These propositions need to be fleshed out, modified, selectively abandoned or added to in order that a theoretically anchored and empirically supported sociology of language and religion can ultimately develop.

## Notes

1. I will not pause to define either sociology, language or religion. To undertake to do so would be a daunting task. Rather, I will assume that all three terms will be understood, as “primitives”, in roughly similar ways by the average lay and scholarly reader. I hope to return to this task in the not to distant future and fully expect that, even thereafter, the behaviors, beliefs and values that are deigned to be “religious”, somewhere in the world’s speech communities, will be found to be much more diverse than any of us (myself included) are currently aware of.
2. I also want to avoid any discussion at this stage of the essentially perspectival nature of lay discussions of the “dialect”/“language” distinction. I will use the more neutral designation “variety” to refer to either or both of them.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Language and world order in Bahá'í perspective A new paradigm revealed

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### 1. Introduction

Many are the ways in which language and religion intersect, sociologically and theologically. There are “languages of revelation,” claims to “divine origination,” the curse of “babelization,” along with issues of canonization, interpretation, and translation – to name a few. Yet the annals of religious history comprise no sociolinguistic doctrine as comprehensive as found in the Bahá'í Faith. The present contribution is dedicated to this unique language ideology – its premises, features, and implications – as it pertains to international order in this day and age.

It is often helpful to present novel paradigms, new models or “grand theories,” from their theoretical foundations up. The keener our grasp of the underlying worldview, the clearer our understanding of the implications for the societal dynamics at issue here. Therefore, the cornerstones of Bahá'í social theory are briefly broached in Section 2 (“Social Doctrines”). Section 3 (“Language and World Order: a Bahá'í Model”) outlines Bahá'í teachings on global communication and ethnolinguistic identity, in sociolinguistic perspective. The comparative merits of languages, the “biodiversity” hypothesis, and role of globalization receive further attention in section 4 (“Issues arising”).

Whereas Bahá'í texts are open to interpretation by individuals including scholars, they are not open to boundless deconstruction in a collective sense. Instead, *authoritative* sources exist, as quoted and referred to throughout by way of evidence. Among these, a distinction is generally made between original Bahá'í scriptures, revealed by *The Báb*, and *Bahá'u'lláh*, and their elaboration as provided by ‘*Abdu'l-Bahá*, *Shoghi Effendi*, and *The Universal House of Justice* (all in historical order)<sup>1</sup>. It was the author's intent to combine religious and scholarly approaches, by providing interpretive commentary on authoritative Bahá'í texts, from the perspective of sociolinguistics broadly defined.

## 2. Social doctrines

In Bahá'í view, the divine permeates all of creation. The highest form of divine revelation is through divine messengers, who periodically renew revelation and impart divine guidance and law to humanity. While renewing spiritual enlightenment, these “manifestations of God” bring social rules, each abrogating those of their predecessors and establishing the social order that reflects divine will for their dispensation – as Bahá'u'lláh attests, to “carry forward an ever-advancing civilization” (1983:214). Both ontologically and epistemologically, the social teachings of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh are thus regarded as the key to our current place in history, as divine inspiration and exhortation, as godly mandate at once spiritual and societal (e.g. Saiedi, 2000).

In this view of progressively revealed divine will, religion constitutes the source and foundation of society's values, principles, and meaning. When true to its role, religion becomes “the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union” (‘Abdu'l-Bahá, 1990: 73). Indeed, at the center of the social teachings of the Bahá'í dispensation stands the doctrine of the *oneness of humankind*, “the pivot around which the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve” (Shoghi Effendi, 1982:42). The doctrine of humanity's oneness is seen as propelling a process of world unification that is divinely inspired and ordained, evident and inevitable.

To see religious revelation as the foundation of societal order – whether in theory or practice – challenges prevailing attitudes. Poststructuralist “incredulity towards meta-narratives” (Lyotard, quoted in Lyons, 1999:16) is particularly anathema to the notion of divine revelation as the standard of truth and social justice. Many a theorist today rejects universalism on ideological principle, whether it be religious or rationalist-humanist in origin. Others denounce it in defense of cultural specificities. Scholars of language and society, too, are often troubled by the dramatic rate of language attrition attested today and the imminent loss of substantial linguistic diversity this forebodes – especially given that the ascendancy of world English and of Western societal influence co-occurs with the endangerment of a many indigenous tongues (Dorian, 1998:11). Wary of the trend to globalize one language tradition at the expense of the others, they tend to view any universal linguistic agenda with reservation.

The Bahá'í ideological focus on the oneness of humankind, therefore, may raise eyebrows. Yet while underscoring the unity of humanity, the Bahá'í canon also pays unequivocal tribute to its *equality*, with regard to differences of religion, ethnicity, gender, and the like. Just as it simultaneously embraces rational and spiritual approaches to reality (see below), so too does it consider cultural heterogeneity compatible with unity, rather than synonymous with conflict. Both unity and diversity are taken to reflect divine will and the Bahá'í doctrine of unity requires the embracing of cultural diversity. The Bahá'í worldview is one of humanity “enriched by the precious variation in human thought, language, religion and culture,” one that favors

aboriginal and minority cultural rights (Bahá'í International Community, 2002:3). However paradoxical this may appear, and however dubious humanity's record in this regard, Bahá'í scriptures speak of a new, divinely willed order that patently promotes policies and values at once worldwide *and* embracing of cultural diversity.

As for the study of language and society, Bahá'í teachings greatly emphasize that "religion must reconcile and be in harmony with science and reason" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1982:316). As "two indispensable knowledge systems through which the potentialities of consciousness develop," the Universal House of Justice elucidates, full and fruitful interaction between science and religion is welcomed (2002:10), and the scholar "...should not lock out of his mind any aspect of truth that is known..." (1996:388). To appreciate this complementary view of science and religion is to recognize the societal mandate of scholarship. "True learning," Bahá'u'lláh stated, "is that which is conducive to the well-being of the world" (quoted in Universal House of Justice, 1995:11). Clearly, no modernist, materialist or rationalist interpretation is implied in this vision of science in service of humanity – no "brave new world," as in Huxley's ominous caricature (1945). Rather, a Bahá'í approach concurs with the ethic of scholars of language and society such as Hymes (e.g. 1999), who, Figueroa reports, "does not separate the role of the academic scholar from the role of the individual in a moral social order," who "sees the linguist as an activist who must integrate social knowledge with linguistic knowledge" (1994:32), and who considers sociolinguistics "...most appropriate to a vision of the future of mankind as one in a world of peace..." (quoted in 1994:31–32).

### 3. Language and world order: A Bahá'í model

#### 3.1 Language and diversity

The Bahá'í approach to linguistic minority rights derives from the equality of minority group members as full members of the broader society and from the a-priori validity of their unique cultural needs. Minority equality as an element of Bahá'í legal philosophy, becomes a matter of *justice* – upon which, Bahá'u'lláh proclaims, depends the "establishment of order in the world and the tranquility of the nations" (1988:28). Based on the principle of equality, derived from the doctrine of oneness and the emphasis on diversity, minority cultural rights become a matter of "cultural justice." Beyond shielding minority populations from cultural tyranny, the socio-spiritual "principle of the oneness of humanity," the Bahá'í International Community asserts, "provides not only a more constructive and far-reaching approach for ensuring minority rights but also a creative basis for the resolution of long-standing tensions..." (2002:3).

In addition, language rights as a subset can be seen through the lens of Bahá'í writings on the native language. The mother tongue is described as "the most profound

characteristic of a people,” “the garment of the spirit of the people,” “the native air which we need for living and dying, which surrounds us from cradle to grave, which is and remains our most personal property.” “The mother tongue is and will always be the mistress in the house of a people’s culture,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expounds, and “... if you give up your mother tongue, then faith, love and hope will leave you, the arts and sciences will flee from you, then justice, law and morality will also disappear” (1997:42). Language rights, then, are to be considered fundamental because Bahá'í writings recognize that our primary languages uniquely define us as individuals and as members of society – including in our relationship with God.

The above scriptural readings, then, co-define a Bahá'í conception of language rights. Inter-culturally, linguistic human rights derive from the principles of unity, equality, and diversity. Intra-culturally, language rights follow from the primordial role of native languages to our cognitive and social identity and thus to our duty to know and worship God – just as “the right to religious freedom” can be seen “as a *human* right, in order to be able to fulfill the *duty* of obedience to God.” (Heller, 2000: 35, original emphasis).

### 3.2 Global auxiliary

Bahá'í scriptures provide guidance as to how to combine humanity’s oneness with its linguistic diversity. It is here that the Bahá'í Faith’s most distinctive sociolinguistic tenet comes into play, i.e. the doctrine of a *Universal* (or “International”) *Auxiliary Language* (UAL). Prominent among Bahá'í social teachings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá calls promotion of this principle “the very first service to the world of man” (1982:61) and its realization “...the greatest achievement of the age in conferring profit and pleasure on mankind” (Holley, 1923: 337). Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh describes espousal of this cause the principal indicator of humanity’s “coming of age” (1992: 250).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the idea of an auxiliary language for international communication enjoyed considerable popularity (see Burney, 1962; Couturat, and Leau, 1903; Jespersen, 1962). Linguists such as Couturat (1903), Sapir (1949), and Pei (1961) were among the leading auxiliary language advocates. They deemed the burden of many languages an unacceptable practical impediment to international communication – and Bahá'í writings confirm this sentiment. In part, the Bahá'í UAL doctrine is supported by Bahá'u'lláh’s admonition “that men’s lives may not be dissipated and wasted in learning divers languages” (1978:68). There are, however, numerous other facets to the Bahá'í UAL model, including descriptive-linguistic, pedagogical, attitudinal, cultural, political, and legal elements. The following are reviewed below: a) general features, b) the question of UAL selection or creation, and c) lexico-grammatical concerns.

### 3.3 General features of the UAL doctrine

As stands to reason, the “universal” element of the UAL principle flows directly from the oneness of humanity doctrine at the center of Bahá’u’lláh’s social teachings. The primary functional domains of UAL are international contexts, communications, and institutions, i.e. international contacts between native speakers of different languages. The more interethnic the domain, the more use of UAL is indicated, such as in international organizations. Other likely environments include international research, information management, media, technical cooperation, military communication, and such. Informal interethnic contacts are by no means excluded, for at least as significant in Bahá’í perspective, is UAL’s tacit contribution to the sense of unity and solidarity among humankind, without thwarting the exigencies of primary ethnolinguistic identity. “Oneness of language creates oneness of heart,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reportedly stated in this context (Holley, 1923:337).

Regarding the meaning of “auxiliary,” Bahá’í scripture explicitly calls for UAL to be *secondary* to native languages – not necessarily, a community-internal *second* language (L2) in the traditional sense. UAL is linked to community-external, inter-community communication, functionally compartmentalized from the primary languages – much like Crystal observes with regard to world English (see 1997:19). No diglossic relationship (Ferguson, 1959) is intended, since UAL’s auxiliary and *international* aspects are intended to weaken its ability to compete, let alone dominate, *within* primary cultures. Rather than violently usurping community-internal, primary languages, UAL provides a practical and reliable bridge to others, without unduly curtailing the “ethnolinguistic vitality” of local speech communities. Rather than a cultural Trojan horse, it is intended as an institutionalized – and thus likely stable – vehicle of a worldwide “bilingualism without diglossia” (Fishman, 1967), one that asymmetrically favors primary languages.

The educational aspects of the doctrine further flesh out the meaning of “auxiliary”. UAL is to be taught in school curricula worldwide, so that “in the schools of the future two languages will be taught -- the mother tongue and this international auxiliary tongue” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1918:84). The goal is what has been called academic, as opposed to natural, bilingualism. This underscores its role as secondary to native languages, since the latter are internalized through an informal acquisition process at home. UAL learning is not meant to interfere, compete, or even co-occur with this native-language acquisition process.

Both ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi have made occasional favorable reference to the simplicity of a potential UAL, i.e. that it be easy to learn. Such hints at the learnability of the auxiliary further confirm its intended non-primary status in the bilingual matrix, since learnability is not of concern with native languages. The Bahá’í UAL principle reflects both the doctrine of humankind’s unity and its emphasis on diversity. Unity is seen as needed for the flourishing of diversity – and diversity is the instrument through which unity is realized. The UAL doctrine encompasses this dual

stance *par excellence*. It envisions global communication in service of an ethnolinguistically heterogeneous world.

### 3.4 The question of UAL selection or creation

Bahá'í scriptures do not foresee a world that relies on the extra-linguistic market place to determine the lingua franca of the hour *by default*, as has been the case throughout history – including today with English as a world language. Instead they call for a global language policy effort without historical precedent. Unlike the survival-of-the-fittest rise and fall of speech communities of the past, the UAL doctrine prescribes a novel process of selecting and implementing a global auxiliary by intergovernmental fiat. Placing the choice of language entirely in the hands of language planners, Bahá'u'lláh states that a “...world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages...” (1967: xi). He proclaims:

“It is incumbent upon all nations to appoint some men of understanding and erudition to convene a gathering and through joint consultation choose one language from among the varied existing languages, or create a new one, to be taught to the children in all the schools of the world (1978: 165–167).”

Clarifying that “the matter is to be determined by a confederation met for the purpose which shall represent all tribes and nations” (1918:84), ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses the “...hope...that intelligent men may be selected from the various countries of the world to organize an international congress whose chief aim will be the promotion of this universal medium of speech” (1982:61).

As for the cultural politics of choosing a UAL, much has been said in auxiliary language circles about the avoidance of cross-cultural offense and the appearance of hegemonic or imperialist intent, i.e. about the need for the language to be culturally neutral, or “unencumbered.” Even if the international community favored compromise, UAL policy makers could steer clear of the natural languages of particularly powerful speech communities, as was the case at the creation of postcolonial plural states such as India (e.g. King, 1997). Despite the emergence of regional varieties of world English, so-called “Englishes,” the prevailing unprecedented global spread of the language and of Western societal influence cannot automatically be equated with Bahá'í standards of oneness, equality, and diversity. Regarding post-colonial English, some consider it naïve to believe that the language no longer fosters the ethnocentric hegemony of its traditional speech communities (Dua, 1994, Pennycook, 1994). Conversely, others hold with regard to UAL that “if English is selected, then, rather than triumphing as a linguistic form bound by a particular cultural and historic past, it will become ... a new language expressive of a new world culture” (Gruber, 2001). Notwithstanding its success as a global lingua franca, however, the preeminent status of English results from worldly dominance. It does not reflect the deliberate and participatory language planning effort to regulate interethnic communication that the

UAL doctrine calls for – though admittedly UAL policy makers may consider world English a *fait accompli*.

Bahá'í stipulates that children worldwide will “be acquiring only two languages, one their own native tongue, the other the language in which all the peoples of the world would converse” (1988: 138). One of the questions to face future UAL policy makers is that of how to define primary languages. A related one is how to represent “all tribes and nations.” Internationally, policy guidelines could be established, and applied according to the language relationships extant within the states, for instance, and territories. Multilingually complex societies for instance, could develop policies that support languages at more than just the local and the global level. Depending on the political mandate of UAL policy makers, the arbitration of conflicts between country-internal languages may fall to central governments, international bodies and, of course, the *force majeure* of societal trends. In view of such imponderables, additional guidance could possibly be requested of the Universal House of Justice.

At present, sub-state languages often receive limited *de facto* status. Their welfare depends on states' legal provisions and, *de facto*, on society's will to honor them. In what is the European Union today, Fishman notes that “states are not slow to apply to languages lower in the pecking order than the state-languages *per sé*, the very same notions of limits that the state languages are to unwilling to apply to themselves” (1995: 55). Presently it is unmistakable that not all speech communities large and small everywhere always enjoy all desired linguistic rights and privileges (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1995), or even those officially granted. It is equally clear that the Bahá'í language ideology, while deferring to central governments for the development and implementation of a UAL policy, favors the extension to all ethnolinguistic groups of maximum consideration with respect to their cultural needs.

### 3.5 Lexico-grammatical concerns

Conspicuously absent from Bahá'í writ is a notion often associated with religious discourse, that of a superior *ur-language*, arche-language, global metalanguage, Adamic, or divine language (e.g. Eco, 1995) that could or should be selected as UAL. Though Bahá'í expressed a personal liking for Arabic, Bahá'í scriptures explicitly avoid prescribing a particular language or language type as UAL. They require only that the ultimate choice be fit for functionally unrestricted human communication at the international level and that it include a choice of writing system – likely, of course, to raise its own applied-linguistic, technological, and ethno-political questions. It could be a natural or constructed, living, extinct, or yet to be invented language. There is little in the Bahá'í writings about intrinsic linguistic criteria for UAL construction or selection. The same applies to the question of structurally comparing natural-language UAL candidates.

Historically, proponents of constructed languages did not look to linguistics for cues as to what properties to include, even though some were linguists themselves.

Generally, the structure of invented languages was grafted on abstract postulates such as simplicity, naturalness, or regularity, however these were understood. A primary goal was often learnability by adult native speakers of generally Western languages, like themselves. With regard to language construction, Bahá'í sources make some reference to the need for collaboration and a lexicon “made up of words from all the languages” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1918: 84). About the selection of UAL, Shoghi Effendi explains, that however “anxious to see a universal auxiliary tongue adopted as soon as possible, Bahá'ís ...are not the protagonists of any one language to fill this post” (National Spiritual Assembly – UK, 1973: 27). Bahá'ís have regarded Esperanto favorably since its inception, if only as a contribution to international understanding. Despite its recognized Eurocentric lexico-grammatical origins, nothing intrinsically precludes Esperanto – or any other constructed language – from becoming more universal. Indeed, Esperantists claim this has already been achieved.

The question of the learnability of a constructed auxiliary has led to considerable debate about its structural simplicity, particularly with an eye to adult learners, who are past the “critical period” for first language (L1) acquisition posited by Lenneberg (1967). This question has been at the core of artificial-language debates for nearly a century and a half. It has led to numerous language designs and proposals to reduce the grammar and/or lexicon of certain natural languages. In structural terms, UAL learnability can be interpreted as a question either of logical (i.e. cognitive) simplicity or of neurological (i.e. innate) “acquirability” – especially since the twain are not incompatible. As for learnability neurologically defined, the “language instinct,” nativist, innateness, or universal grammar hypotheses and their explanatory adequacy for first language acquisition (Chomsky, 1965) remain controversial, from both a linguistic (e.g. Sampson, 1999) and neuroscientific (e.g. Muller, 1996) standpoint. Moreover, the link between the learnability of artificial languages and the question of their grammatical proximity to the putative language “bioprogram” or “language acquisition device” has been almost entirely ignored.

## 4. Issues arising

### 4.1 Linguistic equality

While advocates of auxiliary languages concentrated on constructed languages, contemporary linguists, sociolinguists in particular, have concerned themselves almost exclusively with natural languages. As a result, we know precious little about what either field can contribute to the other. While artificial language efforts have focused on perceived grammatical simplicity and the like, they have not benefited from knowledge of descriptive linguistics. They do not, for instance, include insight into known tensions between simplicity and complexity that reveal that more of the former in one area of grammar may lead to more of the latter in another. By

the same token, with the possible exception of certain creole studies (e.g. Bickerton, 1984), descriptive linguistics offers little to be informally applied to creating, improving, or judging efficiency in language design. This state of affairs is a handicap from a Bahá'í perspective, since its UAL mandate requires at least a weighty *choice* of language and possibly the construction thereof – either of which stands to benefit from broad scholarly input.

Empirical data is available regarding the contrastive cognitive and technological merits of the world's scripts and graphemic principles (e.g. Gillooly, 1973; Tzeng and Hung, 1980). The same cannot be said about our knowledge of the comparable socio- or psychological functions of the *grammatical* features of natural languages. The Sapir-Whorf or linguistic relativity hypothesis has hitherto eluded scientific arbitration, and remains controversial despite recent revisiting (e.g. Gumperz and Levinson, 1996). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the comparative relation between the linguistic attributes and the psychological profile of natural languages was a question eschewed, except notably by the Third Reich, in response to the era of racist and linguistic bias that preceded it. With this question taboo, linguists *en masse* hold to the notion that all natural languages are roughly equal in that they meet or can be made to meet any of the communicative requirements of their speakers with comparable adequacy. Any potential disadvantage of a given language in one grammatical area is simply assumed compensated for in some other area.

However politically correct, this premise deserves further assessment. That natural languages belong to the same functional class does not make them universally identical in level of functionality – let alone with regard to simplicity or some other criterion. To dodge such questions behind reference to the overall cognitive and communicative adequacy of all natural languages is academically self-censoring and unfounded in light of scarce data. One could contrast, for instance, the level of morphological structure between languages and its relation to logical simplicity. Or a comparative look could be taken at the connection between features of universal grammar and ease of foreign language acquisition (see Epstein et al., 1996). Answers to such questions, if we dared to raise them, could aid the short-listing of UAL contenders. The functional needs of the auxiliary could determine the relative attractiveness of certain languages, however categorically “equal” to others they may be. Besides indirectly, however – such as in reference to the limits of translatability of Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Laws, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (e.g. 1992:9–10) – Bahá'í writings offer very little encouragement to scrutiny of the inequality of natural languages. They are particularly open with regard to UAL selection. Any inherent cognitive benefit of one over the other natural UAL contender may therefore be considered subordinate to other goals from the perspective of the UAL doctrine.

## 4.2 “Biodiversity”

In the euphoria of the early international language movement some protagonists felt impelled to clarify that “there is absolutely no question of a universal language destined, sooner or later, to abolish and supersede national languages” (Couturat, 1903:5). Such fears may strain the credulity of late 20<sup>th</sup> century observers, while others may find it naïve to expect an auxiliary language to remain so forever. Sapir, for instance, states that a language could be auxiliary “for untold generations to come” without indefinitely being so (1949: 50). Like the issue of linguistic equality discussed above, this question leads to the “biodiversity” hypothesis that regards diversity of language as essential to the intellectual and cultural future of mankind as diversity of species is to its physical survival (e.g. Hale, 1998). We see efforts to promote, maintain, and revive smaller languages, including a scholarly drive to diagnose the language pathologies at hand (e.g. Dorian, 1998; Fishman, 1991; Grenoble and Whaley, 1998; Krauss, 1992) and to record and describe endangered languages and dialects (e.g. Asher, 1994; Grimes, 2000).

In its broader form, the alleged cultural and cognitive merits of “biodiversity” are considered together (e.g. Mithun, 1998). The Bahá'í writings do not directly address this view. They do, however, support the notion that linguistic diversity enshrines differences in culture. While reflecting little to no concern for natural languages as semiotic systems *per sé*, Bahá'í texts stress their value as conduits of group and individual identity. Peace and stability are considered unachievable at the expense of diversity (Universal House of Justice, 1985). Even while hinting at the cognitive uniqueness of individual languages as described above, Bahá'í sources make no mention of protecting linguistic diversity devoid of ethnocultural content, nor of resisting language change or shift on cognitive principle. From a Bahá'í stance on unity and diversity, the main concern is not whether but *how* ethnolinguistic changes occur, i.e. under which circumstances regarding the justice, equality, dignity, rights, participation, and volition of their communities of speakers.

Whether or not we define biodiversity culturally, the question as to whether the current level of linguistic diversity, enhances or reduces, broadens or atomizes, unifies or separates the world's resources becomes moot when we cannot protect diversity. Similarly, for humanity to benefit from its diversity ultimately requires a shared mode of communication, which has been English in recent times, the very code most associated with the corrosion of diversity. On both counts, the passing of time risks rendering the cause of linguistic diversity futile. Against the backdrop of Bahá'í texts on the oneness of humanity, the equality of peoples, and the role of diversity, the UAL doctrine stands out as a distinctive answer to the question whether the world's diversity of language, roughly half of which is considered at immediate risk, would be helped or hurt by a global auxiliary. What is *urgently* needed is a language that does not undermine native linguistic traditions, does not enter into competition with them, and is not hegemonic, while allowing peaceful interchange between

the world's linguistic communities. Only such a language would allow humanity to access its collective cultural resources without destroying them in the process. This is precisely what the present reading of the Bahá'í UAL doctrine indicates. Moreover, it appears less than logical for those who promote language biodiversity broadly defined to both insist on the cognitive equality of natural languages and decry the loss of the particular cognitive characteristics of languages at risk of extinction. If languages are of equal value cognitively, any one should do. Instead, from a Bahá'í vantage point, concern for global language mortality would be more effectively channeled through promotion of UAL.

### 4.3 Universalization

The auxiliary element of the Bahá'í UAL principle compels closer scrutiny if only to address the reservations of those who, especially in this era of globalization, deem that "the universal is a fraud, a mask for the self-interest of the dominating over the dominated" (Fishman, 1989: 572). The auxiliary nature of UAL lies at the nexus of Bahá'í principles regarding the oneness of humankind and cultural diversity. According to Bahá'í scripture, the oneness of humanity calls for an organic, open-ended development towards greater harmony (e.g. Shoghi Effendi, 1982: 43). UAL would function like "a bridge to the rest of the world" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1997: 42). Its adoption is to enable a world in which the geopolitical gnats can fly with the eagles. Whether one spoke Sranan Tongo or Mandarin at home, the language of international contact, the language of unity between cultures, would be UAL.

Such a Bahá'í-inspired vision of linguistic ecology stands in contrast to the present, largely economically-driven dynamic surrounding world English, the unprecedented global dominance of which (e.g. Crystal, 1997; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1993) behooves no further illustration. The Bahá'í UAL doctrine does not point to speedy inter-societal homogenization driven by the logic of modernity. It is not materially, but spiritually motivated. Rather than encouraging disconnectedness from native traditions it supports them. Instead of superimposition it promotes a voluntary participatory process, an articulation of what Fishman terms "ethnolinguistic democracy" (1995). In lieu of the law of the jungle, it demands justice and equality. It calls not for a facile, rapid, and subconscious process but a deliberate, organic, and ideologically coherent one – not one of globalization (Robertson, 1990) but of "universalization" (Meyjes, 1999), akin to Kuczyński's theory of universalism (1996). It offers a third way between the conflicting logics of annihilating global uniformity and irreconcilable worldwide specificity. Such a Bahá'í-inspired vision of humanity goes beyond what Fishman playfully calls "positive ethnopluralist" (1989) – at least in its post-modern sense. Based as it is on a spiritual understanding of humanity's oneness and diversity, it sees ethnolinguistic diversity as a foundation of a world order both culturally richer and more unified. In this view, the worldwide adoption of UAL is urged in Bahá'í writings, not to glibly install uniformity in guise of unity, but to shield humanity's ethnolinguistic heritage sooner rather than later from the violence

of unbridled intercultural competition, imposition, and displacement that characterizes the socio-Darwinist reality in which we live – while satisfying our common need for communication.

## 5. Conclusion

We are faced today with a world of intercultural tensions and changes, a global cauldron in which the macro-social threat of “intercivilizational” conflagration mounts, while subaltern populations sustain societal pressures so consuming they are forced into violent self-defense and extinction. At issue are often language, religion, or both – due to their fundamental role in constructing meaning and identity. Whether one regards communalism, tribalism, and identity politics as problems or solutions, humanity must achieve greater effectiveness in justly negotiating intercultural diversity if it wishes to avoid consequences potentially more destructive tomorrow than they already are today.

The Bahá'í scriptural guidance on the management of ethnolinguistic heterogeneity reviewed suggests that support for and protection of “the world’s little people and languages” (Fishman, 1989: 573) is no mere noble luxury. It is a most urgent necessity if we are to carry into the future the myriad assets of cultural knowledge and heritage to which our diverse linguistic traditions so uniquely provide access – and thereby lay the critical basis of justice and equality required for humanity’s peace and well-being. This is no small responsibility. Neither are the two – effective concern for primary language and the promotion of worldwide communication – separable. The above reading of Bahá'í sources suggests that both must be simultaneously addressed for either to be achieved. It is this dual stance that the Bahá'í UAL doctrine so inimitably reflects.

The Bahá'í vision of international cultural order is a historically-specific ideology based on a self-defined revelation. Its divine claim alone may suffice to rally believers to its cause, but its UAL doctrine offers all of humanity a unique model of ecological relations between linguistic traditions, without a vested interest in any particular language. It addresses the very tensions between globalization and cultural specificity that so preoccupy certain scholars of our time. Far from opening the door to an all-devouring “killer language” a *universalisme cannibale* (M.A.U.S.S., 1999), UAL is intended to satisfy the planet’s need for cultural justice under conditions of vibrant interethnic exchange. It is meant to shield the primacy of native linguistic traditions from undue pressures even while allowing unfettered, organic, and participatory cultural exchange – and change.

As the object of language policies that secure its position as secondary to primary languages, UAL could in theory remain auxiliary indefinitely. Yet cultural change is natural, and the UAL doctrine does not preclude this. For the distant future Bahá'í writings confirm Sapir’s allusion to the possible emergence of a world-embracing

identity, society, and culture. Under UAL, it will have been gradually and organically nourished and informed by a multitude of primary cultures. Like any other, such a truly universal society will eventually require its own language (Bahá'u'lláh, 1992: 250), which may or may not be genetically related to UAL. No Bahá'í prophesies are known to the author about its identity. Indeed, from the perspective of the Bahá'í UAL doctrine, such developments are as distant as they are irrelevant to the complex and compelling challenges of global language policy before us.

## Notes

1. Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad (1819–1850), entitled *The Báb* (“the Gate”), prophet-founder of the Bábí religion;
2. Mírzá Husayn 'Alí (1817–1892), entitled *Bahá'u'lláh* (“the Glory of God”), prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith;
3. Abbas Effendi (1844–1921), named 'Abdu'l-Bahá (“Servant of Bahá”), appointed interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's writings;
4. Shoghi Effendi Rabbaní (1897–1957), called *Shoghi Effendi*, appointed Guardian of the Bahá'í world community from 1912–1957;
5. The highest and elected governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, certain statements of which are published by its United Nations mission, the International Bahá'í Community.

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## CHAPTER 4

# Religion and traditional belief in West African English

## A linguistic analysis

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### 1. Introduction

The theme of this book touches upon one of the most pressing concerns of post-modern times: a resurgence of religious questions, catalyzed by the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, USA. Yet as individual religious phenomena, definable as “crossing the boundaries of the sensual world to a meaningful beyond” (*Der Grosse Brockhaus* 1980:423, my free translation) may pertain to the realm of the unspeakable and would thus evade critical discussion, religion as a cult, on the other hand, i.e., the social practices built upon religious beliefs, involve language to a considerable degree. To that extent, these beliefs and practices are open to (linguistic) analysis.

In this chapter I shall deal with linguistic realizations of religion in sub-Saharan Africa, specifically West Africa. The medium of these realizations is the L2 varieties of West African English (WAE).<sup>1</sup> Speakers of these varieties use English to convey culture-specific beliefs and concepts. In other words, WAE is far from being culturally westernized.<sup>2</sup>

From my own professional and private dealings with speakers of WAE and my readings of non-theological texts written in this part of the world I had the prior intuition that, in general, religious discourse is more prominent in WAE than in “Western” native-speaker varieties of English. This intuition is confirmed, in fact, by political scientists investigating African politics. For example, throughout his book *Political legitimacy in Middle Africa*, Schatzberg (2001) stresses the inseparability of politics and religion, i.e., the influence of the “invisible spiritual world” on the political terrain (also see Chabal and Daloz 1999:63).

It is crucial to note that “religion” and “traditional beliefs” should not be seen as something separate, as the title of this paper may suggest. If a cosmology is involved (see below), then all concepts pertaining to it are ‘religious.’ From a Western perspective, however, religion would refer to terms and concepts associated with the world religions we find in this part of the world, i.e., Christianity and Islam, and ‘traditional

belief' to culture-specific concepts and their expressions. From an African perspective, such a separation most likely does not hold true (cf. e.g., Chabal and Daloz 1999: ch. 5).<sup>3</sup>

From the above, one can infer that terms relating to the realm of religion (broadly understood) should be more frequent in African English than in Western native-speaker varieties of English. And indeed, this is my hypotheses here with respect to WAE. This inference rest, of course, on the assumption that lexical frequency is indicative of socio-cultural patterns (cf. Wierzbicka 1997: 1; Wolf 2003).<sup>4</sup> In so far as computer corpora are representative of a variety used by speakers of a given society or at least of some text types produced in it, a corpus-based analysis is ideally suited to arrive at the key words of a culture/society.<sup>5</sup>

At this point I need to preclude the possible question whether the speakers of WAE can be considered a 'society,' or, for that matter, a 'speech community' and hence, if they can be legitimately grouped together in this study. While, from such a macroscopic perspective, it would be convenient to say that in the studies mentioned so far the targeted 'societies' or 'cultures' in question are not really defined or internally differentiated either, I do not want to dodge the question this way. My answer to such a possible objection would be that, as to culture, I find that (West) Africans share basic concepts, beliefs, and practices, despite variation in the forms these practices may take, a view that is supported not only by my linguistic data but also by work produced in various disciplines (e.g., Bjornson 1985: 69, Wiredu 1992, Tengan 1994, Simo Bobda 1994: 8f.; and from an historical perspective, Cheikh Anta Diop's 1959 classic *L'unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire*). The reasons for limiting my study to WAE alone are that the varieties grouped under this label share a common history (see, e.g., Hansen et al. 1996: 177–182; Wolf 2001: ch. 2) and that they have a number of structural features in common, despite national peculiarities (see, e.g., Simo Bobda 2000).

As to speech community, if we loosely define speech community as a group of people that feels connected through the use of the same language or language variety (see Hansen 1987: 7; Wolf 2001: 15–16) we have a concept that is flexible enough to include the speakers on the level of the different national varieties of WAE as well as on the more general trans-regional level. Also, this understanding of speech community closely corresponds to the African cultural model of community (ACMC), to which I will return later on. Roughly, the understanding of community in the African context is not fixed and stable in the sense that belonging to a community is restricted to one sociological entity but is open to redefinition according to the circumstance. The community (a synonym for 'family') a person belongs to can range from that of the village to that of Africa.<sup>6</sup>

The ACMC cannot only be related to the theoretical notion of speech community, but, more importantly, is a crucial part of the cosmological, i.e., religious belief system of (West) Africans. It is here where "modern religion" and "traditional" beliefs converge. Since this model plays a prominent role in my interpretation of the data, I will offer a short outline of it later on.

## 2. Method

As pointed out, computer corpora are an ideal means to investigate the salience certain lexical items, in my case items from the domains of religion and traditional belief, have for members of a given culture or society. Yet for the use of computer corpora a prior understanding of the subject matter is a bare necessity (cf. Schmied 1990: 264). As indicated in my introduction, through my studies in the field of WAE I had a preconception about the expression of religious terms in this variety which I intended to test empirically.

My starting point was to compare the frequency of terms relating to these domains in corpora of WAE with their frequency of occurrence in corpora based on native Western varieties of English. So far, only one major corpus of WAE exists, namely the Corpus of Cameroon English (CCE), which was compiled as part of the ICE project (cf. *International Corpus of English* 2002) by a team of Cameroonians.<sup>7</sup> It has 898,572 tokens.<sup>8</sup> Thus the CCE stands *pars pro toto* for WAE in general. To see if my findings apply to other varieties of WAE as well, I also checked into a smaller corpus compiled by students of mine, which, because of its size, cannot be considered representative, but confirms the general tendency (see below). As a reference corpus, I combined the FROWN corpus and the FLOB corpus into one large corpus. My rationale for this was that the FLOB corpus, which is based on British English (BrE), and the FROWN corpus, which is based on American English (AmE), together represent the two major native varieties of English and hence are a good sample of anglophone “western” society.<sup>9</sup> FLOBFROWN combined has 2,064,764 tokens.<sup>10</sup>

The text types a corpus includes are an important point to take into consideration. The corpora used for this study are designed in a similar fashion and are thus comparable.<sup>11</sup> Yet, to clarify the social significance of certain items in the corpora, in some instances it will be necessary to highlight the text types and the textual context in which they occur.

In preparing the data, I lemmatized most of the relevant items consistently across the corpora, basically following the entries in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. One exception was *God* and *gods*, because the Christian God is not the singular to polytheistic gods. Some other items were not lemmatized to simplify the differentiation of the various senses, as in the case of *relatives*, *fasting* and *mediums*. These differentiations were made where the frequency of occurrence allowed for an individual control of the item in each text and where the reference was straightforward enough to distinguish the sense; for example, the entry *saviour* here only refers to Jesus or God, but not to *saviour* in the general sense (cf. Aston and Burnard 1998: 15–16; Leech et al. 2001: 19). In turn, *bless*, which appears as *bless*, *blessed* and *blessing* in the COD became one lemma *bless*, because I found the senses too closely related to pick them apart. I also checked the spelling differences of BrE and AmE. The software I used for the analysis of the corpora was WordSmith (Scott and Oxford University Press 1998), which enables the linguist to compute key words “by comparing the frequency of each word

in the smaller of the two wordlists [the CCE] with the frequency of the same word in the reference wordlist [the FLOBFROWN]" (Scott and Oxford University Press, 1998: help menu).

I have trusted WordSmith with the statistical computations. The minimum frequency of occurrence for key words was specified as 4x, and the probability or "p-value" as 0.01, which, as one can learn from the manual, means that there is only a 1% chance of claiming a wrong relationship. Yet as the results show, the probability of an error is by far lower. More keywords than the ones presented here were computed, but I selected only those which I found relevant to this study.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Results

The following tables consist of 5 columns: The first column contains the key words, the second and third columns show the frequency of occurrence of each item in the respective corpora, column four the "keyness"<sup>13</sup> and column five the p-value. In Table 1, items I labelled "core religious terms" are listed.

These items alone would warrant the claim that religion, particularly Christianity, is more salient in Cameroon English (CamE) than in AmE/BrE. Numerous terms denoting concepts of the Christian faith, among them the most central ones like *Jesus* and the synonyms *Lord*, *Christ* and *Saviour* and *Almighty* appear as key terms. Though *Lord* was one of the terms whose occurrences in the text were not checked individually to see if the term actually refers to God and/or Jesus, the religious reference becomes clear when one looks into the collocations of the base form of this term with content words in the respective corpora. Not only do we find numerous more collocations with *Lord* that occur 5x or more in the CCE, but also a number of words that are listed in this article as key words (e.g., *disciple* 63x, *Christ* 21x, *spirit* 17x, *God* 13x). In FLOBFROWN, on the other hand, only *prayer* is a term with a religious reference that collocates with *Lord* (5x). In this corpus, *Lord* mostly refers to the mortal nobility (e.g., *Chamberlain*, *Vartha*, *Weinstock*, 8x each).

Though *God* and *prophet* in table 1. might as well be used in an Islamic context, in CamE they mostly likely have a Christian background, because anglophone Cameroonians are predominantly Christian. In Nigeria, for example, the religious context of these terms may be more open (see below). In this list, we also have an instance where a concept motivated the formation of neologisms, as in the case of *disciple* and *disciple-maker*, *discipling* and *discipled*.

Table 2 includes the key terms which reflect the role religion and religious institutions play in Cameroonian society. Here, one finds the names of protestant churches and missions and their activities, as well as terms referring to the *clergy*.<sup>14</sup> In this table we also find attestation for the role of Islam in Cameroonian society as a whole, the religion of roughly one-third of the population, and which is geographically demarcated (see Wolf 2001: passim).

Table 1. Core religious terms

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
God	876	531	609.6	0.000000
Jesus	258	125	222.3	0.000000
Lord	667	319	581.2	0.000000
Christ	179	114	117.9	0.000000
Almighty	30	7	40.8	0.000000
Saviour	16	10	10.8	0.001035
heaven	52	71	7.8	0.005119
Satan	18	4	25.0	0.000001
Devil	27	26	9.8	0.001774
Lemon*	32	32	10.8	0.001032
prophet	27	30	7.3	0.007076
apostle	41	14	45.6	0.000000
disciple	458	15	971.0	0.000000
disciple-maker	71	0	169.4	0.000000
discipling	8	0	19.1	0.000012
discipled	7	0	16.7	0.000044
Bible	143	93	92.0	0.000000
commandment	10	3	12.0	0.000535
gospel	70	69	24.2	0.000001
discipleship	11	3	13.9	0.000196
saint	37	39	11.2	0.000828
holy	206	67	235.8	0.000000
sin	235	82	257.7	0.000000
sinner	52	9	79.6	0.000000
sinful	13	3	17.8	0.000025
cleanse	15	3	21.7	0.000003
pray	184	50	232.5	0.000000
prayer	173	119	104.1	0.000000
amen	12	5	11.7	0.000641
spiritual	140	96	84.6	0.000000
theodicy	6	2	6.8	0.009286

\* In West African English, *demon* is also frequently used in the context of traditional belief, understood as an ancestor haunting the living. In the CCE, however, this word only appears with reference to biblical demons. Therefore, it is listed in this table.

Table 3 represents those key words which have a strong religious connotation, including traditional belief, but which are not restricted to the domain of religion alone.

It was not possible to dissect each textual occurrence in both corpora to determine whether these terms are used in a religious sense or not. However, given the salience religious terms have in Cameroonian society, as already demonstrated, there is a high degree of likelihood that these terms more often than not refer to the religious domain. This can be confirmed exemplarily if one looks again at the collocations some

Table 2. Religious terms referring to sociological functions

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
mission	195	137	114.3	0.000000
missionary	92	28	109.4	0.000000
Bethel	8	3	8.4	0.003817
Presbyterian	33	5	52.8	0.000000
Adventist	5	2	5.0	0.025317
presbyterial	5	0	11.9	0.000552
evangelistic	11	1	20.1	0.000007
evangelic	6	0	14.3	0.000154
clergy	14	11	7.1	0.007867
pastor	48	16	54.1	0.000000
reverend	27	16	19.2	0.000012
archbishop	26	31	5.9	0.015934
catechist	9	0	21.5	0.000004
apostolate	4	0	9.5	0.002004
baptism	37	12	42.2	0.000000
evangelise	107	8	203.1	0.000000
preach	54	33	37.2	0.000000
Islam	90	40	83.2	0.000000
Alhadji**	34	0	81.1	0.000000
jihad	11	6	8.5	0.003526
mosque	11	5	10.0	0.001574
Muslim	73	105	9.1	0.002537

\*\* A title usually prefixed to a personal name, signalling that the bearer has been on the “haji,” the pilgrimage to Mecca (see Igboanusi 2002, Lucko; et al., in progress).

of these terms form. For example, the three most frequent collocations the plural of *spirit* forms with content words are with *ancestral* (17x), *deities* (9x) and *evil* (5x), collocations that need to be seen in the framework of the APMC. The word that most frequently collocates with *spirit* in the singular is *holy* (167x).

The content word that most frequently collocates with *obey* (lemmatized) is *Lord* (28x). *Ritual(s)* collocates 5x with *religious*. For a contrast, none of the terms used as an example collocates 5x or more with any content word in FLOBFROWN. In the case of *love*, the most frequent content word it collocates with in the CCE is *Lord* (43x), whereas in FLOBFROWN it is *life* (21x). Thus, from a West African perspective, we may be misguided to talk about a religious ‘connotation’; rather, the frequent collocations with religious terms suggest that they are used primarily in a religious context and that a religious component is an integral part of the meaning of these terms.

The next table lists terms which, in WAE, can be used either in the context of the world religions or in that of traditional belief. Examples taken from the CCE proof that

**Table 3.** Key words with religious connotations and non-exclusive references to the domain of religion

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
spirit	395	175	366.2	0.000000
ceremony	131	66	109.1	0.000000
ceremonial	19	16	8.6	0.003283
ritual	58	65	15.3	0.000093
rite	22	23	6.8	0.009309
taboo	18	14	9.2	0.002402
sacrifice	73	47	47.5	0.000000
forgiveness	17	7	16.7	0.000045
obedience	23	8	25.3	0.000000
disobedience	30	4	49.9	0.000000
obey	80	24	95.9	0.000000
faith	100	176	4.4	0.035648
faithful	62	55	25.9	0.000000
believer	37	29	18.7	0.000015
repent	10	3	12.0	0.000535
infidelity	7	3	6.7	0.009881
kingdom	124	89	70.7	0.000000
fasting	8	3	8.4	0.003817
destiny	31	25	15.1	0.000104
eternal	39	31	19.4	0.000011
love	459	714	41.1	0.000000
loving	40	31	20.6	0.000006
brethren	17	5	20.6	0.000006

**Table 4.** Key words that apply to both world religions and traditional religious practices

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
bless	83	72	36.0	0.000000
priest	82	132	6.2	0.012755
worship	47	46	16.5	0.000049
sacred	37	50	5.8	0.016266

these terms can be used in reference to the “modern” domain of Christianity and the domain of traditional religious practice:

1. *God bless you, to ask the blessing of their ancestors;*
2. *parish priest, Anglican priest, fetish priest, chief priest;*
3. *worship the Lord, high priest of ancestral worship;*
4. *sacred ministers of the church, the sacred shrine of the tribe.*

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that these domains are strictly separated; often there is a blend between the spheres of “modern” and “traditional” religion (see below).<sup>15</sup>

Table 5.1 brings us to what I termed the APMC, whose linguistic realizations I described in detail elsewhere (Wolf 1999, 2001; Wolf and Simo Bobda 2001). It involves a cosmology, which, as African theologians have argued, underlies African religious belief (see, e.g., Mbiti 1990; Musopole, 1994). This cultural model cannot be described here with all its intricacies. Yet the importance and vitality of this model becomes evident if one considers that a number of terms expressing conceptual components of the model show up as key words in the CCE. For the sake of clarity, I have grouped these key words into three separate though thematically related tables. One element is the community of human beings with God/the gods and community/family in general, which is reflected in Table 5.1.

In this cosmological model, *life* comes from the *gods*, or, in a Christian mould, from *God* (cf. above). *Human* beings, i.e., *mankind*, are central, because they link *God/the gods* to *nature* and *earth* (Musopole 1994, Wolf 2001:276). *Community* is a, if not *the* crucial concept in this holistic constellation; ideally, the whole *universe* forms a *communal* relationship. Since life comes from *God/the gods*, *children* are *sacred*, because they perpetuate this link. As Musopole (1994: 11) puts it, '*procreation is a divine obligation*' (my emphasis). The various key words relating to children and childbirth confirm this statement. The prerequisites for children are *marriage* and *parents* to foster them. The occurrence of *orphan* and *orphanage* inversely highlights the importance of parents and family as well. If a couple remains *childless*, childlessness may be understood as breaking the continuation of the sacred community and therefore as *sin*. Another entailment from the fact that life comes from *God/the gods* is that human beings are interrelated (as children of *God/the gods*). Hence, in the African context, *community* and *family* are interchangeable terms. As in the case of children and marriage, several terms from the domain of family appear as key words. One can easily see the link between Christianity and Islam on the one hand, which share these basic assumptions, and traditional African thought on the other. It is very well possible that mutual influencing has occurred or is occurring, or that a common archetypal model exists. Even in the case of community/family, the Christian conceptualisation is compatible with the APMC, if we think of expressions like *brothers and sisters in Christ* or the *Holy Communion*. However, for many "Western" speakers of English, terms like *parent*, *family*, *marriage* seem not to have a spiritual/religious meaning.

Another important element of the APMC is an understanding of community as including the ancestors. The relevant key words are listed in Table 5.2.

*Ancestors* are conceived of as part of present reality, and as part and parcel of community. *Rites* are performed in reverence of the *ancestors*, or *living-dead*, and the people talk about the *cult of the ancestors*. Furthermore, in this conception, ancestors are *spirits* (see above) or, more negatively, *ghosts*, who exert a strong influence upon the living. The collocation *ancestral spirit(s)* occurs 24x in the CCE and seems to have become a fixed expression. Normally, the ancestors are buried in the *village*, the *ancestral home*, another collocation from the CCE. The reason that *elder(s)* are included here is that because of their age, they are closer to the ancestors and therefore draw

**Table 5.1.** Key words pertaining to community of human beings with God/the gods and community/family in general

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
life	987	1.505	96.9	0.000000
gods	50	33	31.6	0.000000
deity	26	1	54.2	0.000000
goddess	12	7	8.7	0.003202
Earth-goddess	14	0	33.4	0.000000
person	570	584	267.3	0.000000
mankind	22	6	27.7	0.000000
human	650	548	295.3	0.000000
earth	150	216	18.6	0.000016
nature	207	345	12.9	0.000321
universe	41	46	10.8	0.001033
community	413	599	49.9	0.000000
communal	35	27	18.1	0.000021
marriage	189	281	20.7	0.000005
marital	23	20	9.9	0.001616
husband	171	300	7.7	0.005463
wife	234	468	3.0	0.085403
parent	344	493	43.6	0.000000
parenting	16	4	21.1	0.000004
maternity	31	12	31.7	0.000000
procreation	11	7	7.3	0.007078
birth	100	131	17.3	0.000033
child	1,057	1.480	146.0	0.000000
neonate	10	3	12.0	0.000535
newborn	9	5	6.8	0.008901
filial	9	2	12.5	0.000408
offspring	38	24	32.4	0.000000
childless	12	7	8.7	0.003202
orphan	14	8	10.4	0.001281
orphanage	15	6	15.0	0.000106
family	545	1.010	16.0	0.000063
relatives	44	43	15.5	0.000083
kin	35	11	40.9	0.000000
kinsman	9	3	10.2	0.001443
kinship	19	18	7.1	0.007773
lineage	18	16	7.5	0.006160
brotherhood	14	8	10.4	0.001294

Table 5.2. Key words pertaining to the role of the ancestors

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
rite	22	23	6.8	0.009309
cult	23	23	7.7	0.005400
living-dead***	3	0	7.2	0.007456
ancestral	58	10	88.9	0.000000
ancestor	65	28	61.6	0.000000
ghost	60	64	17.7	0.000026
elder	59	68	22.5	0.000002
village	423	250	302.2	0.000000

\*\*\* Though this term appears only three times and thus would normally fall below the minimum frequency of four occurrences in the corpus, it is included here because it cogently supports the terminology used in the literature (Mbiti 1990, Chabal and Daloz 1999).

Table 5.3. Key words relating to the domain of witchcraft

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
totem	8	3	8.4	0.003817
mediums	6	2	6.8	0.009286
healer	5	2	5.0	0.025317
heal	69	32	61.7	0.000000
soothsayer	4	0	9.5	0.002004
juju-man	6	0	14.3	0.000154
seer	6	1	9.3	0.002291
witch-doctor	10	0	23.9	0.000001
divination	5	0	11.9	0.000552
fateful	10	5	8.4	0.003788

considerable respect (Kalu 1993: 115; Geschiere 1997: 95, 151). The important role of the ancestors has been frequently discussed in the literature (cf., e.g., Mbiti 1990: ch. 8; Geschiere 1997: *passim*; Chabal and Daloz 1999: 66–67). It is an aspect of African spirituality that is not readily compatible with Christianity or the Islam.

The terms *elder* and *village* point to the third element of the community model, namely witchcraft.

Witchcraft is seen to take place mostly in the village (cf. Geschiere 1997). Elders or certain persons of respect mediate between the spirits and the living (see Wolf and Polzenhagen *fc.*). The power of these *mediums* is ambiguous (cf. Gbadegesin 1991: 109–136); they have a power to *heal* (cf. Chabal and Daloz 1999: 74), to cure childlessness (cf. Makuchi 1999), or to *exorcise spirits and ghosts* (CCE), and to practice the art of *divination*. Yet they also have the power to harm or even destroy people, often through the use of “destructive medicines” (see Wolf 2001: 270, and below). The synonymous terms *mediums*, *healer*, *soothsayer*, *juju-man*, *seer*, *witch-doctor* confirm

**Table 6.** Socio-political terms as key words possibly motivated by the ACMC

Word	CCE	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
father	365	793	22.5	0.000002
fatherland	7	2	8.6	0.003332
country	1,278	1.054	600.8	0.000000
nation	633	418	400.2	0.000000
people	2,110	2.140	691.5	0.000000
society	792	617	404.7	0.000000
social	816	797	287.6	0.000000
societal	14	3	19.7	0.000009

Fowler (1991:82), who claims that “clusters of related terms are found to mark out distinct kinds of preoccupation and topic.”<sup>16</sup> In CamE, *fateful* exclusively introduces negative, often fatal events. Since in the popular African understanding death often does not have a natural cause (see Wolf 2001: 289–291), events introduced with *fateful* are frequently conceived in the context of witchcraft or the supernatural. The terms *witchcraft* and *witch* do not appear as key words; however, one needs to consider the text types in which they occur in the respective varieties of English. That witchcraft is a fact of everyday African life is reflected in the occurrence of this word in, e.g., travel reports and newspaper articles; witchcraft is even a topic in school books (see Wolf 2001, 2003). In FLOBFROWN, on the other hand, with one exception, it is only listed in the text category “religion”, in reference to neo-pagan witchcraft. In the ACMC, witchcraft is implicated if communities values are broken or the egalitarian ideal of the community is disturbed (see Geschiere 1997: passim; Chabal and Daloz 1999: 73–76; Wolf 2001: 288–290).

The ACMC extends to the realm of the political. Schatzberg (2001) argues that political legitimacy in Middle Africa to a great extent rests upon three additional aspects orthodox definitions of political power tend to miss. The second of which corresponds to the model discussed, namely “spirituality,” as described above.<sup>17</sup> In turn, one could tentatively argue that certain terms from the socio-political realm are more salient, i.e., are ‘key’ because they have a spiritual dimension qua being understood against the background of the ACMC. These terms are listed in Table 6.

Schatzberg (2001: ch. 5; 1986) has pointed to the conceptualization of persons in authority as Father-chiefs; African presidents, for example, are often conceived as and present themselves as “father of the nation.” This conceptualization seems to follow “naturally” from the community model, where a given *nation*, *country*, or *society* can be understood as an extended family (see, e.g., Wolf 2001: 293–298). Since this model is so salient in (West) African culture, it lends itself to be exploited by political leaders.

To counter possible objections that CamE may not be representative of WAE/ West African culture, I compared a smaller corpus compiled by students of mine,

Table 7. Key words from the domain of religion and traditional belief in CN

Word	CN	FLOBFROWN	Keyness	P-value
Alhadji	216	0	974.2	0.000000
Allah	38	4	145.8	0.000000
Almighty	10	7	20.8	0.000005
apostle	16	14	33.8	0.000000
Archbishop	18	31	23.6	0.000001
bless	18	72	7.1	0.007898
child	116	1.480	19.6	0.000010
Christian	122	284	116.8	0.000000
cleanse	8	3	23.8	0.000001
clergy	9	11	15.5	0.000083
clergyman	6	9	8.9	0.002913
commandment	5	3	12.6	0.000380
community	112	599	18.5	0.000017
country	553	1.054	659.1	0.000000
disgrace	8	11	12.7	0.000376
elder	77	68	161.9	0.000000
enshrine	5	6	8.7	0.003149
family	217	1.010	57.4	0.000000
fasting	8	3	23.8	0.000001
God	121	531	37.8	0.000000
harmony	11	34	7.1	0.007766
herbal	11	3	35.7	0.000000
holy	26	67	21.9	0.000003
Imam	5	0	22.5	0.000002
Islam	72	16	244.8	0.000000
kinsman	4	3	9.1	0.002498
Koran	17	0	76.7	0.000000
Mallam <sup>19</sup>	27	0	121.8	0.000000
mankind	14	6	40.0	0.000000
Muslim	117	46	343.9	0.000000
nation	151	418	115.2	0.000000
Papa	15	12	33.2	0.000000
parent	31	82	25.2	0.000001
pastor	15	16	28.2	0.000000
people	867	2.064	808.8	0.000000
person	212	427	238.7	0.000000
practitioner	12	9	27.4	0.000000
pray	30	50	40.5	0.000000
prayer	28	119	9.5	0.002067
preach	6	10	8.1	0.004419
prophet	38	20	101.1	0.000000
relatives	14	43	9.1	0.002539
religion	89	206	85.8	0.000000
Sharia	211	0	951.7	0.000000
society	92	495	14.8	0.000118
village	70	224	42.6	0.000000
worship	14	46	8.1	0.004340

namely the Corpus Nigeria (CN), 241,982 tokens, with FLOBFROWN.<sup>18</sup> It is exclusively derived from online sources (online newspapers and a newsgroup). In terms of size and text categories it is quite different from the CCE and FLOBFROWN, and cannot be considered as fully representative of Nigerian English (NigE). Therefore, I will not break down the key words into the different categories, and will not discuss the results in detail. Still, as Table 7 shows, the computations made on the basis of this corpus confirm the general tendency. The fact that CN does not have a separate text category “religion” but mostly deals with socio-political issues strengthens my argument even more.

Many of the words that appear as key words in the CCE also appear as key words in CN (the ones in the shaded cells). As there are proportionally more Muslims in Nigeria than in anglophone Cameroon and in the US and Great Britain, it comes as no surprise that terms relating to Islam (introduced to NigE as loan words from Arabic) are additional key words (*Imam, Koran, Mallam, Sharia*). Of the words that have not appeared in the CCE as key words but do so in CN, *herbal, Papa, practitioner*, deserve special attention. *Herbal* relates to the traditional medicine applied by the *traditional medical* or *health practitioners*, synonyms for *witch-doctors*. *Papa* is a respectful term for elders, not necessarily the biological father (see Igboanusi, 2002).

#### 4. Discussion

The overlap of key words relating to religion and the ACMC in CamE and NigE suggests that religion, broadly understood, is of similar social significance in Nigeria and Cameroon, and, furthermore, that the speakers of these varieties share certain cultural beliefs – which may also be held by other West Africans.

Also, the results of the corpus investigation confirm my own intuitions and the observations made by political scientists that religion plays a central and more prominent part in West African social life than in the “West.” The significantly more frequent occurrence of a number of central religious terms in varieties of WAE and of terms which, from a Western perspective, can have a religious connotation is telling in itself. Yet one would not capture all the facets of this phenomenon if one were content with saying that religious terms are more frequent in WAE than in Western varieties of English because religion is more salient in West Africa. At least, a cursory attempt should be made to explain *why* this is the case.

One part of the answer is that Christianity and Islam as world religions have a much younger history in West Africa than in other parts of the world. In the case of Christianity, the activities of the mission, whether good or bad, were closely connected with colonization, which is still hotly debated in the countries in question.

Secondly, religious issues are played up as part of “identity politics,” especially in contemporary Nigeria, where religion is a major factor in the struggle for power, influence and the allocation of resources. Besides, there has never been a strict separation

of the state and religion in the modern history of African states (see Schatzberg 2001). Today, we find that in parts of Nigeria, this separation has been completely abandoned and religious codes, i.e., the *Sharia*, have become an instrument of governance. Furthermore, the deterioration of the countries and the worsening plight of the people encourage a resort to religion as a means of alleviating burden, which brings us to the third, and perhaps most important point.

In African countries, we witness an upsurge of religious activity. For example, it is estimated that West Africa has the fastest growing congregations within the Catholic Church. But not only the Catholic faith is thriving; especially protestant groups, if not sects, are multiplying rapidly. One source states that in Africa, 1200 new Christian congregations come into existence each month (Willmann 2002). The material success of these groups and their footing in traditional African belief has been proffered to account for their growing influence (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 70–73). From my point of view, the blend of “modern” Christian elements with “traditional” African spirituality is crucial. Christian elements lend themselves to become part of traditional African belief and vice versa. Geschiere (1997: e.g., 187–195) recounts the ways in which Western notions of witchcraft may have fused with African beliefs in the course of colonization. This fusion can be witnessed in so many ways today: For example, in Nigeria, the *Aladura* (‘praying people’) are fundamentalist Christians who “believe that the witches and witch doctors who practice traditional medicine are real and have real spiritual powers” (Lettinga 2000). In a Cameroonian paper (*The Herald Observer* 1998: 6), one finds the story of a “diabolic owl exorcised from Presbyterian Church” and the pastor referring to the owl as the “omen of death and destruction.” That is to say, the APMC, as sketched out here, is a flexible web of concepts which can incorporate new elements and apply “old” concepts to new situations. It is deeply believed in and functions as a “sense making device for people”; in Schatzberg’s (2001) terms, it provides “alternative causalities.” The cosmological and holistic nature of this model and its pervasiveness also explain why key words like *child* or *family*, and perhaps even *society* and *nation*, which, in Western varieties of English, do not have a religious or spiritual meaning except for some fringe groups, could be understood as religious terms in WAE.

## 5. Summary and conclusion

This study was intended to investigate lexical frequency of terms from the domain of religion and traditional belief in WAE. It was found that terms central to religious belief are significantly more frequent in West African varieties of English than in native “Western” varieties of English and thus appeared as key words in WAE. Furthermore, the occurrence of key words which, from a Western perspective, do not or only faintly have a religious dimension was also interpreted as an indication of the salience of religion in West African society because these terms need to be seen in the

framework of a cosmological cultural model. The holistic nature and the pervasiveness of this model, which is open to incorporate elements from world religions, was offered as one explanation in the attempt to account for the higher frequency of religious terms in WAE, besides the general importance of religion in the socio-political arena of (anglophone) West African countries.

## Notes

1. WAE refers to the L2 varieties of English as spoken in Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and the L1 and L2 varieties of Liberian English.
2. For arguments against the view of English as culturally alien language in the African context, see, e.g. Wolf (2001) and Wolf & Polzenhagen (fc.).
3. As an encompassing term, one could perhaps use *spirituality*, as Schatzberg (2001:37), does, “to include formal world religions (e.g., Christianity and Islam), the cosmological world view containing the abode of the spirits and ancestors, and sorcery,” (which to my mind is also part of this cosmological world view).
4. For the purpose of this paper, I do not distinguish between ‘culture’ and ‘society.’
5. *Key word* should not be confused with *search word*, terms sometimes interchangeably used (cf. Barnbrook 1996:67; Oakes 1998:151), but refers here to a word which is significantly more frequent or “key” in one corpus/variety than in another one and thus socio-culturally significant. See Leech and Fallon (1992) for a paradigmatic corpus study.
6. See Wolf (2001:294–295), Wolf and Polzenhagen (fc.) on the family/community concept.
7. The corpus was near completion when work on it stopped. Therefore, only “unofficial” copies of it exist. I received mine from Josef Schmied, TU Chemnitz, who participates in the ICE project and whom I thank at this point.
8. The CCE was originally prepared for the corpus software TACT. For reasons internal to the programs, the number of tokens calculated by TACT is slightly lower than the one computed by WordSmith, namely 889,590.
9. After the computation of the key words, I selectively checked if they also appear as key words if FLOB and FROWN serve as separate reference corpora, and, indeed, they did.
10. This is the figure one gets if the .byb files (the file type used by the corpus program WordCruncher) of FLOB and FROWN are fed into WordSmith.
11. See Tiomajou (1995) for the corpus design and text categories of the CCE, and the manuals of FLOB and FROWN for theirs.
12. I do not claim to have selected all the possible key words from the domain of religion. With more time and space, I could have been more exhaustive; e.g., I could have checked into all the names that derive from the Bible or the Koran to see if they refer to figures in these sources or not. The high frequency of biblical or koranic names found in the CCE may even be telling in itself.
13. “A word is said to be ‘key’ if a) it occurs in the text at least as many times as the user has specified as a Minimum Frequency b) its frequency in the text when compared with its frequency in a reference corpus is such that the statistical probability as computed by an

appropriate procedure is smaller than or equal to a p value specified by the user” (Scott and Oxford University Press 1998: help menu).

14. There is no key word that immediately relates to the Catholic church, except for *archbishop* – the Archbishop of Yaounde is an eminent figure in the political life of Cameroon (cf. Schatzberg 2001:74–75) – which is surprising, because the Catholic church is quite active in the country, and the British and American society are generally perceived to be predominantly protestant.

15. Both *modern* and *traditional* are also key words in the CCE.

16. Another synonym in the CCE is *sorcerer*. It occurs 6x in the CCE and 20x in the FLOB corpus and thus is not listed as a key word. Yet, a consultation of the texts is revealing. In the FLOB corpus, *sorcerer* is the name of a mountain bike (10 occurrences), and a character in a fantasy story (also 10 occurrences). In the CCE, *sorcerer* appears in a religious text and in newspaper articles (in collocation with *fetish priest*).

17. The other two aspects Schatzberg (2001:37) mentions, namely eating or consumption and unity and indivisibility, to my mind, also belong to the ACMC. For further explanation, see Geschiere 1997: passim, Wolf 2001:291–292; Wolf and Polzenhagen (fc.), Polzenhagen and Wolf (fc.).

18. On the usefulness of small corpora, see Sinclair (2001).

19. A Mallam in the Islamic context is “learned man” or diviner (cf. Igboanus 2002).

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## Eastern-Christian tradition and the Georgian language

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### 1. Introduction

According to Eastern Christian Holy Fathers, initially God delivered the curse of “Babel” so that people would speak different and mutually unintelligible languages, but later this punishment turned into a manifestation of God’s mercy for mankind. The world of Eastern Christianity has paid special attention to this fact in order to develop the theory of equality of languages. The main cause of God’s punishment was people’s malicious intent and the rationale was that if they could not speak the same language, they could not understand each other, and thereby not achieve their haughty aim. Now, however, these different languages existed for one sole aim – to convey God’s goodwill. People should listen and hear God’s preaching, suppress their evil intents and nurture feelings of compassion and love instead. In the opinion of the Eastern Christian Holy Fathers, language diversity is a characteristic of the present as well as of the future.

The Eastern Christian tradition considers all languages equal before God - unlike the Western Christian tradition that considered only Hebrew, Greek and Latin to be sacred languages. Eastern Christianity included the Copts, Goths, Syrians, Georgians, and Armenians, later on Slavs, and also the Christians of Persia and Arabia. In spite of the fact that languages were recognized to be equal, the languages of Eastern Christianity faced many difficulties in competing with Greek, as Byzantium did all it could to prevent their legitimization. However, these languages managed to find their place against Byzantium’s will, turning the process into a struggle for the recognition of national cultures and national rights in general.

A typical example of such a struggle is conveyed in a poetic work by Constantine – Cyril, a statesman of the last quarter of the 9th century and the converter of Great Moravia. He expresses sympathy for the peoples who suffer terribly from speaking to God in a language they do not understand and are thus unable to tell Him of their troubles. As a Czech legend of the tenth century relates, Constantine posed the

polemic question to the Western adversaries of the Slavic liturgy: “If everybody has to glorify the Lord, why do you, chosen fathers, prevent me from conducting mass in Slavic whereas God created this language perfect, much as the other tongues?” A prominent Bulgarian writer of Moravian tradition, the monk Khrabr, insists that the Slavic language is the equal of Greek, Latin and Hebrew because all languages arose at the same time, the time of the Tower of Babel; and if Slavic has no ancient letters, it is all the better because its creators were Christian saints, while Greek and Latin letters were invented by unknown pagans.

Russian author of the eleventh century Mitropolitan Illarion goes further still in defending languages without long written traditions: “the new faith demands new words and letters just as new wines require new skins” (Jacobson 1970: 589,594). The Georgian Language had to compete with Greek much earlier, from the 3rd and 4th centuries, A.D. It had already gained a significant social function by that time – it was the main means of national identification and cultural self-consolidation for Kartli. Georgian had been declared the state language in the 3rd century B.C. Georgian literature of the old feudal period was being created at the time when Kartli had to fight simultaneously for national and cultural independence first against Mazdeian Persians, and then against Mohammedan Arabians. In addition, the country had to wage a confessional, dogmatic-philosophic war against paganism and various Christian sects (Aryanism, Nestorianism, Antichalcidice-Monophysite teachings, Pavlikianism). These fights resulted in the formation of the old Georgian culture, which represents a synthesis of the best eastern and western literary and life traditions [Kekelidze 1933: 19, Kekelidze 1951: 36]. The followers of Eastern Christianity tried to give special significance (mission) to their languages and nations. Here are four motives presented in Ioane Sabanisdze’s hagiographic work “The Martyrdom of Abo Tpileli” in the period of Arab domination (7th and 8th centuries AD) to reveal Georgia’s national merits:

1. We Georgians, live “at the outskirts of the world”, i.e. at the outskirts of the cultured world (Romans and Greeks live in the cultured world) and defend Christianity all by ourselves”. Reproach seems to be expressed towards Greeks in these words.
2. Georgians adopted Christianity over five hundreds years ago. “It has been more than five hundred years since the Georgians adopted Christian faith”.
3. If Greece is the centre of Christianity, Georgia is its end, and yet it is no worse than Greece is: It is not only the Greeks who have adopted this faith of God, but so have we, people living far from Greece”. Here Sabanisdze remarks that “they have come from the East and the West and take their origin from the realms of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
4. “Kartli is the homeland of saints. In short, defending Christianity at the outskirts of the cultured world, the honor of the ancient Christian country, being equal to Greece, the homeland of saints – these are the merits of Kartli, the

foundation of national consciousness” (Siradze 1987:46–54]). It is to be taken into consideration that Sabanisdze expressed these ideas at the difficult time of Arab domination, when denationalization threatened the Georgians. Thus, the author was fully conscious of the fact that Georgia could save herself only by reviving the national-Christian culture under the aegis of her own church. It shows that those ideas were not patriotic rhetoric, they formed the credo for the Christian elite of Kartli. It ends with the information given by Giorgi Merchule in “The Life of Grigol Khandzteli”, which established the inner measure of fixing the borders of Kartli with precision. “Kartli is reckoned to consist of those lands wherein the service is conducted in the Georgian tongue”; i.e. Kartli encompasses the territory where liturgy and divine service, in general, are performed in Georgian. It is a statement appropriate to the Eastern Christian tradition, and the cultural and political ideals of 9th and 10th century Georgians as well. The words of the 9th century hagiographer reveal his wish to find the basis for the socio-cultural integration of Georgians and a measure for defining the political frontiers of the country. Therefore, it is natural to think that the idea expressed by Giorgi Merchule concerning the area of the prevalence of the Georgian language being the main criterion for defining the concept of Kartli does not point to a new phenomenon – it is the fixation of a centuries-old tradition lost in the depths of the past (Gordeziani 1998:17).

Gradually, Georgian society begins to search for a “respectable” origin for the Georgian language. To achieve this, they revive myths, create genealogies and cultivate them, and the result is that the Georgian language plays a decisive role in the “Great Georgian Tradition”, together with state administration, religion and history (on the concept of “Great Tradition” see Fishman 1972). This Tradition created an exoglossic society whose members believed that their language reflected their exclusive genius and is authentically connected to their unique life and spiritual experience.

A concrete time and local conditions determine the sociolinguistic attributes of every language. The growing national consciousness of the Georgians, who followed the road of political, economic and cultural development consistently demanded a historical comprehension of antiquity. “The Life of Kings” by Leonti Mroveli, an 11th-century ecclesiastic figure and bishop of the Ruisi eparchy, in Fishman’s words, attests to the quest for the “respectable” past. This historic work contains an andresic story with a complete plot narrating the strange adventure of Parnavaz, the founder of the Georgian State. According to this story Parnavaz was anointed by the sun’s royal glory i.e. parna, or hvarna “brilliance”, “halo” descended on him, hence the name Parnavaz (Kiknadze 1984: 115–117; on the etymology of Parnavaz’s name see Andronikashvili 1966: 498–499).

Despite the fact that they adopted Christianity, Georgians are proud of the pagan king Parnavaz – “respectable” as Fishman would have put it - as his name is associated with the foundation of the first Georgian state, the declaration of Georgian as the state language and creation of the Georgian alphabet. It is difficult to ascertain which sources the

11th century historian used when he wrote about Parnavaz- was it a written source or an oral anecdote? It is not of great importance to the “Great Tradition” (Fishman 1972:39).

## 2. Codification of Georgian and the idea of equality to Greek

The Georgian literary language became more expressive as it competed with Greek and fought for equality to it. Old Georgian literary schools aimed at deeper integration into the Eastern-Christian world. It was thought expedient to master the Greeks’ cultural achievements as much as possible for this purpose. This was mostly revealed in translation.

The literary school united around a certain codifier (as E. Haugen understands it 1972:168), or a person who was an arbiter, a legislator, an authority and a worthy person not only in the opinion of this school, but also that of the educated public, in general. According to Christian authors’ belief, the Lord prepared such a future for His chosen one in advance. Thus, it was an ability bestowed by God (see a detailed discussion by Boeder 1983). An illustration of this was Eptvime of Mtatsmida in Iviron. As Giorgi Mtsire wrote, Eptvime, by translating sacred books from Greek, (a) removed the veil of ignorance from the Georgians’ minds, in this way freeing his people from the negative label of barbarians, which had been given to them by the Hellenes, and b) made the Georgians (people and their language respectively) equal to the Greeks and the Greek language.

This deed of Eptvime was acknowledged and appreciated, and it is for this reason he is described as a brilliant luminary a man who brought wisdom to Georgians. These attributes fully coincide with E. Haugen’s description of a codifier. He (the codifier) is an arbiter of fashion, a national hero, for he brought honor to his language and country – “It is blessed Eptvime whose name solely is sufficient to prove the greatness of his merits. He appeared to be a jewel among us, and like sacred apostles, enlightened the Georgian language and the country of Georgia” (Giorgi of Mtatsmida 1967:41). Eptvime is not only appreciated in Georgia, he is esteemed in Greece as well. He not only translated books into Greek, he also wrote original works in this language.

Eptvime’s Georgian translations were considered to be incomparable and inviolable sacred works. His translations can only be compared with the works of the first anonymous Georgian codifiers-“There are no such other translations but those first ones, and I think there will not be any” (Giorgi of Mtatsmida 1967:16). Giorgi Mtsire (“the small”) shares the same opinion (1967:145). The codifier is concerned with the future of the work he began. He himself prepares the one who will succeed him. The follower continues the work of his predecessor. Giorgi of Mtatsmida succeeds Eptvime of Athos due to the gift bestowed upon him by God (Giorgi Mtsire 1967:122). The aim is the same – to make Georgian equal to Greek and is revealed as I mentioned above through translating and mastering Greek cultural achievements. Giorgi of Mtatsmida completed Eptvime’s unfinished translations as well. Giorgi of Mtatsmida

is also a recognized codifier. He was admired by Greeks and Assyrians in addition to the Georgians (Giorgi Mtsire 1967: 148). Patriarch Tevdosi says to Father Giorgi: “Although you are an ethnic Georgian, on the other hand, with all your erudition you are a real Greek.” The Greek patriarch makes the point: erudition and knowledge make Greeks and Georgians “equal” (Giorgi Mtsire 1967: 151). It is easy to understand what Patriarch Tevdosi had in mind – though Giorgi of Mtatsmida was a barbarian (Georgian) by birth, he was educated in the way the Greeks were, and, therefore, he was their equal. By learning and erudition they meant the knowledge of Greek and the Holy Writ.

In spite of the fact that the Greeks regarded themselves as superior to other Christian peoples of the time, for the Georgian monks of Athos being bilingual by no means suggested diglossia, i.e. they perceived Georgian and Greek not as two functionally differentiated languages, but languages with equal rights (Boeder 1983: 86). The term diglossia denotes the situation in which there is a public agreement, concerning the status of a certain language, i.e. a situation in which one of two functionally differentiated codes by its social and cultural significance has a “higher” or “lower” status (Ferguson 1964: 429–438; Fishman 1970). Of course, Greek was a language of an “higher” status, but Georgian does not have a “lower” status either, for it obtained the function of defending itself from aliens in alien surroundings (Boeder 1998: 64).

In the determination of language status, we depend on the principles articulated by Paul Garvin: a) internal qualities of the language, b) its functions, and c) the attitude of the speaking community to the given language (1959: 28–31). The internal qualities of the Georgian language strengthen its chances of attaining equality with Greek. These qualities include flexible stability that allows modification to reflect cultural changes in the language, and intellectualization, as a codified version of the Georgian language into which the Holy Scripture and theological literature are translated and in which original works are written. The same qualities differentiate official Georgian from that of everyday use, though with a high degree of artificiality. Gospels and other parts of the Bible translated into Georgian guaranteed the normative stability of the Old Georgian language by its constant ecclesiastic use during service and in other areas of spiritual life. The native language is a recognized norm for Georgian scholars working in cultural centers abroad and they make it the standard. In addition, Georgian performed the functions of uniting its community of speakers, setting divergence from communities of speakers of other languages. In addition, in the past it had the function of protecting the cause of national pride. In return, this role increased the prestige of the language.

The endeavor of making Georgian equal to Greek continues later on as well, but translations are done in a different way. The translators were eager to give Georgian a status equal to that of Greek. The principle of free translation, established by those, working on Mtatsmida (Athos), is substituted by the principle of word for word translation from Greek. Eprem Mtsire (the small) established this form of translating.

In spite of the new principle, to overcome the difficulty conditioned by the differing natures of the languages, Eprem Mtsire thought it necessary to add explanatory notes to the words. We come across various comments in these explanatory notes – theological philosophical, linguistic-philological, cultural-historic, etc. Translation is a practical realization of codification, and such explanatory notes and commentary express the theoretical views of the codifier. While making comments, Eprem Mtsire reveals the same freedom as his predecessor codifiers while translating the text.

The Gelati Philosophical Literary School continued along the same path as Eprem. A conscious endeavor was made to establish a united mono-structural system of philosophical-theological terminology here. Ioane Petritzi, a recognized codifier, headed it too (cf. E. Haugen's concept of a codifier 1979: 168, see also above). It is to him that we owe the establishment of philosophical terminology in the Georgian language. With the help of Georgian root-words he invents all the necessary terms with amazing precision. The same terms are presented in European languages as borrowings from Greek or Latin (Marr 1909: 35). The Gelati School demonstrated extensive creativity and boldness in giving a wide scope to their native language to develop its own scientific terminology only from internal Georgian language resources; they coupled Georgian roots and affixes rather than resort to external borrowing. Thus by the scale of its expressiveness the Georgian language was made equal to Greek (Melikishvili 1999: 7).

### 3. The mission of the Georgian language(the Georgian nation)

The Georgians faced the challenge of proving once and for all that they were neither barbarians, nor heretics. The dialogue between Giorgi of Mtatsmida and Patriarch Tevdosi is very interesting from this point of view. The Georgian monk says, "Holy Father, those that consider us to be ignorant and light-minded and yourselves to be wise: there was a time when Orthodox Christianity did not exist in the whole of Greece and Ioane the bishop of Gutha was sanctified in Mtskheta as is written in the great Svinaxar"(Giorgi Mtsire 1967: 155). These words make the patriarch draw back, for Giorgi of Mtatsmida brings a historic fact as a proof. Ioane, bishop of Gutha, whom he mentioned, left Constantinople because of iconoclasm raging there and was sanctified by Catholicos Ioane in Svetitskhoveli in Mtskheta on June 26, 758. This signifies that the Bishop of Gutha was to obey Mtskheta Catholicos Ioane from the point of view of church jurisdiction. The latter would mention his name during the Divine Liturgy. The story told by Giorgi of Mtatsmida points to the great and deserved authority of the Georgian Church from the point of view of Bishop Kirion (Bishop Kirion 1910: 4–7). This feeling already existed in Georgia in times of Arab domination. Let us recall the ideas preached in "The Martyrdom of Abo Tpileli" (see above).

The principle of equality of languages meant that in the nations that had newly adopted Christianity, instead of Greek and other official languages of the Church, they

gradually instituted a priority for national languages and their qualitative excellence (Gamkrelidze 1990). From this point of view “Praise and Glorification of the Georgian Language” is extremely noteworthy (this work is also known under different titles, such as “Praise of the Georgian Language”, “On the Georgian language”). “Praise” raises many interesting issues from a sociolinguistic point of view. The author stresses the fact that Georgian is “humbled and rejected” at present. This could have been caused by the rivalry between the Georgians and Greeks, described above, as a result of which it was difficult for Georgian to get rid of its label as a “barbarian language” in the eyes of the Greeks. According to “Praise”, the humbleness and rejection of this language is a sign of its future glory. Here we can see the eschatological meaning of consecration and adornment, “It will be cursed at birth and rise in glory”.

The Georgian language is cast as the language that is to perform a mystery, and this is its consecration and adornment. The most important part of “Praise” is where the author unequivocally tells us the following: the Georgian language is buried, but not as a corpse. It is preserved until the day of the Second Coming of Christ, i.e. until the day of judgment (Kiknadze 1990: 15). “The Georgian language (nation) is preserved until the day of the Second Coming to testify to Him, in order that God judge (expose) all the languages through this language”. The language in “Praise” signifies nation– it is usual for the old Georgian (Gamsakhurdia 1991).

Thus, the Georgian language [and consequently the Georgian nation] adopts a specific religious consecration – as it becomes the language of Judgment Day and the conveyer of divine mysteries – a function which according to Ioane-Zosime was imposed upon Georgian through biblical prophecy. The declaration of Georgian as the last language is the opposite of the frequently expressed idea about the priority of some language – the attribute by means of which Ioane-Zosime placed Georgian in a difficult competitive situation with sacred languages – Hebrew, Greek and Latin (Boeder 1998:66). But it is not an unconquerable competition, for “Praise” declares Georgian and Greek to be sisters – “these are two sisters like Mary and Martha, and he said friendship because all mysteries are hidden this language”.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The existence of many languages created by God was not a guarantee of the equality of languages in the Eastern Christian world. On the contrary, the followers of Eastern Christianity predicted the superiority of this or that language in the future. There were two reasons for this: the first reason was that functional equality with the Greek language was completely impossible, and the second reason was, that according to Christian eschatology, during future cataclysms some nations will perish, they will be razed to the ground, while others will survive. A prophetic optimism was needed in this case.

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## CHAPTER 6

# Alcoholism and authority

## The secularization of religious vernaculars

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Alcoholism is, among other things, a disease of authority; that is, centers of power and patterns of hierarchy are misperceived or displaced; existing social and political structures are repudiated or ignored; the texture of human life – situated, interwoven, dependent – is denied; phantom authority is arrogated to the self, and a potent illusion of control is contrived to maintain the false edifice.

(Edmund B. O'Reilly)

### 1. Introduction

Omoniyi and Fishman (this volume) writes, citing Hamilton (1995), 'The Sociology of Religion, which is the interface between Sociology and Religion, has two central concerns: determining the role and significance of religion in society, and studying the beliefs and practices of particular groups and societies'. In this essay I will look at the nature of religious experience in Alcoholics Anonymous, at least as represented in a collection of contemporary texts, and analyse, in particular, the language employed by AA. Announcing the scope of the Sociology of Language and Religion Omoniyi writes: 'The ultimate objectives of the Sociology of Language and Religion will be to demonstrate the closeness of the two fields, help us understand the relationship between them better and fashion tools for creating a body of new knowledge that supports the emergence of a better society' (Omoniyi). No one could deny the havoc wreaked by alcoholism and drug addiction in our societies and yet, social concerns aside, the subject of alcoholism, and of AA itself, seems particularly suitable to an appraisal from within the perspective of Language and Religion precisely because the words at the very centre of addiction discourse are themselves unusually contentious and problematic. Edmund B. O'Reilly writes, for example: 'The notion that "alcoholism" is an equivocal culture-specific construction – a notion to which many anthropologists are committed – is abhorrent to those in the therapeutic community who depend upon the stability of a professional discourse... (O'Reilly, 1997:2) Similarly, Nan Roberts observes: 'Nothing makes a member of Alcoholics Anonymous more uncomfortable than the comment that AA is "religious"' (Roberts, 1988: 138).

Similar anxieties exist with reference to words which are absolutely indispensable to AA, words such as “disease”, “spiritual”, “conversion” and, perhaps most significantly, “God”. In a celebrated critique of linguistic essentialism, Pierre Bourdieu writes:

The naïve question of the power of words is logically implicated in the initial suppression of the question of the uses of language, and therefore of the social conditions in which words are employed. As soon as one treats language as an autonomous object, accepting the radical separation which Saussure made between internal and external linguistics, between the science of language and the science of the social uses of language, one is condemned to looking within words for the power of words, that is, looking for it where it is not to be found

(Bourdieu 1994: 107).

Bourdieu’s central premise here: that words do not have in themselves an intrinsic power, but that rather their significance and authority are communicated by the social context within which they are uttered, seems to me incontestable, until, perhaps, the unique nature of AA is considered. Bourdieu continues his rejection of the power of words themselves by saying ‘Language at most *represents* ...authority, manifests and symbolizes it’ (1994: 109). However, Roberts writes of disclosures at AA meetings: ‘The revelations can be as intimate as those told to a clergyman or a doctor, and the trust that they will be kept confidential is as absolute. The difference is that at the meetings *there is no authority figure listening. In AA everybody is equal.* Everybody has the same cunning, baffling, powerful disease; there is no rank higher than membership and nobody has sway over anybody else (1994: 117, my emphasis). Bourdieu writes: ‘In fact, the use of language, the manner as much as the substance of discourse, depends on the social position of the speaker, which governs the access he can have to the language of the institution...’ (1994: 109). However, Roberts writes: ‘In the subculture that is AA, most of the world’s yardsticks for success do not count. Members usually do not ask others about their age, occupation or profession, where they work or where they went to school. The clothes a person wears, the way he handles language, the size of his bank account, the honors he may have won are not important in AA...The language is plain and everyday’ (1994: 124). Classless, leaderless, apolitical, altruistic, AA is successful precisely because it does not recognize social authority. Inevitably, this has implications for the language of AA.

Bourdieu’s critique of linguistic essentialism assumes, a priori, that in any institution there will be representative figures of authority and, by definition, there will be considerably fewer of these than there will be of those whose societal role is to obey the dictates of authority. AA rejects Bourdieu’s a priori assumption. While Roberts may say of AA that within it ‘everyone is equal’, she could also have said that within AA ‘everyone has authority’. Perhaps justly, only another of Bourdieu’s highly influential theories can account for an apparently impossible scenario – one in which every member of an institution has the same amount of authority as every other member. In his introduction to Bourdieu’s *Language and Symbolic Power*, John B. Thompson 1995

writes: 'One of the central ideas of Bourdieu's work... is the idea that there are different forms of capital: not only "economic capital" in the strict sense (i.e. material wealth in the form of money, stocks and shares, property, etc.), but also "cultural capital" (i.e. knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications), "symbolic capital" (i.e. accumulated prestige or honour), and so on' (14). The "capital" which confers authority on all AA members, the currency which authorizes all of them to speak, is suffering. All have suffered, all may speak.

While the prominence of the 'Big Book' within the culture of AA may suggest that, in essence, AA is logocentric, it also has a very strong oral tradition, which is particularly amenable to evaluation through the perspective of linguistics. According to Labov and Waletzky (1967), for example, oral experience narratives consist of six components: 'abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and a coda' (cited in O'Reilly, 1997:124). O'Reilly notes 'the AA narrative form may be matched to the Labov-Waletzky model by simply dissolving boundaries that would probably be unclear in an actual narrative in any case' (O'Reilly, 1997: 124). Similarly, 'In the taxonomy of speech acts advanced by John Searle (1969, 1979) the statement "I'm an alcoholic" may, in fact, be understood as a member of each of the five discrete categories simultaneously. It is a *representative* (or *assertive*)...; it is a *directive*...; it is a *commissive*...; it is an *expressive*...; and it is a *declarative*...' (O'Reilly, 1997: 155).

This essay will focus on a group of texts I have called 'Recovery Narratives', all of which are indebted to the 12-step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous. The recovery narrative is a specific literary genre in which a protagonist, addicted to drugs or drink, or both, is placed within a dedicated space and participates in a formal process designed to return him or her to sobriety. This might involve the protagonist's experiences in an actual rehabilitation clinic, as occurs in Barnaby Conrad's *Time is All We Have* and Malcolm Lowry's *Lunar Caustic*, or, as is more common, such narratives may depict a protagonist's involvement with Alcoholics Anonymous, as occurs in the majority of the texts I want to discuss now: Donald Newlove's *Those Drinking Days*, Nan Robert's *Getting Better*, Jerry Dunn's *God is for the Alcoholic*, and Alcoholics Anonymous' own publication, *The Big Book*. Although the sanctification of profane vernaculars is clearly a worthy subject of study, this essay uses the language of AA to assess the reverse procedure: the secularization of religious vernaculars. The 'drying out' clinic, or the AA meeting, provide sites for various strategies of linguistic displacement that disassociate traditional theological signs from their conventional Christian framework and re-employ these signs to construct an alternative, secular world-view.

Omoniyi and Fishman write of the Language and Religion project, citing Wodak (2000), that four levels of theorizing will initially animate it, and says of the second level of theorizing that it will consider 'the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses (discourse representation and allusions or evocations)...'(see 'Introduction') Recovery narratives are the twentieth century's version of the nineteenth-century Temperance Narratives, which themselves

have Puritan origins, and this essay will examine the ways in which conventional religious concepts such as 'spirituality', 'resurrection', and 'conversion' operate within a space where such words have, increasingly, a secular meaning. Bourdieu writes: 'It is clear that all the efforts to find, in the specifically linguistic logic of different forms of argumentation, rhetoric and style, the source of their symbolic efficacy are destined to fail as long as they do not establish the relationship between the properties of discourses, the properties of the person who pronounces them and the properties of the institution which authorizes him to pronounce them' (111). However, as noted above, AA is strikingly unusual in its reluctance to confer authority on an elite, insisting instead that all members possess an equal authority. For this reason, while bearing in mind Bourdieu's warning quoted above, I do want to now focus precisely on 'the specifically linguistic logic of different forms of argumentation, rhetoric and style' and through an appraisal of the metaphors, rhetorical strategies and syntax employed within texts indebted to AA's 12 step programme, I will suggest that perhaps the most striking 'conversion' that occurs within the recovery narrative is linguistic. The essay will evaluate, in particular, the various strategies of linguistic manipulation that transform or 'convert' a religious discourse into a secular one. Overall, I want to suggest that recovery narratives are representative of the contemporary Western drive to replace the traditional supernatural elements of religion with rational, humanist ones, while still maintaining an earlier, now inappropriate, religious terminology. Parenthetically, I would also like to make it clear that I do not consider humanism as a belief system inferior to organized religion, but I do note that while they are not at all the same thing, all the texts under discussion here imply that they are.

In his book *Equivocal Spirits*, Thomas Gilmore notes that a chief strength of literature is 'its awareness that often the root cause or effect of the illness of alcoholism is spiritual' (Gilmore, 1987:9). With its understanding of alcoholism as a tripartite illness: mental, physical, and spiritual, Alcoholics Anonymous similarly places great stress upon the spiritual. The link between recovery and spirituality is emphasized by a number of writers of recovery narratives. In *A Nice Girl Like Me*, Rosie Boycott writes of a famous letter Carl Jung sent to one of the co-founders of AA, Bill W: 'To Bill, Jung's letter meant a master's confirmation of what he, as a layman, had struggled to prove: that the alcoholic can only be rescued through experiences which must be accounted spiritual' (Boycott, 1984:204). In *Time Is All We Have*, Barnaby Conrad writes of his time at the Betty Ford Center: 'There was no heavy insistence on religion as such at the BFC, yet since the treatment and preparation for subsequent after-care was based on the Alcoholics Anonymous program, it perforce placed considerable emphasis on the spiritual side of the patient's treatment and development during his time there' (Conrad, 1982:252). Caroline Knapp, in *Drinking: A Love Story*, writes of her own reluctant admission of alcoholism: 'The gift of desperation has a spiritual quality' (Knapp, 1996:210). In *Any Woman's Blues*, Erica Jong's protagonist, Leila, says of AA: "the Program led me to see my life in spiritual terms..." (Jong, 1990:137)

The specific nature of the 'spiritual' experiences within recovery narratives,

however, are strikingly vague. Conrad writes: 'I am not arrogant or wise enough to presume that there is or is not a God. But I know that I did go through some sort of spiritual awakening...' (Conrad, 1982: 52) The imprecision of the phrase "some sort of spiritual awakening" is absolutely characteristic of the genre. Specificity is only achieved within recovery narratives confrontationally, when stressing the differences between religion and spirituality. Roberts writes in *Getting Better*: '*Spiritual* and *Spirituality* are words one hears a lot of in A.A. "It's not a religious program, it's a spiritual program" is a sentence A.A.'s utter over and over again...' (Roberts, 1988: 145) O'Reilly writes of AA meetings: 'The AA distinction between religion and spirituality is almost universally appreciated, and theology as such is only rarely an ingredient in AA stories' (O'Reilly, 1997: 154). Notwithstanding this defiant separation, however, AA still actually enjoys the comfort of conventional religious terminology. Roberts writes: 'The two basic texts of Alcoholics Anonymous – its Twelve Steps to recovery and the Big Book, which contain the steps – are studded with references to God. Six of the Twelve Steps mention God directly or by implication' (Roberts, 1988: 139). However, appearances to the contrary, God, as understood conventionally, is quite dead within the recovery narrative.

Roberts writes of the founders of AA: 'Neither Wilson nor Dr. Bob Smith was a religious person in any conventional sense of the term' (Roberts, 1988: 129). Gilmore writes of literature's ability to portray the spiritual dimensions of alcoholism: "'Spiritual" should certainly not be reduced in meaning to "religious"; any good definition of the term would be capacious, including many elements of the irrational and the emotional' (Gilmore, 1987: 11). Both Roberts' use of the word "conventional" and Gilmore's use of "reduced" imply that a narrow religiosity is necessarily inferior to an inclusive spirituality, a view which pervades contemporary culture. O'Reilly's reference to spirituality in AA focuses on the advantages of an ill-defined spirituality:

AA's indeterminate spirituality is a zone where inner experiences – feeling-states, imprecise cognitions, awkwardly intermingled ideas and affects – may be articulated in nonsectarian language, made accessible to others across a range of aptitudes, habits, and codes. (O'Reilly, 1997: 154).

However, it is certainly possible to argue that within the recovery narrative, as within the larger culture, the word 'spiritual' has become an inchoate term of approbation without any determinable referent; that it is, essentially, different from religion precisely because it is both subjective and invariably secular. Indeed, while the struggle to accept the "God part" is virtually a generic requirement of the recovery narrative, such texts rarely depict an individual's acceptance of God, rather they articulate the procedures whereby God is replaced. In this, recovery narratives reflect the growing tendency within Western democracies to substitute a secular humanism for a transcendent God, while retaining the comfort of the earlier vernacular. As a case in point, I want to quote an extract from Marc Almond's 1999 autobiography *Tainted Life*. In the passage I want to look at Almond is just beginning treatment at the Promis Treatment Centre for his drug addiction. He writes of the programme:

Initially the one thing that put me on guard was the word 'God'. I suspected that I'd been duped and was surrounded by religious maniacs – that I might even end up being brainwashed, a glass-eyed Christian smiling and doing all the right things...But over the following days, I began to understand what 'God' could mean for me. As one counsellor, Elizabeth, said, 'GOD stands for "Good Orderly Direction"'. With the religious reference removed, the idea of God began to appeal to me. Good Orderly Direction (Almond, 1999: 391).

This is, of course, not a recent phenomenon. In his book *Emerson and Power*, Michael Lopez writes: "The habit of using a traditional religious terminology in the advancement of ideas that are neither traditional nor Christian, nor even religious, is one of the distinguishing features of post-Enlightenment philosophy and literature" (Lopez, 1996: 157). These are certainly distinguishing features of the recovery narrative. Roberts writes: "An atheist member of A.A. said, "People use the word spiritual in ways that define themselves. I think it means the ability to get outside one's own immediate concerns to perform an altruistic act"" (Roberts, 1988: 145). The spirituality which is so pervasive within recovery narratives forms part of a humanist enterprise which has, with remarkable success, appropriated a religious discourse to strictly secular, albeit admirable, ends. Authors of recovery narratives employ a variety of techniques, including elision, qualification, chiasmus and conflation, to construct a model of spirituality which is thoroughly secular while shrouded in the language of religion.

Writing of Bill W and Dr Bob, Roberts writes: 'Some revere these two men as saints. This is not surprising when you consider the lives, directly and indirectly, they have saved' (Roberts, 1988: 21). Equally, it *is* surprising if one believes that 'saving lives' is no criterion for establishing sainthood. Roberts writes that many A.A. members 'regard the Big Book and other authorized A.A. literature almost as Holy Writ' (Roberts, 1988: 105). Of course the Big Book is not Holy Writ; it is a recovery narrative and the persistent use of meretricious equivalences and conflation within the genre is given its ultimate sanction by AA itself. Roberts describes one of the most important moments in the mythology of AA:

During the final months of his drinking in 1934, his old school-mate Ebby, who had gotten sober in the Oxford Group, suggested to his resistant friend, "*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*" Wilson recounted his reaction: "That statement hit me hard," he wrote. "It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years...*It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning*" (Roberts, 1988: 139).

This 'Power greater than myself', or 'Higher Power', may be, essentially, anything the alcoholic desires it to be. Roberts writes of AA: 'Some members are religious, and some are agnostics or atheists. Many members choose to believe that their "higher power" is their A.A. group' (Roberts, 1988: 100). That one should be asked by an organization to surrender to a 'higher power', but that this 'higher power' could be that organization

itself is as neat, and tautologous, a line of thinking as could be found. It is an example of the ease with which ostensibly religious ‘equivalences’, irrespective of their plausibility, are constructed and maintained within recovery narratives. Roberts writes of the last of the three central ideas Bill W. took from William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: ‘Third was an appeal to a higher power, or at least a cry of help to another human being’ (Roberts, 1988: 61). Bill W. deftly turns James’ ‘God’ into his own Higher Power, implying by the effortless and unqualified transition that there is no ontological difference between the two, then suggests that an appeal to the Higher Power is itself much the same as an appeal to another human being.

Boycott writes: ‘But the whole question of God in AA is a stumbling block’ (Boycott, 1984: 202). On the contrary, it is rarely a ‘stumbling block’ in recovery narratives, precisely because God is envisaged so loosely. Conrad writes of his treatment: ‘It was reiterated that God, or the preferred term Higher Power, was as we perceived him as individuals, not the way some formal church tradition or TV preacher might have pictured Him’ (Conrad, 1982: 202). The use of the word ‘or’ at the opening of the statement takes for granted that these two terms ‘God’ and ‘Higher Power’ are synonymous, and the second ‘or’ assumes an equivalence between a centuries-old religious tradition and the hucksterism of a contemporary media evangelist – a thoroughly illusory equivalence, but one which permits the alcoholic to reject conventional Christianity in favour of an entirely subjective construct. Recounting his experiences at an AA meeting, Conrad cites another alcoholic:

“I...mentally ran through all the notions of God I had rejected. I knew I didn’t believe in God the lion, God our father, God the punisher of sins, or Jesus Christ as God. I considered other definitions of a Higher Power. I heard a few people say that their AA group was their Higher Power. One woman described God as a loving force, or the kindness generated by people” (Conrad, 1982: 113).

As always, the use of a meretricious equivalence features strongly here; Conrad writes ‘other definitions of a Higher Power’ when his earlier references have all been to conventional Christian understandings of God. This easy transition from God to Higher Power is complemented by, again, the use of the word ‘or’ to establish equivalence between a transcendent entity and the mere manifestations of social amiability.

Erica Jong relies heavily on conflation to steer her protagonist through the spiritual dimensions of AA’s programme: “‘Her. Or Him. It doesn’t even matter; it’s a sort of vanity even to argue about the sex of God. We’re talking about spirit here, the gift of life – and whether you choose to affirm or deny it. That’s all this is about’” (Jong, 1990: 137). Jong moves from ‘God’, to ‘spirit’, to ‘gift of life’, as though all three were synonymous. Recounting her experiences at an AA meeting, Leila suddenly realizes: ‘We were not human beings going through spiritual experiences; we were spiritual beings going through human experiences, in order to grow’ (Jong, 1990: 202). The meaningless chiasmus is succeeded by an equally meaningless intransitive – grow into what?

Linguistic imprecision and disingenuousness are the hallmarks of recovery narra-

tives and “Resurrection” is another word which is endlessly rewritten and vitiated within this body of texts. While the word “resurrection”, and attendant imagery derived from its conventional Christian usage is pervasive within recovery narratives, the books inevitably reject the orthodox Christian tenet of literal bodily resurrection and reconstruct it in metaphorical, allegorical terms. Resurrection in the recovery narrative invariably means the possibility of individual regeneration. Throughout nineteenth century temperance fiction there is a clear shift from the religious to the secular and representations of resurrection in the later narratives are invariably metaphorical. In “How His Easter Came” for example, Godfrey Brent, previously a drunkard, vows to his aged mother to give up drink:

“My son,” she quavered...“It is Easter Sunday”  
 “Yes,” he cried, “my Easter, mother! I am risen from the dead! For,” his voice sank to a tender whisper and Sally, in the doorway, caught a rapturous breath, “for I have been dead and am alive again – alive forevermore!” (Shaw, 1909:236)

What is significant here is the insertion of the pronoun possessive in ‘my Easter’, clearly signaling the view of Christ’s resurrection as a metaphor for personal growth. In ‘Granny Hobart’s Easter’, Billy, previously a drunkard, vows to his extremely elderly grandmother to give up alcohol:

“What air the church bells ringin’ for, Mary? Have the folks found out our Billy has come home?”  
 “God has, mother,” answered the daughter, gently. “It’s Sunday, Easter Sunday.”  
 “Easter!” laughed Granny exultantly, “an’ I was afeared to see it! It’s a true Easter, Mary, for ‘This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’” (Shaw, 1909:290)

This metaphorical understanding of the resurrection pervasive in temperance narratives leads inevitably to the eventual abandonment of God, as understood in any orthodox sense, seen in later A.A. practice and in recovery narratives, both of which are indebted to this body of literature.

In *Those Drinking Days*, published in 1981, Donald Newlove, a novelist, writes of his early days in AA: ‘I drew the line at Fundamentalism, the truth of the Scriptures, Bible miracles, virgin birth, resurrection of the body in any religion, and I was sceptical of the Crucifixion...But I was ready to accept most Christian mysteries as metaphors for the uses of adversity’ (Newlove, 1981:107). Bill W. records that his newly sober friend Ebby looks to him like someone ‘raised from the dead’ (O’Reilly, 1997:110). Within the recovery narrative, resurrection is a trope, a rhetorical figure, gesturing only at the possibility of personal renewal in this life, and not toward eternal life.

Jerry Dunn writes of the archetypal recovering alcoholic by quoting directly, and without attribution, from the story of the Prodigal Son, as indeed does Granny Hobart in the quotation above. Dunn writes: ‘We must remember that our alcoholic is like that prodigal son. Once he was lost. Now he is found. Once he was dead. Now he lives’ (Dunn, 1977:126). The appealing balance and binarism of such declarations is one of

several reasons that the most frequently cited Biblical story in recovery narratives and temperance narratives is this reassuring and emphatically wordy tale of dissolution and redemption; intimations of resurrection reside within a strictly secular context.

Many of the protagonists of recovery narratives stress the 'life and death' nature of their struggle with alcoholism. Conrad observes of a group session during his stay at the Betty Ford Clinic:

they were sharing a – and the simple and unremarkable word came to me – “fellowship.” I’d heard people who had been in the Army or Navy or Marine Corps in wartime talk about unlikely and extraordinary fellowships created by sharing life or death situations.

This, too, I reflected was a life or death situation’. (Conrad, 1982: 110)

Roberts quotes a counsellor at Smithers, one of the most successful rehabilitation clinics in New York City: “‘This is a life-and-death situation – your life and your death...Up to now your life has been abuse. What it can be is recovery’” (Roberts, 1988: 216). The rehabilitation programme which Jerry Dunn begins his book *God is for the Alcoholic* by outlining is called, significantly, the New Life Programme.

Although there is the imminent possibility of death unless the protagonist becomes sober, the opposite of death in recovery narratives is not life, but sobriety – a synonym for life. Recovery narratives articulate a process whereby death is not vanquished, as it is within the orthodox Christian perspective, but is only temporarily forestalled, the deferral predicated absolutely on continued sobriety. Strikingly, however, recovery narratives obscure what is actually a temporary frustration of death and, instead, by employing the traditional rhetoric of rebirth, act as though their protagonists had *literally* died and been resurrected. Recovery narratives have numerous cultural services to perform, but a primary function of the genre is to persuade its readers that metaphorical death and literal death are of the same order of being; that they have the same ontological status. The persistent drive of the recovery narrative to depict literal death and metaphorical death as equivalent, utilizing the conventional imagery of rebirth and resurrection, forms part of a displaced Christian acesis. In order to defeat the 'demon drink', a phrase literally much in use in temperance narratives, the alcoholic must be removed from the snares and temptations of this world; this is achieved in large part through the symbolic staging of the alcoholic's own death, and included in this construct is the possibility of a personal, strictly secular, resurrection.

The shift from addiction to sobriety is often represented as a 'conversion' in the recovery narrative, and allusions to St Paul's epiphany on the road to Damascus frequently accompany such depictions of 'conversion'. A 'conversion' scene is central to Charles Clapp's *The Big Bender* (1938), and Clapp's friend and mentor immediately seizes upon Damascus for a comparison: 'Sam recalled for him the prototypical conversion of Saint Paul on the road to Damascus and told of comparable modern-day marvels' (Clapp, 1938: 128). Matthew J. Raphael, however, notes of Clapp's description of his 'conversion': 'Here, God is almost entirely uncharacterized; conversion has more to do with a new outlook on life than with any specific idea of divinity' (Raphael,

2000: 86). ‘Conversion’ in the recovery narrative is almost always secular, not religious. *Converse*, in essence, means the imitation of models, it corrects the arrogance of thinking oneself and one’s story unique, so the Damascene narrative becomes central to AA: it offers a religious parallel to a secular experience, eliding the difference, and, just as importantly, it minimizes the addict’s sense of ‘self’. While Christ’s “Follow Me” stands at the origin of imitation, in the recovery narrative it is a strikingly secular community which the addicted protagonist joins.

## Conclusion

Nevertheless, AA is a community and as the most successful self-help group in the world, it is a global community. Omoniyi and Fishman note in the introduction to this volume that ‘The Sociology of Religion, which is the interface between Sociology and Religion, has two central concerns; determining the role and significance of religion in society and, studying the beliefs and practices of particular groups and societies’ (citing Hamilton, 1995). In the pursuit of these tasks, the discipline covers various issues of interest including secularization, ideology, solidarity, identity, diversity and the impact of globalization on religious practice.

It is striking that an analysis of AA’s rhetoric involves an appraisal of all six of the issues cited above. Similarly, the editors describe the sociology of language and religion as ‘a level-two hybrid, a hybrid formed from a combination of hybrids – sociology of language and sociology of religion’. In an increasingly pluralistic and fragmented society, this ‘level-two’ hybridity is precisely where its strength and importance as a discipline resides. Language is an inescapable aspect of Religion and, as this chapter has suggested, religion is fluid: pluralistic, multi-faceted, even, increasingly, secular. The phrase ‘secular religion’, once clearly, even risibly, an oxymoron, is clearly not perceived as such today. This is a significant shift in ‘religious’ perceptions, perhaps even more important, because it is less obvious, than the emphatic, post-Enlightenment rejection of religion as a viable belief-system. Only a rigorous analysis of the rhetorical strategies that have facilitated this process will help us to explicate the phenomenon and assist us to fashion the tools necessary to measure and evaluate the enormous implications this secularization of religion will have for the twenty first century, and perhaps even more importantly, the study of Language and Religion may help us to accommodate it within our societies.

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# The role of religion in language choice and identity among Lithuanian immigrants in Scotland

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## 1. Introduction

This chapter draws on data gathered in the Lithuanian immigrant community in Scotland. It examines the role of religion in the formation of the Lithuanian immigrant identity and its effect on the community's linguistic behaviour. From the beginning and up to this time, a great number of Lithuanians have kept the community alive through their shared Catholic faith. On one hand, faith forms strong bonds among the elder members of the community whilst, on the other hand, it seems to alienate the youth. The duality of such linguistic situation observed in church events gave rise to the phenomenon of 'pretended bilingualism'<sup>1</sup> which causes ridicule amongst the third and subsequent generation monolinguals. Religion plays an important role in the survival of the Lithuanian identity within the community. It will be argued that religious practices strongly influence the language maintenance in the Scottish-Lithuanian community and that church thus appears to be one of the key factors in the language perseverance or loss. The chapter adds to our understanding of the relationship between language and religion by drawing from the experiences of a century-old Lithuanian community in Scotland.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a need for strong ties emerged in the Lithuanian community on their first steps in Scotland. Firstly, a great majority of the immigrants were unable to speak the local English language. Secondly, they were committed Catholics. The majority of Catholic Lithuanians became part of the Archdiocese of Glasgow including areas such as Lanarkshire and northern Ayrshire which had become noted in the nineteenth century for Protestant-Catholic religious clashes and for the growth of the Orange Order.<sup>2</sup> The commonly shared Catholic faith formed strong bonds and provided a base for the disorientated immigrants in a strange land. Up to this time, Lithuanians keep the community alive through their church which has promoted the Lithuanian culture and language for more than a century of the community's history in Scotland. This chapter will examine the importance of religion in the

process of language maintenance or shift in the Lithuanian community in Scotland and give comparisons to the experiences of other immigrant communities in Britain.

## 2. Role of the church in the Lithuanian immigrant lives

Although Lithuania did not accept Christianity until the fourteenth century thus becoming the last European nation to be baptized, the people, mainly Roman Catholic in their religious belief, remained steadfast to their church. The local Catholic churches had been the Lithuanian immigrants' initial contact on arrival in Presbyterian Scotland. Their faith and the spiritual need in times of hardship and discrimination brought them together to create a strong social network to motivate and generate their ideas and activities and thus make the community's identity evident in the dominant Scottish society. With the ever-increasing numbers of Lithuanians, the need for a Lithuanian priest and church was inevitable. In 1902 an official request was submitted for a Lithuanian church in Bellshill, the main Lithuanian settlement. It was argued that Lithuanians were "unable to speak and understand the English language", and therefore having their own church would help "to keep [their] fathers' faith" (Poutney 1902). The majority of Lithuanians were farmers in their country. They arrived in Scotland generally with no knowledge of English and many were illiterate in their native Lithuanian language. However, most of them could speak Russian and Polish fluently and were able to make themselves understood in German. The clergy in Britain, like most of the population at that time, had no awareness that there was a Lithuanian language or culture and simply referred to the incomers as "Poles" due largely to the fact that Britain saw a substantial influx of Poles in mid nineteenth century and so the locals identified all immigrants from Eastern Europe as Polish.<sup>3</sup> The clergy were totally opposed to a separate church, stating: "We do not consider the Poles a fixed quantity [...] if the Poles and Lithuanians intend to reside here permanently, it is in their own interests to learn English".<sup>4</sup>

Having lost the battle for a church in Scotland, the community organised bringing a priest from their native land guaranteeing upon his immediate and future expenses. Since that time highlighted has been the importance of the Lithuanian priests who became leaders of the community, as few outstanding laymen seem to have emerged particularly in the period after 1920 (Norbutas 1920). Often being the only person of education and standing in the immigrant neighbourhood, each of the chaplains at their time contributed to some extent to the protection and development of the Lithuanian cultural identity. For many of them this was not a new experience as they came from a country which has seen long years of common history with Poles and then occupation by Russians who imposed their languages, culture and Orthodox religion onto Lithuanians. Thus, resistance to the forced russification gave rise to underground activities of the enlightenment movement. Catholic priests in Lithuania played a prominent role in the awakening of national consciousness, religious seminaries there becoming both seats of learning dedicated to the cultivation of the

Lithuanian language and centres of resistance to Russian policy (Sabaliunas 1990). The Lithuanian people having left their country in search of freedom, once again had to deal with similar experiences as immigrants in Scotland where they faced constant struggle to keep their identity alive as a minority group.

Thus, the initial proliferation of Lithuanian societies and clubs in Scotland owed much of its inspiration and organisation to the chaplains. For instance, the first chaplain, Fr Varnagis, contributed directly to the developing of Lithuanian national consciousness in Scotland through being involved in the production of *Vaidelyte*, the first Lithuanian newspaper in Britain, followed by the establishment of the *Šviesa* Society (Eng. 'Enlightenment Society') and a Lithuanian co-operative society *Sandara* (Eng. 'Harmony') in 1899 (Michell 1989).

Apart from the Lithuanian priests who held services in the native language, but were physically unable to cater for all Lithuanians scattered around Scotland, the local clergy also made an effort to cater for the needs of the Lithuanians unable to speak English. Reportedly, in early 1900s, an Irish priest learned Lithuanian. Later, in the Craigneuk parish in the 1920s, a German priest had mastered enough Lithuanian to preach sermons in the language, while in the Mossend of the 1930s local priests could manage a brief formal speech in Lithuanian at community functions (Norbutas 1920).

By the late 1920s, the second generation reached maturity and began to identify with the country in which they had grown up rather than that of their parents. And so the mission in life of Fr Petrauskas, the next priest, became that of keeping the community together and giving it a new pride in its identity. In 1927, Fr. Petrauskas established the Lithuanian Students' Society, launched the Lithuanian Education Society of Scotland as well as the bilingual publication *Naujas Laikas* (Eng. 'New Era'). Such organisations were well placed to carry on his work of promoting the Lithuanian culture through arts, dance groups and choirs. He actively promoted the language, not just through retaining church services in Lithuanian but also through setting up Lithuanian language classes. Petrauskas did some teaching himself, enlisted the help of members of the community, including trained teachers, and even brought over helpers from Lithuania itself. He received no help in language teaching from any official source either in Lithuania or Britain – an obvious contrast with the situation in, for instance, the Italian community. By the 1920s, instruction in the Italian language in the Glasgow area was promoted both by the Glasgow Education Department in three state schools, and by the Italian government through evening classes for children (Colpi 1991).

The subsequent chaplain, Fr Gutauskas emphasised the centrality of the Lithuanian language in the community and was editor of the only remaining Lithuanian language newspaper in Scotland *Iševiu Draugas* (Eng. 'The Immigrants' Companion') which became the longest running Lithuanian newspaper having ceased publication in 1983. It has been suggested that his continued emphasis on the centrality of the Lithuanian language was a mistake simply because with the passage of time, fewer

and fewer people knew the language – the assimilation had taken its effect on the community.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Assimilation into Scottish culture

In the course of time, despite all the efforts of the Lithuanian clergy and some laymen activists, the survival of the Lithuanian culture was in danger as the community lost members, either suddenly, as in 1917–1920, when over 1,000 men were compulsorily repatriated under the Anglo-Russian Military Agreement to fight as “Russian subjects” on the Eastern front, or gradually, as younger generations drifted away from their Lithuanian heritage (Rodgers 1982: 61, 69).

The religious identity, which helped sustain the ethnic identity, became somewhat double-edged. Firstly, the Lithuanians reacted to the religious discrimination against Catholics in the field of employment. Secondly, in view of the gender imbalance among the immigrants, many Lithuanian men had stopped practicing their religion as a result of protestant marriages. The first generation of Lithuanian young men had avoided intermarriage with the Scots and brought their partners from their native land, however intermarriage became much more common between the wars. Thus, some Lithuanians just drifted away from their religion, others left as a matter of conscience as a strong sense of social justice and a desire to change the poor working and living conditions of the day led them into socialism. Some people of Lithuanian extraction, particularly of the second generation, made a conscious decision to drop out of the community altogether. Others of this generation however were reasonably content with their Lithuanian identity but were not actively involved in any of the community’s cultural activities. Their children were likely to be in a no-man’s land being neither fully Lithuanian nor yet Scottish. If second generation Lithuanians married out of the community, the third generation would have little that was Lithuanian with which to identify. And as time went on, so much of the community’s identity had become bound up with Catholicism that there was an issue of what place there was in the community for those who felt they had some kind of Lithuanian identity but did not want to find this through the Catholic Church.

The process of assimilation speeded up from the 1950s. An additional factor at work was the increasing secularisation of society, a process which had begun to affect the general Catholic community in the interwar period and became more prominent in post-Second World War Britain and particularly in the 1970s (Brown 1992). The Lithuanian Catholic community was not immune to this widespread secularisation and at the present time is but a shadow of its former self. Lithuanian church services, however, continued to take place on a monthly basis both in Glasgow and Mossend up until May 2003. The services were normally followed by a social gathering at the Scottish-Lithuanian Club next-door. However those attending the services and even the big celebrations of the year such as Easter Sunday, Christmas Eve and Carfin Day, were mostly the older members of the community (60+). For many years, the

church, on the one hand, maintained strong bonds among the elder members of the community whilst, on the other hand, it seemed to alienate the youngsters from it. Religious activities were wholeheartedly practised in the community and no event passed without attending to Church or, at least having a resident Lithuanian Catholic priest present in the venue. The mass was held in the Lithuanian and English languages and even the parishioners who claimed to be unable to speak or understand Lithuanian, they sang the hymns in the language from specially provided books printed in 1984. In between the hymns, the priest conducted the mass in English mainly with occasional readings in Lithuanian, which he then found necessary to summarise in English to ensure that all was understood. The duality of the situation – I will term it ‘pretended bilingualism’ - may promote curiosity, but it also caused ridicule amongst the third and fourth generation monolinguals. Once a representative of the former said jokingly all she knew in Lithuanian was “*mama*” (Eng. ‘mother’) and she could also ... “make a cross”.<sup>6</sup> Although, this was meant to be a joke, the statement can serve as a perfect illustration of how strongly the Lithuanian identity and religion were bound together. Very few younger generation Lithuanians attended to church, and when they did it was usually owing to their grandparents who cherished those short regular meetings but needed assistance to make their visits possible. Even today, many older members of the community assign major importance to the church in keeping up the vitality of the Scottish Lithuanian identity and the language of the community’s ancestors. However, with the loss in numbers of the original immigrants mainly due to the geographic dispersal and old age or general lack of interest, the church has been becoming weaker and weaker in its influence on the community.

The latest chaplain worries about his ageing and dwindling community. He wonders if there will be anyone to carry on his work after he dies.<sup>7</sup> Due to ill health of Fr McAndrew, the Lithuanian mass has not been reconvened up to this day. A substitute has not been found and there is a general tendency among the community to question the need to take action. Many do not see the point in carrying on with the tradition. It can be predicted that with the loss of the church services in Lithuanian, the community’s language use will be affected, too – yet another domain, which for many years has been a stronghold for the use of the minority language and a uniting factor in bringing the community members together, will be lost.

#### 4. Other immigrant communities – A comparison

It is revealing to compare the situation in Scotland with the experiences of other immigrant communities in the UK. England had Polish, Lithuanian and Italian churches in London dating back to 1894 (Kay 1996). Jewish immigrants in Scotland had formed their own separate community from the predominately Catholic Lithuanians and had little or no social contact with them. This was not solely due to religious and cultural differences but because Jews did not work in the mines and steelworks and founded themselves in the larger cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh. Unlike the large Jewish

community in Glasgow where education was provided in three Jewish schools with Jewish teachers, the dispersed Lithuanian population had no option but to attend local schools where the language, values, history and literature of the host community alone were taught (Devine 1999). Inevitably, the immigrant identity came under pressure, not least from the peers at school as the new generation grew into young adulthood. It can also be argued that, in not granting a church in the early years, the authorities were in fact aiding the process of integration of the Lithuanian community. A separate church would have marked out the distinctiveness of the immigrants and might perhaps have unduly prolonged the exclusiveness of the community. An ethnic church could have taken on the role of guardian of the language and culture, protector of the identity of the community.

Both the Jews and the Catholic Irish have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve integration without complete assimilation. Why were the Lithuanians unable to do so? The small size of the community (around 8,000 people in 1914) was one factor. A sharp drop in these numbers occurred in 1917 as a result of the Anglo-Russian military agreement<sup>8</sup>. In the 1920s there was a further haemorrhage as a result of emigration to the USA and return migration to the independent Lithuania. Only after the Second World War, when the Russians annexed Lithuania, were there some new arrivals in Scotland. There was an obvious contrast with the Irish whose sense of identity was constantly refreshed by a continuous flow of migrants over several generations from the early 1800s until the 1950s. The Scottish Lithuanians, on the other hand, were effectively isolated after 1920 because of the restrictions on alien immigration which followed the Great War and the deteriorating economic circumstances of Scotland in the inter-war period which made it a much less attractive destination for their fellow countrymen (Devine 1999).

The Lithuanian community was also weakened by both internal and external pressures. Deep tensions were apparent between the minority of immigrants with socialist sympathies who became associated with the Lithuanian Socialist Federation of Great Britain and the 'conservative' majority who looked to the Catholic Church for leadership and guidance. The confrontation of ideas and values diminished the Lithuanians' ethnic solidarity. This was put to the test most severely during the economic crises of the 1930s when in the worst years of the Depression the unemployment rate was 70 percent (Millar 1998). Unlike the Italian community, who could find work for fellow countrymen in their own shops and cafes, most Lithuanians faced the bleak prospect of the dole and long-term unemployment. They were likely to suffer discrimination in some areas of the labour market because of their Catholicism and their distinctive identity. The consequent strategy in such circumstances was to submerge their identity, keep a low profile and become part of the Scottish community. By changing their names and dissociating themselves from the Lithuanian Catholic community, their original nationality could be concealed and the chances of securing a job improved. Thus, many Lithuanians adapted to life in Scotland by becoming invisible. Not surprisingly, as a once distinctive Lithuanian identity in Scotland is nowadays

close to extinction, there is consequently little awareness in the wider community of the Central European people who settled in Lanarkshire over a century ago. Their religion seems to have provided the Lithuanians with the only strong base to nurture their identity, culture and language. Having lost interest and contact with the strongly Catholic Lithuanian community in Scotland, many thousands of the four or five descendent generations of Lithuanians, have also lost the language their forefathers once brought with them.

## Notes

1. The author's term
2. Handley 1964: 143, 145, 146
3. e.g., The North-East Lanark Gazette (16 September 1899; Aug 29, 1903)
4. Archdiocese of Glasgow. 1902. "Letter of June 24 to J.Poutney". In *Lithuanian Box*.
5. Based on the oral testimony by Fr. J.McAndrew, the community priest
6. Oral testimony by A. Brown, a community member
7. Based on the oral testimony by Fr. J. McAndrew
8. Read more in Rodgers 1982

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## CHAPTER 8

# Religion, social history, and language maintenance African languages in post-apartheid South Africa

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### 1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the role of religion in language maintenance in South Africa, with a focus on the indigenous languages. This it does against the background of the socio-political changes that have taken place in the country since 1994, among them the end of apartheid, end of school segregation, adoption of a new language policy, to list but a few. The chapter examines the impact of these and other changes on the 'life' of the indigenous languages. It points out that currently, in South Africa there is a steady language shift from the indigenous languages to English especially in urban black communities. It argues that religion can play a vital role in staving off language shift, provided it is taught through the medium of indigenous languages rather than through the medium of an already powerful language, English, which is currently intruding the family domain, one that has traditionally been the preserve of the indigenous languages.

South Africa has a long history of language struggle, a history in which religion has been deeply embedded. On the one hand, religion has been implicated among the dehumanizing forces in South Africa. It has been entangled with economic, social, and political relations of power that have privileged some, but have excluded many from a fully human empowerment (Chidester, 1992:xi). Some of the European missionaries who settled in South Africa worked as spies for the colonial authorities (de Gruchy, 1995: 62; Cochrane, 1987) and so played a major role in the oppression to which the African people were subjected. The Church, and particularly the Dutch Reformed Church, was very instrumental in the creation of the ideology of apartheid (Loubser, 1987; Sundermeier, 1975; Hexham, 1981; Moodie, 1975). In this regard, Chidester (1996:75) notes that "the Dutch Reformed Church was organized as a branch of government. It rejected social equality of Blacks and Whites in South Africa, and promoted social differentiation and spiritual or cultural segregation". On the other hand, however, by introducing

literacy and education in South Africa, among other things, the missionaries contributed substantially to the development of the country and its linguistic heritage.

This chapter looks at the role of religion in language maintenance and language shift in contemporary South Africa, with a focus on the indigenous languages. In order to understand the process of language shift that is currently in place especially in urban black communities, one must understand the social history that underpins that process. Section 2 will be devoted to this history. Section 3 examines the role of religion in the development of indigenous African languages. Section 4 focuses on the socio-political changes that have taken place in the country and their impact on language practices in the family domain, with a focus on the language of religion. Section 5 concludes the discussion by looking into the implications of these language practices for the maintenance of the indigenous languages.

## 2. Religion, language, and social history

The term ‘religion’ is used here in the sense of Geertz (1973:90–91), who defines it as “a system of symbols which acts to ... establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations” in people. South Africa is not only a multilingual and multiracial country, but it also is religiously plural. Besides the indigenous religions commonly known as African Independent or Traditional Religions, South Africa is also home to nearly every religious tradition in the category referred to as “world religions”: Roman Catholics, Protestants, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Zionism, Zoroastrianism (Parseeism), etc. There are four major religions in South Africa. These include, in numerical order, Christianity, African Traditional Religions, Hinduism and Islam. The following table presents the statistics of membership of the various religions practised in the country.

Membership of the various religions as a percentage of the total

Religion	1980 census	1991 census
Christian churches	77,0	66,4
Hinduism	1,8	1,3
Islam	1,1	1,1
Judaism	0,4	0,2
Other faiths	0,1	0,1
No religion	2,1	1,2
Nothing/object	3,1	29,7*
Uncertain	14,4*	

\*The people in these two categories are believed to include many members of the African traditional religions. Source: Kritzinger (1993:2–4).

In spite of this religious pluralism, in the apartheid era South Africa was persistently declared a Christian country, underwritten by a particular Protestant, national understanding of Christianity. The country's inherent religious diversity was not officially acknowledged, nor was its linguistic diversity, except where this was convenient for the purpose of dividing up and thus have political control over the majority of the country's population, the Blacks. Christianity, says de Gruchy (1995:28), developed in South Africa along two distinct paths. In the first instance, it was the established religions of the European powers, Dutch and later British, who colonized the Cape from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. The second strand in the development of Christianity came as a result of missions to the indigenous peoples of South Africa, and to those who had been brought to the Cape as slaves from the East.

Earlier contacts between Europeans and the indigenous people of South(ern) Africa began not with the first European settlers in the Cape, the Dutch of 'Dutch East India Company', but rather with the Portuguese navigators in 1488, especially Bartolomeu Dias, whose cross-raising at Kwaaihoek on the southeastern coast is the first known Christian act in South Africa (Prozesky & de Gruchy, 1995). Almost a decade later, in 1497, another Portuguese sailor named Vasco da Gama gave a Christian name to eastern coastal area, *Tierra da Natal* (Land of the Nativity), for he sighted the area, the present-day Province of KwaZulu-Natal, on Christmas day. According to research reports, these earlier contacts between the Europeans and the Africans primarily had nothing to do with religion (e.g., Du Plessis, 1965, Prozesky 1995a, Beck 1989, Geertz 1973). If the account, given by Du Plessis 1965, of how the Dutch East India Company was founded is anything to go by, the contacts happened as a commercial enterprise:

In 1648, the Dutch East Indiaman "Haarlem" was stranded on the north-eastern shore of Table Bay . The crew reached the shore in safety, and made their way to the spot on which Cape Town was subsequently built. On their return to Holland five months later, two of the wrecked mariners named Leendert Jansz and Nicolaas Proot, drew up a document which they entitled "Remonstrance", in which is briefly set forth and explained the service, advantage and profit which will accrue to the United Netherlands Chartered East India Company, from making a Fort and Garden at the Cabo de Boa Esperance" ... The man to whom was entrusted the task of carrying out this important project was Jan van Riebeeck, a ship surgeon by profession, a man who thus became the founder of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope (Du Plessis,1965: 19)

It seems that, as Prozesky (1995b: 7) puts it, the European impact on South Africa was neither in its origins nor in its subsequent main line of development primarily motivated by religious conviction, and not especially by any great missionary concern for the soul of Africa.

Reporting back home on their contacts with the indigenous people of South(ern) Africa, Portuguese, Dutch and English traders asserted that Africans had no religion (Chidester, 1996: 15). This assessment was echoed by early missionaries to South Africa. The London Missionary Society, for instance, assumed that Africans provided a natural

focus for Satan's attention, and saw them as "essential sinners, as people of wild birth and dark color who, in the order of things, lived like children unknowingly close to evil" (Landau, 1995:xvi). Landau observes further that African worship of fetishes was described, in the words of Godefroy Loyer in 1714, as neither a cult, nor a religion, nor rational, because "not one of them [the Africans] knows his religion". As the Wesleyan missionary William J. Shrewsbury put it, the indigenous people of Southern Africa lived "without any religion, true or false" (Chidester, 1996: 13). J.T. van der Kemp wrote back to London in 1800 about Xhosa-speaking people he stayed with in the eastern Cape: "I never could perceive that they had any religion, nor any idea of the existence of God" (Van der Kemp, 1804: 432). Twenty years after van der Kemp, the Methodist missionary to the Xhosa, William Shaw, argued that they [i.e. the Xhosa] "cannot be said to possess any religion", while in the north, the Methodist T. L. Hodgson reported that the Tswana "appear to have no religious worship", "with no idea of a spirit" (Cope, 1977: 155, 367). Like the Xhosas, the Tswanas and other south(ern) Africans the Zulus were subject to denials of their religion. For instance, the survivors of the shipwreck of the *Stavenisee*, as reported by the Cape Governor Simon van der Stel to the Netherlands in 1689, had discovered an absence of religion among people in the eastern coastal region: "During the two years and eleven months which they passed amongst that people (i.e. the Zulus)", the Cape Governor recorded, "they were unable to discover amongst them the slightest trace of religion" (Chidester, 1996: 118–19). Further, Chidester notes that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, travel reports frequently coupled the lack of religion with the absence of other defining human features, such as the institution of marriage, a system of law, or any form of political organization. In many cases, the diagnosis of an alien society without religion was delivered bluntly in the assertion that such people were brutes and beasts by comparison to Europeans (1996: 13).

This initial, sweeping denial of African religion, says Chidester (1992: 38), represented South Africa as if it were a clear space for Christian conversion. Soon enough, however, Europeans began giving names to aspects of southern African behavior they called religious. Looking at BaTswana, for example, what might otherwise be called 'invoked ancestors' became demons, and 'dingaka' (priest healers) aware of the ancestors' presence were termed 'sorcerers' (Geertz, 1973). By the 1850s, Christian missionaries had been forced by their engagement with African resistance to conversion into acknowledging, grudgingly, that Africans did in fact have a religion, but one which, in the words of the government agent, J.C. Warner, in the eastern Cape, "[was] a regular system of superstition which answers all the purposes of any other false religion" (Chidester, *ibid.*).

The missionaries suddenly discovered that the Africans did indeed believe in a Supreme Being, a God, and that this God had a name: *Modimo* in Setswana and Sesotho; *uNkulunkulu* in isiZulu and siSwati, *Mudzimu* in Tshivenda; *xiKwembu* in Xitsonga; *uZimu* in isiNdebele, *Qamatha* in isiXhosa, etc. This Supreme Being is closely associated with natural phenomena. The essence of mystery, It evokes a sense of awe. It represents the ultimate source of man's well-being, but is not directly involved in

the affairs of the living. Its influence is mediated through the ancestors, *badimo* in Setswana, *amadlozi* in isiZulu, *makhulukulu* in Venda, *izinyanya* in isiXhosa, etc. One missionary after another suddenly found evidence of this once 'unknown God' among the many language groups in the region. W.J. Colenso found this evidence among the Zulu in the 1850s, Henry Callaway among the Xhosa in the 1870s, and D.F. Ellenberger among the Sotho-Tswana at the beginning of the twentieth century (Beck, 1989; Cope, 1977).

In brief, the missionaries found that all Africans in south(ern) Africa, simply by virtue of birth, actually had a religion, a common, generic religious system that could be identified as Bantu religion. The discovery that black South Africans had a God was not an accident. Chidester (1996) explains that this discovery came about after the European colonial authorities, in collusion with the church, had achieved their initial goal to conquer and impose their power over the African people. Put differently, the discovery of an indigenous religious system in Southern Africa depended upon colonial conquest and domination. Once conquered, dispossessed and contained under colonial control the African people, who supposedly lacked any religion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, all were credited with having the same religious system at century's end (du Plessis, [1911] 1965; Geertz, 1973; Hofmeyr & Cross, 1986; Cobbing, 1988). The section that follows examines the impact of the missionaries' discovery of African religions on the development of the indigenous languages.

### 3. Religion and language development

An assessment of the impact of missionaries in South Africa must acknowledge both good and ill. Indeed, Christian missions in South Africa were interlinked with the economic, social, and military advance of European colonial interests. In different ways, and with different intentions, Christian missionaries appeared as agents of conquest (Majeke, 1952). The implication of Christian missions in conquest gave rise to the common aphorism that "when the white men came to Africa, the black man had the land and the white man had the Bible, [but] now the black man has the Bible and the white man the land" (Zulu, 1972: 5). Although in some ways they were destructive, the missionaries also brought tangible advantages. Perhaps most comprehensive were literacy and education (Lye & Murray, 1980: 67; Ashley, 1980, 1982). From the start, they founded schools, which remained the basis of local educational systems. The Church became the first context where the indigenous languages were used as written languages. Put differently, the educational system of South Africa developed out of the work of the churches. So the kind of language used in church and school became the 'standard' among the new elite.

When missionaries first arrived in South Africa, they did not speak any local language. So, they could not achieve their goal to convert the Africans to Christianity. Initially they utilized a wide range of material means, goods and services, which might

help promote this aim. Soon they realized that to reach out to the indigenous people and preach to them the word of God, they had to learn local languages. For the missionaries, people had to get the Bible in their own language (Petersen, 1987). They were convinced that the experience of Pentecost, where everyone heard the message of the great deeds of God “in his own language” (Acts 2), had to become real also for this newly reached language group (Kritzinger, 1995). That is why so much effort was put into the reduction of the language to writing, and the subsequent translation of the Bible into the language. By the turn of the nineteenth century there were already full published Bibles in five South African indigenous languages: Setswana (1857), isiXhosa (1859), Sesotho (1881), isiZulu (1883) and Sepedi (Northern Sotho) (1904). The Setswana Bible of Robert Moffat was not only the first in an African language, but these five were among the first eight (Kritzinger, 1995).

European missionaries were later joined in their effort to spread the word of God by African independent churches that emerged and proliferated in number from the early twentieth century onwards (e.g., Strassburger, 1974). According to the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) (1985: 20–24) in 1984 among South African Blacks there were 2,419,000 Methodists (11%); 2,022,000 Roman Catholics (9.4%); 1,300,000 Dutch Reformed (6.1%); 1,224,000 Anglicans (5.7%); 948,000 Lutherans (4.4%); 516,000 Presbyterians (2.4%); 297,000 Congregationalists (1.4%); and 141,000 members of the Apostolic Faith Mission (0.7%). (For a more elaborate discussion on African independent churches, see Kamwangamalu, 2001a; Sundkler, 1961; Strassburger, 1974; Oosthuizen, 1987)). Most of these churches conduct their services in the medium of an African language. And this augurs well for the maintenance of these languages against the spread and hegemony of English. Language practices in the family domain, however, suggest that English is gradually replacing the African languages in virtually all spheres including religion. The section that follows discusses this situation and its implications for the survival of African languages.

#### 4. Religion and language maintenance and shift

In this section I examine the role of religion in language maintenance or shift against the background of the end of apartheid and concomitant socio-political changes that have taken place in South Africa. The most relevant changes for the purpose of our discussion are the new language policy and the social meanings with which the official languages have become associated (e.g., Kamwangamalu, 2001b). In terms of the language policy, South Africa is no longer officially the bilingual state it was claimed to be in the apartheid era, with English and Afrikaans as the sole official languages of the state. Rather, the country has given official recognition to 11 languages including English and Afrikaans and nine African languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Swati, Sotho, Pedi, Tswana, Tsonga and Venda. In terms of the social meanings, that is “the set of values which a language itself encodes or symbolizes and which its use commu-

nicates” (Downes, 1984:51), English has become far more hegemonic than it was in the apartheid era. The majority of parents [and this includes parents in some sections of the Afrikaans-speaking communities] want their children educated in English-medium schools: English is the language of power, prestige, and status; it is seen by many as an open sesame by means of which one can achieve unlimited vertical social mobility (Samuels, 1995). In contrast, Afrikaans has lost some of the privileges it had during the apartheid era: it’s no longer a compulsory school subject in the country’s educational system; it no longer has the political protection and financial support it was invested with in the apartheid era; it’s no longer the sole language of the army and is gradually being replaced by English in this domain to accommodate the members of former liberation armies who have been incorporated into the new South African National Defense Force (de Klerk and Barkhuizen, 1998). Finally, Afrikaans is struggling to shed its tarnished image and identity as the language of oppression, an image it has acquired because of its association with apartheid.

As for the African languages, nine of them have achieved official recognition and count among the country’s 11 official languages; they are more visible in the national media (especially television) than they were in the apartheid era; occasionally, some jobs both in the public as well as private sector now require knowledge of an African language. Despite these gains, compared to English and Afrikaans the African languages have no real cachet in the broader social, political and economic context. Against this background and of the political power and instrumental value of English in particular, there is now a tendency especially in urban black families to encourage the use of English in all spheres of social life including religion. As a result, English and all the other official languages including Afrikaans and the African languages co-exist in what Sridhar (1996: 54) describes as a state of organic tension, in which language practices enforce the supremacy of English over the other languages. The pressure that English exerts on the other languages, coupled with the international image of English as the language of upward social mobility, has to a large extent contributed to current trends towards language shift from the African languages not to Afrikaans but rather to English, especially in urban black communities.

The term language shift is invoked here in the sense of Fishman (1991: 1), who uses it to refer to “speech communities whose native languages are threatened because their intergenerational continuity is proceeding negatively, with fewer and fewer users (speakers, readers, writers and even understanders) or uses every generation”. The opposite of language shift is language maintenance. The literature indicates that many factors are responsible for language maintenance and shift, the most important among them being generation, the numerical strength of a group in relation to other minorities and majorities, language status, socio-economic value, education, and institutional support/government policies (see Sridhar, 1988; Fishman, 1991; Romaine, 1995). These factors, I argue, do not operate independently of one another, but they interact in complex ways in determining language maintenance and shift. For instance, quite a number of scholars maintain that generation is the single most vital factor of

language maintenance and shift (Sridhar, 1988; Fishman, 1991; Gupta & Yeok, 1995). It is argued that the ability and desire of parents to transmit the ancestral language to their children (Gupta & Yeok, 1995: 302), or the extent to which the language is used among the younger generations (Sridhar, 1988: 83), constitute the litmus test for language maintenance and shift. It is worth noting, however, that individuals' decisions to transmit or not to transmit the ancestral language is often influenced not by generation alone, but also by other factors, such as the status of the ancestral language in the wider society, government's language policy vis-à-vis the ancestral language in question, community support, etc. (Tollefson, 1991). A case in point is the shift from Indian languages to English in the South African Indian community. Prabhakaran (1998: 302) describes the shift as a conscious choice that Indian parents made for their children. She explains that parents forced their children to learn English and discouraged them from learning Telugu or any other Indian languages, because, first, the social identity associated with English was more desirable than that associated with Indian languages and, second, the government's language policies did not assign the Indian languages any role in the South African society.

The process of language shift that took place in the South African Indian communities and, before them, in the Khoisan communities, is now taking place again, this time in the urban black communities and to some extent in the white, middle class, Afrikaans-speaking communities. In this regard, Reagan (2001: 63) points out that although neither Afrikaans nor most of the indigenous African languages are in any immediate danger, language shift toward English is clearly taking place at an accelerated rate, and the number of spheres, and this includes religion, in which languages other than English can be used is rapidly declining. It seems that in these communities English is increasingly becoming the medium of communication in the family, a domain which is traditionally the preserve of the indigenous languages. Domain intrusion, observe Appel and Muysken (1987: 39, 41) is a clear warning sign of language shift. Fasold (1984: 213) makes a similar point, that "when a speech community begins to choose a new language in domains formerly reserved for the old one, it may be a sign that language shift is in progress". Along these lines, Fishman (1989: 206) remarks that "...what begins as the language of social and economic mobility ends, within three generations or so, as the language of the crib as well, even in democratic and pluralism-permitting contexts". For instance, in a survey of language use in the family by black high school teenagers in the Durban area in South Africa, Kamwangamalu (2003) found that the teenagers use English to meet most of their communication needs, including religious ones. It seems that the use of English in the family is deliberately encouraged by black parents, for they see English as an open sesame by means of which their children can achieve upward social mobility. In contrast, and although the new Constitution of South Africa grants them equal, official status as English, the African languages do not have a real cachet in the broader socio-economic context. Consequently, it seems to matter less, especially in urban black families, whether or not the children use African languages for religious or other purposes. The implica-

tions of the children's language practices for the African languages are obvious. The hegemony of English leaves very little or no room at all for the African languages to be used neither outside nor inside of the family domain. Unless urban black families change their language practices at home and particularly in the sphere of religion, the African languages will face attrition and eventual death.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight the current trend towards language shift from the African languages to English especially in urban black communities in post-apartheid South Africa. It has noted that the shift is taking place against the backdrop of the country's social history and of the socio-political changes it has experienced in recent years. It has argued that, in spite of these changes, religion can play a major role in staving off language shift, provided it is practised through the medium of the African languages rather than through the medium of an already powerful language, English. The fact that English is intruding virtually all spheres of language use including religion especially in the family domain does not augur well for the maintenance of the indigenous African languages.

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## CHAPTER 9

# Creating God in our image The attributes of God in the Yoruba socio-cultural environment

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Bi eeyan o si irunmọlẹ o si  
Where there are no humans there is no divinity  
(Yoruba proverb)

### 1. Introduction

The study that I report here is an application of the sociology of language to the analysis of religious practice. It focuses specifically on the description and analysis of terms and expressions that occur in the context of religious performance among Yoruba speakers in South-western Nigeria. In the study, I am concerned with how the words and expressions used as attributes of God, in the context of what I describe later in this chapter as petition-prayers, among Pentecostal Christian groups and prophetic movements today reflect the socio-cultural realities of the Yoruba people. One major aim of the study was to explain the relationship between these linguistic expressions and the religious area of Yoruba everyday experiences. In trying to demonstrate the social and cultural frameworks that underpin the production of these terms and expressions, I will also attempt to show that religion and/or religious practices among the Yoruba people must be understood within a sociological framework that sees religious practices as pragmatic, need-directed and utilitarian. From this perspective, I, therefore, argue that Yoruba language use functions to support such utilitarian/pragmatic agenda in the religious domain. Furthermore, I try to conclude that the linguistic coding of petition-prayers specifically as a genre in Yoruba religious performance is underlain by some socio-cultural framework for making meaningful connection between the life crises of the Yoruba and a supra-empirical being created to be above these crises. [1]

The literature shows that language cannot only be used to create or construct social reality but that it is also used to maintain it (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999; Easland, 1981; Berger and Luckmann, 1981). As noted by Devitt and Sterelny (1987:6),

language plays some extra-ordinary roles in people's lives. Language is the key ingredient in the very constitution of knowledge (Jaworski and Coupland, *ibid*: 4). The use of language, very often, objectifies certain realities among the community of users. Among the Yoruba, the use of language in petition-prayers during a religious event seems, on one hand, to objectify powerlessness. On the other hand, the Yoruba use language as a persuasive tool to gain material or spiritual power for engaging and/or conquering their adversaries. According to Simpson (1980), among those things that a Yoruba person carries in his/her mind as guides for conduct and for the definition of reality are two sentiments. The first is the belief that people have power to bring harm and misfortune to others through magical means.

The second sentiment is that the Yoruba believe that people are not born equal and therefore, those with higher status must be respected. For example, the sentiment of respect and/or deference to a superior is evident in the Yoruba approach to representing an *orisa* (deity/divinity) or God. This is an approach that reflects the group's own social structure where people do not only recognize those above them but also defer to them. Thus when seeking a favour from such people whether they are human beings or deities, Yoruba etiquette considers it improper for a younger person or a subordinate to approach and speak to the superior person or being directly. In other words, for the Yoruba, language is not just an interaction tool, it also serves expressive functions. This is why among the Yoruba, seeking a special favour from a king, for example, involves the ritual of praise chanting that is done within the *oriki* genre. The underlying motive is to endear a king to themselves, re-establish or re-enact the relationship between them and remind him of their loyalty. In the process they remind the king of his reciprocal duties.. In the *oriki*, stories are often told of the wonderful deeds of a personage or a deity in order to situate the need for him/her to oblige a subject or worshipper. For example, in the *oriki* to the Goddess *ṣun* (the Goddess of fertility), the worshipper says:

The way is clear  
 The *Ọba* of *Ijumu*, the beauty is out (the King/Queen of *Ijumu*)  
 The aged *Oroki* who occupies the forest (*Oroki* = praise-name for a town)  
 It is from inside the calabash that she fights people (Badejo, 1991: 87).

In this *oriki*, *ṣun*'s beauty and wisdom are praised and the image of power is conjured for the deity. Here, for instance, *Ṣun* is praised as powerful because she is an invisible and a mysterious fighter who fights from inside the calabash.

According to Murphy (1988:8), there are many metaphors of divinity among the Yoruba that seem to underlie or represent certain shared values among the people. These metaphors fall into three categories: (a) metaphors that refer to values; (b) metaphors that refer to power; and (c) those that refer to order. Murphy (*ibid.*) posits that it is in the way of values, as demonstrated in the way the Yoruba people honour their ancestors, that we can see the premium placed on the religious practice of petition-prayers. For example, the appearance of *egungun* (masked dancers who

represent ancestors) otherwise known as *ara-orun* (heavenly beings) at festivals show them hearing petitions from the living that they would carry back to the ancestral community in heaven. As noted also by Murphy (ibid.), women frequently approach the *egungun* to ask their favour in unlocking the mystery of generation and grant them children from heaven (p.9). The process of asking for favour involves singing and chanting praises of the departed and testifying to their generosity and efficacy. For example, the following praise-song is for an *egungun*:

Ori-le-kee, my Father  
 Rohun Jagbe. Famous king  
 Le-kee. Father of witches.  
 Arowosoju. I swear that I am not a witch  
 One who strikes terror like the snake  
 Whoever sees the snake and does not flee, plays with death (Murphy, ibid:9)

In the *oriki* above, the image of *egungun* presented are those created from the social and cultural roots of the Yoruba people. Here, the *egungun* is perceived as more powerful than witches (one phenomenon the Yoruba believe could constitute an impediment to successful living) because he is not only a terror, he is, like the snake, death itself.

As noted by Badejo (1991:88), an *oriki* seeks to elevate its subject as well as to project a socio-cultural goal or an ideal. It talks about history as well as attributes that project the cultural goal or ideal. It sometimes sets to record the events of a man's life in most favourable and glorious light and to exalt and glorify him (also, Akinyemi, 1991:142). Some *oriki* refer to qualities of character or physical appearance such as bravery, leadership in war, royalty, generosity, beauty and so on. For example, the *orisa* – Ogun (God of metallurgy) is projected by his devotees as a dark-warrior with blood shot eyes and praises to him reflect the fierce strength he is projected to possess. Akinyemi (1991:31) observes, however, that the purpose of *oriki* is to evoke in people feelings of well-being and pride, as well as confidence for the present and courage for the future.

## 2. Yoruba cosmology

In the literature, religion and/or religious practices have been explained in various ways. However, Barret (1991), observes that the study of religion, particularly in Africa, has shown that in the place of the classical perspectives to religious beliefs such as Marxists, an intellectualist paradigm in which a cardinal principle of accepting the belief in God at the face value is more fruitful. This is because the intellectualist framework takes as its analytic starting point the actor's belief in God. In this, there is a need to recognize that people believe in non-empirical entities or spiritual beings and associated with such belief is awe, faith and the sacred. The significance of these

beliefs is that they have causal consequences for social action. That is, these beliefs are translated into mundane social action in the lives of religious practitioners.

Furthermore, Bourdillon (1991:146) notes that the thrust of the intellectualist paradigm is in holding that;

a system of religious beliefs provides one kind of intellectual framework into which people can fit the events which disturb them. Indeed, it can be argued that most African traditional religions are precisely attempts to provide an intellectual framework by which problematic events are to be understood.

Bourdillon (ibid.) argues that even if we were to place more emphasis on symbolic, social and psychological functions of religions, we must still agree that religion invariably involves some kind of cognitive scheme, and what is dominant in such a scheme is the explanation of misfortune. For the African, it is a system of interpreting and coping with problems. For Bowie (2000), religious practice in a place like among the Yoruba show people with a super-naturalistic vision of reality with a discourse of God and the Devil, miracles, and an instrumental understanding of religion (p.249).

Thus in this study, my approach to religious practices among the Yoruba people is the intellectualist approach which Barret (ibid.) describes as taking the traditional religious beliefs at their face value or as theoretical systems intended for the explanation, prediction and control of space-time events (p.6). In other words, I want to view religious practices among the Yoruba people of West Africa as a complex process of explanations, prediction and control of space-time events in the lives of the people. It seems, therefore, that I can begin also to view petition-prayers as one interpretive tool for the understanding and resolution of life crises among the Yoruba.

According to Mbiti (1982), the African does not only believe in God, s/he holds that God and other invisible beings are actively engaged in the world of men. Also, Africans generally interpret their life's experiences from the point that the universe is created and sustained by God (p.196). Mbiti (ibid.) says further that in practice, the African looks for the usefulness or otherwise of the universe to himself. That is he seeks what the world can do for him and how he can use the world for his own good. It is, therefore, not surprising to note that among the Yoruba, religion or religious practice is, as noted earlier, handled pragmatically as manifested in their saying:

*orisa bi o ba le gbe mi* : orisa if you cannot help me  
*se mi bi o ti ba mi* : leave me where/as you met me

The two lines above, when interpreted, mean that an orisa or a deity that is perceived to be unable to positively impact on or change the fortune of a devotee should not venture to do anything at all for the devotee. Also the Yoruba say:

*Ori tio ba gbeni laasin*

It is the Inner Head/Fate that is supportive that we propitiate

These two sayings above seem, again, to confirm my view that the Yoruba people's need for a deity or God is utilitarian. That is to say that the major function of a deity,

among the Yoruba, is to serve to benefit a devotee such as to deliver or accede to his/her requests. In fact, the Yoruba people have been known to abandon one deity for another whenever they found one unhelpful. The Yoruba could actually dump a deity (represented in some figurine) in a river and fashion out another when the former has failed. This pragmatic approach to religious practice does not, however, mean that the Yoruba can dispense with one religious practice or the other. The desire to create or fashion a deity and/or shift alliance to another shows that there seems to be no meaning in the life of the Yoruba without religion. As noted by Manus (1999:2), the Yoruba are incurably religious people. I think to understand this deep-rooted need for a deity or God one has to look at the socio-cultural environment of the Yoruba people.

According to Lawuyi (1986), for the Yoruba, one model of reality is that in which human motivations and achievements are enclosed in a concept of God's purposes. Lawuyi is of the view that the Yoruba think that those efforts supported by God lead to success or victory over enemies (p.102). Pre-Islamic, pre-Christian and pre-colonial Yorubaland was predominantly agrarian with people dependent mainly on nature on which they exercised limited power in terms of technology. Yoruba people also engaged in some other activities like hunting, crafts like blacksmithing, carving, cloth-weaving and so on. Today, the Yoruba have become incorporated into the global economic system with all its uncertainties for a Third World country like Nigeria where the majority of the Yoruba people could be found. A substantial population of the Yoruba are still peasant farmers. There are new areas of employment such as the bureaucracy, manufacturing industries and the service sector of the economy within which we can find Yoruba people in Nigeria today. Just as there were uncertainties before the contact with the new religions and cultures, the global incorporation of the Yoruba seems to have made life more imponderable, though in different areas and/or dimensions.

As noted by Barber (1981:729), Yoruba cosmology presents man as a solitary individual picking his way in the world between a variety of forces, some benign, some hostile and many ambivalent. Thus the Yoruba person seeks, in his religious activities, to placate these various forces and ally himself with them in an attempt to thwart his rivals and enemies in human society. In other words, the world is perceived by the Yoruba as a harsh place that is full of obstacles that are very often perceived to be greater than ordinary men. According to Godelier (1981), in such a society where man is perceived to have limited control, the sphere where he does not exercise control appears to him as powers superior that he must represent to himself, explain and reconcile to and, therefore, control indirectly (p208).

Although Marxists might see religious behaviour or belief as false consciousness, it is the argument of the intellectualist, as mentioned earlier, that we should not focus on the truth or falsehood of the belief in God but rather on the centrality of that belief to social action. Barber (op. cit.), observes that the Yoruba believe that human beings are one another's enemies and that most misfortunes are caused by the nefarious

activities of witches, wizards and evil people employing their services. The Yoruba also hold that humans are confronted in their daily life by a lot of adversaries called *ajogun* (literally: warriors) that debar their success and/or progress in life. It bears no repeating then that, for me, an understanding of the meaning of religion to the Yoruba people should be sought in their action or struggle against these 'warriors'. In other words, a religion should be capable of providing the Yoruba people 'arms' to confront their material and spiritual adversaries, otherwise such a religion would not stand the test of time among them. This is why it was, and still is, not unusual to find among the Yoruba people changing either their faith or affiliation within the same faith or even combining Islam or Christianity with traditional religious practices a couple of times in the course of their life. The motivation for this practice could be found in the search for a power that would ensure a successful life – money, children and good health which constitute *ayeere* (good life) for the Yoruba person. This may also be one reason why Lawuyi (1986: 102), says that among the Yoruba, the only way to proceed to the future, with its perceived uncertainties, seems to be through the appropriation or re-appropriation of the power of God. For the Yoruba, the deity is absolute power. That is, this creation of theirs – God – is informed by absolute power essence:

*Oba bi olorun ko si.*

There is no king as God.

It is true that in most cultures, especially in Judaeo-Christian and Islamic religions, God is a King. Also, as borrowed into Yoruba from Christianity, God is *oba awon oba* (the King of kings). However, for the Yoruba, the concept of 'king' on which the deity is created is *'iku baba yeye'*: 'death, father-mother' (i.e. the awesome power). Thus when we begin to examine the attributes of the deity in the Yoruba socio-cultural environment we will note that to a large extent a lot of the attributes mark the theme of power. This is why it will seem a profitable endeavour to approach the deity in the socio-cultural life of the Yoruba people as expressed in the choice of words and expressions used also from the perspective of relations of power. When there are needs, whether or not they are attainable, the Yoruba think they must seek the intervention of the deity in whom their 'powerlessness' has been resolved into power. That is the powerlessness of the Yoruba is resolved in the power of the deity. Therefore, there is the need to form an alliance with this power in whatever is said and done with regard to it. The Yoruba, for a long time, associated religious practice with material values. It is thus not surprising that the practice of Islam and Christianity among them, today, is not immune from the concrete material reality of the people.

With changing social structure, the need for *the use of power* has become more critical among the Yoruba: *olorun wa gba ija mi ja*: 'God take on my fight' because you are *balogun*- the 'war captain' has become a 'sing-song'. The theme of power in relation to the struggle and/or competition for the good things of life has become particularly focused following the introduction of the IMF-inspired Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria in the 1980's which has caused a lot of social dislocation

in Nigeria. In several areas of their life, the Yoruba, just like people from other ethnic groups in Nigeria, have found it difficult to meet personal needs. The state seems to have failed. The political and business elites and their collaborators are perceived to have cornered the good things of life. So, it is not surprising to observe the tremendous growth in religious institutions in the country in recent years where for the larger majority of the powerless and poor they think a greater power resides. For example, a large number of those who cannot take their various ailments to hospitals due mainly to poverty resort to looking for miracle healing. The motivations are more of lack as well as neglect from the state rather than belief in faith healing. The state is, to them, like a deity that is unwilling to help. Therefore, if there exists another power greater than the state, it would be foolish of the Yoruba not to seek its intervention in their affairs.

### 3. Petition-prayers and the image of God

Having placed Yoruba religious practice within the foregoing perspective, I will now try to demonstrate how language is used to carry and /or support this religious system in the manner the Yoruba represent God. In traditional Yoruba setting, ritual sacrifices can be offered to appease deities in order to curry their favour. Other religious practices that are thought efficacious in achieving benefits from the supernatural include *iwure* (invocation), *ofo* (incantation) and *ayajo* (charming), prayer songs which incorporate praise (*oriki*) and petition. Petition-prayers fall within the mode of praise-petition/-worship in the Pentecostal term. The praise part tends to express a supplicant's adoration of the deity while petition is meant to ask for some obligation on the part of the deity. The words and expressions used in praises have the contents of *oriki* of *orisa* (the Yoruba divinities) while in their deployment they function like incantatory declamations. Actually, a prayer of this nature is not about praise but about 'commanding' the deity to do one's bidding:

<i>Baba iwo ti o se ti Lagabja wa se temi</i>	Father, you that has made it possible for X
<i>Oba olowo gbogboro ti yo omo lofin</i>	Lord, who saves his children from the abyss
<i>a ni ki o wa jeki o ri bee fun mi.</i>	Let it be so for me

In structure, the praise section is like a prologue to a list of 'demands' or a 'shopping list' which constitute the petition. In the process of uttering this petition, comparisons are drawn between the deity and objects in the material world. Thus metaphors, similes and metonyms are used based also on those things in the Yoruba socio-cultural environment. There are repetitive utterances, parallelisms and sound symbolisms (sound mimetic) that bear resemblance to the formula of incantations: *ogbaagba ti n gba ara adugbo*: (the rescuer/refuge that rescues/saves people in the neighbourhood), *eye kii fo ko fori sogi*: (the bird does not fly head-into the tree), *obamba teremuteremu*

(untranslatable). In other words, the expressions used contain images drawn from the diverse areas of experience of the Yoruba world. As demonstrated by Forster (1989), in relation to Longhouse Iroquois' use of language in the religious domain, the Yoruba also find their place in and relate to the cosmological order by extending the same system of terms and expressions used in their social environment to it. A Nigerian news magazine – **The Week**, for example, notes this recourse to indigenous idioms:

And in a bid to meet the aspiration of worshippers, ancient paganism [is] mixed with Christianity and the desire in most churches has been to gather as many members as possible... (April8, 2002: p14)

What **The Week** refers to in the quote above as ancient paganism is the syncretic practice among Nigerian Pentecostal churches today where traditional practices are combined with Christian practices. For me, what I think is that the performance of petition-prayers derives mainly from the underlying 'powerlessness' that is perceived by the Yoruba as the basis of failure in life experiences. Therefore to seek the intervention of the superior power, the Yoruba seem to have evolved for themselves expressions and words (including sometimes the manner of their delivery) that are believed to constitute the key to opening the door to the deity (that power). In other words, language and language use become critical to the success of their approach to seeking the deity. This is why the Yoruba use of language to approach the deity reflects not just reverence but subordination to, and recognition of the absolute power of the deity. This is demonstrated particularly in what today is referred to as "shopping list prayers" where what I call, in this paper, prayer-salutation forms a prologue.

#### 4. Prayer-salutation: The *oriki* of God

The *oriki* within which the Yoruba now address God, and which form the crucible where God is forged, in their prayers can be uttered or chanted in some rhythmic form by a priest or somebody selected to pray in a Yoruba Christian gathering. They are not learnt formally but those who know them learn them passively sometime in the course of their vocation. The prayer-salutation style has been a particularly popular prayer mode within African indigenous churches such as the Aladura and the Celestial Churches but the practice is diffusing into prayer performances of Yoruba-medium Pentecostal churches today.

Akiwowo (1983: 144), observes that *oriki* is an attributive name expressing what the child is or what it is hoped that it will become. They are also praise-chants made up of sacred chants for the divinities and secular chants for kings, titled men and other people. An *oriki* contains recitation of achievements of an individual or group meant to make full their self- images as well as to create a fuller sense of self-awareness or identity in themselves or their groups. According to Akiwowo (*ibid.*), the purpose of *oriki*, apart from preserving records of achievements, is to spur listeners or addressees

to greater achievements. They are like names but they differ from proper names in that they do not have any relationship to the circumstances of birth, pregnancy or socio-political occurrences at the time of birth of the ones to which they are applied. In chanting *oriki*, they are meant to spur or boost the morale of their possessors to greater achievements.

In this study, I discuss an *oriki* that is chanted in the process of prayer offering to spur a deity on to oblige a supplicant. Among the Yoruba, salutation is very important in seeking a favour from a superior or even a stranger. In traditional religious practice, the Yoruba offer prayer songs in shrines accompanied often by ritual dance of different types depending on the *orisa* or deity. In addition, apart from *ẹbọ* (sacrifice) which are offered to *orisas* in requesting good health, children and wisdom, the Yoruba also render praises to the divinities. As Murphy noted, the Yoruba offer these praises because they believe that humans grow when there is a divine exchange of energy:

...without the *ashe* of the *orisas*, human beings would despair...  
And without the *ashe* of sacrifice, the *orisas* would wither and die (1988: 15)

Furthermore, it is important to mention here again that the Yoruba religious vision is a vision that finds human destiny rooted in the breath of God. The Yoruba not only believe that nothing happens by chance but also that it is the duty of human beings to recognize the need to grow in the life force/breath (*ashe*) of the divinity by respecting elders and honouring the *orisas* (Murphy, 1988:20). They perform these duties through offering sacrifice (*ẹbọ*) and praise to the Gods.

## 5. Data collection and analysis

The data for this study comprised audio tape recordings as well as personal observations from participation in petition-prayers. The data contain proper names as well as descriptions of the deity couched in similes, metaphors and metonyms in Yoruba. I have taken an interpretive approach to these data which I have also attempted to supplement with some ethnographic information.

Proper names in Yoruba, apart from being constitutive of histories of individuals, are also very often attributives. Yoruba names convey information about beliefs, behavioural patterns and the history of communities of people. In relation to *orisa*/divinities, names represent perceptions of, as well as attitudes towards spiritual beings within the Yoruba cultural belief systems. By the deployment of these expressions, the Yoruba create images of deities that conform to their aspiration. These expressions represent such attributes as power, royalty/majesty, awesomeness, beneficence, among others.

In speech interaction, names are presented as addresses and for the Yoruba these addresses are partly constitutive of the *oriki* genre in the ethnography of communication/speaking. As individuals have addresses or *oriki* so do divinities. These *oriki* to

the deity can be sung or uttered by the priest in the process of prayer. They are expressions that rarely occur in colloquial talk and carry meanings mainly in the context of petition-prayers. In terms of content, they are metaphors with heavy semantic loads. They contain established themes within the Yoruba culture but of adaptive flexibility to current religious practice among the people. As Godelier (1981) observed, the construction of such attributes comes through the operative system of reasoning by analogy which can be interpreted or understood both as a way of speaking and a way of thinking (p. 207).

The Yoruba, like many other people with similar worldview, seek to see and create an invisible world wherein lives God in the structures of the visible in which they live. In other words, the conception of their relation to God is underlain by their concrete material relations in the visible world (as below, so above). Salami (2000: 207) notes that traditional Yoruba cosmology allows for this kind of interaction and interconnection between the world of material objects and the world of spiritual entities. Thus, it is not unexpected that the attributes by which God is constructed and defined derive from the concrete material reality of the Yoruba – a reality that is also influenced by relations of social and economic power. Also, as Barber (1981) suggested, in Yorubaland, relations between humans and *orisa* (the deities) are in some sense a projection of relations between people in society. She notes that Yorubaland is a hierarchical society dominated by the institution of divine kingship and articulated by a series of chiefly titles of different grades and ranks (p. 724). This is why it is not surprising to observe that in their expressions the Yoruba create largely a deity that is all-power. In the following sections, I will attempt to thematically treat these attributes.

### 5.1 The attribute of power

There is a lot to be encountered here. In the words and expressions gathered, God is seen not only as powerful but God is also conceived as power itself. This is represented in images of animals like the lion and leopard:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| (1) <i>Ekun oko farao:</i>  | Leopard the husband/conqueror of<br>Pharaoh   |
| (2) <i>Kiniun eya juda:</i> | The lion of Juda (Old Testament<br>borrowing) |

Among the Yoruba, when a person is described as ‘*ekun*’, it means that s/he is a strong and brave person. The animal metaphor is that of the leopard (*ekun*) that can devour its less powerful preys. The image might not be that the Yoruba God is a bully preying on weaker beings but the image of the leopard is that of power. The Yoruba people can be found mainly in the rainforest and savannah grassland regions of Nigeria where in the past they could have had encounters with this animal. Although the image of the lion as symbolic of strength (and royalty) seems universal, it is also not impossible that

the Yoruba people had direct encounters with this animal from which the symbolism then derived. To have a God that is an 'ẹkun' in relation to the terror that Pharaoh represents in the Old Testament is to say that this deity that could conquer Pharaoh must be very strong and powerful. The awesomeness of the power of the Yoruba God is shown further in the *oriki* in (3) to (6) below:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| (3) <i>ẹrujeje nla leti okun pupa</i> | The terror by the Red Sea                      |
| (4) <i>omimi ti o mi ile aye</i>      | the tremor that shakes the world               |
| (5) <i>omimi ti n mi igi oko</i>      | the tremor that shakes the trees in the jungle |
| (6) <i>Oloju ina:</i>                 | One with blazing eyes (like the deity – Sango) |

The image that *omimi* in (4) and (5) conveys here is that of a force that shakes the apparently unshakable but what this actually denotes is 'controller of the world's destiny'. There is no concrete entity that can be referred to as 'omimi' in Yoruba rather it is a creation from the word 'shake'. Furthermore, the Yoruba God is a warrior as shown in the images and attributes of a warrior (7, 9, 10, 12 and 20):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (7) <i>balogun ọrun</i>                                  | heaven's war –captain  |
| (8) <i>aaṛẹ agbaye</i>                                   | the President of the world/universe  |
| (9) <i>Arogun-ma-tidi</i>                                | One who does not run away from battles   |
| (10) <i>Ajagun ma gbọ girigiri ese<br/>a ja bi oogun</i> | a stealth warrior/fighter<br>one who fights like charms (efficacious as a charm)         |
| (11) <i>a soroomu</i>                                    | the unconquerable  |
| (12) <i>igi ti n gbe igi iye mi</i>                      | a tree that swallows the tree of life  |
| (13) <i>ogiri gbangba a sọṛọ ko laya</i>                 | an impregnable wall (a fortress)   |
| (14) <i>ọba to fi were daamu ọlogbọn</i>                 | the king that punishes the wise with insanity<br>(makes insanity a test for the wise)    |
| (15) <i>ọga awọn ọga</i>                                 | the boss of bosses   |
| (16) <i>ọlọrun to gun igbi leṣin</i>                     | the one that rides the storm like a horse  |
| (17) <i>ọba to t'ọju alaseju bo mi<br/>gbigbona</i>      | the king that punishes the proud by submerging their faces in boiling water              |
| (18) <i>alewilese aleselewi</i>                          | one who can do and undo  |
| (19) <i>Ajagun ma fehinti</i>                            | one who is not battle weary  |
| (20) <i>ọbamba teremu teremubamba</i>                    | (no specific meaning but from the sounds this name seems to represent the immense power) |

- |      |                                       |   |
|------|---------------------------------------|---|
| (21) | kikiida agbara                        | (He) is all but power   |
| (22) | gbengbeleku t' o da nibi ti o wu      | gbengbeleku, that is nice where he chooses                                      |
| (23) | <i>oba to pa ti o seni to le ji</i>   | the king that takes a life that no one can restore                              |
| (24) | <i>oba to n ji ti o seni to le pa</i> | the king who gives life no one can take   |
| (25) | <i>ẹlẹyinju ogunna</i>                | one whose eyeballs glow like charcoal (may be a reference to the deity – Sango) |

The words *oogun*, *igi* and *ogiri* in 11, 13 and 14 above are used metaphorically to refer to God. *Oogun* (charm) as in: *a ja bi oogun* (one who fights like a potent charm): is one element the Yoruba hold to be potent and can be used to confront/fight an adversary. Its use does not require any physical confrontation and since charms fight this way, God must also be one being that not only fights quietly but he is efficacious as a power. *Igi* (tree) as in *igi ti o gbe igi iye mi* in (13) is probably a borrowing from the Old Testament story of the confrontation between Moses and the magicians in Pharaoh's court where Moses' staff turned into a snake and swallowed a magician's snake. The staff of Moses (*igi*) has become a metonym for the Yoruba God. One can also see the use of 'ogiri' along the same line: God is a wall but *ogiri gbangba a soro kolaya* – an impregnable wall (a fortress) within which supplicants can seek refuge in times of 'war' or away from the ravages of life crises.

Among Yoruba Christians today, God (and/or Jesus) is addressed as *balogun* (7) in the context of prayer performance. The name *balogun* is a title that means a 'war captain' or 'leader of the fighters'. The *oriki balogun* has become both a name and a title that is now used to address God for it is conceived that he leads the community (of believers) against its enemies. It seems to mark the attribute of power (leadership and bravery). The other expressions that come under this category are (8), (10) and (20). These attributes seem also to remind one of the Old Testament God who was always called upon to lead the sons of Israel against their adversaries.

The *oriki oba t' o fi were daamu ọlogbọn*: though seems to give an image of a harsh or wicked God, it is not strange particularly if understood from the perspective of Yoruba worldview. It has been mentioned earlier that one purpose a deity serves among the Yoruba is to defend human beings against their adversaries. In other words, it is not out of tune with a deity's character to destroy the enemy of a supplicant. This character is like that of the Yoruba divinity – *ogun* whose force can be channelled into the peaceful arts of agriculture or the terrible ones of war (Murphy, 1988: 11). It is, however, possible that this characterisation of God may represent one of two things. The first is that it may derive from the Yoruba belief that insanity is caused by God (as a consequence of destiny) while the second may be a way of demonstrating that God has power over all human beings including the wise (here wisdom is understood as an attribute of power). The greatness/extent of this God's power is reflected in *kikiida agbara*: one full of power (22) and *oga awon oga*: the boss of bosses (16). The world is ruled by 'bosses' because they have power but if the Yoruba God is the boss of all

bosses, it is clear that the Yoruba supplicant would seek refuge in times of need or crisis with no other being than this bigger boss.

It is interesting to observe that the Yoruba, in spite of their belief in destiny, has created, today, a God that “can do an undo”: *alewilese, aleselewi* (19). Placed against the Yoruba view that the *ori* (destiny) one has chosen at the time of creation cannot be altered, one may find it difficult to reconcile destiny with a situation where a supplicant seeks a change to say, his/her ill-fortune by invoking the *oriki* ‘alewilese’ to endear God to look positively towards himself/herself. In other words, it seems that for the Yoruba, in spite of all odds, a superior power could be made that is capable of all possibilities.

## 5.2 The attribute of royalty/majesty

In Yorubaland, the *oba* (king) and the *ijoye* (chiefs) are very crucial institutions in the life of a community. As noted by Fadipe (1991:205), a king, especially in pre-colonial times, was not only revered but he was considered second to the deities (*oba alase ekeji orisa*: the commander and wielder of authority, next to the *orisa*) and his words were considered sacred or sacrosanct. A king’s authority could not, in most cases, be challenged. He lived a prosperous life and his palace symbolized this prosperity. If Yoruba kings lived this life and were so regarded, it follows, therefore, that there are no other earthly beings, apart from the kings, in Yorubaland to whom the Yoruba could compare the supreme deity: God or Olodumare. In other words, the Yoruba God must incarnate (in greater forms) the characteristics of the earthly king as shown in the following terms and expressions which have become the *oriki* used for God today ( 27 – 30):

(27) <i>Kabiyesi ~ ka bi o o si</i>	One no one can question/whose authority cannot be challenged
(27) <i>oba awon oba</i>	King of kings
(28) <i>oba nla to n fobaje</i>	the Great King that crowns other kings
(29) <i>obaluaye</i>	Lord of the world
(30) <i>oba atayese</i>	The king who corrects every wrong on Earth

The *oriki* in (27) to (30) above are used usually in marking the majestic character of the Yoruba king especially (27), (29) and (30). It is rather strange that the *oriki obaluaye* is now given to Christian/Muslim God because it belongs originally to the king and deity Sango – the divinity of thunder and lightning – who is thought of by the Yoruba as ruthless, crafty and powerful. It is true that the Yoruba king wielded much power especially in pre-colonial times and that his words were final. In other words, the use of the attribute *kabiyesi/ka bi o o si* (27) sits very well and seems in order for a God that the Yoruba Christians perceive today as the controller of their destiny. Also, the

*oriki* in (28) and (29) make God in the image of prominent Yoruba kings like the Alaafin of *oyò* and the *oni* of Ife who have authorities to crown (lesser) kings or make people kings.

The Yoruba God is a prosperous one and his prosperity is manifested in the type of crown he wears and the vastness of his palace as described in the following *oriki*:

- |      |                              |   |
|------|------------------------------|---|
| (31) | <i>alade wura</i>            | one who has a gold crown                        |
| (32) | <i>alaafin òlā</i>           | owner of a prosperous palace/a palace of wealth |
| (33) | <i>alagbala nla ode ọrun</i> | owner of the vast home in heaven                |

Yoruba kings are known to wear beaded crowns. Thus for God – the king – a gold crown defines him apart from the earthly kings as greater and more prosperous. God’s capability is also demonstrated in (34) to (37) below:

- |      |                                  |   |
|------|----------------------------------|---|
| (34) | <i>ọba to tẹlẹ bi ẹni tẹni</i>   | King that has the earth spread like a sleeping mat  |
| (35) | <i>a tọba tan</i>                | one eminently qualified to be king                  |
| (36) | <i>ọba ti n jọba loju ọba</i>    | the king that is king in the life of another king   |
| (37) | <i>ọba ti o n jọba lẹhin ọba</i> | the king that is king at the demise of another king |

The meaning of the *oriki* in (34) could be derived from the Yoruba perception of the mystery of creation. In Yoruba creation myth, the first thing Olodumare (God) did was to send a cockerel and a chameleon to the world with some soil because the primordial world was full of water. The soil was to be used to cover the water and the result is the earth we have today. In using this as an *oriki* of God, the Yoruba recognize that this God is powerful. For (35) to (37) the Yoruba God cannot be less than a king because he is not only eminently qualified (35), he can be king whether or not there is an existing king (36 and 37). In other words, this God is invested with greater power by the Yoruba people than their earthly kings.

### 5.3 The protective God

As noted earlier in this chapter (p.102), the Yoruba believe that human beings are confronted in the world by *ajogun* (difficulties termed ‘warriors’ or ‘adversaries’) that tend to impact negatively on their life. There is, therefore, the need for the Yoruba to seek protection from the deity – God – in order to confront these adversaries. For a good life (*ayeere*) then, the Yoruba is expected to offer sacrifice (*ẹbọ*) and praise to the divinities because in them lie power:

*ẹbọ riru a gbeni* : offering sacrifice is protective

It is the belief of the Yoruba that whatever happens to a man is *ase olodumare* (by the force of God). Therefore, it is not surprising that this God is conceived in terms expressed in (38) to (43) below:

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| (38) | <i>ibi isadi</i>                            | a place of refuge   |
| (39) | <i>olowo gbogboro to n gba omọ re lofin</i> | one who rescues his children from the abyss of problems/difficulties. |
| (40) | <i>adani ma gbagbe eni</i>                  | the creator who does not neglect his creation                         |
| (41) | <i>ogbigba ti n gba alailara</i>            | one who protects the homeless   |
| (42) | <i>oba ti n gbani lojo isoro</i>            | the king that comes to one's aid in time of difficulties              |
| (43) | <i>okọ opo</i>                              | the husband (protector) of the widow                                  |

In (38) above, God in the view of the Yoruba is a refuge to which one can run. This is not different from the conception of the God of the Old Testament or Allah in the Qur'an. The saying *mo sadi oluwa* : I seek refuge from God: which is a common prayer among the Yoruba today is a reflection of this perception of the role of God as a refuge. It is my suspicion, however, that this could be an influence from Islam where Moslems make it a practice to verbally utter what can be called a "mantra" seeking refuge from God against the evil influence of satan in their life. In (39) to (42), one can see how the Yoruba place God not only as a concerned creator (*adani ma gbagbe eni*) and protector of his creations (*olowo gbogboro to n gba omọ re lofin*) but also as a saviour/protector of human beings from the perils of existence (42) as well as a saviour of the destitute/poor (41) and the weak (43). In (39), rather than describe this God as a protector or saviour, he is described in the anthropomorphic characteristic of one with long arms that can reach the depth of an abyss. Interestingly, this *oriki* is the *oriki* of Ogun – the Yoruba divinity of metallurgy. In (41) *ogbigba ti n gba alailara*, God is thought of in a filial term in that he is seen as one who has some concern for people without relations (*alailara*: without relations). The term *ailara* may also refer to either a poor person or a socially marginalized person in the context of the Nigerian state today. The lexical term *ogbigba* is a coinage that is not used usually in any other context or to describe any other being other than God.

#### 5.4 The listening and comforting God

In a number of *oriki*, the Yoruba conceive of a God that has ears all over him and always ready to attend to complaints from humans (44 – 47):

- |      |                            |  |
|------|----------------------------|--|
| (44) | <i>eleti kara bi ajere</i> | one who has as many ears as the holes in a sieve |
| (45) | <i>eleti ofe</i>           | one with sharp/sensitive hearing ability         |





(58) <i>asoro wo</i>	One that cannot be looked at (his face)
(59) <i>asoro ri</i>	One that cannot be seen (difficult to see)
(60) <i>asoro mu</i>	one that cannot be conquered (cannot be held)
(61) <i>asudede bi ojo</i>	dark as the rain cloud
(62) <i>irokeke iyanu</i>	sounds of miracles
(63) <i>alarabara iyanu</i>	One with a variety of miracles
(64) <i>a too wo bi iyanu</i>	enough a miracle to watch
(65) <i>olaju ina</i>	blazing eyes (one with fire in his eyes)
(66) <i>Awamaridi</i>	Unfathomable
(67) <i>ariiro ala</i>	uninterpretable dream
(68) <i>aramota ti m ba agba leru</i>	the mysterious that frightens the elderly
(69) <i>omimi ti n mi ile aye</i>	the tremor that shakes the world
(70) <i>ala funfun gboo</i>	all white!
(71) <i>Gbengbeleku</i>	(no particular meaning but may refer to might)
(72) <i>Atabatubu</i>	(no particular meaning but may refer to greatness)
(73) <i>Arabata ribiti aribitirabata</i>	(no particular meaning but may refer to great-ness)
(74) <i>akaba karabata gbaa</i>	(no particular meaning but may refer to greatness)
(75) <i>oyibirikiti a ji pojo iku da</i>	the orbit that changes the day of death
(76) <i>eru jeje oba oke baramubaramu</i>	the fearsome king baramubarmu (may refer to greatness)

In (58) to (60) above, we have a very strong image of an invisible and invincible God. This is a deity that is unconquerable – one that the powerless would desire to have on his/her own side in time of trouble. This creation of the Yoruba is as unfathomable as the ‘dark cloud’ of tropical rain (61) with all its possibilities – thunder, lightning and storm. (62) to (64) seem to point to the Yoruba belief in miracles as God is shown as one full of miracles. We have mentioned earlier in this paper the seeming penchant for miracles among Yoruba Christians in Nigeria today. Apart from the fact that the Bible miracles themselves tend to promote this belief, the desire for miracles could also be traced to traditional religious belief in magic (e.g. *ofo*: incantation, and *ayajo*:

spells). The Yoruba would probably want to create a super-magician in the image of the deity in (63): *alarabara iyanu*. Furthermore, they try to characterise this creation of theirs as one who is like Dada's kid brother [2] who fights the fight of the powerless by imbuing him with mysterious powers and employing some set of terms/expressions which sound rather esoteric to clothe him in (71) to (76). Here we find the use of sound mimetics (71 to 76) with metaphorical meanings of 'bigness' (*baramubaramu*), "might and confidence" (*gbengbeleku*), "greatness and vastness" (*atabatubu*), "mysterious" (*oyibirikiti*) and so on, used to define their God. Although these mimetics which may be culture bound tend to appeal to one's auditory and visual sensibilities, their major purpose is, perhaps, to appeal to the emotion of their God in the process of praising him. It is not likely that English words can be used to evoke such emotional feelings within a predominantly Yoruba church or Pentecostal gathering.

### 5.8 The God that is severe in punishment

For the Yoruba, God is one that not only supports truth and rejects evil but he is also a God that punishes transgression severely (see 77 – 80 below). These attributes seem to show that the virtues of truth and abhorrence of evil are valued by the Yoruba. Truth is a universal religious or ethical value. However, the image that comes to one's mind in the Yoruba representation of a just God (79) is that of a God that metes out severe punishment for transgression rather than a God that seeks repentance. The Yoruba God seems to share this attribute with an attribute of the God of the Old Testament and the Qur'an. In (80), the Yoruba believe that however wise one could be, one could be easily humbled by God because he is the king that can make insanity the lot of the wise. Like the image of a God submerging the face of a transgressor in boiling water used in (79) in expressing God's justice, the image of madness/insanity in (80) also looks very forceful in registering the power of this God in our mind:

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| (77) | <i>a duro gboingboin lehin asododo</i>   | One who supports the truthful                            |
| (78) | <i>a ko ma tika lehin</i>                | One who refuses to support the wicked                    |
| (79) | <i>oba to toju alaseju bomi gbigbona</i> | One who submerges the face of the proud in boiling water |
| (80) | <i>oba to fi were damu ologbon</i>       | The king that punishes the wise one with insanity        |

### 5.9 The magic in God's attributes

Although one does not expect religious practices to be manipulative like magic, the purpose of prayers among the Yoruba today seems, to me, to be comparable with the goal of magic. This is because for the Yoruba today, the goals of the new religions of Christianity and Islam go beyond salvation and the meaning of existence and death.

Religious practices among the Yoruba today seem geared towards achieving such goals as defeating adversaries, achieving success at work and in love affairs (succeeding in getting somebody to marry and having children) and prosperity. As it is with magic, the Yoruba tend to want to bend their prayer practices to achieving immediate concrete goals. Thus language use within their supplications is set in a way to manipulate and control that being in whom they have invested power and control of their personal affairs. It is in the process of doing this that they resort to some anthropomorphic qualities/characteristics wherein they impute some human qualities to the deity. This is done in order that this God can be “handled” or appeased. As observed in the literature (Samarin, 1971; Bauman, 1989; Goelier, 1981; Simpson, 1980; Murphy, 1988 and so on) people know from experience that they can get things from other people through pleading, flattery, cajolery, threatening, bargaining, promising and so on and therefore God must have these human qualities in order that he might be ‘handled’ or appeased in the way the humans they know can be appeased.

When we examine the shape or form and function of a number of the attributes treated in this chapter, we observe that they bear some resemblance to Yoruba incantations or magical expressions. This is particularly so with the sound symbolic *oriki* (mimetics). Incantations serve the purpose of manipulating nature to do one’s bidding. In carrying out this purpose, there is a recourse to some special use of language which include the use of similes and parallelisms (e.g. *oke oke leye n fohun, owo re yio ma roke* ; the bird always flies upward, your hands shall always go up/you shall always progress). Like incantations, some prayers offered by Yoruba tend to incorporate some esoteric language use form with the objective of persuading or manipulating the deity:

*Arabaribiti aribiti rabata* (untranslatable but marks bigness)

*Obamba teremu teremu bamba* (untranslatable, also marks bigness)

The expressions above are formulaic in structure and they tend to have some tonal and syllabic rhythm. In content, they are supposed to demonstrate the might/greatness of the deity and, therefore, in form and shape the repetition of the syllables and tones seem to emphasise this greatness. There seems to be an effort here to create these awe-striking and fear-inducing names for efficacy of prayers (parallel to incantations).

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, I have attempted to show that the Yoruba people are a very religious people who not only believe in God but have particular conceptions of God which derive from their socio-cultural life. I have also tried to show that these conceptions are shown in the Yoruba use of language in the context of prayer performance where *oriki* are used in creating and defining their image of God. Just as demonstrated by Rosaldo (1975) in the study of Ilongot magical spells, the Yoruba people seem, in their

use of *oriki*, also to exploit language to create a deity that conforms to their needs as well as to cultural meanings and cultural controls. It has been shown in this study that the terms and expressions deployed in the context of prayer performance draw on established themes and metaphors in Yoruba language and culture. In treating the relationship between language and society, Lewis (1996:569) notes that it has been recognized a long time ago that people are likely to draw on their own experiences for analogies and images to help them form ideas of their relationship to God.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank Hans-Georg Wolf and Chao-Chi Liao for reading through drafts of this paper and making useful suggestions.
2. This derives from the Yoruba proverb *bi Dada ko le ja o laburo to gboju*: If Dada cannot fight he has a brave younger brother (that can defend him).

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PART II

**The mutuality of language  
and religion**



# Societal multilingualism and multifaithism

## A sociology of language and religion perspective

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‘... the “unity of mankind” must be built upon a recognition and acceptance of mankind’s diversity, and not merely upon the diversity of one social group from the other; upon the diversity that exists internally, in each group within itself. It is this diversity of both kinds that creates and recreates societal multilingualism and that makes it part and parcel not only of society but of humanity *per se*’.

Joshua A. Fishman (August 1973)

### 1. Introduction

My objective in this chapter is to explore societal multilingualism (cf. Fishman 1978) and multifaithism (cf. Modood 1997) as core concepts in mapping the sociology of language and religion as a new disciplinary interface. To do so, I shall argue that diversity as it exists in multilingual and multireligious societies triggers and is triggered by similar social structures. I shall propose difaithia as a model along similar lines as diglossia and extended diglossia (Ferguson 1959, Fishman 1967) to illustrate the nature of social structuration inherent in multireligious societies. Nigeria and Britain will provide the context for my discussion.

In his discussion of religious beliefs and linguistic culture, Schiffman (1996: 59) notes that ‘most of the world’s great religions which have textual traditions (the so-called ‘Peoples of the Book’) have at some point in their canon a story, myth or parable about the origin of language, and the role of the deity for it.’ He cites God’s injunction to Adam to name the birds and beasts in the Judaeo-Christian Book as one account of how language started. Thus, naming, both as a social and/or religious practice, is a function of language. This function is one of ascribing identity (see Salami, this volume). Thus diverse societies with multiple myths of genesis, religions and religious

texts, are potential subjects for the sociology of language and religion.

On November 21, 2002, civil riots broke out in Kaduna and Abuja, Nigeria. The immediate cause allegedly was an article written by twenty-one year-old female journalist Isioma Daniel and published in *ThisDay News* a Nigerian daily on the Miss World Pageant scheduled to be held in the Federal Capital, Abuja. Miss Daniel was a Christian and of Igbo/south-eastern extraction in the context of Nigeria's geopolitics. In the article she had suggested that if Prophet Muhammed were alive he would have considered marrying one of the contestants for their beauty. Some Muslim Faithfuls interpreted it as blasphemy and the deputy governor of Zamfara State in the North-west of the country, Alhaji Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi, a Muslim declared a *fatwa* on Miss Daniel thus:

It is binding on all Muslims wherever they are, to consider the killing of the writer as a religious duty.

It was the first such widely publicised controversial declaration of a fatwa since the Salman Rushdie Affair of 1989 following the publication of his book the *Satanic Verses*. At the centre of the controversy was an article written in English for a minority readership (elites) by a young Christian with reference to an Islamic holy figure (Prophet Muhammed) and sociocultural practices (marriage and beauty pageant) and the inference that the prophet would have supported such an un-Islamic practice. The fatwa was subsequently nullified on the grounds that the Quran stipulates that only the head of an Islamic Umma (a theocracy) had the authority to pronounce and revoke one. However, the over two hundred casualties of the attendant religious clashes demonstrate that identity conflict is a potential feature of both societal multilingualism and multifaithism.

Similarly, reports that some British Muslims fought on the side of the Taliban army against the 'global' anti-terrorism coalition and were consequently captured and detained at Camp X-Ray, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba post-September 11, 2001 indicate that religious diversity may have intra-state ideological implications, no less than language and cultural diversities have.<sup>1</sup> For instance, several of those captured had been allegedly recruited from Tipton, a town with a high concentration of minority British Asians in the West Midlands of England with links to relatives on the Indian sub-continent. The media had also reported widespread jubilation by Muslim Ulamas in Kano City in northern Nigeria on September 11, and condemnation of the subsequent United States-led attack on the Taliban government in Afghanistan. In both of these cases, national integration and national identity were obviously in conflict with ethnoreligious and personal identities. Neither the sociology of language nor the sociology of religion as originally conceptualised as disciplines individually can offer a satisfactory critical overview of the incidents nor of their consequences. Thus the need arises to explore a new conceptual interface for answers. The choice of Nigeria and Britain as the context of my discussion is particularly interesting because of the way and manner in which the colonial relationship they shared hitherto had contributed

immensely to the growth of multi-ethnicity, multilingualism and multifaithism; these factors define their internal diversities and national identities today.

New questions have arisen in contemporary times about identity, citizenship, literacy, education, minority rights, and other topics that have engaged researchers in the sociology of language over the last three decades. Existing paradigms in identity research need to be re-examined because of the complexes set up by criss-crossing variables including race, ethnicity, nationality, language and religion. The emergence of religion as a variable in identity and identification processing in pluralistic nations like Nigeria and Britain further complicate the multifaceted and understandably complex nature of these questions. For example, how does diversity in religious practice challenge national identity? Is this similar to the way that language diversity does? Is it possible to maintain these diversities and at the same time ensure citizens' rights and equality? What institutional practices support hegemony around religious and language use practices? Old paradigms of analysis had focused on simple binary oppositions of North versus South, minority versus majority, lower class versus middle class, colonised versus coloniser, East versus West, male versus female, old versus young and so on, but these are fast becoming inadequate for analysing today's complex social structures. A new World has evolved in which old social, cultural and political boundaries have been dissolved or at least made less discernible as a result of decades of change.

## 2. Defining the problem

Fishman's description of the sociology of language as the offspring of the two disciplines of sociology and language, in essence a hybrid discipline, suggests that the sociology of language and religion is a level-two hybrid, a hybrid formed from a combination of hybrids – sociology of language and (sociology of) religion. My intention in flagging up 'societal multilingualism' here is as it were to return to the beginning of the sociology of language project and the macrotopics that it was concerned with and evaluate the capacity of its foundational structures to sustain the sort of structural expansion that the 'sociology of language and religion' may entail.

Fishman (1978: vii) posited that 'societal multilingualism is in many respects the foundation field out of which all of the sociology of language grows and rami-fies' because as he claims, it 'provides easiest access to the data of intra-network as well as inter-network variation in language usage and in behaviour directed towards language'. This establishes diversity as a core notion of the sociology of language. Interestingly, diversity is also at the core of the sociology of religion. Hamilton (1995:2) notes that the task for sociologists of religion include 'to further the understanding of the role of religion in society, to analyse its significance in and impact upon human history, and *to understand its diversity and the social forces and influences that shape it*' (my emphasis). Following from this and using societal multilingualism as model,

I define societal multifaithism as providing access to the data of intra-network and inter-network variation in religious practice and in behaviour directed towards religion. Within such a framework, the diversity that Hamilton speaks of may cover faith preferences and choice, modes of worship, beliefs, attitude towards religions/faiths and their practitioners, etc.

In summation then, diversity and its associated ideologies constitute common denominators to the separate 'sociologies' of language and religion, and societal multilingualism and multifaithism, which we locate at least theoretically at the interface under discussion, are contexts for their investigation.

### 3. Nationality, nation and ethnicity

Each of these concepts has generated a certain amount of discussion in the literature yet they remain complex. I shall situate my discussion within an existing paradigm without a review of literature for convenience. Fasold (1984) paraphrasing Fishman (1968, 1972) draws a distinction between multinational states and multiethnic nations. As 'sociocultural units that have developed beyond primarily local self-concepts, concerns, and integrative bonds' (Fishman 1972: 3), both Nigeria and Britain comprise nationalities whose politics include varying levels of clamouring for self-determination. When a nation holds together in harmony, component ethnic groups are simply a matter of demographic detail. However, when the nation is a problematic expression, these groups become ethnic nationalities and political pressure groups. Thus, although Nigeria and Britain have diverse populations the nature of their diversities is arguably different. Nigeria comprises ethnic groups which are 'simpler, smaller, more particularistic, more localistic' sociocultural organisations in the Fishman sense (1973:3), but which turn into nationalities to negotiate their individual group causes within the politics of Nigerian federalism. The attempt by the Igbo to secede from Nigeria to form the autonomous Republic of Biafra, which led to the civil war of 1967–1970, was an expression of an ethnic nationality's desire to establish and control its own territory and political destiny. Ethnic minority groups in Britain are far more complex. For instance, Afro-Caribbean identity means that one emigrated from anyone of the islands of the Caribbean. 'Asian' connotes originating from Asia with all its marked differences and diversity in all spheres and at all levels. Similarly, 'Black African' refers to an immigrant from any of the racially Black nations of Africa. Yet each of these source regions and nations is already a multiethnic complex.

The distinction made between nation and state and from which Fasold (1984:2) derived the concepts of multinational states and multiethnic nations presents a problem when applied to Nigeria. Arguably, following amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, pre-existing nationalities were brought together to form a multinational state. At independence from Britain in 1960 the three regions, Northern, Western and Eastern represented an ethnic nationality-informed political

structure, which arguably made the Biafran secession attempt possible, even though unsuccessful. The restructuring of the 1980s and 90s aimed to undermine ethnonationalism. Within the framework of the new nation those old nationalities were restructured and redefined so that members of the same ethnic group were re-orientated towards different socio-political centres. Nigeria changed from a multinational state to a multiethnic nation. Civil strife and civil wars can be said to challenge the transition from a multinational state to a multiethnic nation, promote ethnonationalism (Conversi 2003) and undermine emerging nationalism. In such a scenario, the separatist function of linguistic and religious pluralism come to the fore as ethnic groups (rather than nations) and their languages, religions and other cultural practices become the focus of attention.

With regard to the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are component nationalities whose histories have become intertwined in order to constitute one geopolitical national unit. At one level, the political process of devolution can be regarded as a statutory affirmation of the diversity of the United Kingdom, one that is manifested in the creation of the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies and the Scottish Parliament with some degree of autonomy deriving from post-devolution restructuring. Language, culture and religion play a major role in fashioning their separate destinies as nationalities as well as the joint destiny of their populations as citizens of one nation. The six counties of Northern Ireland and the twenty-six that make up the Republic of Ireland also share the history, culture, language and religion of the Irish isles. Diversity in these contexts is defined fundamentally by religion – Catholicism versus Protestantism.

At another level, more recent migration, especially through the middle of the last century, accounts for a diversity that is defined by the variables of race, religion, culture and language in the UK (see Solomos and Black 1993, Barot 1993, Jones 1996, Luthra 1997, Modood 1998). Ethnicity is a term in the discourse of race that is reserved for relatively new immigrant groups. The component nationalities of Welsh, Scottish and English are pre-existing identity cohorts into which immigrants settle and nationality as a concept is not necessarily associated with 'a corresponding political unit or polity' per se.

The United Kingdom and Nigeria provide illustrations for the two concepts respectively. The UK may be said to be 'close to the multiethnic nation end of the continuum' that Fasold (1984:2) speaks of because of the cohesion between the component national units. However, minority ethnicities also exist that are not territorially bound like the indigenous nationalities to spaces of origin and ancestry within the United Kingdom. The latter have their origins outside of the UK in relatively recent history and therefore non-local identities. In other words, they owe their claim to UK identity to migration and naturalisation. The state's agenda of multiculturalism is targeted at the integration of this latter group. In contrast, prior to the Berlin Conference of 1884 at which Africa was carved up, some already sophisticated political systems existed in the area that eventually became Nigeria (see Adefuye 1985).

But since the partition, the new formula of federation which was adopted has not exactly created a harmonious nation-state. National integration remains a pursuit and it is on this framework that conflictual internal group relations are predicated. So in summary, Nigeria and Britain are similar to the extent that:

1. Both qualify as multinational states and multiethnic nations: Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa nations versus Scotland, Wales and England with defined ethnolinguistic spaces. The minority groups that make up 40% of the Nigerian population in a sense parallel the minority groups recognised in the 1991 British census – for instance, Punjabi, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and ‘others’;
2. Both consist of ethnic and/or racial groups;
3. Both are self-professed multicultural nations;
4. Both have the English language as the core communicative resource of their establishments;
5. Both have minority groups and minority languages within their polities;
6. Both are ‘secular’ states and accommodate a variety of religious practices – Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, African Traditional Religions, English Traditional Religions, Atheism, etc.

In Stewart’s (1968) paradigm for examining multilingualism within the national framework, he delimits the following ten functional categories: official, provincial, wider communication, international, capital, group, education and curriculum subject, literary and religious. Stewart points out that a language can fit into several functional slots under various conditions in the same way that people can have more than one language in their repertoire. I should add that multilingual and/or multidialectal repertoires are the consequence of involvement in multiple roles. The notion of diglossia as articulated in the sociology of language, (and here I lump Ferguson and Fishman together) which refers to the relative statuses of individual languages/dialects and therefore defines the statuses and identities of their speakers in a multilingual and multi-ethnic nation thus assumes a level of significance. Majority versus minority polarization is formulated within this as the configuration of conflict.

As far as religion is concerned, it is possible that a society has within its borders multiple religious practices, which supposedly thrive within the framework of a liberal democracy. Multilingualism is a property of both the individual and the state, but individuals often do not profess ‘multifaithism’ even though the practice may be rampant especially in postcolonial rural Africa where it is common practice for family networks to actively participate in the celebration of multiple religious rituals. Antsen (1997: 47) described religious syncretism as the mixing of religious practices and beliefs. If occasion warrants, multireligious consultations or faith-mixing and faith-switching are acceptable social norms. These phenomena are a feature of contact situations in similar ways to language mixing, codeswitching, pidginization and creolisation. They more or less define the existing hybrid identities within a cultural paradigm of analysis.

## 4. Multilingualism and multifaithism: The state and the individual

### 4.1 State provision

Both language and religion are institutional and personal concerns in most societies around the world. For instance, language is addressed as an issue in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 and 1999. In Britain where there is no such formal constitutional document, language has been topical in several parliamentary bills for a long time. One such bill is the modification to the Immigration Act to make proficiency in English a requirement for UK immigration while ‘subtly’ encouraging immigrant families already resident in Britain to introduce English as a co-language of the home. The ‘struggles’ by minority language and racial groups to assert their inalienable rights further confirm the institutional status of languages.

In theocratic states, religion forms the bedrock of the political structure and in that sense a degree of homogeneity is implied based on sharedness of state religious practice and the associated subcultural practices such as rituals, festivals and costumes. Islam and Catholicism are the life-blood of the states of the Middle East and The Vatican respectively. From an ideological perspective, most of the European Union countries may be described as secular nations in which the Church is closely linked to the establishment but practitioners of other faiths are accommodated by the established tenets of democracy. There is even a United Nations charter provision on the right of children to education in their mother tongues in the same way that freedom of religious practice is entrenched in the constitutions of nations.

In Nigeria, the Fulani Jihad of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had attempted to spread Islam as far southwards as possible. In post-independence, the spirit of the Jihad had been fuelled by the driving metaphor ‘Dip the Quran in the Atlantic’. Islam extended as far south as Ilorin on the northern fringe of the old Yoruba Empire before it was stopped (see Ajayi and Crowder 1974). However, at no time more than the period 1990- 2000 in Nigeria’s national history has its continued existence as a nation been called to question. The growing call for a sovereign national conference (SNC) during this period to renegotiate the terms of the Union is evidence of the general unease that surrounded the notion of a ‘Nigerian nation’ and a confirmation of the unstable nature of multinational states phase (Fasold 1984). Sections of the Constitution are directly or indirectly deployed to manage diversity in Nigeria. For instance:

Ch. I, 10:

The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion.

Ch. IV, 38(1):

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and

propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Ch V, 1(55):

The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefor.

By implication, as many religions as there are practitioners of and as many languages as there are speakers of are accommodated and protected in principle by the Constitution. But in spite of constitutional provisions, various groups have complained about being marginalised within the polity. An underlying element of the discourse of marginalisation is an assertion of inequality of status between component groups and by implication inequality between the languages and cultural practices that are associated with them. The issue arises then whether such inequality is institutionally sanctioned. In order to determine this we need to examine institutional discourses for evidence of violation of these constitutional provisions, be they covert or overt.

#### 4.2 Evidence of violation

The above provisions are violated in a number of instances, the evidence of which I discuss below.

##### 4.2.1 *The symbols of national identity*

Aso Rock is the official residence of the Nigerian president. It is to Nigeria what No 10 Downing Street is to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and No. 7 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington DC to the United States of America. In other words, Aso Rock is a symbol of state and it inscribes the Nation by the activities that take place within it. With regard therefore to national identity, the presence of a Mosque and an interdenominational Church on the grounds may be indicative of undeclared institutionally accorded higher status to the two religions that these structures symbolise. This amounts to state exclusion as far as the other religions practised in the country are concerned. The victims of exclusion include small pockets of people who practice African traditional religions, Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism among others. This is substantially symbolic and demonstrates the hegemony of Christianity and Islam whose profiles are raised to the level of state by such recognition.

In addition, the Nigerian National Pledge and the national anthem exist only in English. There is no strong religious dimension here but there is a reference to spirituality, which may be difficult to associate with any one religion:

##### **The Nigerian Pledge**

I pledge to Nigeria my country  
To be faithful loyal an honest

To serve Nigeria with all my strength  
 To defend her unity  
 And uphold her honour and glory  
 So help me God

Only by the fact that the text exists in English can one stretch logic to claim the reference is more akin to Christianity than any other faith, especially since Islam invokes Allah and traditional deities are represented in a lower case 'g'. The United Kingdom's Citizenship Pledge is debatably more committal as it joins the monarch and the state.

#### Citizenship Pledge

I [swear by Almighty God] [do solemnly and sincerely affirm] that, from this time forward I will give my loyalty and allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second Her Heirs and Successors and to the United Kingdom. I will respect the rights and freedoms of the United Kingdom. I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its laws faithfully and fulfil my duties and obligations as a British Citizen (Home Office 2002)

Interestingly, there is a choice between 'swear by Almighty God' and 'do solemnly and sincerely affirm' in recognition it would seem of the rights of atheists.

#### 4.2.2 *Inscriptions on institutional sites*

Institutional spaces constitute sites for the construction and contestation of state or group identity. Such spaces include vehicle number plates (see du Plessis 2003), street name signboards, currency notes, buildings and so on. On these sites, text is deployed as an instrument of identification. In this regard, the inscriptions on the currency notes of a nation may be taken as an indication of institutionally sanctioned identity. In secular states like the United States of America, such inscriptions depict a certain degree of neutrality. The dollar notes, for instance, carry the inscription 'In God we trust' (see Figure 1a). As far as religion is concerned, this text may not overtly depict a particular faith, but atheism is certainly not part of state agenda. Also it does not accommodate the various religious practices of indigenous peoples that do not have the same concept of 'God' as it exists in the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. This interpretation is held together by the fact that currency notes as fiscal instruments are a post-industrial invention.

Also, the text does not accommodate many of the Eastern religions that have been imported into the US through a wave of relatively recent migration. More importantly, since this is an English-only text, the historical caveat of the Founding Fathers would suggest that Christianity is absent but present by deductive logic. On the Nigerian currency note, the Naira, there are both English and Arabic inscriptions (see Figure 1b). The content of these inscriptions are in no way religious as they simply spell out in Roman numeral and Arabic text the worth of particular notes. However, their presence on the currency notes invoke traditions that convey some sense of the hegemony

of the languages associated with Christianity and Islam and thus sets up a diglossic relationship with the other languages of the polity.<sup>2</sup>

The inscription on the British currency note, the Pound, serves the monarchy's further institutionalisation rather than that of religion per se. However, the relationship between the Church and the State it may by extension be argued automatically links the Christian faith to the currency. The monarch promises in English 'to pay the bearer on demand the sum' indicated on a currency note (see Figure 1c). Currency notes of the Sultanate of Oman, the Rial, (see Figure 1d), for instance, carry more obviously balanced biliterate texts – Arabic on one face and English on the other.



Figure 1a. United States one dollar bill



Figure 1b. Nigerian twenty naira bill



Figure 1c. United Kingdom five pound bill



Figure 1d. Sultanate of Oman one rial bill

A sample of students at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in Nigeria and Roehampton University, London in the UK were asked if they thought that religion was invoked by the writing on a selection of national currency notes. The following is a summary of the explanations offered by the Nigerian students for claiming that religion was invoked:

- 'the Arabic inscription on the currency invokes sympathy for Islam in a multi-religious state.'
- 'Writing in Arabic on the Nigerian currency has religious undertone because our leaders think according to history after the colonisation in which the 'whites' gave power to the Hausa to show their influence.'

- 'Why Arabic words and not Christian verse?'
- 'The word written there is 'Arabic' and it is only understood by the Muslims.'
- 'The Arabic words written indicates Nigeria as an Islamic State.'
- 'I think the Arabic inscriptions on the notes (Nigerian currency) denotes Islamic conventions.'
- 'Written [sic] of the amount in Arabic connotes the country is an Islamic nation.'
- 'That Nigeria is either ruled by northerners or that Nigeria is a majorly an Islamic nation.' (sic)
- 'It was badly written on each note in a language only known to be Moslems [sic] language i.e. Arabic, and the word was not generally understood.'

The British students' (from my Discourse and Conversation Analysis class at Roehampton) reactions fell into two broad categories – those who interpreted the co-presence of Arabic and English texts on the notes as multiculturalism and those for whom the Arabic inscription had no ideological significance. What is interesting though is that not a single one of the British students associated the Arabic script with religion indicating that this variable does not feature strongly in identity construction and ascription unlike in Nigeria. However, multiculturalism, which is pursued as a state ideology by the British government, was read into the scripts. This proves that the context is as important as the text.

#### 4.2.3. *Official observance of religious holidays*

I must stress that what is of significance here is not the holidays and rituals in themselves but the discourses that they generate through which we derive some representations of society. For instance, ritual greetings, which are confined to specific times of the year, are associated with religion and the appropriateness of their performance is thus easily determinable. These greetings are universal to the extent that as a cultural practice, the mechanism of Empire ensured their spread.

Muslim and Christian religious holidays are marked across faith lines. In rural villages, there are seasons for masquerades and other forms of traditional ritual and worship. These include, the lunar month, harvest, onset of the rains and planting, etc., and each has its associative deities and characteristic features including ritual discourse. Today, Muslim holidays are advertised according to the Islamic Calendar in Arabic transliteration (e.g. Dhal Hijjah, Muharram etc.).

## 5. Language, religion and literacy & education

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings from Nesbitt's 1990/1991 ethnographic study of ways in which Christian traditions are transmitted in ethnically diverse

Coventry (UK) is the fact that the same languages were associated with two different scripts. For instance, Nesbitt (1993: 163) reports the presence of bibles in Urdu (Persian script) and Punjabi (Gurmukhi script), hymns in Urdu (Roman script) and Punjabi (Devanagari script) noting that 'there is no one written language or script strongly associated with their religious tradition'.

Nesbitt's study further revealed that of all the Christian groups in Coventry, Irish Catholics had the most homogeneous nurturing. According to her, 'home, church and school share a common language, the same assumptions and religious calendar' while among other minority ethnic Christian groups, there was an obvious disjuncture between these domains in language use.

Elsewhere, I have argued the case for liberation literacy and participatory democracy through indigenous languages in post-colonial Africa (Omoniyi 2003). I want now to argue that perhaps in the specific case of Nigeria the delivery of literacy in English is not ideologically neutral and neither is the growing attempt to deliver education through the indigenous languages as well as through Arabic and French closed to interpretation. Education as currently conceptualised remains first and foremost a Christian missionary 'invention' at least from a historical perspective. English language was first a vehicle for conveying Christian doctrine before it became a colonial language. 'Sunday School' was the context within which Western education first took root but in a sense, it was also the context in which multifaithism developed in the community. Christian and traditional religious festivals were not exclusive to their practitioners and modes of practice filtered from one into the other. Moyo (1988) described this as an African theology in the making. According to Antsen (1997) it represented a 'degree of syncretism'. This is a quintessential context of language and religion contact.

Bishop Crowther first translated the Bible into Yoruba in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the North, Arabic through the Madrasahs (Quranic schools) provided a similar platform but was for a long time restricted to religious education only. More recently, there have been attempts to explore the resources of these centres for the promotion of the UNESCO and Nigerian government-sponsored Universal Basic Education scheme in Kano in northern Nigeria. Figure 2 presents the manner in which missionary activities have impacted society vis-à-vis the use and spread of Arabic and English in Nigeria:

Although both English and Arabic have their roots in missionary activities, they have now spread into other domains of use. The diglossic relationship that exists between English and other languages including Arabic is the consequence of state support of the former as well as its status in the international sphere. English translations have supported the emergence of indigenised varieties including pidginised forms whereas there are no Arabic translations of indigenous texts. Whereas English has shed its obvious tie to religion, Arabic has remained hinged to it and is only just beginning to be explored for non-religious education under the Universal Basic Education scheme in parts of the north (see Omoniyi 2003).

MISSIONARIES		
<b>Civilisation:</b>	<b>European</b> (Predominantly White)	<b>Middle Eastern</b> (Predominantly Arab)
<b>Religion:</b>	Christianity	Islam
<b>Language:</b>	English	Arabic
<b>Status:</b>	Official language	Foreign language
<b>Availability:</b>	Translation (into local languages)	No translation (sole authentic text)
<b>Domains of use:</b>	L2 literacy Mainstream education Initially Sunday Schools Administration & commerce Media and the home	Religious literacy Quranic education Madrasah's Shariah (Islamic law)

Figure 2. Religion in the spread of Arabic and English

## 6. Religion and language as social practice

Both religion and language play a major role in informing and structuring social practice. Behaviour, beliefs, taboos and other social norms are impacted by both of these factors. Consequently, they influence the attitudes and social practices of individuals and groups which mark them apart from another.

### 6.1 Attitudes

Attitudes have been studied in sociolinguistics and the sociology of language to establish the relationships between language choice and language status in a speech community. The matched guise and the semantic differential scale were conventional tools for 'measuring' individual and group attitudes to other individuals/groups or an established social characteristic of such groups (Fasold 1984). Negative attitudes are associated with less desirable status or identity and positive attitudes are associated with status and identity we desire and may aspire to. Attitude is thus a macrosociolinguistic variable of identification. Elsewhere, I have employed attitudes together with multilingual patterns and language choice patterns in defining identity in a borderland community (see Omoniyi 2004). But how do we extend this to the sociology of language and religion?

There are obvious evidences of attitudes being expressed toward religions, religious groups and objects in a way that identity is impacted. These attitudes are coded in language and conveyed in utterances. For instance, post-September 11, 2001, attitude changes toward some of Britain's Muslim communities suggested that Al-Qaeda was being equated with Islam. Similarly, attitudes are expressed toward sections of the same faith, such as between Sufis and Sunnis among Muslims; Protestants, Catholics

and Mommons among Christians and so on. In other words then there are interfaith as well as intrafaith attitudes both of which inform the identities ascribed to different groups. At the interfaith level these attitudes coincide with ethnic identity boundaries; Christians, Muslims and Hindus display diverse language repertoires, language use patterns and social practices (see Nesbitt 1993).

Finally, attitudes may be expressed toward a mode of behaviour or taste, which when measured against the social norm is considered non-mainstream and therefore rejected. Such rejection may be perceived as one directed at a whole community of practice (Scollon 1998) and an identity. The appointment of a gay priest (Canon Jeffrey John) as Bishop of Reading has threatened the disintegration of the Church of England worldwide. In this instance, attitudes and reactions to the appointment by extension directed toward homosexuality as a practice and its practitioners are constructed as fringe and lower status in relation to a straight mainstream in the context of the Church.

## 6.2 Naming practices

One area in which the impact of religion has been most visible in Nigerian society is in naming as a sociocultural practice. Western or biblical names have replaced traditional names as first names in most communities in much the same way as Quranic names have. Indigenous language variants of the names have developed in oral and textual literacies (for instance David = Dafidi; Elizabeth = Eli, Abdulwaheed = Waidi, Abdulshaheeb = Saibu, etc.). Traditionally, there are three kinds of names among the Yoruba – *amutorunwa* (brought from heaven), *abiso* (name given at birth) and *oriki* (cognomen or attributive name). Yoruba names often eulogise the deity worshipped in a community. Johnson (1921, 2001: 81) says with regards to ‘*abiso*’, that is, the name given to a child during christening ‘*Ile la iwo kia to so omo l’oruko*’ which is glossed as ‘we look at the home in naming a child’. For example, from the following names, we know what deity is worshipped in the respective families: Sangoyomi (Sango saved me), Ogunsayo (Ogun created joy), Osabiyi (Osa gave birth to this) etc. With the coming of Christianity, naming practices began to reflect the new resident deity Olorunyomi (God saved me), Olorunsayo (God created joy), Olubiyi (God gave birth to this).<sup>1</sup> But more importantly for our purpose here is the fact that attitudes changed first towards ‘animism’, it became less desirable and was associated with pre-modernity. For a period during the 1980s, for instance, cultural festivals that involved ritual, which had hitherto essentially defined certain communities began to disappear arguably because there was no strong national cultural policy in place to support or protect these treasure troves of culture.

In contrast, both Christianity and Islam have enjoyed state support or at least some attention whether directly or indirectly and as a result, both gained converts from among practitioners of traditional religions. But the difference in the political status of these two religious identities came to the fore during the second republic in

Nigeria (1979 to 1983). The National Party of Nigeria government was a predominantly northern party and in effect, political power had a base in an Islamic stronghold. Consequently, outright conversion to Islam or alternatively visible appropriation of Islamic values and cultures became a strategy for securing access to the corridors of power and the trappings of political office such as government contracts and top appointments. In this regard, names and dress codes were the most easily identifiable elements of material-triggered culture shift. Although the press reports of the period provide evidence of this development, there has as yet not been any systematic data-driven study.

## 7. Language, religion, law and politics

Both language and religion are inextricably linked to politics as reflected by a number of events. These events include the Safiyat Affair and the consequent global outcry against the institution of Sharia justice, 9/11, Al-Qaeda Britons and the pro-Taliban rallies in Kano, Nigeria. In gearing up for the 2003 elections the Christian Association of Nigeria encouraged its members to participate in politics and went on to produce a presidential aspirant to boot in Reverend Chris Okotie who ran on the platform of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), thus affirming the interconnection between religion and politics. Religion also establishes hegemony in the same way that language does. Fraternities have evolved around Christianity and Islam in much the same way that they have around *La Francophonie* and the *English Circle*. Nigeria's two official languages are exogenous and they have a quasi-diglossic relationship with the indigenous languages. As a matter of fact, they, especially English have encroached upon domains traditionally reserved for local languages. In a similar vein, both Christianity and Islam, exogenous religions to all intent and purposes, have equally encroached upon sociocultural contexts that were once essentially the preserve of traditional religious practices. The recognition of this prompted President Olusegun Obasanjo to remark in a press interview in which he condemned the excesses of Sharia exponents 'We can't be holier than the Pope'.

In a feature article on the Sharia judicial system and political violence in Nigeria (*Nigeriaworld.com*, May 29, 2002), Femi Awoniyi remarks:

The recent banning of the public performance of Hausa music and other forms of cultural expression in Hausaland because they are 'un-Islamic' is an act of hostility against Hausa culture.

Electronic broadcasting services in the South and the Christian North should introduce Hausa programs for, say, 2 hours daily, to their local Hausa communities. Such broadcasts should be used to promote Hausa culture. It could also give Hausas a forum to articulate their aspirations and possibly vent out their grudges against the privileged status of Fulanis. This could provide fertile grounds for the seed of Hausa nationalism, which will then grow into Hausaland.

One thing can be inferred from this statement, that the conditions of Islam encroached upon the rights of Hausas to preserve their indigenous culture. Such imposition was however not new. In an earlier era, it was for the purpose of crafting ‘a formal acknowledgement of the role of the Sharia in the Second Republic, that the Constitutional Drafting Committee recommended a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal’ (see Laitin 1986:2). This together with Nigeria’s ‘observer status’ in the Organisation of Islamic Countries also in the Second Republic may be interpreted as part of the process of asserting equal status for Islam and Christianity by a northern Muslim dominated government.

In the United Kingdom, the link between State and religion is more obvious. The Queen’s Speech is one of the annual establishment ceremonies, which marks the beginning of a new parliamentary year. The Queen is the Head of State and also the Defender of the Faith as head of the Church of England and Wales. British citizenship entails swearing allegiance to the Queen and by implication to the Church of England. There is now a growing network of people clamouring for the Church to be disestablished. Jane Griffiths MP (Reading East) notes for instance that, “The English are somewhat slaves to tradition and that is not a bad thing at all. But some traditions no longer serve us and this is one of them” adding that “With the multitudes of religions practised in England today, the Church does not reflect all of our beliefs and I think it is time it was disestablished” (*Reading Evening Post*, May 2, 2002, pg21). The Church had already been disestablished in Wales for about a century, which again is indicative of a small degree of autonomy of the Welsh nation. It is in the context of the relationship between religion and the State that ‘difaithia’ becomes a topic of interest and I discuss this in the next section.

### 8. Difaithia

Difaithia may be defined as the existence of two or more religious faiths within a polity, one of which has a higher status by virtue of being institutionalised at state level. Thus the Church of England and the faith school system vis-à-vis other churches and faiths, and non-faith schools which are confined to individual cum community realms may be said to set up difaithia. Following from this we can generate a model patterned after Fishman’s (1967, 1972) description of diglossia thus:

		<b>Difaithia</b>			
	+	1	+	2	-
			Both difaithia and bifaithism		Bifaithism without difaithia
<b>Bifaithism</b>					
	-	3	Difaithia without bifaithism	4	Neither difaithia nor bifaithism

Figure 3.

Societal multifaithism and difaithia have the same relationship as societal multilingualism and diglossia. Wilce (1996) demonstrates how diglossia is situated at the language-religion interface with an illustration from Bengali. The model of difaithia proposed here is predicated upon a number of basic facts:

- religious pluralism exists (e.g. in the United Kingdom and Nigeria);
- the religions practised may not enjoy equal recognition by the state;
- there is evidence of mixed faith practices – Muslims attending Christian schools, Christians participating in non-Christian religious practices and ceremonies, for example in interfaith marriages, members of the same family units nuclear or extended in different denominations, interdenominational and interfaith services on state occasions such as the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, etc.

There are a number of indicators of the asymmetry that exists between religions practised in the United Kingdom and Nigeria. These include:

- incorporation of ‘Christianity’ into instruments of governance and state authority as in the Citizenship Pledge (see 4.2.1 above);
- state-sponsored pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Mecca take place annually in Nigeria;
- specific constitutional provision for a language which is also the language of liturgy;
- use of a language of liturgy as the medium of instruction in mainstream education, institutional discourse and the media;
- Use of the Christian calendar for institutional reckoning aligned to global practice.

The model presented above has the following four categories:

- Bifaithism/bilingualism with difaithia/diglossia
- Bifaithism/bilingualism without difaithia/diglossia
- Difaithia/diglossia without bifaithism/bilingualism
- No bifaithism/bilingualism, no difaithia/diglossia

In a variant of the third category, bifaithism without bilingualism, in which the observance and practice of religious rituals in more than one faith (difaithia) are carried out in the medium of one language, the practitioner remains subject to institutionally defined asymmetries in the statuses of languages and religions. This conveys an implied challenge to the ‘one religion, one language’ paradigm.

## 9. Conclusion

Abundant evidence abounds in the literature of societal multilingualism as a phenomenon. However, societal multifaithism has not hitherto been systematically studied

as a subject of interest to language and its politics per se. In a sense, democracy as a political philosophy may set the framework for the co-existence of multiple religions and faiths, but difaitism, which is an expression of the various kinds of asymmetry between the different faiths is instituted in the associations that exist between particular religions and the state. If we are to understand and manage the complexity occasioned by crossings, hybridity, migration and other forms of redefinition to social and cultural boundaries, certainly the kind of reconceptualization proposed by the sociology of language and religion is necessary. Societal multifaitism and difaitism in conjunction with multilingualism and the asymmetry of diglossia, set up a complex but useful paradigm for the re-examination and re-evaluation of the macro-themes that traditional sociology of language had accommodated.

## Notes

1. The last four of these detainees were released without charge on January 25, 2005.
2. Between January 23 and March 4<sup>th</sup> 2005 there were six articles on the subject of the Arabic inscription on the Nigerian currency. See for instance, <http://odili.net/news/source/2005/jan/23/18.html>

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## Ideology, authority, and language choice

### Language of religion in South Asia<sup>1</sup>

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#### 1. Introduction

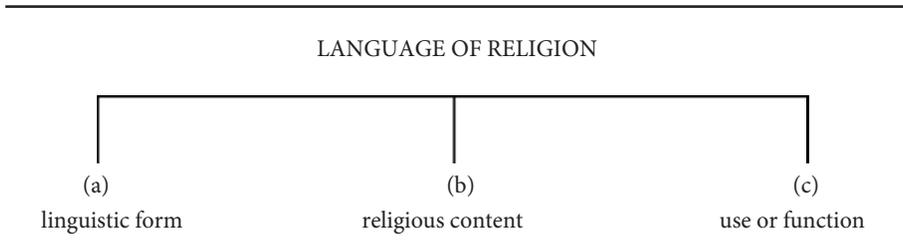
This chapter narrates a fascinating story of the interface between religious language and society in South Asia. The major goal of this chapter is (a) to examine the dynamic relationship between languages and religions in South Asia, and (b) to demonstrate that for an adequate understanding of this relationship, it is necessary to take into account the interface of language, religion and society (with its various historical, cultural, and ideological dimensions) at different points in time and space. In multilingual and multi-religious South Asia, many religions (the indigenous religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism and the extraneous religions, Islam, and Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and various tribal religious systems) currently co-exist along with languages of diverse language families such as Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, and Munda. One of the striking features of the language of religion in this region is that there is no fixed equation of one linguistic form for one religion. Many languages are used to express one religion and one language is used to express many religions. For example, Christianity is expressed through English (in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka), Portuguese/Konkani (in Goa), Tamil (in Tamilnadu), Hindi (in India), Sinhala (in Sri Lanka), Urdu (in Pakistan), and Bangla (in Bengal, and Bangladesh), etc. Similarly, Hindi is used to express not only Hinduism, but also Buddhism, Christianity, and Jainism. Within the same religious community, diverse languages are used to perform different religious functions thereby producing a diglossic situation. For example, Sanskrit is used for major rituals of Hinduism, while for household rituals, modern Indian languages are used. Adding to this variation, are various registers of regional religious languages such as Sankritized, Arabicized, Persianized Hindi, Marathi, etc.

This situation of the complex relationship between many languages and many religions raises the following questions of theoretical and empirical significance which current studies (Hooper 1963, McGregor 1984, Ranade 1933, Shapiro and Schiffman 1981, Shackle 2001, Tulpule 1979, and Zvelebil 1974) have not answered: (a) What are the determinants of language choice for various religions? (b) Is the choice random?

(c) What is the cause of the change in language choice across time? (d) Which authority legitimizes and implements the choice? (e) Does the authority remain constant across time and space or does it undergo change? (f) When a new religious code is introduced to carry out the function of the earlier code (which functioned as the religious code), what happens to the earlier code? Why do they coexist? (g) When one religious code is replaced by another, do the structure of the linguistic code and religious content undergo change?

The following discussion clearly shows that social context plays an important role in constructing, maintaining, and transforming the patterns of language use in the religious context. In order to understand the above issues, it is necessary to briefly describe the constituents/composition of language of religion. A linguistic code is labelled as language of religion on the basis of its three components—its form or linguistic structure, its religious content, and its function (see Table 1 below).

Table 1.



The combination of these three varies across religions. That is, the equation of a linguistic code, a particular religious content, the function/goal of a religious language varies across religious systems. Even within the same religion, this equation changes across time. In particular, it will be demonstrated that the change in this equation is primarily caused by the change in the ideology of the religious community regarding the composition of religious language (i.e., its form, content, and function).

This chapter demonstrates that in South Asia, different languages are perceived as powerful in different domains. Even within the same domain of religion, not all languages are perceived as equally powerful. At any given point in time, there is a hierarchy of power of linguistic codes to express a particular religion. The choice of the code for expressing a particular religion is determined by the degree of power of the code. The power of a code to express a religion as well as the hierarchy is determined by the ideology of the religious communities. The ideology is implemented by the “authority”, which serves as the medium or mechanism through which the choice of the codes for particular religions is institutionalized.

The ideology and authority change across time and space due to which the power hierarchy of the codes is restructured, which in turn, influences the structure and function of religious languages as well as their religious content.

The following discussion illustrates (a) the patterns of language choice, (b) the variation in the power-hierarchies of religious languages across time and space, (c) the ideologies (about the form, content and function of religious language) which determine those hierarchies, (d) the socio-cultural history which gives rise to the ideologies, and (e) the “authority” which authenticates those ideologies.

The discussion is divided into ten parts. Part 1, “Languages of religions in South Asia,” presents a profile of the languages of religions in South Asia, and their distribution across religions, Part 2, “Many languages, one religion: historical evolution”, illustrates the historical evolution of the patterns of many languages linked with many religions, Part 3, “Ideology, and Power-hierarchy: the ancient and the medieval period”, and Part 4, “Ideology, power hierarchy, and language choice in contemporary South Asia” discuss the role of ideology in creating power- hierarchies in the ancient, medieval, and modern (contemporary) South Asia and their relevance for determining the language choice, Part 5, “Modernization, composite identities, and ideology of language-mixing” highlights the relationship between mixed codes and mixed socio-religious identities in modern South Asia. Part 6, “The impact of multiple linkage on the structure of the languages” discusses the impact of the ideologies on the structure of the South Asian languages. Part 7, “The question of functional transparency” explains the constraint language choice. Part 8, “Script as a determinant of religious language, ” Part 9, “Authority” examines the authority which licenses the choice of religious language, and Part 10, “Summary and Conclusion” presents a summary of the discussion in the chapter.

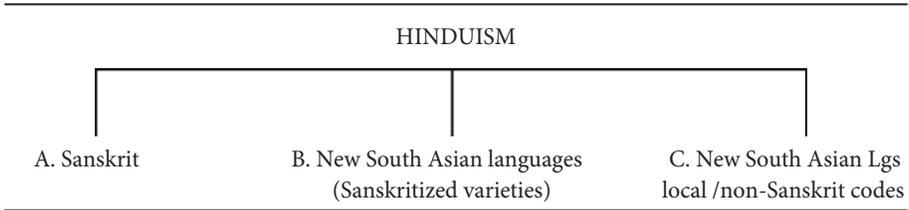
## 2. Languages of religions in South Asia

As mentioned earlier, diverse religious communities exist in South Asia. The degree of concentration of different religions varies across different regions. The distribution of the population of India across religions is given below: (The numbers indicate the percentage of the total population of India): Hindus about 83, Muslims about 11, Christians about 3, Sikhs about 2, Buddhists about 0.75, and Jains less than 0.5. Other religions constitute less than 0.5 of the population. In contrast to this, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have a relatively larger concentration of Muslims and significantly smaller percentage of the Hindus and other religious communities. Sri Lanka has a larger Buddhist community compared to India and Pakistan. While a major concentration of Indo Aryan languages is observed in North India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, the Dravidian languages are primarily concentrated in South India, and Sri Lanka. Tibeto-Burman languages are dominant in the eastern regions in South Asia (India, Nepal, Tibet, and Bangladesh). The following discussion focuses on the issue of the pattern of choice/use of religious language(s) to express different religions and not on the issue of the distribution of the religious languages across the region.

### 2.1 Distribution of languages across religions

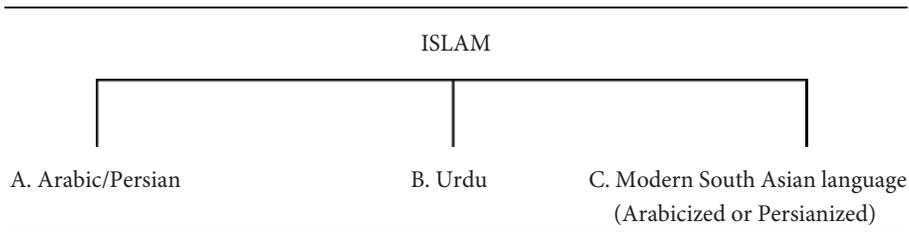
The current distribution of languages across religions is given in the following tables.

Table 2



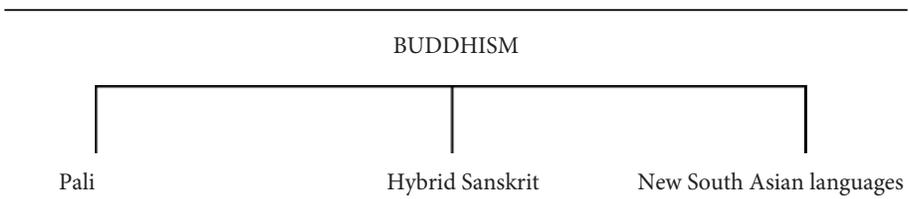
The above chart shows that English, as well as other languages which were not used earlier, are now used to express Hinduism. Within these languages, two varieties are observed, the one which shows a marked influence of Sanskrit and the other which is devoid of it. It is also important to note that the languages which are typically not used for Hinduism are Arabic, Persian, Portuguese, Pali and Arabicised, and Persianized varieties of modern South Asian languages.

Table 3



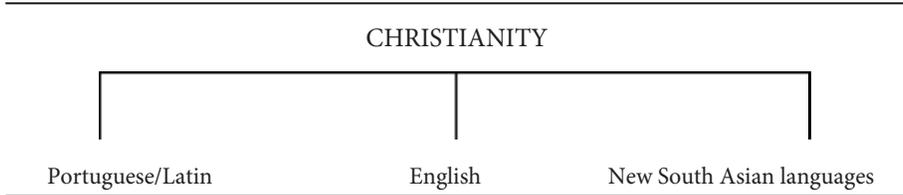
As shown in the above table, the languages of Islam are Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Arabicized or Persianized NSA languages. The languages which are typically not used for Islam are Sanskrit, English, Portuguese, Pali, and Sanskritized or Englishized varieties of modern South Asian languages.

Table 4



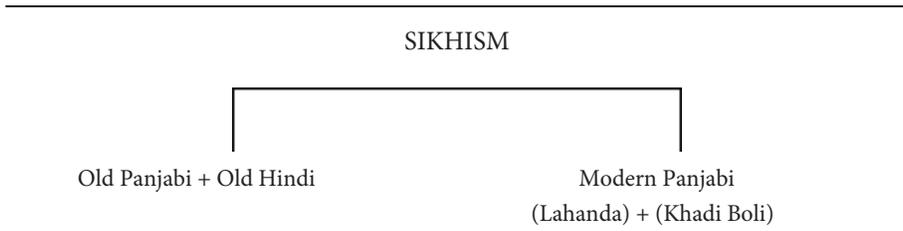
Pali and NSA languages are used for Buddhism. Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Sanskritized, Arabicized, Persianized varieties NSA languages are not used. While Portuguese, Latin, Syriac, English, and NSA languages are used for Christianity, the use of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Pali is strictly prohibited.

Table 5.



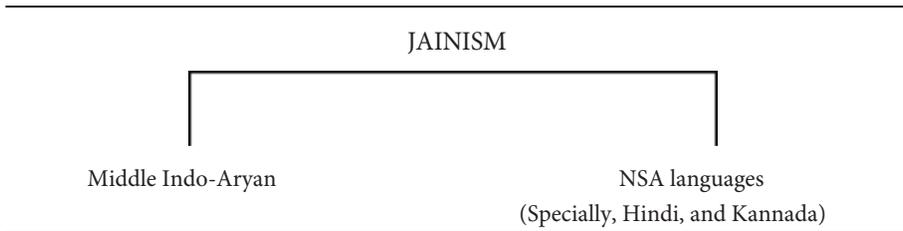
While the language of the Sikh scripture (Guru Granth Sahab) is a combination of Old Panjabi (Lahanda) and Khadi Boli, modern Panjabi is readily used for religious discourses in current South Asia.

Table 6.



The language of old Jain scriptures is Ardhamagadhi (Middle Indo-Aryan). However, its use is largely replaced by the NSA languages. A large literature is written in Kannada, and Hindi (as well as other NSA languages).

Table 7.



The above discussion points out that the choice of a language for a religion is not random. Although more than one language is used for Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity, some languages are typically excluded from the list of options.

Furthermore, it needs to be noted here that the pattern of languages shown in the above tables has not been constant through the history of these religions. For example, the use of NSA languages for these religions is relatively recent (approximately, after 1200 CE). Also, an interesting fact about the current situation in South Asia is that the use of the Sanskrit and Arabic, the classical languages of Hinduism and Islam respectively, which was more restricted in the medieval period, is on the rise in contemporary South Asia. The use of English for Hinduism has a history of almost two hundred years. Another fact to be noted is that there are two radically different varieties of NSA languages are used to express their corresponding religions (see tables above). In the next section, I will briefly discuss the historical events which have been instrumental in propagating the use of many languages for one religion.

### 3. Many languages, one religion: Historical evolution

The medieval period (after 1200 CE) marked a major shift in the pattern of languages used to express religions. Before this period, the status “language of religion” was enjoyed by one language for one religion. For example, the classical languages such as Sanskrit (for Hinduism), Arabic/Persian for (Islam), Pali/Hybrid Sanskrit (for Buddhism), and Ardhamagadhi (for Jains), and Latin (for Christianity) were considered to be the linguistic codes endowed with the “power” to express their corresponding religions. Other South Asian languages were excluded from the domain of religion. During the period 1200 CE to 1700 CE, mystics and saints from the above religions in various parts of India such as Basavanna (12<sup>th</sup> century CE) in Karnataka, Jnaneshwar (13<sup>th</sup> century CE) in Maharashtra, the Alvars and Nammalvar in Tamilnadu (14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries CE), Mirabai, and Tulsidas in the north (15<sup>th</sup> century CE), Nanak and Kabir (16<sup>th</sup> century CE) among others, independently argued for the legitimacy of non-classical/vernacular languages. They composed their religious poetry in vernacular regional languages such as Marathi, Tamil, Rajasthani, Awadhi, Khadi Boli/Old Hindi. The mystics and saints were the integrators (see e.g., Ramanujan 1973, and Ranade 1933) who, on the one hand, liberated the religions from the constraint of the linguistic form of their expression, and elevated the status of the vernacular languages on the other (for further discussion on the medieval Bhakti movements, see Nagendra 1973). The classical languages had become virtually inaccessible to the common people by this period. The use of NSA languages for religions brought the scriptures to the common people in their own languages.

The other major historical development during the medieval period was the translations of the scriptures (which were in the classical languages), in new South Asian/vernacular languages. The impetus for translation came from the following facts: (a) as mentioned above, the common people needed access to the scriptures and religion, and (b) the Syrian, Roman Catholic, and the Protestant missionary activities in South Asia included conversion of the South Asian population to Christianity of

the above denominations, and to facilitate this goal, the need to translate the bible into local South Asian languages became necessary. The first Bible translation in the local (Konkani) language is *Doutrina Crista* (1622 CE) by the English Jesuite priest named Thomas Stephens. Large scale conversions to Christianity continued through the British rule after the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE (see Hooper 1963) which resulted in translations of the Bible in NSA languages. Thus, the use of languages other than the original languages of religion became prominent after the medieval period, (c) Buddhist texts which were translated into Tibetan in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, began to be used as the Buddhist canonical texts in the medieval period, (d) although Arabic continued to occupy the central place in the orthodox mosque, several some versified bilingual, glossaries (Arabic-local languages) termed *Khaliq bari* or Sufi poetic romances and hymns were composed in modern South Asian Languages (Schimmel 1973). Qur'an was first translated into Persian 1737 and later into several Urdu versions which inspired translations of Qur'an in numerous South Asian languages (Tamil 1873, Gujarati 1879, Telugu 1938, Kannada 1949). It is important to note that the language of Buddhism in Srilanka, and India remained the same .i.e, Pali and Hybrid Sanskrit (a Sanskritized variety of Middle Indo- Aryan) while the language of Sikhism, a mixture of Old Panjabi and Lahanda was supplemented by modern Panjabi. Translations of Jain scriptures into Kannada and Hindi (in addition to other NSA languages) allowed use of many languages for the religion.

The above historical events provide a background for understanding the use of the NSA languages for their corresponding religions. However, in order to better understand (a) the rationale for the coexistence of the earlier /classical languages and the new South Asian languages as the religious codes, (b) why Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, and Jainism allowed the use of more than one language for its expression while Islam did not, and (c) why classical languages as well as the NSA languages are used in both the secular and religious domains, it is essential to go beyond the historical facts. It will be demonstrated in the following section that the variation and change in the pattern of the choice of languages for expressing religions is determined by the ideologies about the language of religion at different points in time in different religious systems. It will also be argued that the hierarchy of power of languages to express a religion is based on the ideology which licenses power to different languages. The change in ideology changes the power-hierarchy and consequently the choice of the language.

#### 4. Ideology, and power hierarchy: The ancient and the medieval periods

Current research on language ideology and power (Bourdieu 1991, Fairclough 1989, Fowler et al 1997, Hodge and Kress 1988, Silverstein 1979, among others) argues beyond doubt that ideology, which is a system of beliefs, practices, and representations

in the interest of an identifiable class in the society creates linguistic power hierarchies. In the context of language of religion, I define ideology as the system of beliefs about the (a) linguistic form, (b) religious content, and (c) function, of language of religion at a given point in time within a community. In other words, it is the system of beliefs about the interrelationship among the three components (i.e., its form, content and function/use) of the religious language. I argue that the ideology provides a rationale for the choice of a particular language/linguistic form for expressing a particular religion. This framework ideology does not treat ideology exclusively as 'a distortion in perception of social and economic relations' (Luke 1998:366). It will be shown that the variability in each of these components of language of religion is explicable on the basis of the underlying ideology. This framework (a) allows the possibility of co-existence of many ideologies of diverse groups within the society (b) provides a mechanism to identify diachronic changes in the ideology and thereby in language choice, and (c) explains variation in the language choice across religions.

The following discussion will address the issue of language choice in three major periods-ancient (pre-medieval), medieval, and contemporary. In particular, it will be shown that the historical evolution of language of religion (with its variability) discussed earlier, as well as its current situation regarding language choice is explicable within the framework of language ideology and power.

First, let us look at the power hierarchy of religious languages in the ancient period (2000 BCE – the medieval period) in South Asia. As I mentioned earlier, Sanskrit was considered to be the only legitimate language of Hinduism. No other languages (Indo-Aryan or Dravidian) were viewed as appropriate to express Hinduism). In other words, Sanskrit was perceived as powerful while other languages were viewed as powerless. The ideology, which sanctioned this power hierarchy viewed language of religion as the divine code (*dewawānī*) which alone was endowed with the power or efficacy of expressing the ultimate truth (*satya*). The Vedas, the ancient Sanskrit texts were viewed as the first 'revelations' of the early sages (*ṛṣi*) and which were orally transmitted to the following generations as the truths about the phenomenal reality as well as its foundation in the higher reality which lies beyond human conceptualization and thought. The term *mantra*, literally, "that which protects when meditated upon," had multiple meanings such as, "the sacred formula (the Vedic hymns addressed to the deities)", "verses recited at the Vedic rituals", etc. The Vedic theologies of sound attributed the origin of the universe to the phonic sound and claimed that the language of the Vedas had the power of creation. When uttered flawlessly, it was assumed, the *mantras* had the power to bring about the intended results for the sacrificer (the performer of the Vedic ritual) (for further discussion on *mantra*, see Staal 1989). The purity of the language was assumed to be the prerequisite for the success of the ritual. Thus the religious language was defined on the basis of both its linguistic structure as well as its content. This ideology sanctioned Sanskrit to the exclusion of other languages, to be the language of Hinduism. Similarly, a few centuries later (but

before the medieval period), Islam treated Arabic alone as the language of religion since it was the language of Qur'an which was believed to be the literal word of God revealed through his Prophet Muhammad. Pali, and Hybrid Sanskrit were remained the languages of Buddhism, and Ardhamagadhi was considered to be the language of Jainism. Christianity was expressed exclusively through Syriac (in Kerala), and Latin (in the Roman Catholic churches in the Southern, mostly western coast of India). In general, the language of the scripture (s) was viewed as the only appropriate form for expressing the corresponding religion. Similarly, the scriptural content was the only source of the legitimate religious beliefs, and the function of the religious language was to express, promote, and follow the religious beliefs presented in the scriptures. There was no variation allowed in the form, content and the religious function of the language. This ideology gave enormous power to the classical languages while the regional languages were left totally powerless. Thus, we can argue that it was the ideology which determined the choice of the classical (as opposed to the regional) languages for expressing religions in the ancient period.

The medieval period marked a major change in the ideology about the language of religion as well as in the power hierarchy of religious languages. Primacy of the religious content over the linguistic form (structure) was well accepted by the mystics, and saints (as well as the religious communities). The religious content was considered to be the differentia of the religious language and all languages, including Sanskrit and NSA languages, were viewed as equally powerful to express the religious content. Jnaneshwar (13<sup>th</sup> century CE), strongly argued for the equality of all linguistic codes, and thereby authenticated the NSA languages as legitimate languages of Hinduism (for further discussion, see Ranade 1933). He claimed (*Jnāneśwar* 6.14:) *mādzā maraṭhātsī bolu kautuke, parī amṛtātehī paidzā djinke, aisī akṣare rasike, melwīna*. “My speech is Marahi indeed, but my composition for the connoisseurs will be so effective that it will surpass even ambrosia.” He challenged the exclusive superiority of Sanskrit when he said, “If Sanskrit came from the God, did Marathi come from the thieves?” This ideology of the “sacralization of the secular codes” granted power to non-classical regional Indian languages to express Hinduism, and also sanctioned the use of more than one regional language for expressing Hinduism. The process of sacralization of NSA languages was expressed through two major trends – one which marked Sanskritization of NSA languages, thereby approximating them to Sanskrit by borrowing linguistic features of Sanskrit, and the second, their de-Sanskritization. While the process of Sanskritization resulted in the structural convergence of the South Asian languages, de-Sanskritization marked the trend against this convergence. Although both trends emphasized the legitimatization of the NSA languages in the religious domain, their assumptions and impact significantly differed from each other. The first trend of Sanskritization implicitly assumed superiority of Sanskrit over NSA codes, and resulted in the development of a commonly shared Sanskritized register of NSA languages, and thereby causing their convergence. In contrast to this, the intentional



tity as religious language to a code. The linguistic structure by itself was not viewed as endowed with particular efficacy.

In contrast to the above, Islam did not recognize NSA languages as legitimate codes for Islam. Arabic continued to occupy the central position as language of Islam despite the fact that the local NSA languages had developed their Arabicized varieties. While those varieties marked the religious identity of the Muslim community, they were excluded from the rituals in the mosque. The ideology which justified this exclusion of the NSA languages from the traditional rituals was based on the understanding that Qur'an is God's word transmitted to the human beings through the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the correct language of Islam had to be Arabic. Thus diglossia of Arabic and NSA languages marked the language of Islam as well.

In the case of Buddhism, NSA languages (including Tibetan in Tibet) were accepted as the religious codes, though Pali and the Hybrid Sanskrit remained major languages of the Buddhist canon (for further discussion on Tibetan Buddhism, see Ekvall 1964, and Williams 2001). The above discussion shows that the ideologies were varied across religious systems which gave rise to diverse power-hierarchies, and allowed use of many languages for one religion. It also pointed out that the ideologies were responsible for the emergence of diglossia as a strategy of maintenance of more than one code in the same religious domain. An interesting point to note here is that the NSA languages were used for Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. However, the use of the classical languages such as Sanskrit, Arabic, Latin and languages such as Persian, Portuguese, and to a large extent English, was restricted to their corresponding religions. No cross over of these languages to other religions is observed in the medieval period.

## 5. Ideology, power hierarchy, and language choice in contemporary South Asia

Although the patterns of language choice in the medieval and the contemporary period South Asia look similar, they are not the same. The most striking difference between is that the domain-related diglossia which existed in the medieval period (mentioned above), seems to be breaking down in the modern/contemporary South Asia. The languages are crossing over their earlier domains. In fact, two (at least) apparently contradictory processes seem to be currently operating in South Asia. For example, NSA languages are more readily used in the domain where earlier exclusively classical languages (Sanskrit for Hinduism, Arabic for Islam, Latin/Syriac for Christianity, Pali for Buddhism, etc.) were used in the more orthodox religious context such as wedding, funeral, naming ceremony, etc. Moreover, the religious sermons are readily given in the NSA languages mixed with the classical languages. This process, as mentioned earlier, can be called sacralization of the NSA languages. In contrast to this,

the classical languages such as Sanskrit, and Arabic are being revived in the secular context in contemporary South Asia. This process can be called the “secularization of the sacred languages.” Another interesting choice is of the English language, which was earlier excluded from the domain of Hinduism, is readily acceptable within the community for the philosophical discussions, sermons, and theological discourses. Mixing NSA languages with English is seen as a strategy to popularize religious beliefs (of Christianity, Hinduism, Neo-Buddhism, and Islam) among the masses of diverse groups using mutually unintelligible languages.

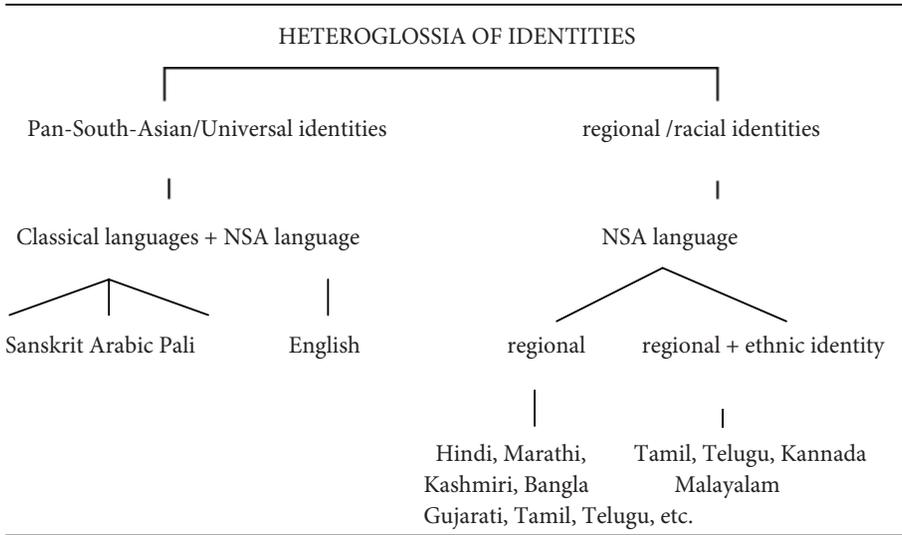
The above developments can be explained on the basis of the ideology regarding religious language. Within the contemporary South Asia, the choice of a language for a particular religion is not determined by the social domain, but rather, by its function i.e., the socio-religious identity which it symbolizes. In contemporary South Asia, religion is one of the major symbols of social identity. The South Asian society is largely divided on the basis of religion. Thus, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, etc. mark not only the religious groups, but the social groups. Embedded within the same religious/social group, there are other identities such as Pan-South-Asian religious/social group, regional religious/social group, etc. Additionally, the regional groups are further divided along ethnic lines such as Aryan, and Dravidian, etc. Each language expresses a particular type of religious/social group identity. The choice of a language is determined by the intended identity and power of the language to express it.

The correspondence here is not necessarily between the social domain and the linguistic code, rather, it is between the linguistic code and the identity (social and religious) of the communities. I would call this “heteroglossia of identities.” The connection between the codes and the identities is showed in the Table 10.

The classical languages Sanskrit, Arabic, and Pali symbolize the larger, pan-South-Asian or Hindu, Muslim, and Christian and Buddhist universal identities (religious as well as social) respectively. In contrast to this, NSA languages express the regional religious/social identities. For example, the use of Hindi for Christianity, or Bangla for Islam, and Tamil for Hinduism as religious codes express the regional version of their corresponding religions. Therefore, when the pan-Hindu identity is to be expressed, the most powerful code is the classical language. The regional NSA languages are powerless in this context. On the other hand, if the regional identity is to be expressed, the power hierarchy is reversed. Regional languages, and not the classical languages are powerful. It should be noted here that the use of English for Christianity is similar to the classical languages. However, the use of Syriac and Latin is also marginally maintained in some churches in Kerala.

This is what I call the **heteroglossia of identities**.

Table 10



The heteroglossia of identities include micro level identities in many cases. It is interesting to note here that the regional languages (similar to the medieval period) use one of the two registers, one which shows the influence of the corresponding classical language and the other without it. For example, the use of Sanskritized Hindi or non-Sanskritized Hindi can be readily used to express regional religious/social identity. Additionally, various dialects of Hindi are also used to express Hinduism. The choice of a language in this case is determined by the religious theme (for the discussion on thematic diglossia, see Pandharipande 1992). However, in South India, the use of the regional languages, devoid of any Sanskrit influence, indicates intentional dissociation from the Indo-Aryan Hindu tradition and assertion of the Dravidian identity (for further discussion, see Hart 1976, Narayanan 1994, Peterson 1989, and Zvelebil 1974).

The use of English (as opposed to Latin, Syriac, and Portuguese) for pan-South-Asian Christianity is becoming more common as the knowledge of the traditional languages for Christianity is rapidly decreasing.

## 6. Modernization, composite identities, and ideology of language-mixing

This section presents the social context of the contemporary South Asia, which similar to other parts of the world, is undergoing the processes of modernization/globalization. South Asian communities at large, are redefining their local as well as global identities. In the multilingual situation of South Asia, different languages are perceived

as symbols or indicators of these identities. The ideology of heteroglossia is a consequence of modernization, the phenomenon which is characterized as the process of globalization as well as localization at the same time (Appadurai 1996, Robertson 1992, Stuart Hall 1996). While globalization (marked by technologization, Englishization, and homogenization) results in undermining, and, at times, obliterating differences within and across societies, it also causes emergence of local identities expressed by age-old symbols. While Sanskrit, Arabic, and Pali express the pan-South-Asian or universal Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist identities respectively, they diffuse those regional/ethnic differences which are embedded within the broad labels of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. This increased awareness of the “particular” or “local” identities, is symbolized and expressed by the use of regional languages.

The phenomenon which has not received attention in current research is mixing languages within the same event. For example, in a typical wedding ritual (in Maharashtra state in India), the priest conducts the ritual in Sanskrit while the concluding ritual of blessing the newly wedded couple (*mangalāṣṭaka* “the eight auspicious verses”) is in Marathi while the content of the wedding invitation card can be in English. Another typical example of mixing of languages is the popular religious sermons delivered to the public on the television or in the “open air theater.” The local language (for example, Hindi, Marathi, or Gujarati) is the primary language of the sermon. However, the use of Sanskrit quotations from the Hindu scriptures is abundant. English vocabulary is also mixed with the primary language of communication.

In order to explain this situation, I would like to argue that the construction or make-up of the contemporary South Asian identity is complex. The identities (universal, and local) do not exist mutually exclusively, rather, they exist simultaneously. This is what I call a composite identity of the society. The South Asian multilingual community consists of multiple identities, each performing an individual function. Each language symbolizes one identity. The use of Sanskrit in the above two events of Hinduism indicates the pan-South-Asian/universal Hindu identity of the group, the use of Marathi articulates the regional identity, and the use of English allows communication with the larger group with many mutually unintelligible languages. The use of English vocabulary in the public (popular) religious sermon is a strategy to express religion in common people’s language which contains a large body of English vocabulary such as station, car, TV, table, fast, slow, traffic, post office, etc.

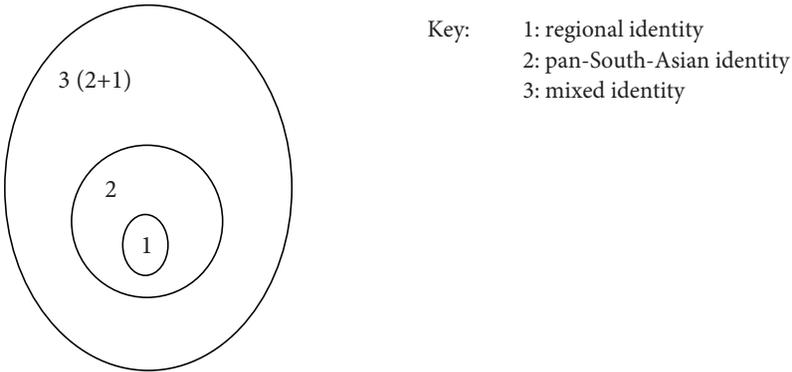
Another interesting case of mixing languages is where Sanskrit, the classical language of Hinduism is mixed with other SA languages in the most secular context. For example, the logo of the insurance company owned by the government of India (Bharatiya Vima Company) is in Sanskrit. It is a direct quote from one of the most prominent scriptures of Hindus (*Bhagawadgītā* 9:22) *yogakṣemaṃ wahāmyahaṃ*, “I take care of their needs /I provide them security (who depend on me).” In the original text of the *Bhagawadgītā* God Krishna advises Arjuna, his friend and devotee, to depend on him because God always takes care of those who depend on him. This quote is the appeal to the people to have faith in the insurance company. In the advertise-

ment of this insurance company, this quote occurs in Sanskrit while the rest of the text are in various SA languages.

Another example of the Sanskrit quote is from a Hindu scripture, *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad* (3:28) *tamaso mā jyotirgamaya*, “Lead me from the darkness to the light.” In the original scripture, this is a prayer to God to remove ignorance and bestow knowledge on the person offering the prayer. However, this quote is used as the caption in an advertisement of fabric for men’s suiting. The intended meaning is, “Let the knowledge be dawned that this fabric is indeed the best. Let the ignorance about the quality of the fabric be alleviated.” This phenomenon of using religious language for promoting commercial products, the most secular purpose, is fairly common in South Asia. The linguistic form (Sanskrit) and the literal meaning of the religious language both serve the secular purpose. This process can be called the “secularization of the religious language.”

The ideology which justifies above three cases is based on the following two assumptions about the religious language (a) religious language symbolizes religious as well as secular/social identity, and (b) the identity of the SA community at large is a composite one which allows use of multiple languages to express those identities.

Table 11.



While the innermost circle (1) expresses the local /regional religious/social identity, the circle (2) expresses the broader, pan-South-Asian religious/social identity. The outer circle (3) expresses the composite identity of the religious community which embeds the other two identities.

## 7. The impact of multiple linkage on the structure of the languages

The discussion in the preceding sections points out that historically in South Asia, for various reasons, different linguistic codes have been used for different religions. The question is whether the structure of language undergoes change when it is used for different religious systems. It has been demonstrated (Pandharipande 1992, 2001, and forthcoming) that language does undergo change when it is used for different religions, i.e., it develops different registers. For example, when Hindi is used for Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Buddhism, it develops Christian, Buddhist, Islamic, and Buddhist registers respectively. These registers differ from one another primarily in the religious vocabulary, which varies across religions. (for further discussion, see Pandharipande 1992). The major impact of the use of one language for many religions was that these languages developed a set of vocabulary (which was commonly shared by different religions) the meaning of which was contextually determined. For example, the term *Īśwar(a)* is interpreted differently in different religious systems, as shown in the Table 12 below.

Table 12.

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<i>Īśwar(a)</i>			
Krishna	Christ	Buddha	Mahavir
(Hinduism)	(Christianity)	(Buddhism)	(Jainism)

---

In addition to the above, the major impact of the use of SA languages for many religions is seen their convergence. Each of the major SA languages developed similar varieties such as Sanskritized (for Hinduism), Arabicized/Persianized (for Islam), and Englishized (for Christianity) which share linguistic features (mainly, religious themes and vocabulary). This is a fascinating example of convergence of languages through a common point of contact (Sanskrit, Arabic, and English respectively) rather than the direct mutual contact.

It is important to note here that the use of the different languages has had an impact on the religious content as well. As the medium changed, the message did too (Pandharipande 1992, 1999). The use of NSA languages included metaphors, narratives, and religious themes which were not necessarily part of the earlier scriptures in their corresponding classical languages.

Another impact of the multiple linkage and social change is seen on genres of religious languages which change through different periods. The written, oral, and visual (TV) religious discourse show enormous diversity of genres ranging from the

pure (classical or vernacular), mixed, or entirely new paradigms of religious genres (see section 7). The oral/visual culture of the TV medium has constructed new genres through fascinating mixing of classical and vernacular languages and cultural idioms. A tremendously successful genre is of mixing the religious themes with political issues (see Pandhariapande forthcoming)

## 8. The question of functional transparency

One important question needs to be addressed in this context, i.e., while NSA languages are readily used for different religions, why are classical languages (Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Pali) restricted to their corresponding religions? Why is Sanskrit mostly not used for Islam or Christianity and Arabic for Hinduism, or Christianity? The single answer to these questions lies in the fact that these languages are perceived as functionally transparent, i.e., they are the languages of the ancient scriptures of their corresponding religions and they have always been unique markers of their corresponding religions. Therefore, their affinity with the respective religions was viewed as almost exclusive. In contrast to this, the NSA languages have not been functionally transparent. They came on the scene much later and their affinity with a particular religion was relatively less transparent. Therefore, in the medieval period, they were chosen for the Bible translations as well as for the translations of the Qur'an. This is the reason why in the contemporary South Asia, the classical languages are used to symbolize the pan-South-Asian identity of their corresponding religions and religious/social communities. NSA languages are not used in this context since they cannot uniquely mark one religion/religious identity because they are used to express many religions (i.e., they are not functionally transparent). In contrast to this, regional languages, and not the classical languages, are functionally transparent with respect to the regional identity. Therefore, NSA languages are used to symbolize regional religious/social identities. This discussion clearly shows that a language with higher degree of functional transparency has more power to carry out that function compared to the language with lower functional transparency. Moreover, the language with higher functional transparency (*vis-à-vis* a particular religion) is less likely to crossover to other religions (see the Table 13 below).

The notion “functional transparency” is used in this context as a tool to measure the relative power of a language to express a particular identity. Functional transparency can be formally described as follows: if a language A is the only language used to perform a particular function in a particular domain, then, language A can be said to have “functional transparency” *vis-à-vis* that function. In contrast to this, if the same function is performed by more than one language, the languages involved are said to be not transparent (but opaque) to that function. For example, for science and technology in India, the only language used is English. Therefore, English can be said to be transparent to this function. Similarly, regional languages (in their native States)

Table 13

I.	Larger/ pan-South-Asian Identity:	More powerful
	Classical languages: more transparent	↓
	NSA languages: less transparent	Less powerful
II.	Regional religious/social identity:	More powerful
	NSA languages: more transparent	↓
	Classical languages: less transparent	Less powerful

are almost exclusively used at home thereby command functional transparency in that domain. In Mumbai, the pidgin Hindi (Bazar Hindi) is almost exclusively used as the “market language”, thereby claiming transparency to the function of a link language (in the multilingual community in Mumbai). I argue that the invariable correlation between the language and its function makes the language transparent to that function. As shown above, the degree of its functional transparency of a language to express a particular identity can be seen as a determinant of the choice of a language in the context of religion.

The power of functional transparency is seen in the failure of the effort of the British Baptist Missionaries to use the Sanskrit translation of the Bible (*Dharmapustaka*) for promoting Christianity among Hindus who could not accept the “Christian semantics” of the Sanskrit in the Bible translation! Hence they switched to the use regional languages for their missionary work.

## 9. Script as a determinant of religious language

Another interesting case is of diagraphia which shows multiple linkages of South Asian scripts. While there is not an inalienable correlation between religions and scripts certain trends are observed: when a language such as Konkani has three scripts, Devanagari indexes Hindu, Perso-Arabic script indicates Muslim, and the Roman script expresses Christian identity. Recall that regional languages (with their diverse scripts) are also used for expressing various religions. While one script indicates the Pan-South-Asian identity of the religion, the other script(s) indicate the regional religious identity. For example, the Devanagari script indicates the Pan-South-Asian Hindu identity, other scripts (of the regional languages) indicate regional Hindu identity. Similarly, the Perso-Arabic script indicates the Pan-South-Asian Muslim identity,

while other scripts indicate the regional identity (Bangla, Gujarati, etc.). While the Roman script symbolizes Christian identity, other South Asian scripts indicate South Asian/ regional Christian identities. Devanagari identifies Pan-South-Asian Hindu, Buddhism, and Jainism, other scripts symbolize their regional variants. An interesting situation is noted with the script of the languages of Sikhism. It is the Gurumukhi script, and not the language which is the differentia of the religious literature, which can be in different languages such as Panjabi, or Hindi.

## 10. Authority

The discussion raises the question, namely, which authority authenticates ideologies and thereby choice of religious languages? Ideologies do not get implemented by themselves. Linguistic codes express or represent ideologies. However, as Bourdieu (1991:107) points out, "The power of words is nothing other than the *delegated power* of the spokesperson, and his speech—that is, the substance of his discourse and, inseparably, his way of speaking—is no more than a testimony, and one among others, of the *guarantee of delegation* which is vested in him." In the context of South Asia, traditionally, mystics, saints, church, Muslim Mullahs have been perceived as authorities in determining the choice of religious languages for religions. However, their perception of religious language changes across time. Thus the mystics of the ancient period did not allow the use of NSA languages while those in the medieval period did. In the contemporary South Asia, the mystics and saints do use a mixture of many languages! However, it should be noted here that the mixture of languages is more readily allowed in the oral discourse about religion than in the religious rituals and written discourse.

Although the traditional authority of saints and mystics continues to play a role in authenticating the choice of a code as religious in the contemporary South Asia, the "social magic" (Bourdieu: 1991) is the media which constructs, communicates and promotes religious languages as symbols of religious/social identities. More specifically visual (TV) and audio programmes on and about religion play a major role in the authentication of religious languages as symbols of identities. For example, Sanskrit (in the religious rituals, mostly wedding) expresses the pan-South-Asian Hindu identity while the use of a regional language in a prayer at home, symbolizes regional Hindu identity.

In addition to the above process of symbolization, the linguistic structure of the languages used in the programs gets authenticated and gradually institutionalized as religious languages. For example, the languages used by the saints in the religious discourse on the TV, or in the movies on the religious epics are accepted as authentic languages of religion. The most interesting case is that of the epics the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*. The language of the epics is Hindi mixed with Sanskrit. However, the genre is new. The vocabulary, syntax, and the symbols depict a novel composite of

a genre which is intentionally prepared to re-create the ambiance of the ancient period. Although this genre has no precedence in the history, it is well accepted as an authentic religious code of Hinduism. Just as the use of the NSA languages was authenticated by the religious scriptures composed by the mystics in the NSA languages in the medieval period, the use of the Sanskrit mixed Hindi and Sanskrit – NSA language mixing in the secular advertisements is authenticated and institutionalized by their presentation on the TV (for further discussion on authority in religious language, see Pandharipande, forthcoming). There are two mechanisms of authority operating in the authentication of language choice in contemporary South Asia. One is the religious leaders (mystics, saints, etc), who conceptualize, construct, and present the equation of the form, content, and function of a religious language for the people. Thus, the mystic such as Sai Baba (of Shirdi), a 20<sup>th</sup> century Hindu mystic of India freely used a mixture of the vocabulary of Sanskrit and Persian /Arabic origin respectively in his message to the people. He claimed *śraddhā* “faith” (Sanskrit), and *saburi* “patience” as the two most important goals which the devotees must aspire to achieve. While this combination of the Sanskrit and Persian/Arabic words is quite unique (since the two languages (Sanskrit and Persian/Arabic) typically symbolize Hinduism and Islam respectively), the Hindu devotees do not have any problems accepting this combination since it has been presented by the mystic saint Sai Baba who is perceived as an “authority” for licensing the language. Similarly, the use of English mixed NSA languages on the TV (national as well as the local) by saints provides authenticity to the form, and it also propagates the “mixed code” as a legitimate choice for the religious discourse. What is implied here is the assumption that the process of authentication of a particular linguistic code does not necessarily represent or construct a social reality, rather, it can construct (a) a novel *method* of presentation of the traditional religious content/meaning (the case of the ancient epics in a new genre), or (b) to convey *intended* religious meaning/message (the case of Sai Baba mixing Sanskrit and Persian/Arabic vocabulary to indicate that religious differences (Hinduism and Islam in this case) are not important. What is important is faith (in the divine) and patience (and tolerance) for each other. Sai Baba is known in India for his message of the unity of all religious traditions. He preached that the divine is one, but is called by many names. Sai Baba’s spiritual teaching was to go beyond religious differences and have faith in the divine which is not bound by a particular religious system. This intended message is conveyed by the use of the Sanskrit-Persian/Arabic mixed code.

## 11. Summary and conclusion

The above discussion points out that in a multilingual and multireligious region such as South Asia, the choice of a language to express a religion is determined by the ideology about the function of the religious language and the relative power of the language (s) to carry out that function. It also demonstrates that the ideology changes

across time which restructures the hierarchy of power of languages, and consequently, affects the choice of languages for expressing religions. It is further shown that the ideology is implemented through two mechanisms, one, the authority and second, the degree of functional transparency of the language. Therefore, ideology, authority, and functional transparency should be treated as mechanisms of change in the structure and function of religious languages in particular, and languages in general. Furthermore, the discussion shows that the same ideology can be expressed in two mutually exclusive and at least apparently opposite processes. For example, the ideology of using NSA languages for religious expression (in the medieval period) was expressed in two linguistic processes of Sanskritization and de-Sanskritization. This challenges the current theory of ideology which assumes that one ideology is realized in promoting only one structural realization.

The discussion shows that the authority is not static; it changes across time. Moreover, even if the authority remains the same, it licenses different ideologies at different point points in time.

It is argued with evidence that when one language is used for different religions, its linguistic form changes (recall the various registers of Hindi). Similarly, when one religion is expressed in many languages, the religious content change as well in Particular, it is shown that the use of the NSA languages to express religion, has produced convergence of SA languages across languages families. This is an interesting case of linguistic convergence of languages through the development of shared religious registers (Sanskritized) where languages (of Indo-Aryan and Dravidian families) converge via Sanskrit without a direct mutual contact. Similar case of convergence of NSA languages is seen in their Englishization (in contemporary South Asia) which results in the emergence of Englishized registers of NSA languages. What is different about this convergence is that the converging languages are not necessarily in contact with each other.

The concept of heteroglossia explains the choice of a language in modern South Asia, and, more importantly, it demonstrates that distribution of languages in a multi-lingual society is not always explicable on the basis of diglossia where the choice of a code is determine by the social domain of language use. It is argued that the choice is determined by the identity (religious/social) which is intended to be expressed by the language.

Finally, the discussion shows that the sociolinguistic conditions (ideology, authority and functional transparency of the code) which determine a code as “language of religion” change at different points in time. Table 14 summarizes the discussion about the choice of the code for expressing a religion at three major points in time.

In the first period, the form, content and function are viewed as invariable since the languages chosen for expressing religions at his time are the classical languages or the languages of the scriptures.

In the medieval period, (column II), the ideology changed allowing variation in the form and keeping the content perceived as invariable. As long as the religious

Table 14.

LANGUAGE OF RELIGION		
Key for the interpretation: The plus sign (+) is used to indicate non-variability while the minus sign (-) marks variability.		
I. Pre-medieval period (a) Form : +  (b) Content : + (c) Function : + [no variability]	II. Medieval period Form : -  Content : + Function : + [variability of form] [diglossia]	III. Contemporary South Asia Form : -  Content : - Function : - [Heteroglossia of identities]
Lgs. of the scriptures	[diglossia] Lgs. of the scriptures + NSA lgs.	[variability of form, content and function] [Heteroglossia of identities] Scriptural lgs, NSA lgs., mixed lg codes

content was maintained, the form which expressed that content was perceived as religious. The function of the religious language also remained the same as before. The NSA languages (along with the earlier classical /scriptural languages) were chosen as religious languages. Diglossia was the mechanism which allowed maintenance of both- the classical as well as the NSA languages. In the third contemporary period (see column III), the choice of the language for expressing a religion is determined by the identity of the religion/community. The form, content, and function are variable, thus allowing languages to cross over the religions as well as the boundaries of the secular and the sacred.

This framework predicts that different religious communities and cultures may vary in their ideology about the composition of the three components of the language of religion and thereby the choice of the religious codes may vary as well.

**Notes**

1. An earlier version of this paper will appear in a forthcoming volume on *Language in South Asia* (edited by Kachru, B and S.N. Sridhar). Cambridge University Press.

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## The shifting role of languages in Lebanese Christian and Muslim identities

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I dream of the day when I can call all the Middle East my homeland, as I now do Lebanon and France and Europe; the day when I can call all its sons, Muslim, Jewish and Christian, of all denominations and all origins, my compatriots. In my own mind, which is always speculating and trying to anticipate the future, it has already come to pass. But I want it to happen one day on the solid ground of reality, and for everyone. (Maalouf 2000 [1998]: 132)

### 1. Introduction: Language and identities

However tightly they are bound up with national identities, languages are no less potent a force in constructing identities concurrent with and often resistant to the national. While national identities are already arbitrary in their construction, they at least develop an institutional status through such practices as the issuing of passports, the coinage of money and the production of other talismans through which 'banal nationalism' is effectuated (see Billig 1995). This tends to set the national apart from other identities, while at the same time creating a temptation to treat other identities as though their own status were on a par with the national. The most salient example is the Marxist treatment of 'class' identities, but recent history has shown how, even in formerly Marxist states, long-repressed religious and sectarian identities have managed to survive and re-emerge.

Religious identities are like ethnic ones in that they concern where we come from and where we are going – our entire existence, not just the moment-to-moment. It is these identities above all that, for most people, give profound meaning to the names we identify ourselves by, both as individuals and as groups. They supply the plot for the stories of our lives, singly and collectively, and are bound up with our deepest beliefs about life, the universe and everything. Moreover, in most cultures ethnic and religious identities are bound up with reproduction, in the sense that they limit who one can marry, whether endogamy or exogamy is the cultural norm. That, of course, gives them an evolutionary dimension.

In Europe, for over a thousand years beginning in the fourth century after Christ, religion was the primary focus of people's identity. With the fall of Rome in 453, there ceased to be a Western and an Eastern Empire, and was again just one Empire, ruled from Byzantium. Throughout these long centuries, any strangers wandering through countryside or village, if asked to identify themselves, only in rare cases could have cited a 'national' identity, but would have claimed to be Christians (or Jews) from such and such a parish (or town). The obvious exception was in times of war between Christian armies, and such wars, great and small, were numerous in certain parts of Europe. Identifying where strangers were from, based on the sort of Latin they spoke (or did not speak), was a matter of life and death. So the groundwork for later identity differences among Christian sects after the Reformation in the late 15th century was already there to be built upon.

Somewhat paradoxically, then, religion functioned as a linguistically unifying force, but also as a divisive force. Religion bound Christian Europe to Latin, the Islamic world to Arabic, and Jews to Hebrew. Yet when Christianity underwent an East-West split the use of Latin vs. Greek became its most potent symbol. The islands of Christians within the Western Asian lands ruled by Muslims pegged their identities to Syriac, Chaldean and other languages. Hebrew loan-words helped mark out the forms of German and Spanish spoken by Jews from those of other German and Spanish speakers. Sectarian splits in Islam came to be associated with dialectal differences in Arabic, just as splits within Christianity would do. It is extremely unlikely that any of these alignments in belief and language were accidental. Members of the various sects needed and wanted to be able to recognise one another, and to identify members of other sects, and they adopted various ways of doing this, from circumcision, to distinctive clothing and ornaments, to rituals such as the sign of the cross or bowing to the east for prayers. In such a semiotically charged context, language could hardly fail to play its part.

This chapter will focus on language and religious identity in Lebanon, where bilingualism has come to play an important signifying role. In some cases, however, religious differences actually come to be built into the grammar of the language, and personal pronouns seem to be a preferred locus for such difference. A famous example is the retention of the familiar second-person pronoun *thou* and its related forms (*thee*, *thy* etc.) by dissenting sects such as the Quakers, long after their disappearance from general spoken English. In a number of European languages which, unlike non-Quaker English, have retained a formal-informal pronoun distinction, Roman Catholic and Protestant sects differ (or have differed) in which of the two they use to refer to God – a choice seen as having profound theological implications about the relationship of human beings to the divinity.

But its more immediate effect is to mark the different identities of the sect that uses the divergent forms, and to mark the identity of an individual as belonging to one or the other sect. In this latter regard it serves a double function: to inform the out-group of one's membership of the sect; and also, in many cultures, to allow in-

group members to assess one's status within the religious system. This status can take the form of 'full membership', as when the young Jewish male signals his *bar mitzvah* status by his knowledge of Hebrew, or the young Muslim by his knowledge of Koranic Arabic; or it can be a matter of depth of religious piety, as measured through repetitions of formulaic invocations of the deity (and avoidance of 'vain' invocations of the divine name), or through general linguistic *purism*, using whatever language the religious identity is bound to in its most 'proper' form. This is the religious equivalent of the behaviour of the 19th-century lower middle classes as described by Hobsbawm (1990:117; see Joseph 2004:121), where they signalled their identity as the most 'proper' members of the nation through their proper use of language.

An extreme example of linguistic purism tied to religious identity, discussed below, is that of early Islamic scholars who sought to prove that every word of the Koran is 'pure Arabic'. In a comparable way, extremely conservative Protestant Christian sects such as the Amish and Mennonites in the USA try to live in accordance with the Bible to such a degree that they shun modern inventions and use a form of English that, insofar as possible, does not depart from that of the King James Bible. Among Southern Baptists as well, exceptional piety is 'performed', by preachers in particular, through the use of archaic biblical formulae and frequent quotations of scripture even in secular contexts.

In Western Europe, one of the most striking social phenomena of the last forty years has been the decline of Christian identities, in contrast with the great strengthening of religious identities taking place in the rest of the world. The most dramatic of these have been the rise of 'militant Islam' and the resurgence of Christian worship and identities in Eastern Europe and Asian countries where they had been suppressed or banned outright until the fall of communism. Christianity has also made steady gains in parts of Africa and Southeast Asia where Islam or forms of Buddhism had previously been dominant, and its presence in American cultural life has grown rather than receded. Western European societies, however, experienced massive secularisation in the last third of the 20th century. In the UK, where government subsidies for churches is limited, vast numbers of urban church buildings have been abandoned or given over to other uses, and a majority of people under the age of 60 have become extremely reticent about proclaiming a Christian identity, because they associate religion with conflict, strife and war. The 30 years of 'troubles' in Northern Ireland have contributed their share to this association; but younger people throughout Europe display similar antipathy to traditional religious identities, preferring instead to locate their belonging and their spirituality elsewhere, in 'New Age' spiritual practices, popular music or other secular pursuits – or nowhere at all. But identities show a remarkable capacity to metamorphose, and the aim of this paper is to show how readily linguistic, religious and ethnic identities transfer and blend into one another. (For a fuller treatment of the issues see Joseph 2004 & forthcoming.)

## 2. Language and religious identity in Lebanon

On 14 August 2002 I witnessed and recorded a brief conversation that took place (in English) between a Malaysian Chinese woman who has lived in Scotland for more than 30 years (W1), and a 24-year-old Lebanese woman making her first venture outside her native country (W2). By way of making small talk, W1 asked what (as she later told me) she took to be a rather obvious question:

W1 And what language is spoken in Lebanon?

W2 French.

(pause)

W1 Really? Not Arabic?

W2 The Muslim, they speak Arabic all the time. Nothing but Arabic.

The father of W2, a 54-year-old who had accompanied her on the trip (having himself been out of Lebanon only briefly on two previous occasions) was also taking part in the conversation, nodded assent to his daughter's words but added nothing.

What W1 did not realise was the extent to which her seemingly innocuous and obvious question would be interpreted as a challenge over a very sensitive matter of linguistic and religious identity. I am confident that W2 did not misunderstand the question, since her reply, although surprising, was in line with numerous other statements she made to me. These were particularly surprising because, in February and March of 1998, when I visited W2 and her family at their home in Lebanon, their attitude toward Arabic and French had been markedly different. Then, we spoke to each other mainly in French, for the simple reason that it was our most viable lingua franca. They subjected me to considerable criticism for not speaking better Arabic, since, in their view, as the descendant of two Lebanese grandparents (one of them the uncle of W2's father), I had a filial and cultural duty to know what they described over and over as 'the language of Lebanon'. Over the intervening four years I worked on my Arabic, a language I had in fact grown up with, getting it to a reasonable conversational level – only to discover that now, in a changed religious-political atmosphere, they prefer to speak French.

Before I attempt to explain the change, some historical background is needed. The land that constitutes the modern state of Lebanon was part of the Alexandrian, Roman and Byzantine Empires. It came under Arab rule in the 7th century after Christ and remained under it until the 15th century, minus a few periods of Byzantine reconquest and a few cities held by Crusaders. In 1516 it became part of the Ottoman Empire, and remained so until the Empire was disbanded in the aftermath of World War I, in which it had sided with Germany. For most of the Ottoman period, Mount Lebanon was a quasi-autonomous region dominated by the Maronites, a Christian sect who have been uniate with the Vatican since 1182, centuries longer than any of the important Catholic sects in Lebanon (Greeks, Armenians, Syrians and Chaldeans, all of which split off from Orthodox or other non-Catholic sects between the 16th and

18th centuries). Having the French as their protectors was the main factor in Maronite power within Mount Lebanon. The Lebanese state was established under a French mandate in 1920, and became an independent republic in 1943 after Lebanon was freed from Vichy French rule by Free French forces.

*Pace* my cousin W2, Arabic is the mother tongue of nearly the whole native-born Lebanese population. It serves as the major binding force of national unity, even for people who locate their identity principally in their differences from other Lebanese, when national unity is what they want to assert. These differences are religious and sectarian first and foremost, but they are mirrored and manifested in other cultural divisions, including differences of who is bilingual in what. These differences are significant enough for W2 to have spontaneously shifted W1's question onto the ground of bilingualism. For what W1's question threateningly implies is that Lebanon has one language only, and more generally, that nations and languages exist in a one-to-one correspondence. If Lebanon has just one language, that language is surely Arabic; and if the 'ownership' of Arabic has to be assigned to one nation, many would maintain that it would have to be the 'nation of Islam', who were after all responsible for spreading Arabic from the southern part of the Semitic-speaking world to northern areas such as Lebanon. Rather than countenance any such implications, W2 simply switched battlegrounds; for when it comes to bilingualism, the Christians of Lebanon, especially Maronites like her, can assert an advantage.

Already during the Ottoman period, various forms of bilingualism set groups of people apart. Speakers bilingual in Arabic and Turkish, the Ottoman administrative language, formed a class of government officials and functionaries that cut across religious divisions. On the other hand, with rare exceptions, only Christians were bilingual in Arabic and the languages of their Western European protectors, especially the French. Arabic-French bilingualism became an important identity marker for certain (not all) Christian sects, notably the Maronites. Their relationship with Arabic is further complicated by the fact that another Semitic tongue, Syriac, is their liturgical language, which means that the role of Arabic in Maronite cultural life is fundamentally different than for the Muslim sects. Still, *Allāh* is the God worshipped by Christians and Muslims alike in the Arabic language, *Īsā* is the Jesus whom the former consider the Son of God and the latter one of his greatest prophets, and *Maryam* his mother, revered by both Christians and Muslims as the holiest of women. (On language and national identity in the Arabic-speaking world see further Holt 1996, Suleiman 1994, 2003; and on Lebanon in particular, Dagher 1994, Der-Karabetian & Prodian-Der-Karabetian 1984, Gordon 1985).

In modern times, the distribution of languages other than Arabic in Lebanon has gone through three stages. In the Ottoman period, up through World War I, chances were strong that anyone who knew French (or Italian, though it had receded considerably by the end of the 19th century) was an educated Christian, and more specifically a Maronite or Roman Catholic. Anyone who knew English was likely to be an educated

Muslim (probably Druze) or Orthodox Christian (probably Greek). Knowledge of Turkish was widespread, especially among men.

Under the French mandate and its aftermath, knowledge of French spread across religions and sects. It was still statistically more probable that someone who knew French was Christian rather than Muslim, but not by a wide margin. Similarly with the Druze and Greek Orthodox majority for English. In 1962 Abou found the distribution shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Bilingualism by religion, sex and age group, from Abou (1962: 111)

	Arabic-French Bilingual	Arabic-English Bilingual	Arab-Fr-Eng Tri-lingual	Arabic Mono-lingual	Illiterate
<b>Men</b>					
Christian	21%	3%	5%	48%	23%
Muslim	17%	3%	2%	39%	39%
<b>Women</b>					
Christian	24%	1%	2%	28%	45%
Muslim	7%	2%	0%	22%	69%
<b>Boys</b>					
Christian	37%	3%	6%	32%	22%
Muslim	32%	5%	1%	34%	28%
<b>Girls</b>					
Christian	39%	1%	2%	29%	29%
Muslim	28%	2%	0%	37%	33%

Abou's use of 'illiterate' as a separate category suggests how strongly multilingualism in Lebanon has been above all an *educational* fact. The spread of education through the population over time can be seen by comparing the figures for men and women on the one hand and boys and girls on the other. Knowledge of French has nearly doubled among the youngest generation; in the case of Muslim girls, it has quadrupled. Illiteracy has dropped sharply for every group except the Christian males, three-quarters of whom were already literate in the adult generation. The coming of English, although slow, is visible, again by comparing the generations. (For further information on bilingualism in Lebanon, see Abou, 1978; Guenier, 1994; Pecheur, 1993; Srage, 1988; and for an early study on bilingualism in the 'Arab world' generally, Nakhla, 1935).

### 3. Ancient Phoenician and Maronite identity

Further on I shall give more recent data for the distribution of languages by religion in Lebanon. Before that, I want to look in detail at one facet of the Christian cultural context and one facet of the Muslim cultural context, each of which has contributed

to the construction of ethnic, linguistic and religious difference where, in reality, there is unity. For centuries the Christian populations of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq have been nearly an island in the vast sea of Islam. Actually they have been a sort of peninsula, with Lebanon as the primary link to the Christian world to the west. In these circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that a significant cultural effort has gone toward creating a cultural authenticity rooted in the belief that, if they are an island, they did not emerge from the sea, but were there long before the sea existed.

An interesting contribution to this effort is the 1984 book *History of the Maronites* by Father Boutros Dau. Part One is called “The Phœnician Ancestors of the MARONITES”, and its first chapter is entitled “Origin of the Phœnicians – a People three million years old”. It divides the 3,000,000-year history of the Maronites into seven periods, the first being:

- 1 – The prehistoric extending from three million years to the sixth millenium [sic] B.C. From this period were found:
  - a – Fish fossils about 75,000,000 years old found at Sahil ‘Alma and in Haqil Byblos,
  - b – Implements from the Stone Age found at al-‘Aqbiyah [and eight other locations],
  - c – [...] a human skeleton embedded in a rock shelter at Kasr ‘Aqil above Antilyas six miles north of Beirut [...] of a boy about eight years old who may have lived 25,000 to 30,000 years ago [...]. (Dau, 1984, pp. 11–12)

Quite how this evidence establishes that the Maronites are “a People three million years old” – twenty times older than the current estimated age of the species *Homo sapiens* – is not explained. The next paragraph gives more information about the skeleton in (c), though, oddly, without noting that it has already been mentioned:

A fairly typical early Lebanese child skeleton with strong mediterranean appearance dating back 30,000 years ago was discovered at Antelias. This discovery proves that since at least 30,000 years, Lebanese people have been of a proper mediterranean type, independent and wholly different from that of an Arab type. It is therefore contrary to all beliefs to maintain that Lebanese people are Arabs. (ibid., p. 12)

An intriguing slip there: “contrary to all beliefs” when one would have expected “all evidence”. The historical periods continue up to Period 8, the “Phœnicio Greco-Roman period (332 B.C.–400 A.D.)”, during which

[...] Christ is born, the cities of Phœnician coast gradually embraced christianity. The mountain [Mt Lebanon] persisted in paganism until it was converted by the disciples of St. Maron during the fifth through the seventh century. (ibid., p. 16)

And that brings us finally to:

9 – The Phœnicio-Maronite period (400 A.D.-present time): The population remained ethnically and nationally the same as before, but the religion changed, and with religion the name Maronite replaced that of Phœnician; politically, the mountain became the center of gravity instead of the coastal cities, and the name Lebanon replaced politically that of Phœnicia. (ibid.)

In other words, *Lebanon* equals *Maronite* equals *Phœnician*. It now starts to become clear why it is important to stretch the Phœnicians further and further back into prehistory. If Maronite Christianity predates Islam by only some two centuries, that does not give it much in the way of historical priority. If, on the other hand, the Maronites were already in Lebanon over 3,000,000 years before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, their claims to be the *true* Lebanese people are beyond refute. The cultural fictions concerning the Phœnicians are clearly cultural first and ‘ethnic’ second. For despite Father Dau’s remark about the “child skeleton with strong mediterranean appearance”, there is no credible physical anthropological distinction to be drawn such that Lebanese people, or even just Maronites, fall clearly into a ‘Mediterranean’ rather than an ‘Arab’ category. As for the Phœnicians, all the archaeological evidence suggests that they were a Semitic people, in other words of exactly the same ethnic and cultural origins as the Arabs.

#### 4. Constructing Islamic Arabic uniqueness

Father Dau stands in a long and venerable line of people devoted to scholarly disproof of apparent ethnic and cultural unity. Much classical Islamic scholarship was aimed at furthering the belief that Arabia in the time of Muhammad was isolated from the rest of the Semitic world, which plainly was not the case. Jeffery’s 1938 study of *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’an* spends a great deal of time sorting through the ideologically motivated etymologies put forward to claim that *no word in the Koran is of non-Arabic origin*. Even when the source of the borrowing was a very close Hebrew congener, so long as it was charged with Jewish or Christian religious significance, scholars held it to be unrelated.

In the following examples I have transliterated foreign scripts and omitted the details as to which scholars maintained which views (the full information can be found by following up the citations). First, some cases of words borrowed into Arabic from Greek, a language associated exclusively with Christianity:

- *Iblīs* “the Devil”: “The tendency among the Muslim authorities is to derive the name from *bls* ‘to despair’, he being so called because God caused him to despair of all good [...]. The more acute philologers, however, recognized the impossibility of this [...]. That the word is a corruption of the Gk. *diábolos* has been recognized by the majority of Western scholars” (Jeffery, 1938, p. 47).
- *burūj* “Towers”: “The philologers took the word to be from *baraja* ‘to appear’ ([...]), but there can be little doubt that *burūj* represents the Gk. *púrgos* (Lat.

*burgus*), used of the towers on a city wall [...]” (ibid., p. 78).

- *qalam* “pen”: “The native authorities take the word from *qalama* ‘to cut’ ([...]), but this is only folk-etymology, for the word is the Gk. *kálamos* ‘a reed’ and then ‘a pen’, though coming through some Semitic form” (ibid., p. 243).

Indeed, the name for the Byzantine Greeks themselves, *ar-Rūm*, was subjected to this same interpretational process: “A considerable number of the early authorities took it as an Arabic word derived from *rām* ‘to desire eagerly’, the people being so called because of their eagerness to capture Constantinople ([...]). Some even gave them a Semitic genealogy [...]. The ultimate origin, of course, is Lat. *Roma*, which in Gk. is ‘*Rómē*, which came into common use when *hē Neà ‘Rómē* [...] became the name of Constantinople after it had become the capital of the Empire” (ibid., pp. 146–147).

Turning to the Semitic languages, the scholars subjected the name of *Isrā’īl* “Israel” – the patriarch and the nation of his descendants – to no less extraordinary etymological acrobatics: “Some of the exegetes endeavoured to derive it from *sri* ‘to travel by night’, because when Jacob fled from Esau he travelled by night ([...]). It was very generally recognized as a foreign name, however” (ibid., p. 61). Jeffery goes on to note that the absence of an initial glottal stop means that the word was probably not borrowed directly from the Hebrew, but came instead from a Christian origin, since the Greek, Syriac and Ethiopic forms of the name all lack the stop.

Other Hebrew borrowings for which Koranic commentators went into denial include:

- *aḥbār*, plural of *ḥibr* or *ḥabr* “a Jewish Doctor of the Law”: “The Commentators knew that it was a technical Jewish title and quote as an example of its use Ka’b al-Aḥbār, the well-known convert from Judaism. It was generally taken, however, as a genuine Arabic word derived from *ḥabira* ‘to leave a scar’ (as of a wound), the Divines being so called because of the deep impression their teaching makes on the lives of their students” (ibid., pp. 49–50).
- *asbāt* “the Tribes” (i.e. the Twelve Tribes of Israel): “The philologists derive it from *sbt* ‘a thistle’, their explanation thereof being interesting if not convincing ([...]). Some, however, felt the difficulty, and Abū’l-Laith was constrained to admit that it was a Hebrew loan-word” (ibid., p. 57). Jeffery goes on to note that it may have been borrowed via the Syriac.
- *Taurāh* “the Torah”: “was recognized by some of the early authorities to be a Hebrew word [...]. Some, however, desired to make it an Arabic word derived from *warā* [‘to conceal, keep secret’] (ibid., p. 96).

Finally, I have reserved for last what are undoubtedly the two most significant cases, since they consist of nothing less than the names of God and the prophet whom Christians believe to be the Son of God. Concerning *Allāh* Jeffery writes,

One gathers [...] that certain early Muslim authorities held that the word was of Syriac or Hebrew origin. The majority, however, claimed that it was pure Arabic, though they set forth various theories as to its derivation. Some held that it has

no derivation, [...] while the Baṣrans derived it from *al lāh*, taking *lāh* as a verbal noun from *lyh* “to be high” or “to be veiled”. The suggested origins [...] were even more varied, some taking it from *alaha* “to worship”, some from *aliha* “to be perplexed”, some from *aliha* ‘*ilya* “to turn to for protection”, and others from *waliha* “to be perplexed”. Western scholars are fairly unanimous that the source of the word must be found in one of the older religions. (ibid., p. 66)

But most problematic of all was ‘*Īsā* “Jesus”, a form which does not occur in Arabic earlier than the Koran (ibid., p. 220) and is difficult to derive from its Hebrew original following normal sound correspondences. Jeffery writes:

Many Muslim authorities take the word as Arabic and derive it from ‘*is* “to be a dingy white”, whence ‘*ayasu* “a reddish whiteness” ([...]), or from ‘*aisu* meaning “a stallion’s urine”. (ibid., p. 219)

Stallion’s urine is not the most obvious source from which to derive the name of a revered prophet, even if he is another religion’s Messiah. But I doubt that the Muslim authorities were, as we say, taking the piss, since Arabic culture has always revered the awesome power and majesty of the stallion, and it is easy to imagine that its urine would be perceived as a magical substance with connections to the animal’s near-mythical generative capacities. Still, the very impulse to prove a pure Arabic origin for the name of everyone who figures in the Koran, even when their name in their own language was known to be reasonably close to the Arabic form, is a testament to the power of ideology over empirical observation, if any such testament were needed.

## 5. Recent shifts in Lebanese language/identity patterns

After the start of civil war in the mid-1970s, the position of French, which had been strong and growing in 1962 (see Table 1 above) began to decline sharply. Something like the old Ottoman-era distribution re-established itself, so that now approximately half the Francophones of Lebanon are Maronites (see Table 2).

The decline of French has been paralleled by the rise of English. Recent data are not available on knowledge of English across Lebanon, but quite a bit can be surmised from the survey Abou et al. (1996) have done of the Francophone community. When asked what languages besides Arabic would be most useful for the future of Lebanon, 61.5% of the Francophones answered that English would be most useful. Only 31.8% said that French would be most useful, and a mere 3.1% said both English and French (Abou et al. 1996:99). Even more startlingly, the Maronite Francophones were more inclined than the Muslim Francophones to answer English rather than French. Two out of three Maronite Francophones named English as the most important language for the country’s future (ibid., 100). It seems clear from these data that another major linguistic realignment is in progress.

A research study which I initiated in 1998, the results of which have been published

**Table 2.** Distribution of Francophones by religion, from Abou et al. (1996:68)

Religious community	Francophones
Sunni	10.5%
Shi'ite	12.1%
Druze	2.9%
Maronite	49.3%
Greek Orthodox	12.7%
Greek Catholic	9.6%
Others	2.9%
Total	100.0%
Number in sample	6,703

in Ghaleb & Joseph (2000), targeted adult residents (over 17 years of age) of the Greater Beirut area. A university student was trained to solicit and administer the instrument. Diverse areas of the capital were pinpointed for data collection. The student would randomly select an adult passing by her location and request their participation in the study. The amount of time needed to complete the form was estimated at 15 minutes each. Our research was based on a combination of questionnaire and interview. The major independent variables we examined are: age, sex, religious affiliation, type of schools and university attended, level of education attained, profession/occupation, place of origin, and area of residence within Beirut. Moderator variables include time spent abroad (and where spent), contact with persons abroad, and so on.

A total of 281 participants in the Greater Beirut area completed the forms. The participants were subdivided as follows:

**Table 3.** Participants by Gender and Religion (Ghaleb & Joseph 2000)

	Male	Female	Total
Religion:			
Muslims	55	101	156
Christians	38	72	110
No Response	6	9	15
Total	99	182	281

In breaking down the first foreign language by religion, we found no significant differences between Muslims and Christians:

**Table 4.** Participants' First Foreign Language by Religion (Ghaleb & Joseph 2000)

Respondents' 1st Foreign Lang.	Muslims	Christians	Total
English	91 [58.3%]	60 [54.5%]	151 [53.7%]
French	59 [37.8%]	43 [39.1%]	102 [36.3%]
English & French	2 [1.3%]	3 [2.7%]	5 [1.8%]
Other	4 [2.6%]	4 [3.6%]	8 [2.8%]
No Response			15 [5.3%]
Total	156	110	281

When it comes to attitudes, however, differences begin to emerge. Although English figured as the foremost world language by the respondents, when considering Lebanon's needs, a less overwhelming response was found. In answer to the query, "Do you think English or French is currently more important as a second language for Lebanon?", the responses showed that both English and French figured as being important. However, for those that selected just one language for their response, English was considered to be the more important of the two.

**Table 5.** Most Important Foreign Language for Lebanon by Religion (Ghaleb & Joseph 2000)

Participants' Religion	English	French	Both	Neither	=Total
Muslims	77 (49.7%)	14 (9.0%)	58 (37.4%)	6 (3.9%)	155
Christians	37 (33.6%)	10 (9.0%)	61 (55.5%)	2 (1.8%)	110
No Response					16
Total	114	24	119	8	281
Percent (/265)	43.0	9.1	44.9	3.0	100

These figures show a difference from those cited in Abou *et al.*, 1996, p. 99:

**Table 6.** Comparison of figures for Most Important Foreign Language for Lebanon

	English	French	Both
Abou et al.	61.5%	31.8%	3.1%
Ghaleb-Joseph	43.0%	9.1%	44.9%

My interpretation of the difference is that, for whatever reason, Abou's subjects did not perceive 'both' as a valid choice. Interesting results were found from the query, "Do you associate English and French with particular religious groups in Lebanon? If so, which ones?" The responses showed that, of 281 responses, a little less than fifty percent associated French with Christians while the overwhelming majority did not associate English with either religion:

**Table 7.** Which Religion English is Associated With (Ghaleb & Joseph 2000)

	Religion of Respondent	
	Muslim (/155)	Christian (/110)
Associate English with:		
Christians	2 (1.3%)	7 (6.4%)
Muslims	18 (11.6%)	7 (6.4%)
Both	25 (16.1%)	9 (8.2%)
Neither	107 (69.0%)	85 (77.3%)
No Response		21

**Table 8.** Which Religion French is Associated With (Ghaleb & Joseph 2000)

	Religion of Respondent	
	Muslim (/155)	Christian (/110)
Associate French with:		
Christians	73 (47.1%)	43 (39.1%)
Muslims	1 (0.6%)	–
Both	1 (0.6%)	–
Neither	81 (52.3%)	63 (57.3%)
No Response		19

So a tendency persists whereby French is associated with Christians, and, what is surprising, it appears to be stronger among Muslims than among Christians themselves. This is despite the fact that the two groups report French as their first language in roughly equal proportions.

What this suggests is that old cultural patterns die hard. Since 1997 all Lebanese education from primary up has been trilingual, in line with educational policy developed specifically to close up the linguistic divide. But there is no guarantee that it will work, unless Christians and Muslims want their communities to draw closer together. Otherwise, discursive means can always be rediscovered for reconstituting their supposed uniquenesses.

## 6. Conclusion: Still more recent developments

As noted in the second section, I observed a marked change in attitudes toward bilingualism among my own relations in Lebanon between 1998 and 2002. It took a considerable amount of observation and conversational interaction to determine what had changed such that W2 and her father, who four years earlier had felt that Arabic

was their language, now instead made strong assertions of their Arabic-French bilingualism. In 1998 Lebanon was, in retrospect, at the peak of its modern stability. Open hostilities between Christians and Muslims had ceased, the economy was approaching something like normality and major rebuilding projects were underway. Admittedly, there were two open wounds to national pride: the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, and the fact that Syria was openly running the rest of Lebanon, with its troops stationed throughout the country and the government unable to take any action without Syrian consent. Yet in the minds of most Lebanese these twin occupations effectively balanced each other out.

Muslims, although the more furious over the Israeli occupation, were recompensed by the presence of *de facto* Muslim national control. Indeed, the presence of Israeli troops in the south of Lebanon had been the rationale (or pretext) for Syria's entry into Lebanon. Christians were by no means content with the Israeli occupation, but it did not pose the same level of threat to them; and as for the hand of Syria, they exhibited an amazing capacity to deny that their country had in fact lost its sovereignty. This capacity was no doubt fed by the welcome fact of the economic upturn. Whatever the situation of the government might be, one is less likely to resent it when times are peaceful and prosperous.

What upset the balance for the Christians was the fact that, when Israel withdrew from Southern Lebanon in May 2000, Syria did not then withdraw its own troops from the rest of the country, as it had always been assumed would happen. In the absence of any significant international objection, the occupation of Lebanon by Syria became an apparently permanent arrangement. Then, the following year, as the long international economic boom of the 1990s came to a halt, the Lebanese economy ceased to grow. Times were no longer good, and any Christians who had been in denial that their country was now effectively a vassal state of its Muslim neighbour and traditional rival shed their illusions.

And that is how, in the summer of 2002, the answer to the question "What language is spoken in Lebanon?" came to be 'French'. A different answer, one that would amalgamate Lebanon to the rest of the Middle East and the Arab world, had become unacceptable to W2, however obvious that answer may be. An answer that asserts the uniqueness of Lebanon within the Middle East and the Arab world – however counter-intuitive it may appear – becomes the immediate reply. Such is the volatility and, paradoxically, the durability of the links which language has to identities, national, ethnic and religious.

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## Language and religion in Bethlehem

### A socio-historical linguistic perspective

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#### 1. Introduction

The recent Israeli incursion (April 2002) to Bethlehem and the siege of the church of nativity illustrate the importance of religion and politics in the town. Israeli soldiers (for the overwhelming majority the native language is Hebrew) sieging the church, with monks and priests inside the church with various European languages (mainly Greek, French, Italian, Latin etc.), and the Palestinian fighters (native speakers of Arabic and mainly Muslim) taking refuge in the church from the Israeli army. Although the pictures broadcast on television shocked the entire world, the occupation of Bethlehem and the significant role-played by religion over the years are not a new phenomenon.

Religion has played a significant role in the formation of the language fabric of the town of Bethlehem. Bethlehem provides a unique case for testing the relations between language and religion. Religion is closely related to economic and socio-political developments and other emerging social processes such as migration and urbanization. The effect of migration, after a century of emigration of Christians and of immigration of Muslims, is considerable on the language repertoire of the town. The indigenous and European Churches have encouraged the spread of multilingualism through the educational institutions they have established. The uncomfortable economic integration with Israel, following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967 is reflected by the status of Hebrew in the linguistic repertoire. The gradual emergence of a unique blend of Palestinian and Bethlehem identities and communities of practice is a final result of these multiple effects.

My goal in this chapter is to explore the 'lingualism' of the city and to determine the role of religion in the formation of the city's lingual patterns. More specifically, I shall look at the development of Bethlehem's language repertoire and attempt to answer the following multi-pronged question: How did the education system, emigration of Christians with their greater exposure to other languages and immigration of Muslims, and politico-religious developments encourage or restrict multilingualism in Bethlehem?

## 2. Bethlehem Christian

Bethlehem's greatest importance came from its early identification as the birthplace of Jesus Christ. According to local tradition, the town's Christian population was established by five Jewish brothers who converted and became the patriarchs of the founding Christian families in the town (Bannurah 1982). In 326 CE, Constantine, Greek-speaking Holy Roman Emperor, and his mother Queen Helena, who had converted to Christianity, visited the Holy Land, and identified the important sites that had appeared in the New Testament account of the life of Jesus. In 326 CE, she and her son had an elaborate church erected in Bethlehem over the cave which local tradition identified as the site of the nativity (Franciscan Friars 1998). First named The Church of Saint Mary, it was later called The Church of the Cradle or The Church of the Nativity, and soon became the hub of a growing settlement.

With this, Bethlehem's history as a place of pilgrimage began. Many hermits and monks – Byzantine, Greek, Roman, Russian, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, and others – settled in the area, bringing with them a great variety of languages (Hassan 1993). Christians fleeing persecution increased the local population and it is claimed that by the end of the fourth century there were over two hundred convents and monasteries in and around Bethlehem. The most famous of these religious settlers, St. Jerome, arrived in Bethlehem in 384 CE and lived near the Church of the Nativity where he worked on translating the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek texts into Latin (Petrozzi 1971). His most famous work was the Vulgate, a Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures. It is believed that he was assisted with this work by Jewish scholars who lived in nearby villages.

Bethlehem was particularly important as the site for ceremonies celebrating the birth of Jesus. By the fifth century, Christians from Bethlehem and elsewhere, especially Jerusalem would join in major celebration on the fifth of January. Later, there were also celebrations on the twenty fifth of December when the Church in Jerusalem started to recognize the Roman Catholic calendar (Franciscan Friars 1998).

In 539, the Samaritans, living around Nablus north of Jerusalem, rebelled against the Byzantine State. In the course of their rebellion, the walls of Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity were destroyed but these were rebuilt by the Emperor Justinian who crushed the revolt. The church was rebuilt on Constantine's original plans, with an enlarged area over the grotto and marbles and mosaic covering the walls. There are conflicting reports on how happy Justinian was with the renovations. According to some, he had the architect executed. Nevertheless it is essentially the same church that exists today (Franciscan Friars 1998).

### 3. Islam and the rise of Arabic in Bethlehem

The dominance of the Arabic language in Bethlehem essentially begins with the Arab conquest of Palestine in the seventh century under Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab. Classical Arabic became the language of Government and eventually spoken Arabic the vernacular of most of its residents. How quickly local residents began using Arabic as their vernacular can only be speculated on but it is clear that Arabic was never the only language spoken in Bethlehem. At the very least, the various Christian services would have continued to be conducted in non-Arabic languages, for ‘Umar and his successors enforced the Islamic concept of *dhimma*. Derived from the Qur’anic statement, *la ikraha fi al-din* (2: 256) ‘there is no constraint in religion’, it protected the religious rights of Christians and Jews as *ahl al-dhimma* “people of the pact”. These communities were tolerated under the Muslim rule of ‘Umar, their holy places and possessions were protected, although they lived under a number of social and symbolic restrictions and were required to pay higher taxes. (Bosworth 1982)

This policy of tolerance was maintained by ‘Umar’s successors until 1099 CE when the Fatamid Caliph *El-Hakim* destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and began to persecute Christians. Bethlehem was saved, according to some through miraculous intervention, and according to others, through the payment of protection money.

The next great impact on the political (and linguistic) landscape of Bethlehem was again through this pattern of conquering, settling and ruling. In 1099, the First Crusaders conquered Bethlehem after Tancred of Normandy led a hundred knights to conquer the basilica. The Crusaders brought with them the languages of Europe. Baldwin was crowned King of Jerusalem in the Church of the Nativity on Christmas day a year later. For the century during which the Crusader kings ruled, the town of Bethlehem prospered economically. Its population increased with the coming of pilgrims and their families. Some of them settled down and intermarried with the inhabitants of Bethlehem, presumably leading to further multilingualism. In 1110, Bethlehem became a bisphoric, endowed with properties in Palestine and estates in France, Italy, Spain and Scotland. (Franciscan Friars 1998) The Church of the Nativity was restored between 1166 and 1169 with the addition of marble, mosaics and other ornamentation, many of which survive today.

The Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem survived until 1187, when the Arab armies returned under the command of Sultan *Saladin* the Ayyubite and re-conquered much of Palestine (El Ali 1991). For the next seven centuries, Bethlehem was under Muslim rule with Arabic the language of the rulers. The extent of the toleration of non-Muslims was dependent on the attitude of distant rulers and local governors. At various times, the Christian communities labored under political inferiority and financial restrictions. In 1192, *Saladin*, while allowing a continuing Frankish presence in the town, ordered that all pilgrims to the holy places of Bethlehem had to pay a fee to Muslim doorkeepers. Although an agreement in 1229 between Frederick II and Sultan

*Kamil Mohammed* restored Frankish control over the Church of the Nativity, there continued to be disputes over religious rights and political control.

Numerous Christian sects with their various languages continued to be present in the town although the numbers of Christians was limited by political and financial difficulties. The Italian-speaking Franciscan Friars, who were to have an important influence in the town, established themselves in the deserted Augustinian monastery in 1333. However, it can only be presumed that the more established Christian residents of the town, as distinct from the clergy and pilgrims, reflected the general pattern of Christians in the Middle East and gradually became indigenous speakers of Arabic.

The demographic breakdown of Bethlehem between Christians and Muslims would seem to have fluctuated. Political and other events could cause sudden changes. For instance, in 1517, Bethlehem was under the protection of the Russian Czar and became a refuge for Christians from the Palestinian countryside fleeing the conquering Ottoman army. However, immigration from the town was also not uncommon, especially among Christians relocating to Jerusalem. (Bakhit, 1982)

By 1617, Bethlehem was under the occupation of the Ottomans. With the Ottoman conquest came a new language of Government – Turkish. Arabic continued to be the most common vernacular although the multilingual nature of the town was maintained under Ottoman rule. Although the Church of the Nativity was initially looted, the Ottomans allowed the continued presence of Christian through the millet system, the Ottoman version of the *dhimma*. The list of Christian groups in Bethlehem recognized by the Ottomans included not just the representatives of the Latin Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox Church but also Syrians, Melkites, Copts, Chaldeans, Abyssinians and many others (Karpat, 1982: 146). Each group had their own language of prayer and favored vernacular.

Religious and political disputes in Bethlehem were never solely the preserve of a simple Muslim-Christian rivalry. Conflict among the various Christian groups, particularly for authority over the Holy Places including the Church of the Nativity, was far more common and convoluted. The Ottomans attempted to regulate inter-Christian relations by granting the Greek Orthodox Patriarch hegemony over other Orthodox dyophysites who upheld the doctrine proclaimed by the Council in Chalcedon in 1441 that Christ was both man and God, with each nature preserved. The Abyssinian Patriarch was acknowledged as head of the Orthodox monophysites – those who held the two natures of Christ were blended into one – but was required to respect the rights of other recognized sects.

However, no magic formula could be found to prevent these continuing disputes. Over the centuries a complex pattern of rights and responsibilities developed which was codified in the ‘Status Quo’ compromise codified by Sultan *Uthman III* in 1757 and recognized by a host of international conventions. The ‘status quo’ determined which of the three Patriarchates, as by this time the Armenians were recognized alongside the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox, had responsibility for the upkeep

and decoration of various parts of the Church of the Nativity. It also applied to determining who, including smaller sects like the Copts and Syrian Orthodox, could use space in the church and conduct their own rites. However, fierce and at times violent inter-Christian rivalry continued to be a feature of Bethlehem.

Despite this, Bethlehem grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Its traditional agriculture and trading economy was supplemented by olive-wood and mother of pearl factories which developed to provide the growing number of pilgrims with religious artifacts. By 1842, an Austrian pilgrim estimated Bethlehem's population as 2,500 while in 1875 a German priest by the name of Valenteiner suggested it was three thousand.

The town continued to be multilingual. The languages of government were Turkish and classical Arabic, the main vernacular of both Christians and Muslims was Arabic and each church maintained its own sacred and metropolitan languages for worship and the clergy. Temporary visitors, especially pilgrims, also contributed to the linguistic fabric of the town.

Until the nineteenth century, education played an insignificant role in spreading multilingualism and plurilingualism in Bethlehem or in the region as a whole. Under Ottoman rule, there was no public education system in Palestine. Education for Muslims was limited to traditional religious schools known as the *Kuttab* in which the Qur'an was taught while the only Christian school in Palestine was the Terra Sancta School in Bethlehem, which was established in 1598.

However, during the nineteenth century, the influx of Western missionaries into Palestine saw a change not just in the languages they brought with them but also in the education system. They set up their own schools in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nazareth, Jaffa, Haifa, and in Bethlehem. By the early twentieth century, there were English, French, German, American and Italian church schools, educating Muslim as well as Christian pupils and aiming to gain converts to their cultures if not their religions. At the turn of the century, the Ottoman government finally opened a few schools in Jerusalem and other cities where both Arabic and Turkish were taught.

Bethlehem's population grew quite rapidly during this period. By 1913 it was estimated at 12,000. Although exact numbers are not available, it would seem that the large majority were Christian with the rest a Muslim minority.

#### 4. The British Mandate – English and Hebrew Official languages

During the British Mandate, there was a general strengthening of Bethlehem's plurilingual traditions. A local community began to emerge that functioned in its own language with its own traditions, but maintained openness to the outside world. However, this trend was limited by a number of factors, including, most notably, a marked disparity in educational opportunities for local children.

Emigration played a major role during this period in increasing Bethlehem's ties

with other cultures and languages. Emigration, especially for economic reasons, had been a feature in local life from as early as 1854, when mother-of-pearl craftsmen traveled to New York to attend the World Fair and decided to set up business there (Hassan 1993). It increased greatly in the last decades of the nineteenth century as hundreds of locals left although World War I was perhaps the greatest single period for emigration. The increased taxation of the last years of Ottoman rule, plus the hardship, poverty and compulsory military service of the War saw a major fall in the size of the town. In 1913 the population was estimated at 12,000, in 1921 it was down to around 6,100. The great majority of emigrants were Christian, and the favored destinations were North America and especially Latin American countries such as Chile and El Salvador.

Emigration continued throughout the Mandate period and offset the high natural increase. Although population estimates for this period are far from perfect, they reveal a reasonably consistent picture of fairly slow growth. In 1933, the population was estimated at 6,260. By 1938, it had grown to 7,751 and in 1945 to 8,820. The Population estimates for 1946 was 10,000. There would seem to have been a small drop in the following year, although the figure of 8,000 may be somewhat low. (Encyclopedia Judaica)

The effects of this emigration on Bethlehem, linguistically and culturally, were varied and during this period at least, often positive. Bethlehem's ties with its growing Diaspora were generally close and many emigrants returned either permanently or temporarily to the area. It was common for men to emigrate, either alone or with male relatives, and to return, either to be reunited with the families they had left behind or to marry local women. They brought back to Bethlehem not only their experiences with new places and languages.

Not all emigrants return to Bethlehem. However, the connection between them and their hometown was maintained in various ways. The desire to maintain contact with emigrants, to urge them to return and to press the authorities for their right to do so, was a major spur to the cultural and literary life of the town. (Musallam, 1989).<sup>1</sup>

There were other spurs to multilingualism during the British Mandate. Tourism and pilgrimage increased, and at least some Bethlehemites learnt Hebrew so as to communicate with their new Jewish neighbors. More importantly, numbers of locals were employed in the government departments during the British Mandate, a reflection and a strengthening of their ties to the new governing language, English.

But the greatest single incentive to multilingualism remained the prevalence of foreign-sponsored schools who strengthened their role in education in Bethlehem and Arab Palestine generally. During the British Mandate, government policy was to allow the private church-related schools to continue, and to leave education essentially to the Arab and Jewish communities. Article 15 of the British Mandate stipulated that:

It is the right of each religious group to conduct its educational affairs in the pattern it chooses and the languages it wishes according to the general requirements of society as imposed by the administration.

This law clearly suited the Christian missionary groups who were allowed to set their own curricula, they continued to spread their views and propagate Western languages such as French, English, German and Russian. These schools generally gave a lot of attention to the language of their home church. Initially, during the British Mandate, they prepared pupils for the Palestinian Matriculation Examination. Later, this examination was replaced by the English General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination set by the University of London.

However, Bethlehem shared in the serious educational problems that effected Arab Palestine as a whole. There were constant complaints about the standard of Arab education during the Mandate, particularly centering on the low level of Government support. In the Bethlehem area, no public school was established until 1924. Arab elementary schools under the Mandate taught in Arabic and taught some English. The government secondary schools also used Arabic as the language of instruction, teaching English, Latin and Greek as additional languages. During the Mandate, there were only two government Arab schools with the complete four years of secondary education in all of Palestine. The Arab College and *Al-Rasheediyya*, both in Jerusalem (Abu-Kishik 1983), saw their role as preparing pupils for clerical jobs in government offices.

This division of educational systems between Government and private during the British Mandate exacerbated cultural and educational gaps between rural and urban populations. Village elementary schools offered only a four-year program, a year less than urban schools (Abu Kishik 1983). There were secondary schools only in towns and cities.

Particularly relevant to this study is the clear evidence of major gaps between the standard of education for Christians and Muslims and the different levels of exposure to non-Arabic languages for the two communities. Although some Muslims attended traditional Muslim schools (which usually taught only Arabic) or church-based institutions, the main source of education throughout Palestine for Muslim children was the inferior Government funded schools.

According to Hourani (1947), 92% of Christian and just 25% of Muslim children received primary education. In 1947, the British director of education reported that while it was hard to estimate the level of literacy, he assumed that 50% of all Arab children in Palestine between the ages of 7 to 12 would be permanently illiterate (Miller 1985: 160).

The role of developing Arab nationalism in Palestine in fostering or reacting against multilingualism is deserving of further study. Suleiman (Suleiman 1994) has suggested that Arab nationalism was in general closely tied to calls for the strengthening of the place of Arabic and the use of standard Arabic instead of divisive local vernaculars. However, in Bethlehem at least, it would be wrong to draw a crude portrait of nationalism representing a reactionary element against multilingualism or exposure to other cultures. Although the evidence is sketchy, it is possible to discern

in Bethlehem at this time a developing nationalist elite class that, while committed to local concerns, also had close contact to other cultures and languages. These men were frequently educated in foreign-sponsored schools, and often had ties both with the English speaking Government and with relatives and friends abroad. Far from being an insular group, they would appear to have been particularly influenced and interested in the ideas and cultures of elsewhere.

## 5. Jordanian Rule – Arabic first

The events of 1948 were a watershed for Bethlehem in many ways. Bethlehem and surrounding areas known as the ‘West Bank’ (of Jordan) came under the rule of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The founding of the State of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war caused massive population disruptions, with 250,000 refugees during 1948–1949 leaving the area controlled by Israel and entering the West Bank. As part of the effort to cope with this huge influx, three refugee camps near Bethlehem were established by the Jordanian authorities – the ‘Azza and the ‘Aida camps just to the north of the town, and the larger Ad Duhayshah camp to the south.

The changes to Bethlehem caused by the war were far-reaching. The demographic dominance of Christians was altered. The population of the town, which was 9310 a few months before the 1948 war, rose to 11, 600 as the result of people from nearby villagers seeking shelter from the fighting and its consequences. The great majority of the town’s permanent residents were Christian, 8796 as compared to 2900 Muslims. Most Christians were associated with either the Latin Orthodox, Greek Orthodox or Syriac churches. The contiguous villages of Bayt Jala and Bayt Sahur were also predominantly Christian.

However, by 1961 the population of Bethlehem had almost doubled to 22, 453. The increase was largely due to the inhabitants of the refugee camps situated on the town’s edges, almost all of whom were Muslim. Bethlehem, which for several centuries at least, had been largely Christian, had during this period roughly similar-sized Christian and Muslim populations. By 1967, Bethlehem was majority Muslim and moreover was situated in the midst of an overwhelmingly Muslim countryside.

Emigration continued to be a significant factor in Bethlehem. Economic reasons remained prevalent although the disruption and disillusionment of political and military events also surely played a part. Huge amounts of West Bankers, reaching 2.5% of the population per year and almost 400,000 during the entire period of Jordanian rule, moved to the East Bank of Jordan. In the 1950s, most migrants were men under age forty, frequently joined in the following decade by their wives and families. They were drawn by the fact that Jordan, alone among Arab countries, granted Palestinian refugees full citizenship, especially as a result of the accelerated industrial and agricultural development (Benvenisti: 1984). Internal migration was also a factor as the urbanization increased in the West Bank. Many Bethlehemites, especially Christians,

moved to the city of Jerusalem, often to be replaced by Muslims moving from villages to the larger town.

There were other linguistic consequences of Jordanian rule. English was replaced as the official language by Arabic, although in practice, Arabic had been the language of many Government institutions during the British Mandate. Private church-related schools, as well as public schools, now came under Jordanian control. New schools for refugees were also established in the 1950s by UNRWA and administered by UNESCO. After the Jordanian educational reform in 1961, all schools were legally required to use Arabic as the language of instruction although it remained permitted to teach foreign languages.

Most Christian children in Bethlehem continued to be educated in church-based schools. During this period the Lutheran Evangelical School was established, which taught in English and German as well as Arabic, and the Christian Mission School, founded by an American-based religious society and where English was the only foreign language. The great majority of Muslims were in government based and refugee schools, with a small minority receiving their education from Christian schools.

It would therefore be wrong to suggest that the Jordanian period saw a radical turning back from the tradition of multilingualism. Certainly, Arabic was unquestioningly the predominant language. It remained the major vernacular of Bethlehem, and was now the language of government as well as the official language of instruction for education. Bethlehem's population had also become increasingly Muslim, with Christians who were more likely than Muslims to be multilingual, by 1967 in the minority.

But there were still plenty of factors keeping multilingualism alive. The infrastructure of the town, which had established its multilingual traditions, remained in place – the Churches with their sacred languages, the private schools, the ties with emigrants. Tourism and pilgrimage increased under the Jordanians, despite the difficulties caused by a closed border with West Jerusalem.

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank from 1967 did not transform Bethlehem society overnight. Many parts of traditional society remained in place; others had been changing even before 1967. But, the occupation did introduce and heighten a complex range of developments within Bethlehem. It was to impact on many parts of the economy, the social structure and the daily lives of Bethlehemites.

## **6. Israeli occupation – Hebrew in the language repertoire of the town**

It is somewhat artificial to attempt to separate the linguistic impact of Israeli rule from 1967 until 1995 with the situation in Bethlehem today. However, a brief depiction of this period does help suggest what linguistic features of Bethlehem stem from long traditions and what reflect more recent events.

The most direct linguistic impact of Israeli rule on Bethlehem from 1967–1995 was the imposition of Hebrew as the official language. It was the language of

Government, of bureaucracy, of the occupation. It was usually the language used by the soldiers who patrolled Bethlehem and manned the checkpoints that were a feature of everyday life. It was also increasingly the language of work. Large amounts of Bethlemites during this period labored in Israelis factories, farms, restaurants and construction businesses and gained some functional knowledge of Hebrew. Businessmen also frequently used Hebrew as Israel was the major source of the West Bank's imports and exports during this period. Hebrew could be heard on the television and radio, there was some contact with the Israeli settlers who lived close-by and with the many Israeli tourists.

The contact with the many languages of tourists and pilgrims from all around the world also grew enormously, despite occasional downfall in times of heightened political tensions. Although the lack of hotels meant that Bethlehem was usually just a day trip from Jerusalem, enormous amounts of overseas visitors passed through.

Emigration during this period also increased. The 1967 war with Israel led to massive emigration from all parts of the West Bank. Between June and September 1967, some 200,000 people left the West Bank. The most common destination was Jordan, 20% of the West Bank population crossed the river during these months. Emigration continued as the Israeli occupation established itself. 15,000 more West Bankers left in 1968 alone. Between 1968 and 1983, 136,500 people left the West Bank, a figure equal to 46% of the (high) Palestinian natural increase.

Bethlehem was similarly affected. We reported earlier that emigration had a number of positive spin-offs, linguistically and otherwise, for the town. To some extent, these benefits continued. Money sent back by migrants was crucial to the economy of the town and there were frequently other forms of continuing contact. According to a 1991 survey, nearly 50% of Bethlehem emigrants wrote and one third phoned regularly. One in ten made regular visits back to Bethlehem. Nor did emigration cause a major drop in population. On the contrary, Bethlehem's population grew greatly during this period, due mainly to high natural increase and also internal immigration.

However, it is impossible to ignore the cumulative damage of continued emigration for Bethlehem. The human cost was enormous, as people fled their homes from war, occupation and poverty. The impact of Bethlehem as a whole also mounted. Bethlemites left following the 1967 war and they continued to leave, not in vast numbers at any one time but a significant percentage of the population. The Bethlehem Diaspora became far larger than those who remained. Although some emigrants returned (not always willingly, such as the Palestinian workers expelled from Kuwait in 1991), most of them did not. Increasingly, entire well-established Bethlehemite families had disappeared, become 'extinct' from the town (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Numbers of emigrating and extinct families in Bethlehem (Source El Ali, 1991)

Quarter	Emigrating Families	Extinct Families
Al-Farahiyyah	63	11
An-Najajrah	58	16
Al-Anatrah	31	6
Al-Qawawsah	32	6
Al-Hraizat	40	16
Al-Tarajmah	22	4
Al-Fawaghrah	24	0
The Syriacs	86	5
Total	356	64

## 7. Bethlehem today – The language situation

*What is the nature of the current multilingual situation in the city? A household survey<sup>2</sup> gives us an answer. Data obtained from 510 homes pertaining to 2240 individuals. The gender distribution was 52.5% male, 47.5% female, and the proportions of Muslims (64.4%) and Christians (35.6%) were closer to the estimate for the population. The sample surveyed then is 10% of the present estimated population of Bethlehem proper. The person actually interviewed in each house was generally an adult. The average age of the people interviewed was 33.8*

What are the languages that these people claim to know? The major language of Bethlehem is Arabic, spoken by 96%.<sup>3</sup> The second most common language is English, said to be spoken by just over half. This figure is in some ways exaggerated, for it assumes that any child in school learning English may be said to know it already. A sizeable number of Bethlehemites (13%) are reported to be able to speak Hebrew, followed by French (11%), other (unspecified) languages, German, and Italian. Some of these too (excluding Hebrew) are perhaps better understood as reports that a pupil is studying the language in school.

To add more detail, questions were asked about language skills, distinguishing between speaking, reading and writing. To make the self-assessment a little easier, speaking was defined as “being able to conduct a normal conversation, reading as “being able to read a newspaper,” and writing as “being able to write a simple letter.” In all cases, the literacy skill is reported to be lower than the oral skill in the same language. Thus, while 95% are said to be able to conduct a conversation in Arabic, only 83% are said to be able to read a newspaper in it and 80% to write a letter in it. There are similar differences in claims of proficiency in English and each of the other languages. Arabic reading and writing are taught in school, so is English and some of the other languages. In school, foreign language teaching, writing, though important, generally comes after speaking and reading.

Table 2. Languages claimed by the sample

Language	Number	Percentage
Arabic	2127	96
English	1223	55
Hebrew	299	13
French	254	11
German	65	3
Italian	46	2
Other languages	116	5

Table 3. Language skills reported

Skill	Frequency	Percent
Speaks Arabic	2127	95
Reads Arabic	1866	83
Writes Arabic	1800	80
Speaks English	1223	55
Reads English	1173	52
Writes English	1064	45
Speaks Hebrew	299	13
Speaks French	254	11
Reads Hebrew	216	10
Writes Hebrew	203	9
Reads French	201	9
Writes French	184	8
Speaks Other	116	5
Reads Other	98	4
Writes other	87	4
Speaks German	65	3
Writes German	47	2
Reads German	46	2
Speaks Italian	46	2
Reads Italian	32	1
Writes Italian	28	1
Total	2240	100

The pattern for Hebrew however is different. Most Palestinians learn it in informal situations, as a spoken language at work, for instance. Thus, reported ability in speaking Hebrew is second after English, higher than reported ability to speak French. Reading and writing Hebrew come lower, after French. However, considering that Hebrew is not taught in Bethlehem schools, it is remarkable that there are over 200 people who

are reported to have learned to read it. As we saw earlier, salespeople and clerks, as well as academics and students, are most likely to have developed this skill.

Are there any significant differences according to religion? Christians know (speak, read and write) more languages on average than do Muslims (the differences are highly significant) (see Table 4). This suggests the influence of the foreign churches and their schools on foreign language proficiency.

**Table 4.** Mean number of languages known by Muslim and Christians

Religion	Languages spoken	Languages read	Languages written
Muslim	1.66	1.47	1.37
Christian	2.16	1.86	1.75
Both	1.84	1.61	1.51

Christians, with better access to foreign schools and more likelihood to have contact with foreigners, know English, French, German, Italian and other languages better. Muslims, on the other hand, are more likely to work in Israel and so to know Hebrew better (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Languages spoken according to religion (percentages)

Religion	English	Hebrew	French	Other language	German	Italian
Muslim %	47	15	3	4	2	1
Christian %	68	10	26	8	5	4
Total %	55	13	11	5	3	2

The household survey confirmed both the multilingualism of the town and the plurilingualism of its inhabitants. This plurilingualism may be accounted for in different ways. On the whole, the best explanation of the number of languages known is education, but religion, age and gender also correlate highly (see Table 6).

There are a few native speakers of languages other than Arabic, mainly born outside the town. For most residents, schooling has been the main source of knowledge of the most common language, English. For Hebrew, however, it appears to be work or occupation that accounts for knowledge. As a result of the Israeli decision in 1967 to leave the Jordanian curriculum in effect in West Bank schools, schools in Bethlehem were not required to teach Hebrew. Those who worked in Israel or who were brought into regular contact with Israeli authorities or tourists acquired Hebrew informally. For the other languages, the common source is education, through Church schools which teach the language of their metropolitan congregation.

Another context for acquiring a language, or perhaps more correctly, reason for knowing it, is contact with tourists. The town's multilingualism justifies this pattern,

**Table 6.** Correlations between number of languages spoken and education, age, religion and gender.

	Age	Education	Gender	Languages spoken	Religion
Age	1.000	.228**	-.034	.151**	.124**
Education	.228**	1.000	-.070**	.632**	.128**
Gender	-.034	-.070**	1.000	-.129	.023
Languages spoken	.151**	.632**	-.129**	1.000	.246**
Religion	.124**	.128**	.023	.246**	1.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

with English satisfying most demands for contact with foreign tourists and pilgrims, Hebrew helping for contact with Israeli, and other languages associated with the Churches and with tourists.

Difference in language knowledge helps distinguish Muslims and Christians. Logistic regression reveals that if one knows a person's age, education, number of languages spoken and ability to speak Hebrew, there is a 72.5% likelihood of predicting correctly whether they are Christian or Muslim.

These findings were borne out in the direct questioning. Standard Arabic, English and French were mainly learned in school. The only formal learning of Hebrew was in university (Bethlehem university offers two courses) or vocational institutes. On the other hand, most people who knew Hebrew say they learned it at work or on the street.

To sum up, half of the population of Bethlehem is reported to be at least bilingual. While for many, this bilingualism is limited to speaking ability, a good proportion are claimed to have functional reading and writing skills in more than one language. Christians have better access to foreign languages and Muslims till the second Palestinian Intifada had better access to Hebrew.

Amara et al. (1999) have also revealed significant differences in phonological and lexical features between Muslims and Christians. For instance, while the percentage of use of the standard variant [q] by Muslims and Christian is the same, Christians show a much greater use of the [ʔ] urban variant than Muslims and a proportionately lower use of the [k] village vernacular variant.<sup>4</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

The socio-historical linguistic survey of Bethlehem suggests that the language situation of the town stems from long traditions and what reflects more recent events.

Focusing on recent events, there are a number of plausible explanations as to why Christians in Bethlehem should have more knowledge of foreign languages and favor the urban features over the standard ones. The first concerns education.

Bethlehem Christians are educated in schools conducted by Church groups all of which recognize another language besides Arabic. While most of the instruction in these schools is in Arabic, the school's ideology treats Arabic alongside the sacred or metropolitan language of the sponsoring Church, whether Greek or Latin or French or English or Italian. In Muslim schools, on the other hand, Arabic (especially its standard Qur'anic variety) rules alone. Just as the re-arabization of the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) has suffered from the competition for prestige of European languages, so it is understandable that Bethlehem pupils educated in Christian schools have a lower regard for Standard Arabic.

There are two additional reasons connected with education. The Christian schools start teaching English earlier than the Muslim, teach other European language as well, and so devote less time to the teaching of Arabic. Reinforcing this, many Christian pupils are already aspiring to continuing their study at European or American universities. For all these reasons, then, the standard may be assumed to have lower prestige for them.<sup>5</sup>

A second reason has to do with migration. More Bethlehem Christians than Muslims have left the town and are now resident in Diasporas in the Americas. Having relatives abroad and the increasing likelihood of joining them one day reduce the chances of regarding Bethlehem as a permanent home.

Thirdly, we may assume that part of the reason for divergences some attempt to keep distance from the Muslim villagers who since 1948 have slowly become the majority in Bethlehem. While the original dialect of the town was *fallahi*, the shift to urban forms is part of the same movement that Cadora (1970) proposed, from Bedouin to *fallahi* to *madani*. Cadora, who in 1965 studied a Christian family in Ramallah, a West Bank town near Jerusalem, interpreted the change as a process of increasing urbanization. He postulated a general move in Arabic from pastoral (Bedouin) to rural (*fallahi*) to urban (*madani*), with each level and its associated dialect having higher status than the one before, and with all three being lower in status than the standard (H) form associated with the literary and classical language. Jerusalem was a city while Bethlehem was still a village, and the Christian Patriarchs who are responsible for the Bethlehem churches have their seats in Jerusalem. For Christian males, then, urban phonology is an alternative way of resisting the Standard while choosing to give up on the vernacular form.

## Notes

1. Pioneer leaders in journalism, literature and policy started to appear after World War I, led by Yuhanna Khalil Dakkarat, Issa Basil Bandak, and the leader of the Greek Orthodox

nationalist renaissance in Bethlehem and Palestine, *Khalil Ibrahim Kazakiyya*. In 1919 a group of young men decided to establish a literary club, with a journal. The Bethlehem Journal published articles on nationalist, literary, political, economic and social topics (El Ali 1991) and helped to maintain the bond between Bethlehem and the Diaspora.

2. This paper is based originally on a project funded by the Netherlands Israel Research and Development Program (NIRP) that I conducted together with Professor Bernard Spolsky (Bar-Ilan University), Professor Hanna Tushyeh (Bethlehem University), and Professor Kees de Bot (the University of Nijmegen).
3. The exceptions are mainly infants, reported as knowing no language yet
4. The sociolinguistic variable /q/ is a well-studied stereotype in Levantine Arabic. It has four distinct variants (Mitchell, 1993). The first, [q], is the standard Arabic variant, that generally has the highest prestige. The second, [ʔ], is common in urban centers in Palestine and the Levant, associated with *madani* or city-dwellers. The third, [k], is the common vernacular form heard in Palestinian villages and formerly associated with *fallahi* or villagers. The fourth, [g], occurs commonly in Bedouin dialects. Evidence will also be adduced from other phonological variables.
5. Christians generally express more favorable opinions of English than do Muslims, as our study found.

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# The role of language in some ethnic churches in Melbourne

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## 1. Introduction

Immigration and refugee resettlement have brought to Australia a great diversity of peoples, and with them many cultures, languages and faiths. Of the 68% of Australians who identify with the Christian religion, 13.7% (2001 Census figures) speak a language other than English at home; thus a significant percentage of the population experience firsthand the tensions that exist where language, culture and (the Christian) faith intersect. This research illustrates well the dynamic interface between the sociology of language and of religion, by examining these tensions from a sociolinguistic viewpoint while drawing on theological perspectives and theories of multiculturalism. In doing so, this research endeavours to move towards a more thoroughly documented response to the question of *What is the role of language in ethnic churches?*

In order to begin to answer this question, an investigation was undertaken of the language needs, habits and preferences of Christians of non English-speaking background in sixteen different ethnic congregations in Melbourne during the period 1997 to 1999.<sup>1</sup> Importantly, the congregations selected represented different periods of Australia's migration history, as well as different languages, cultural backgrounds and denominations. The congregations were: from the Anglican Church, Chinese (principally Hakka-speaking) and Persian; from the Baptist Church, Arabic and Spanish; from the Catholic Church, Croatian and Italian; from the Lutheran Church, German, Latvian and Slovak; from the Orthodox Church, Greek and Russian; from the Reformed Church, English-speaking of Dutch origin, and Chinese (Mandarin); and from the Uniting Church (a denomination formed from an amalgamation of Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches), Indonesian, Oromo and Tamil congregations were studied.

This chapter will present some of the findings of this research, with particular focus on two of the congregations involved, the Latvian Lutheran congregation, and

the Indonesian congregation of the Uniting Church. These congregations illustrate well the variety of ethnic church experiences in Melbourne.

## **2. Setting the Scene: Australia's religious profile**

The religious profile of Australia is firmly linked to immigration patterns. As Bouma (1997: 1) states, "The shape of Australia's religious profile is primarily a function of its migration history and only secondarily a function of conversion or changing religious identification. Many forms of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism are found in Australia because people of these religious traditions have migrated to Australia and have worked to establish religious organisations to enable religious practices not previously found here." Six of the seven denominations which are represented in the current research – Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, and the antecedent denominations of the Uniting Church (Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian) – were all firmly established in Australian society within the first hundred years of its colonial history (with the Reformed Churches evolving out of – and other churches being fortified by – twentieth century migration). Each was established by immigrants who, accustomed to expressing their faith in a particular way, wished to continue familiar practices in the new country.

For migrant Christians seeking to worship in the Australian context, the issues are many, the results as varied as the groups themselves. At one extreme they may gather in isolated, homeland-looking churches, or, at the other, assimilate into a sea of largely anglo-centric, English-speaking Christians in the mainstream churches. One question thus stands out – is getting "the message" across (and here "the message" is specifically that of the Gospel) more or less important for a church than being a vehicle for cultural and language maintenance?

What seems to be clear from the present research is that the balance between the medium and the message in ethnic churches is determined by two overlapping sources of influence – the place of language and religion in the cultural value system of the ethnic group, and the place of language in the culture of the religious denomination. These factors will be examined in turn.

## **3. Language and religion in the cultural value system of the ethnic group**

The term "core value" was developed by Smolicz (1981 and elsewhere) to refer to "those values that are regarded as forming the most fundamental components or heartland of a group's culture" and which "act as identifying values which are symbolic

of the group and its membership” (Smolicz and Secombe 1985: 11). Smolicz’s core value theory proposes that community members who reject their community’s core values are jeopardising their group membership and that rejection by the group as a whole will ultimately result in its “disintegration as a community that can perpetuate itself as an authentic entity across generations” (Smolicz and Secombe 1989: 479).

Over the years, Smolicz and others have sought to determine the core values of different ethnic communities, particularly with respect to language as a core value. While the Dutch language has not been shown to be a core value of the Dutch culture (which to some degree explains the high rate of language shift within the Dutch community; Smolicz and Lean 1979, Clyne 1991), studies conducted in the Latvian and Greek communities (Smolicz and Secombe 1985: 11–38; see also Lloyd-Smith 1996, Woods 1999), the Croatian community (Smolicz and Secombe 1989: 478–511), and the Chinese and Tamil communities (Smolicz, Lee, Murugaian and Secombe 1990: 229–46), have found all but the latter to consider its respective mother tongue as a core value. More precisely, amongst the Tamil community, the Tamil language is considered a vital aspect of the culture only by those who are also devout Hindus, and not by Tamil Christians.

The difference found between the core values of Tamil Christians and Tamil Hindus points to two difficulties which have been raised concerning Smolicz’s theory: firstly, multiple group membership and secondly, problems in group definition (see Clyne 1991; Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels 1995). Ethnic churches are associated with the use of a particular community language (other than English) which is common to the majority of those who attend. Where this language is a pluricentric language, such as Arabic or Spanish, the situation is more complex. While its speakers are members of the same *global* speech community, they have different cultural experiences and expectations conditioned not only by their country of birth, but in addition by their migration vintage and a host of other factors. Members of a pluricentric speech community may be united under the “umbrella” of their church, but “they cannot and do not have a single cultural value system” (Kipp *et al* 1995: 129).

The second difficulty flows from the first: how exactly may the core values of a group whose members simultaneously have multi-directional loyalties be identified? Members of ethnic churches not only possess cultural and language community membership, but membership of a denomination, and a religion at local, national and international levels; they have overlapping ethnic and religious identities. These competing allegiances have implications for both language maintenance and language shift on an individual and community level, and help to explain why some ethnic communities tend towards greater community language use in their churches than others.

#### 4. The place of language in the culture of the religious denomination

Language plays an important role in religious expression whether the believer is monolingual or multilingual. Whether full use is made of a speaker's linguistic resources depends on a number of factors, and the ways in which these resources become present in church life vary. Certainly it depends in part on the past history and existing structure and character of the church of which the individual is a member. Are there policies at the top of the denominational hierarchy which prescribe which language may be used when in the church? Are there regulations at parish or congregational level? Or are there simply long-held traditions at work determining the domination of one culture and language over all others?

At one level, language might be considered to be quite independent of religion. Smolicz (1994:38) – speaking principally about multilingualism in the Catholic setting – compares the additive nature of language with the exclusive nature of religious faith:

“In the case of language, individuals can be bilingual, trilingual or multilingual, but they cannot claim to be bi-religious or multi-religious in faith and doctrine. ...In contrast, the use of diverse languages in the church by the faithful does not hinder unity, but openly enhances it. The clergy who says one Mass in English and another in Italian on the same Sunday, openly demonstrates that bilingualism, by being internalised in the same individual, causes no division, no conflict, but rather bears witness to the universality of the Church.”

Language can also take on a distinct spiritual dimension. Hebrew, Greek and Arabic, as the languages used in sacred scriptures, have taken on “sacred” value for Jews, Christians and Muslims (Fishman 1991:360). Clyne and Kipp (1999:328–9) indicate that this sacred character is extended to the colloquial variety, as well as the ecclesiastical variety, firmly identifying the language as the only authentic one to use in religious practice.

Research – such as that by Katsikis (1993:50–3) – illustrates the sacred value which (ecclesiastical) Greek has taken on for members of Greek Orthodox churches. One of her informants is quoted as saying:

“I do not understand [the liturgy], but I have a book with a translation. If I take it along with me, I understand, but if I don't, it doesn't matter, because it is a mystery – we are not meant to know and understand everything; that is the way of the church, of religion.”

The belief that religion is not “pure” without the “right” language has also surfaced throughout history in many churches connected with revolutionary theological reform. Lehmann (1981:30) refers to the conviction of many German Lutherans

in South Australia in the late nineteenth century, that “God had revealed the true meaning of the Bible to Luther in the German language and it was their special obligation to preserve this precious gift”. Many believed that there could be “no genuine Lutheran faith without the German language” (p. 33).

Boyd (1985:163) describes the potential strength of the relationship between language and religion in the following way:

“Decisions by church authorities to change the language used for religious activities have often been met by strong reactions on the part of the believers. Some prefer to leave the church rather than change the language they have been accustomed to using there, even though church officials motivate the change in terms of the members’ lack of skill in the religious language. Even if the language is not established by dogma as sacred, it takes on a sacred value by being used for many years in religious contexts. Usually, this sacred value is not shared by any other language or variety of language for the believer.”

Smolicz’s core value theory helps explain why language is more central to one culture than another. A similar construct is needed to explain why language is more central to one Christian denomination than another. The notion of “language-religion ideology” (LRI) is thus helpful.

Each denomination has its own ideology about the role of language in religion; each considers that language enhances the religious experience, but in different ways. The formation of the language ideology of a denomination is largely a product of its theological orientation. For example, God may be viewed as so special that only a special language or variety of language (such as Cultivated English within some parts of the Anglican Church) may be used to communicate with or about God. On the other hand, the emphasis on having a personal relationship with God may result in the vernacular being seen as suitable for worship. The notion of “language-religion ideology” thus describes the nature of the link between language and religion as illustrated by the following continuum.

Denominations thus have their own unique language-religion ideologies (and there may in fact be within a denomination many “sub-ideologies” which correspond to spiritual orientations such as charismatic, evangelical, etc.).

The language-religion ideology of a denomination affects its perception not only of language in general, but of *specific* languages and *varieties* of languages. In some cases this results in contradictory evaluations: a denomination which views “ordinary language” as acceptable for worship, may accept the “ordinary language” of only one group of people. How then does such a denomination accommodate any other languages of its parishioners? Is there any room for other languages in a denomination which may be historically and dogmatically associated with one specific “church” language?



Luther's translation of the Bible to an extent shaped the German language, and to many Lutherans, the German language thus also took on authenticity.

The Lutheran church has been in Australia since the 1830s, when small groups of Lutherans who believed they were prevented from practising the "true Lutheran faith" in their German-speaking homeland migrated, settling mainly in rural areas of South Australia (and later in other states). Lutheranism in Australia, however, became divided early on. After the end of World War I, there existed two Lutheran synods in Australia, with the result that two quite different language-religion ideologies based on different theological interpretations coexisted. The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia (UELCA), perceived a strong link between "true" Lutheranism and the German language, and in this respect, English or any other language, was considered a threat to the faith. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia (ELCA), on the other hand, felt that "the word of God had never been and should not be tied to any one language" (Lehmann 1981:35). They believed the exclusive use of German to be a barrier to English-speaking friends and family, encouraging flexibility in language use. The ELCA severed its ties with the homeland prior to World War I (Kipp 1999). In the time surrounding both World Wars, the German roots and character of the Lutheran Church were perceived as problematic, resulting in, among other things, the closure of many Lutheran parish schools, the banning of the German language in the Lutheran press, and the cessation of German language services in the church. As World War II ended, Lutherans from a number of other European countries arrived in Australia, many as displaced persons. This influx of immigrants from other Lutheran countries added to the growing perception that if the church was to survive, it could not stay a "German" church. However, the strong nationalism of many of these newly migrated Lutherans, such as the Latvians, caused the Lutheran Church to retain its ethnic character – not as a "German" Church any longer, but as the Church of "Europeans".

The ELCA and the UELCA joined together in 1967 to form the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). Among churches which exist outside of the LCA are the local congregations of the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (German Protestant Church), and the Swedish Church.

Latvian migration to Australia occurred almost entirely between in the post-war period of 1947–1950, with the arrival of around 20,000 displaced persons (Putniņš 1981: 16). The Latvian migrants were quick to establish their own Lutheran churches according to the Latvian model; "Martin Luther's thesis that everyone had the right to listen to God's Word in his mother language was used as an argument for establishing separate Latvian congregations" (Silkalns 1988: 170). The Latvian community in Melbourne is the largest in Australia. It is home to three Lutheran congregations, only two of which are members of the LCA, the other acting as a fully independent church body. The largest of these congregations took part in the present research. Although it is linked with the Latvian Church Outside of Latvia (formerly, the Latvian

Church in Exile), the congregation has been a full member of the LCA since 1972.

From its beginnings, the goal of the Latvian congregation was not merely to gather for spiritual nourishment and fellowship with other Latvian Christians, but to preserve their cultural heritage and uphold the dream of a “free Latvia” where this cultural inheritance could take its rightful place. Cultural and language maintenance in all domains of life – especially the Church – became a way of showing support for the idealised homeland. Once the goal of Latvia’s independence was achieved in 1991, the patriotic fervour continued; decades (in fact, centuries) of guarding against outside cultural and linguistic influence had made it into a way of life not easily changed. In the meantime, however, the composition of the Latvian community had changed, with increasing numbers of mixed marriages through the generations. The modern family dynamics typically include Latvian-speaking grandparents, parents who can speak either language but are more comfortable with English, and children who can speak only a little Latvian.

The American-born pastor of the congregation began ministry at the church in 1987. The Latvian-language service is run weekly, with an accompanying Sunday School held fortnightly.<sup>2</sup> An English service is usually held only fortnightly, with an English-language Sunday School until recently being held once a month; it became no longer feasible to continue it due to declining numbers. English evening services have also (irregularly) been conducted in previous years, as well as a youth group. The average number of those who regularly attend services is typically around 10–15 for the English service and around 120 for the Latvian service. While the average age of those who attend the English-language service would be, based on observation, around 40, the average age of those who attend the Latvian service is recorded at 65. The pastor has pointed out that those in the 30s age group who attend the Latvian service usually do so because they are making an effort to actively maintain their language. Many of these send their children to the community-run Latvian “Saturday School” (ethnic supplementary school) as well.

The congregation has its own constitution, which gives as one of its aims “[that] the activities of the Congregation and its religious services shall be performed in the Latvian language; additional services and activities may also be provided in the English language for those who do not speak Latvian.” One interpretation of this which has been strongly voiced is that “additional” means “not equal to”, thus meaning that *weekly* English services are not permissible. This has been disappointing for those who regularly attend and enjoy these services, for these services provide not only an alternative language of teaching and worship, but also a very different style. While the Latvian-language service is traditional Lutheran, the English-language service is described by the pastor as “contemporary liturgical”. The style is informal, with interaction between the pastor and the congregation being more frequent and spontaneous, and the worship showing a clear charismatic influence.

The clergy considers the use of English in appropriate situations vital to the

communication of the Gospel message, particularly for youth and those in mixed marriages. In a Latvian service, this may mean providing an English translation of a phrase, or the use of an English word where the Latvian is not as appropriate. This has at times resulted in heated opposition, particularly from some of the original members of the congregation, who feel that the church was “built by Latvians, for Latvians”, and hence the Latvian language *only* should be used within its walls. The conflict that this issue has caused has been so great that it has in fact threatened to split the congregation.

## 5.2 The Indonesian congregation of the Uniting Church

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is unique as it is the product of the merger of three separate denominations, each having been brought to Australia during its early colonial history and maintained for a significant period as distinct entities. It was established with the union in 1977 of the Methodist Church of Australasia, (most of) the Congregational Union of Australia and (parts of) the Presbyterian Church in Australia.

Several hurdles had to be overcome in planning its life as a “new” “Australian” Church. The greater numerical strength of the Methodists (59%) and Presbyterians (36%) than Congregationalists (5%) had the potential to influence many parts of the new Church’s character; as Bentley and Hughes (1996:7) point out, there were differences to be reconciled concerning the “major traditions within each group, their quite different church structures, and the differences in the practices of worship and ways of fostering spiritual life”.

The language-religion ideology of the Uniting Church is therefore a product of the language attitudes and practices of its antecedent denominations. It is thus influenced in this respect by Calvinist and evangelical theology, although the Presbyterian churches which joined the UCA were those which held to a more liberal reformed theology. Initially, the UCA allowed its constituent churches to continue using their own orders of service, but by 1988, the UCA’s Commission on Liturgy had published a resource book entitled *Uniting in Worship*, which congregations are encouraged, but not bound to use. The UCA’s appeal to a wide range of ethnic communities has no doubt been enhanced by such flexibility towards the use of liturgical resources. This flexibility is matched by the openness of its attitude towards the reform of language in a more general sense, such as the adoption of inclusive language.

Members of the antecedent denominations of the Uniting Church came predominantly from the United Kingdom: Congregationalists from England; Methodists predominantly from England and Wales, and Presbyterians largely from Scotland. Missionary efforts of the Methodists in places such as the Pacific have meant that Christian migrants from those areas have moved towards the Methodist Church in Australia and subsequently the Uniting Church; in response the Uniting Church

has sought to emphasise its openness to the presence and influence of all cultures as a distinctive feature of its emerging identity. In 1985, the UCA's Fourth Assembly proclaimed itself to be a "multicultural Church", stating: "the fact that our membership comprises people of many races, cultures and languages, is a reminder that the church is both product and agent of mission" (Statement adopted by the fourth Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, 1985). As evidence of this, the UCA encourages its ethnic congregations to worship together in their community languages.

Melbourne is home to the second-largest concentration of Indonesian speakers, after Sydney. Immigration from Indonesia began in the 1960s, and in recent years large numbers of Indonesian students have enrolled to study at Australian universities. The particular congregation involved in the present research is situated in a Melbourne suburb close to Monash University, and therefore includes a significant number of students who spend the university year in Australia, returning to Indonesia for holidays. Because of this, the size of the congregation is quite variable according to the time of the year, being largest (around 120) between March and November, following the Australian university year. Numbers drop to around 80 from November to March.

The vast majority of those in this particular Indonesian congregation are of Indonesian background, though non-Indonesian spouses or visitors (part of a growing number of those having learned Indonesian as a subject offered at school or university and who are keen to practice their skills) are also present in the congregation.

The weekly Indonesian service at the church is for the most part conducted in Indonesian. English is used in an intentional manner at particular times in the service for the benefit of those who are not Indonesian. Almost all parts of the service – prayers, words of welcome, notices, the sermon – are simultaneously translated into English and heard through headphones. English is also used for any interaction with children during the service, such as when the minister gives the "children's address", or when the children perform for the congregation songs learnt in their Sunday School classes. The clergy also uses some English during his sermons, often spontaneously. The use of English in the Indonesian services seldom raises objections from amongst members of the congregation.

While many of the congregation possess skills in languages other than Indonesian or English – for example, regional languages such as Javanese or Sundanese – none of these other languages are used in services or official activities of the church. The use of Indonesian in this setting is a mark of respect and reverence, and is at the same time a common language to all members. While the use of the highest speech level of a regional language such as Javanese would be considered more polite and reverent than the use of Indonesian, very few people possess adequate fluency and religious vocabulary to be able to communicate with God (or about or on behalf of God) in this speech level. The clergy claims it would be impossible for him to preach in Javanese, although his brother, the minister of a Pentecostal church in an Indonesian village, preaches regularly in Javanese.

Within this congregation of the Uniting Church, a variety of Indonesian denominational backgrounds are represented, and the liturgy which has been specially developed by the minister reflects this varied heritage. Its similarity to liturgies used in churches in Indonesia adds to the “comforting familiarity” of the service, and the minister is continuing to adapt this liturgy to suit the changing needs of his congregation.

## 6. Language-religion ideology in the ethnic church context

Having examined the language religion ideologies of two of the denominations involved in this research, they can now be placed on the LRI Continuum according to the nature of the relationship between language and religion which they exhibit. For comparative purposes, the other denominations involved in the research but not discussed here have also been included on the continuum.

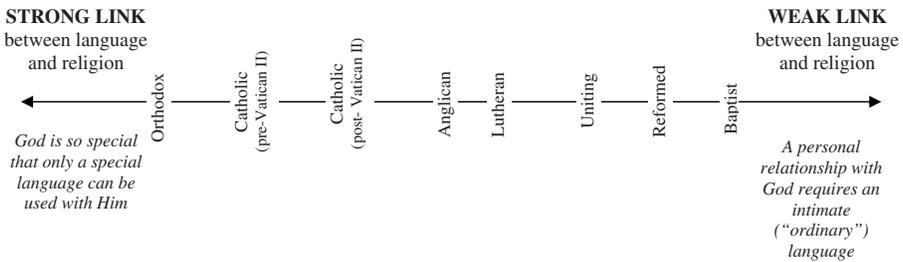


Figure 2. Application of the LRI Continuum

The two extremes of the continuum are represented by the Orthodox and Baptist denominations. Prior to Vatican II, the Catholic Church exhibited a language-religion ideology which more closely approximated that of the Orthodox Church, valuing Latin as a sacred and untouchable language. Since the introduction of the vernacular with Vatican II, Catholicism has loosened the distinction between the language of everyday life and the language of spiritual matters. Anglicanism is in a similar place on the continuum. Having rejected Latin in the Church in favour of the vernacular, a particular literary form of English then became fossilised for the ensuing centuries (and may be witnessed today by the use of a Cultivated English by some Anglican clergy). Although Luther sought to change the emphasis upon particular languages as being more “right” than others, for Lutherans, the German language became the authentic language of the “true” faith. The Uniting Church has been particularly influenced by liberal reformed theology, and by Methodism, which, as an offshoot of Anglicanism, exhibits a similar language-religion ideology but with less emphasis on formal worship. The emerging identity of the Uniting Church has a stronger social justice emphasis and openness to ethnic ministry and to the incorporation of

community languages in worship. The Reformed Church, with its Calvinist theology, rejected the need for liturgy, and in the Australian context has further loosened the link between language and the expression of faith.

At the “weak” end of the continuum, the emphasis on personal salvation means that individuals have a responsibility to understand for themselves the Gospel message. The Gospel must therefore be communicated in a language which the individual can understand. At the “strong” end of the continuum, faith is seen as a *community experience* which is led by the clergy. The clergy, as the mediator between people and God, has the responsibility for learning the “language of God” – the sacred, ecclesiastical variety – which the individual does not need to know in order to participate.

The specific congregations involved in this research may also be placed along the LRI continuum (Figure 3). A two-dimensional framework best illustrates the dynamic link between language-religion ideology (horizontal axis) and actual language use (vertical axis). Again, for comparative purposes, the results for all sixteen congregations which took part in this research are shown, with the two case studies appearing in bold. (For a full discussion of these results see Woods 2004.)

The views of the Latvian minister and his congregation in relation to language issues in some cases differ considerably. Devotion to a specific language in the religious context, paired with strong nationalistic feeling, characterise the Latvian Lutheran congregation. Although the minister also views Latvian language maintenance as important, he feels a sense of duty to members of the congregation whose Latvian skills are limited or non-existent; concluding that the message is indeed more important than the medium. Thus, the minister sees the combined use of English and Latvian as being preferable, while the majority of the congregation and church council wish to see the exclusive use of Latvian in the church. Perhaps contributing also to the minister’s openness to different languages and types of languages is his American accent – evident when speaking both English and Latvian – in the *Australian* Latvian context. In the eyes of some of the “purists” of the congregation, his position as role model for “correct language” for the congregation is diminished by this American influence. The clergy’s interest in charismatic worship also influences the link he perceives between language and religion. The Latvian church is thus divided and sits at either end of the continuum, displaying two types of language-religion ideologies.

The Indonesian congregation reflects the Uniting Church’s language-religion ideology, which is marked by flexibility towards language use and tolerance for pluralism of worship styles. However, the congregation does perceive some sort of a link between language and religion. While the prestige which English has gained in Indonesian society has resulted in a great openness to the use of English in the church setting, the Indonesian congregation has culturally-embedded views about the appropriateness of language in the religious domain and the need to convey honour and respect, particularly when addressing God.

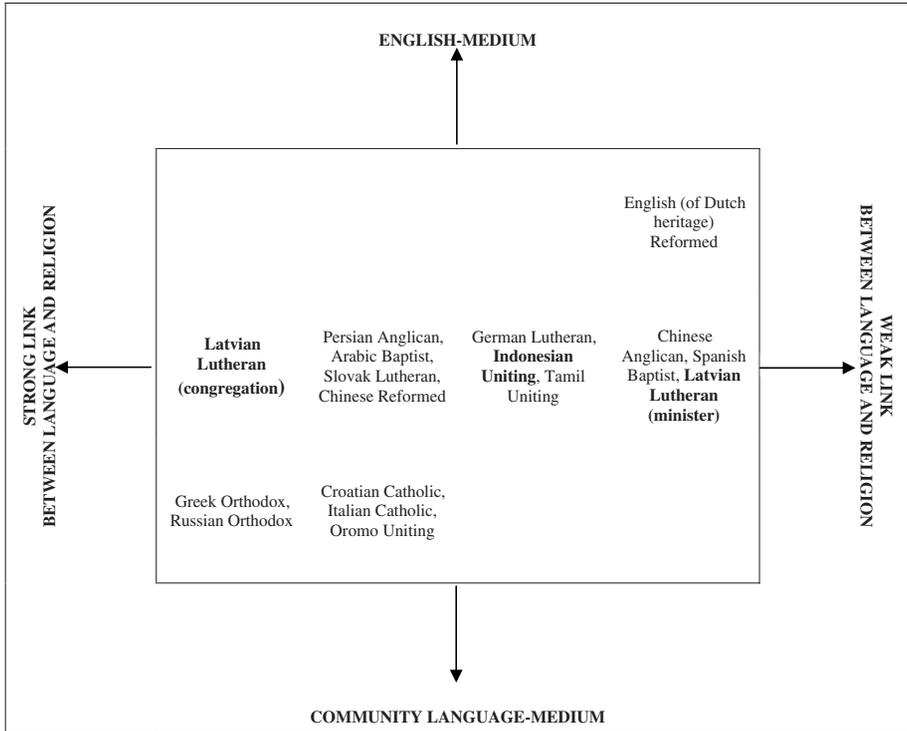


Figure 3. Language attitudes and practices of ethnic congregations involved in this research

### 7. Language, religion and conflict

In ethnic churches language has the potential both unite a community, and to cause fissures within it. The sacred value that a language may take on makes it difficult for some church members to see another language as being able to fulfil the same role. Language change in the religious context may even be seen as a threat to the true expression of ethno-religious identity. Some church members would rather leave the church than have to use and respond to a “new” language, even if they could not understand the “old” one. In the Australian context, it is the use of English which may be considered particularly “disloyal”. This was evident in the Latvian congregation described in this research. Fishman (1996: 18–19) puts it this way:

“Wherever fidelity is well-defined, there apostasy is likely to be well defined as well. Where language maintenance is viewed as moral rectitude, there language shift is likely to be viewed as tantamount to moral transgression... In this view, maintaining the beloved language is a supreme commandment, one that is even

more important than keeping the faith itself. The language which is a companion, key and expression of the faith may, indeed, become not only an article of faith but a faith in its own right.”

The older members of a congregation (regardless of migration vintage) tend to be most attached to long-held traditions – whether this means the use of a special liturgical language or the use of the community language. It is the older members who tend to be the most distressed and dislocated by suggested or actual language change, often seeing faith and language as being more intimately connected than younger members of the church.

The youth of ethnic churches have their own set of language-related problems. Those born overseas but raised in Australia, or born in Australia to the first generation, face particular difficulties in establishing their sense of identity. Their English language skills are typically better than the English language skills of their parents, while their community language skills may be weak.

The presence of youth in some ethnic churches is clearly under threat. This may be linked to the prioritising of community language maintenance over effective communication. While disinterest in church activities amongst ethnic youth is not solely due to inappropriate language use, it is nonetheless certain that a church which refuses to speak the same language as its youth will soon lose its appeal to its target audience. These increasingly disparate language needs can cause great fractures in previously close-knit communities of ethnic Christians.

## **8. The role of ethnic churches in language maintenance**

Ethnic churches appear to play a vital role in language maintenance, but not for all church members. The use of community languages in ethnic churches is typically of most benefit to the first generation, for whom church attendance is culturally embedded, and who have forged strong social networks in which the community language is reinforced. Ethnic churches do not generally seem to be successful in raising the level of community language skills of the younger generation who may be more familiar with, skilled in, and comfortable using English, although where the church is linked to other community activities and organisations, such as Saturday Schools, the result may be more positive.

## **9. Conclusion**

The LRI Continuum presented in this paper provides a framework in which to place an individual church according to its language practices and the attitudes it holds towards its own and other languages. Using this framework it becomes clear how the

relationship between language and religion for an ethnic church is influenced by the “language-religion ideology” of the denomination of which it is a part, as well as by religious subcultures, such as the charismatic movement. Trends in language maintenance and shift, as well as the evaluation of language as a “core value”, also play a vital part in the extent to which a church exhibits the language-religion ideology of its “parent” denomination.

It is hoped that this research will inspire offshoots into areas which have been only briefly touched upon. Some of these avenues include investigating the notion of language-religion ideology in relation to different theological orientations (such as charismatic) which overlap traditional denominational boundaries; exploring the issue of code-switching in the ethnic church setting, as well as perceptions of the clergy as linguistic role models and accompanying ideas of language purity; and examining the place of youth in ethnic churches, particularly those who have grown up and been educated in a “new” country and whose first or preferred language is different to that of the older members of their families – even to that of their siblings. Other questions to explore include whether “national” churches can be “de-nationalised” and what the implications of this process are for language; and the role of indigenous churches in helping to maintain Australia’s fifty or so surviving Aboriginal languages. Finally, it would be valuable to examine these issues within an international framework, perhaps tracing the religious settlement of Christians from one particular ethnic background in different places around the world, thus illuminating the impact of different language contact situations on language maintenance in the religious setting.

## Notes

1. The material discussed in this chapter is presented fully in Woods (2004).
2. The descriptions of the Latvian and Indonesian congregations represent the situation in 1997, when extensive research was conducted via questionnaires and interviews.

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## Language use and religious practice The case of Singapore

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### 1. Introduction

This preliminary study presents a macro-diachronic perspective of language shift and language death and its relationship with the rise or decline in the practice of Chinese and Malay religious and cultural life in the Republic of Singapore. Of special interest is the study of the rise of world languages, such as English and Mandarin at the expense of Chinese regional languages (hereafter referred to as dialects) such as Hokkien, and Cantonese and the former lingua franca of the masses, Bazaar Malay. The study is based on the premise that language is more than merely statistical choice or a medium for speaking and writing since it provides us an experience of the world and is an indicator of ways of thinking and acting. What this means is that all of us are trapped in language and that our subjectivities are constructed for us by our linguistic practices. Philosophers such as Nietzsche (1986) have presented us with an epistemology of rhetoric, an intellectual perspective that knowing depends on the way things are produced in language.

Language is not a neutral instrument that we use to interpret the world impersonally and objectively for language is by its very nature biased. This theory of how language affects the way we see the world was first advanced by American anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir in 1929 and later refined by his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf. It is a theory which is attractive today because it is very much in tune with Einstein's theory of relativity; that is, how we see phenomena in the universe is related to our point of observation. For Sapir, meanings are "not so much discussed in experience as imposed upon it, because of the tyrannical hold that linguistic form has upon our orientation in the world." (Carroll 1956: 518).

There are also moderating viewpoints to this general premise. Kramsch (1993) argues that knowing about a culture through e.g. the English language, does not mean that one has an obligation to behave in accordance with the conventions of a culture and indeed, the English language today is affiliated to many different cultures, as evidenced by the rise of Non-Native-Englishes and literatures. Elsewhere, Paulston (1992) shows that it is possible to inculcate interculturalism in learning a language

and not just learning the culture of the language per se. Whatever the viewpoint, it is true that while it is possible to become bilingual without becoming bicultural, the reverse is not true.

A related but less-known and less-discussed point is that language is inextricably linked to religion because language, like religion, is by and large a shaper of behaviour and cultures. Both language and religion define the characteristics of civilizations and both mutually affect and influence each other. Often the fight to preserve a language has a religious base, the religion being associated with a way of life that involves language as a total picture. Where groups have been persecuted by a general populace, they have often maintained a language or a religion as a group symbol of resistance, and as a means of psychological defence.

Recent events on the world stage such as the rise of terrorism as well as the heightened materialistic culture created by corporate globalization have thrust the study of religion into the limelight and sociolinguists cannot afford to be immune from a surge of interest in recent years in religion and its complex interface with variables such as race and language. There are persistent questions asked today which were not as significant a decade or two ago such as, "Does language affects religious choice?"; "Does religion affects the way one speaks a language?"; "Can language facilitate the religious message or does it obscure and alienate people from it?"; and "Is the medium of a language part of the content for a religion?"

Following this lead, this study explores the link between language and religion in Singapore, a multilingual and multiracial society. It is a study of the imposition of world languages upon a specific community and the ensuing death of native languages. I shall be focusing on factors involved in language shift vs. language maintenance and in language death vs. language survival and their relationship with religious practices in Singapore. More specifically, I shall be examining in a macro-diachronic way, the rise and decline in the practice of Chinese and Malay religious and cultural life in relation to language shift and language death. Of special interest is the study of the rise of world languages, such as English and Mandarin at the expense of Chinese languages such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hainanese, Hakka (hereafter referred to as dialects), and the former lingua franca of Singapore, Bazaar Malay.

## **2. Racial and religious backgrounds in Singapore**

Singapore is one nation which has successfully crafted a distinct group of people through highly-focused language policies and practices. It has a population of 4 million on 680 square kilometers of land. One may suppose that in a "competitive, lean and modern state" with a relatively high per capita gross domestic product and a reputation for efficiency and enterprise, the religious aspiration is secondary to the material one. But such a presupposition would be untrue in this case. Religion is an important ingredient in the lives of Singaporeans and freedom of worship is

enshrined in the Singapore constitution. The Inter-religious Council (IRO) is an officially recognized and supported non-governmental organization (NGO) as well as an active one which promotes activities such as the annual celebration of World Religion Day whereby representatives from the nine religions of Singapore come together to commemorate a day of diversity and tolerance in religious beliefs.<sup>1</sup> For many people, religion is a source of spiritual, social and even cultural nourishment. In addition, for the Sikhs, Malays and Parsis of Singapore, religion is a definition of their identity. For the Chinese and Indians, it is a major part of their cultural life, as seen in their practice of annual local festivals such as the Moon Cake Festival and Thaipusam..

Where the government is concerned, and it is important to note here that the same government – the People’s Action Party (PAP) – has been in power since independence, religion is a necessary and welcomed ingredient in nationhood. Indeed, “race” and “religion” which originated from the colonial logic of separation and divide-and-rule have been found to be useful classificatory tools. This policy continues to be practiced in many forms, not least in the establishment of separate ethnic bodies for community work, such as SINDA (Singapore Indian Development Association), MENDAKI (Council on Education for Muslim children) and CDAC (Chinese Development Assistance Council) Religion is looked upon by the government as a source of social control, a purveyor of moral values, a guardian of tradition, and a useful antidote to excesses. Recently, in a prominent newspaper headline “Religion still relevant, says President” the President of Singapore, S. R. Nathan, reminded the citizens that religious groups “must fill the vacuum created by the computer terminal.”<sup>2</sup> Freedom of worship is allowed in Singapore as long as it does not get into a situation defined as against “national interests” and most religious group comes with an understanding not “to rock the boat” for example, no religious leader has publicly protested about the promotion of a materialistic way of life even though this is in variance with many of these systems of beliefs.<sup>3</sup>

The teaching of ethnics through Chinese, Malay or Tamil, is part of the belief that value transmission is best carried out in the mother tongue. Accordingly, a civics programme for schools began in 1967, which was in turn replaced in 1974 at the primary level (ages 6 – 12) with another programme entitled “Education for Living”, a combination of civics, history and geography. In 1984–1989, there was also a short-lived government imposition of Religious Knowledge (RK) as a compulsory subject for upper secondary students. In RK, pupils had a choice of Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism or Sikhism. This was a free choice and many children chose to study a religion other than they own, but there was some pressure on children to choose a culturally appropriate religion (Gupta 1994). However, due to religious revivalism and evangelistic activities among Buddhists and Christians (and indeed there were a lot of crossover from Taoism to these two religions during this period), RK was scrapped (cf Tan 1997). In its place, a new compulsory Civics and Moral education programme was designed for all secondary school students and which incorporated factual knowledge about the main religions in Singapore.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the government is keen to keep all faiths in harmony and has recently inaugurated a Racial Harmony Day in Singapore in July 2003. The different religions on this day, under the auspices of the Inter-religious Council will gather together to recite from a card a commitment to practice their religions within the context of a secular and multi-religious Singapore.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Linguistic backgrounds of Singapore

The linguistic scene in Singapore is as complex as its religious one. There are three major ethnic groups (Chinese, Malay, Indian), at least 5 major languages and three minor languages. The former are Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil and Hokkien; the latter are Teochew Cantonese and Hainanese. Each of the three major ethnic groups is further composed of different language groups, thus making for a multilingual mix in addition to the ethnic diversity. Historically, Hokkien, a southern Chinese dialect and Bazaar Malay were the favored lingua-franca for inter-ethnic communication for the masses.

The use of Malay as a lingua franca amongst the varied races of the colony was not surprising since Malay had been well established as the lingua franca of the region (primarily Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia) since prehistory (Vreeland et. Al 1977). Because of its high status, colonizers including the Portuguese, Dutch and English perpetuated its use. The 1957 census by Chua found that in the age group 15–54, as many as “two-thirds declared that they could speak Malay” and only 31% were able to speak English (Chua 1957: 76).

The linguistic policy of the British colonial government was to provide training in English and to give English-medium education only to the elite few so as to prepare them for employment as middle-ranking officials in the colonial administration. English was not made available to the masses in accordance with the policy of divide and rule. In addition, the British established vernacular medium-schools, but these vernacular schools were not as well financed. Where Chinese vernacular education was concerned, the schools reflected a fragmented community made up of different dialect groups, with their primary function to maintain traditional education and the values of the old country on foreign soil by teaching the Chinese classics and the use of abacus. Many of the teachers were imported from China.

The major constitutional changes which have occurred after independence and which have had an influence on language policies in the island have been connected with the inclusion of Singapore as a state in the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, and the subsequent separation from Malaysia, which resulted in its establishment as an independent republic in 1965. The separation was due to a difference in perspective: Singapore’s model of a Malaysian-Malaysia, modeled on multiculturalism clashed with the Malaysian government’s desire for a Malay Malaysia. Prior to separation, great emphasis was placed on the teaching of Malay so as to make it acceptable to the

Malay dominated government in Kuala Lumpur. With separation in 1965, the policy was reversed and English now emerged as the favoured lingua franca. Although Malay was designated as “National Language”, it was to be used only for ceremonial functions, e.g. singing the national anthem and military skills.

The rise in the use of English was also influenced by a reformed school system. Those who attended English-stream school had to take Malay, Chinese or Tamil as their second language. However, those who went to the other three streams – Malay, Chinese or Tamil-stream school, was required to take English as a second language. This had the effect of ensuring that every school leaver would acquire competence in the English language. In other words, bilingualism was now not just any of the four official languages but English plus one mother tongue. This move was rationalized entirely on the basis of its utility use for science, technology and commerce. Furthermore, Mathematics and Science, subjects which were strongly emphasized then were taught in English.

English was now slated to be the language with no equal. The market economy became associated with English and so were prestigious scholarships. Not surprisingly, with each passing year, enrollments in the English-medium streams increased disproportionately to all the other language streams, leading to the gradual atrophy of the Chinese, Tamil and Indian-streamed schools. The story of Nantah, the only Chinese-medium University in Singapore, is a case in point. It was founded in 1953 by the Chinese-educated community and was a symbol of the vitality of Chinese medium education and culture in the 1950's. However, scarcely twenty years later, in the 70's, it faced a barren future with a fall in enrolment. Forced to survive, it had to adopt English as a para-language of instruction side by side with Mandarin in 1975 and to eventually merge with the English-medium University of Singapore in 1980. This came about with the recognition that competence in English was the key to career advancement and occupational mobility. By 1980, all tertiary institutions (polytechnics, etc.) offered instruction in English.

What is of significance to this study is that the invariable corollary of the high status of English has been the low status of the other languages. English grew at the expense of Chinese dialects as well as the other official languages. The drastic decline in the subscription to Rediffusion, a commercial radio network, which used to broadcast folk cultural programmes in the Chinese dialect, is a case in point. It used to broadcast in six different Chinese dialects until the airing of such dialects was disallowed almost overnight with the promotion of the “Speak Mandarin Campaign” in 1979. Presently it has two channels – one in English and the other in Mandarin and a much-declined subscription rate.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. The relationship between language and religion in Singapore

The following tables will give us a clearer picture of the interface between religion and variables such as language, race, educational qualifications and income levels in Singapore. Table 1 gives us an overview of the relationship of different ethnic groups in Singapore with their respective religious affiliation. Perhaps the most striking factor here is that the Malays are the most homogenous ethnic group in terms of religious affiliation as almost all Malays identify themselves as Muslims. Malays are essentially Muslims (consistently around 99% in the 1980, 1990 and 2000 census) and this is a fact that has not changed since the census of 1957 (Chua 1957).

**Table 1.** Resident population aged 15 years and over by ethnic group and region<sup>7</sup>

Ethnic Group/religion	1980 (%)	1990 (%)	2000 (%)
<b>CHINESE</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Christianity	10.9	14.3	16.5
Buddhism	34.3	39.4	53.6
Taoism	38.2	28.4	10.8
Other Religion	0.2	0.3	0.5
No Religion	16.4	17.7	18.6
<b>MALAYS</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Islam	99.6	99.6	99.6
Other religions	0.3	0.3	0.4
No religion	0.1	0.2	0.1
<b>INDIANS</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Christianity	12.5	12.2	12.1
Islam	22.1	26.5	25.6
Hinduism	56.3	53.1	55.4
Other Religions	8.0	7.1	6.3
No religion	1.2	1.2	0.6

Source: Department of Statistics (2000), *Census of Population 2000, Advanced Data Release*, p. 36

In contrast, the Chinese and Indians are much more heterogeneous in terms of their religious affiliations. A Chinese may be a Christian, a Buddhist, a Taoist, “other religion” or no “religion”. Similarly an Indian may be a Christian, a Muslim, Hindu, “other religion” or “no religion”. In addition, the table also reveals that of all the religions, the one with the most heterogeneous ethnic composition is Christianity – and this is so because it has taken adherents from other religions, notably from the Chinese and Indian races.

Table 2 shows the resident population aged 15 and over by religious affiliation. What is significant in the past thirty years is that Christianity and Buddhism has grown in strength significantly. The Christian population grew from 10.1% in 1980 to 12.7% in 1990 to 14.6% in 2000. Christians made up 12.7% in 1990, up from 10.1% in 1980. About 88% are Chinese. Similarly, the Buddhist population grew from 27% in 1980 to 31.2% in 1990 to 42.5% in 2000. The gains in Christianity and Buddhism came from the decline in Taoism which was 30% in 1980, 22.4% in 1990 and 8.5% in 2000. It is obvious from this table that religious conversion in Singapore is a zero-sum game, and converts to one religion means a loss from another.

**Table 2.** Resident Population (15 years & above) by Religion

Total	1980 (%)	1990 (%)	2000 (%)
Christianity	10.1	12.7	14.6
Buddhism	27.0	31.2	42.5
Taoism	30.0	22.4	8.5
Islam	15.7	15.3	14.9
Hinduism	3.6	3.7	4.0
Other Religions	0.5	0.6	0.6
No Religion	13.0	14.1	14.8

Source: Source: Department of Statistics (2000), *Census of Population 2000, Advanced Data Release*, p. 33

Once again, the proportion of Muslims and Hindus remained relatively unchanged at approximately 15% and 4% respectively.

Table 3 shows the language most frequently spoken at home in the years 1990 and 2000. The most striking phenomenon is that the usage of English and Mandarin as a language spoken at home had become more prevalent among Chinese Singaporeans. The use of English has risen from 18.8% in 1990 to 23% in 2000 while that of Mandarin has risen from 23.7% in 1990 to 35% in 2000. This has been achieved at the expense of Chinese dialects which have fallen from 39.6% in 1990 to 23.8% in 2000.

In contrast, home languages for the Malay and Tamil communities have been relatively stable and did not show any significant change. The Malays continued to use Malay and the Indian community continued to use Tamil.

In addition, comparing 1980 and 1990 census figures, Lau (1993) discerned a significant shift from the use of Chinese dialects towards English or Mandarin as predominant household language. Mandarin household increased from 13% to 30% in

**Table 3.** Resident Population above 5 years of age by language most frequently spoken at home.

	1990 (%)	2000 (%)
English	18.8%	23.0%
Mandarin	23.7%	35.0%
Chinese Dialects	39.6%	23.8%
Malay	14.3%	14.1%
Tamil	2.9%	3.2%
Others	0.8%	0.9%

Source: Source: Adapted from Department of Statistics (2000), Census of Population 2000, Advanced Data Release, p. 27

1990. Use of dialects in Chinese household dropped from 76% in 1980 to 48% in 1990 as a result of the “Speak Mandarin Campaign” which was launched in 1979 (Lau 1993:5)

Table 4 shows the relationship between religion and language spoken at home. The predominant household language is defined as the language or dialect that is frequently used among family members. This table shows that Singapore residents who have adopted English as their home language appear to have greater exposure to the influence of Christianity. In the 1990 and 2000 census, most Christians (39.2% and 39.8%) spoke English followed by Mandarin (8.2% and 8.3%), Chinese dialects (8.2% and 9.9%), Malay (0.7% and 0.7%) and Tamil (8.2% and 6.7%).

The chart also shows that most of the Taoist adherents came from those who spoke Chinese dialects (36% in 1990 and 15.5% in 2000) or from Mandarin speakers (26.7% in 1990 and 11.2% in 2000). Only 7.2% in 1990 and 2.2% in 2000 of English speakers were Taoists. On the other hand, most of the Buddhist adherents come from those who spoke Mandarin (43.2% in 1990 to 60% in 2000).

It is also interesting to note that there is a strong correlation among ethnicity, home language and religion among the Malays and Indians. Almost all Malay-speaking residents were Muslims while most Tamil-speaking residents were Hindus both in 1990 and 2000. 98.8% of Muslims spoke Malay at home in 2000 with around 17% of them speaking Tamil (signifying the presence of Muslims adherents in the Indian community). Correspondingly, 75% of Hindus spoke Tamil as their home language and the others used either English or other Indian languages e.g. Urdu or Hindi.

**Table 4.** Resident Population aged 15 and over by religion and language most frequently spoken at home.

Lang spoken at home	English		Mandarin		Dialect		Malay		Tamil		Others	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Christianity	39.2	39.8	8.2	8.3	8.2	9.9	0.7	0.7	8.2	6.7	11.1	11.1
Buddhism	21.1	24.8	43.1	60.0	43.2	61.0	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	3.7	10.3
Taoism	7.2	2.2	26.7	11.2	36.0	15.5	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.5
Islam	6.1	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	98.2	98.8	16.5	17.9	15.2	16.3
Hinduism	5.3	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	74.7	75.0	38.9	43.6
Other Religions	1.4	1.5	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	26.2	14.7
No Religion	19.5	19.2	21.8	20.3	12.5	13.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2	4.9	3.5

Source: Adapted from Department of Statistics (2000), *Census of Population 2000, Advanced Data Release*, p. 39

## 5. Christianity, Taoism and language shift

As may be surmised from Tables 1 & 4, many former Taoists are now either Christians or Buddhists. The swift decline in Taoism in the last thirty years is due in large part to the simultaneous decline in dialect-speaking among the Chinese of Singapore. Taoism was brought to Singapore by its Chinese immigrants. As a distinctive religion in its own right, Taoism incorporates “a part of Mahayana Buddhism, a dash of Confucianism, and a great deal of spirit mediumship.” (Chew 1997). It is led by a monk or elders and their religious skills, which include that of the spirit-medium cult, is passed down from father/mother to son/daughter in the oral tradition. Thus, a decline in the use of the dialect (Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese Hainanese, etc) will directly affect the vitality of Taoism. Young Chinese Singaporeans are mostly unable to speak to the generation of age 55 and above due to their mother-tongue being replaced by either English or Mandarin. According to the 2000 census, 71.8% of Chinese above 55 years remain monolingual in Chinese dialects (see *Straits Times* 9.9.2002, “Clans start courses to teach their dialects”)

Chinese dialects e.g. Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese have traditionally been the working language of major temples, e.g. Bright Hill Buddhist temple, Tua Peh Kong temple at Kusu, and the Soing Lim Temple at Toa Payoh. It has also been the traditional working language of Taoist/Buddhist/Confucianist, sectarian-based organizations such as the *Nanyang Moral Uplifting Association* or the *Great Way of Former Heaven*. These syncretic organisations are an essential part of the religious landscape of the Chinese masses. They have a strong emphasis on lay orientation (rather than

priestly ones), on ritual rather than theology, and a very pragmatic philosophy. They have faith in the necessity of “guidance”, believing it pays off in the end – whether in business, wealth or personal relationship. Taoism also comprised within it groups of syncretic sects such as *San I Chiao* or (3 in one religion), which specifically based their teachings on the fundamental unity of apparently opposed religious system i.e. Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism. A strong moral basis and loyalty to the state tends to be present in most of the sects in Singapore as is their devotion to the founder of a sect or a particular patron deity (Clammer 1993).

At independence in 1959, the vast majority of the Chinese population subscribed to Taoism.<sup>7</sup> However, Taoism was dwelt a mortal death blow with the identification of dialects as the key obstacle to the success of the bilingual policy in 1978 by Dr Goh Keng Swee, the then influential Minister of Defense. The Goh Report (1979:4) expounded that although the majority of pupils were taught in 2 languages, English and Mandarin, “about 85% of these pupils do not speak these languages at home. When they are at home, they speak dialects. As a result, most of what they learnt in school is not reinforced.” This was a significant reversal in thinking from the 1956 *All Party Report* which saw the place of dialects as one facilitating the learning of Mandarin.<sup>8</sup>

What Taoism has lost, Christianity has gained. Indeed, the adherents of Christianity and Taoism are the polar opposites. Christianity is English speaking, higher educated, higher income and highly literate. Taoism is dialect speaking, lower educated and lower income with low literacy levels.

The rise in the use of English has been accelerating since the dawn of independence in 1959. In 1970, Arumainathan (1970: 103) noted that the majority who were literate in both English and Chinese were in almost equal numbers (49.4% in Chinese and 46.7% in English). Drawing from the 1970 census, he pointed out that the number of persons literate in English was 160.2% over the 1957 figure. With regards to literacy in Chinese, however, the rate of increase was lower than that for persons in English – 115.7% (Arumainathan 1970: 104).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the popularity of English outgrew that of Mandarin – a trend which has relentlessly continued ever since.

There is also a correlation between higher education in English and Christianity. Table 5 displays the highest educational qualifications attained by Singapore residents in the last two decades. In 2000, some 57% of the resident population aged 15 years and over had secondary or higher qualification. This was 15% points higher than the corresponding 42% recorded in the 1990 census. The share of university graduates in the population had also increased significantly – from 4.5% in 1990 to 12% in 2000. 1 in 10 had attained university qualifications in 2000 compared with 1 in 25 in 1990. The share of those with upper secondary or polytechnic qualifications also increased from 11% in 1990 to 21% in 2000. In brief, the educational profiles of the residents have improved drastically in the last twenty years.

Table 5. Highest Qualifications Attained by Singapore Residents

Highest Qualifications Attained	1990	2000
Total	100	100
No qualifications	31.3	19.6
Primary	27.0	23.1
Secondary	26.5	24.6
Upper Secondary	7.3	14.9
Polytechnic	3.5	6.2
University	4.5	11.7

Source: Adapted from Department of Statistics (2000), *Census of Population 2000, Advanced Data Release*, p. 19

The improved educational level (in English) has a direct effect on religious affiliation. Tong (1988) found that when a group is English-educated, there is a significant rise in the number who claim to be Christians and a significant lowering in numbers of those who claim to be Taoists. He also found that the English educated is less likely to perform traditional Chinese customs and birth/ marriage/funereal rites when compared to the Chinese educated respondents. Correspondingly, a survey by Clammer (1993) found that 35% of university students are Christians (p. 205), a figure which will certainly be higher today. Many students switch ostensibly because of a strong desire to associate with one's peers as well as to belong to a relatively well-heeled group.<sup>10</sup>

Researchers such as Elliot (1990 p. 169) believe that "Only English education at its highest level is capable of inculcating a strong critical attitude towards Chinese social practices held to be questionable by Western standards. The bulk of Christian converts occur among those who have considerable exposure to English language and a "modern" lifestyle. An English education makes people look for a more rational (in the Weberian sense) religion. An education in English and with the scientific tradition the language opens up would make Christianity appear as a "rational faith". In 1987, in a move to remove Religious Knowledge (RK) as a compulsory subject from schools, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew noted that better-educated segment of populated were converted to Christianity and revealed in a private survey that 38% of school teachers were Christians, even though they comprised only 10% of the population. (*Straits Times* 17.8.1987)<sup>11</sup>

Last but not least, English is a clear indicator of socio-economic status. English household are usually those in the higher-income brackets. Table 6 (Resident population aged 15 and over by religion and type of dwelling) shows that Christians comprise the highest end of the continuum in terms of wealth – they live in private flats and houses, condominiums and higher-end government's Housing Development Board flats. In stark contrast, most Taoists live in the 1-and 2 room lower-end government flats and comprise the poorest end of the continuum. The Buddhists were more evenly spread out in all the various types of housing.

Table 6. Resident Population aged 15 and over by Religion and Type of Dwelling

Religion	HDB 1 & 2 rooms		HDB 3-rooms		HDB 4-rooms		HDB 5-room/exe		private housing	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Christianity</b>	5.5	6.8	8.0	9.7	10.0	10.2	20.3	17.4	30.0	34.3
<b>Buddhism</b>	27.8	41.8	32.2	46.3	34.1	46.3	29.4	39.5	26.1	30.1
<b>Taoism</b>	32.7	11.8	25.1	10.5	23.3	9.8	15.3	6.4	13.2	4.2
<b>Islam</b>	16.1	23.7	19.9	16.7	16.2	17.4	11.9	14.3	3.3	2.8
<b>Hinduism</b>	4.7	5.2	3.3	3.9	3.7	3.9	4.0	4.2	3.7	3.6
<b>Other Religions</b>	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9
<b>No religion</b>	12.8	10.5	11.5	12.5	12.2	11.9	18.4	17.4	22.9	24.2

Source: Adapted from: Department of Statistics (2000), *Census of Population 2000, Advanced Data Release*, p. 40

Not surprising, in Singapore, Christians are considered high status and Taoists are low status. A *Straits Times* Report (ST 26. 4. 1995) also confirms the fact that the Taoists are the opposite in terms of demographic background to the Christians. They are older in age, have a lower level of formal education, and speak dialects at home.

## 6. Double-edged language: Using English to fight back

While Christianity and Taoism may be polar opposites of each other, Buddhism is not discriminative of such variables as income, age and education; and in a sense can be a religion for Chinese Singaporeans of all ages, all educational levels and various socio-economic backgrounds. In this respect, it is similar to the position of Islam among Malays and of Hinduism among Indians (See Table 1).

The phenomenal rise on the part of Buddhism (see Table 2) is due to its ability to swiftly adapt to the changing linguistic profile of the population. Although Buddhism was traditionally conducted in Sanskrit as well as Chinese and Indian dialects, it has increasingly transferred parts of its religious activities to Mandarin and English, a move which has attracted the youth and the English-educated. The last two decades have seen the production and dissemination of apologetic literature in English and bookshops, the establishment of a Buddhist library in Mandarin and English, the reactivation of Buddhist societies on university campuses, as well as the organization of seminal talks and ecumenical activities in English. English is now used increasingly in the chanting of sutras (scriptures) and the conducting of dharma classes (lessons on Buddha's teaching).<sup>12</sup> One also sees English educated English speaking Buddhist

monks who are not only well-versed in chanting but also in world affairs, e.g. Venerable Yuan Fan who was an engineering graduate at National University of Singapore.

Aware of the worldview of the English-educated, Buddhism now provides social welfare services, such as those provided by the Catholic Church. It has also adopted some Christian practices e.g. displaying a notice board outside temple listing services (chanting, meditation) on Sundays, as well as the provision of hymn books.<sup>13</sup> It publishes magazines like “the Young Buddhists” in university clubs and has a website.<sup>14</sup> There are now six Buddhist societies at tertiary institutions in Singapore as well as a Buddhist Graduate fellowship programme.<sup>15</sup>

One denomination of Buddhism which has been growing by 10% membership each year is the Singapore Soka Association (Soka Gakkai 2001). Unlike Taoism, which traditionally operates in dialects, the Soka Association has a strong English (as well as Mandarin) component. This may be compared to a kind of “Protestantism” – back to the basics and a strong sense of community. It has a very modern outlook e.g. taking part in National Day performances and the initiation of educational projects which are beneficial to the community at large. Its membership is predominantly from the lower-middle class Chinese, – a group neglected by Christians. Understandably, it has appealed to the younger and well-educated.

Taking the cue from Buddhism, Taoism is attempting to regain lost ground. Understandably, its main weapon is a linguistic one – by conducting more of its activities in a medium that is appealing to the youth, i.e. English. In Chee Hong temple, for example, more than one-third of its followers are English educated. During committee meeting, affairs of temples are discussed in English, although spiced with Teochew and Mandarin, for the benefit of non-English speakers. Even its minutes are written in English. In 1993, for the first time, a Taoist group launched a Taoist newsletter in both English and Mandarin to explain Taoist tenets and ritual.<sup>16</sup> The recently formed (1990) *Taoist Federation of Singapore* has begun to organize public talks and encouraged the publication of literature both in Mandarin and English.<sup>17</sup> It ensures that the media is careful to highlight that new faces in Taoism include those fluent in Mandarin and English.<sup>18</sup>

The Taoist community has also initiated the modernizing of Chinese temples such as the great Bright Hill Buddhist temple, the Tua Pek Kong Temple at Kusu and the Soing Lim Temple at Toa Payoh – such as renovations, repainting of car parks and construction of new buildings. These attempts at “modernity” has caught the eye of the press which quipped that “the Gods are going bilingual” with e.g. more English educated worshippers at the Kwan Im Thong Hood Temple in Waterloo Street and Wak Hai Cheng Boi in Phillips Street. Nevertheless, the switch to English is taking place slowly, e.g. at other Taoist temples, the English educated only number about 15% and most adherents remain Chinese-educated with little or no education.<sup>19</sup>

We may conclude that the increasingly English-educated population with a worldview clearly different from the generation before them, possessing a new language which has in part already defined their experiences and expectations, will certainly

continue to shift religious loyalties unless their native religions are able to bring themselves to conform to the realities of linguistic change. Clammer (1993:212) believes that there is, however, some hope for Taoism: “its nominal and unsystematic character is double-edged: while it make adherents susceptible to claims for other religions, especially Christianity, it also makes it easy for adherents who are threatened from without to fall back on any number of theological positions, without having to fall out of Taoism.”

## 7. The rise of Mandarin and its effects on religious life

There has been a great shift towards the use of Mandarin as a home language among the Chinese in Singapore (see Table 3). The phenomenal success of the “Speak Mandarin Campaign”, launched in 1979, shows that linguistic habits, however entrenched and race-related, are not slow to change in Singapore (Pakir 1993). This nation-wide campaign to have all Chinese use Mandarin as a matter of habit was intended to discipline the Chinese into one race

Since 1979 in Singapore, all Chinese dialect programmes on radio and television have been dubbed in Mandarin and overnight, Chinese dialects have disappeared from the public face of Singapore. Today, although most young Chinese Singaporeans are bilingual in English and Mandarin, many of them can neither speak nor understand dialects. According to the 2000 population census, dialect is most frequently spoken at home for only 4.3% of Chinese children aged 5 to 14 and 18.4% for those aged 15–24. However, 71.8 % of Chinese Singaporeans above 55 remain monolingual in Chinese dialects.

Indeed, the use of Mandarin rose at a faster rate than English in the campaign’s first 10 years. However, Mandarin began to lose out from 1990 onwards to English as the first home language of the population, which continued to rise, at a faster rate than before. If such a trend continues, English will overtake Mandarin as the dominant home language of Chinese Singaporeans within the next 5 to 10 years. The full impact of the Mandarin campaign on home pattern will be apparent only in the next 10 years.

It is noteworthy that the Speak Mandarin Campaign was implemented in coordination with the moral education of the youths, to counter the supposed erosion by western influences on the Chinese traditional value system (often expressed in terms of Confucian ethics. One good reason for emphasizing Confucianism is its statist and respect-for-elder philosophy. Here, the Institute of East Asian Philosophy was established in 1983 by the Singapore government to promote the study of Confucianism. In 1982, eight Chinese-American Confucian scholars from prestigious universities in the United States acted as consultants to the Confucian ethics programme, which was part of the components under Religious Knowledge (RK).

However, Confucianism did not prove as popular as Christianity and Buddhism.

This is mainly because the masses of poor Chinese immigrants to Singapore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were not from the professional or educated elite (who historically were the adherents of Confucianism) but were the Chinese masses from the lower and middle working classes. In addition, while Confucianism embraces education, letters, ethics and political philosophy, Buddhism taught the indestructibility of the soul and the attainment of nirvana as a kind of immortality. In contrast, for the Confucian literati, the question of whether life existed after death is always carefully left out of the discussion. Confucius was more interested in ethics and social morality whereas Taoism and Buddhism were more focused on the pursuit of individual salvation and nirvana. In other words, Buddhism and Taoism were more attuned to the everyday problems of life and death rather than the more abstract moral perfecting of man and society, and subsequently, was more attractive to the ordinary person (Chew 2000).<sup>20</sup> Not surprisingly, RK was scrapped from the school curriculum in 1989, largely due to the majority of ethnic Chinese failing to opt for Confucianism under RK. Instead, the majority opted to study Buddhism and Christianity under RK.

## 8. The Malay community: Language shift and religious practices

While all races are speaking more English in their working lives, it is only the Chinese race, rather than the Malay or Indian races, which have shown a significant shift in religious affiliation during this period of language change (See Table 1). If anything, the Malays have become more consciously “Muslims” than before since the onset of independence and the terrorist attack on the United States in September 2001. Many more Muslims are making pilgrimages to Mecca, are fasting during the month of Ramadan and are praying 5 times a day, at dawn, early afternoon, before sunset, after sunset. A number of reasons may be postulated to explain this phenomenon.

First, for the Malay, Islam is an “inherent” part of their culture. According to the Malaysian Constitution, to which Singapore is careful to pay its respect, a “Malay” is one who is a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, and follows Malay custom or “adat”. Religion is therefore an integral part of their ethnic and national identity. This is also the case for the Hindus where personal identity is related to the caste system, a phenomenon which has led to many attempts to by-pass the caste system by religious conversion to say, Buddhism or Christianity. Thus, the cost of religious switching is higher and therefore rarer for the Muslims and Hindus. On the other hand, Taoism and Buddhism are not part of Chinese identity. In addition, the Chinese family structure is patrilineal rather than religion-based. There is no attempt to control the child’s religious identity since religion is not part of ethnic identity. To summarize, for Malays, “Malayness” is a part of Islam, but “Chinese-ness” is independent of Religion.

Second, in contrast to the Chinese and Indians who show the highest percentage of dialect shift to English-speaking at home, the Malay community continues to main-

tain the use of Malay as the predominant household language (see Table 4). Table 7 shows that while 16.4% Chinese and 21.5% Indians were monoliterate in English in 2000, in contrast, only a miniscule 2% of Malays speak “English only”. Malays are the most bilingual as 76.7% of them can speak *both* mother tongue and English. This can be compared to 48.5% of in the case of the Chinese and 37.5% in the case of the Indians. We can thus conclude that Malay remains to be the only language that has achieved mother tongue status. Malay families still speak Malay at home and retain a strong ethnic identity whereas most Chinese have already switched to English or Mandarin, both of which are, ironically, not their mother tongues.

**Table 7.** Literate resident population aged 15 & over by language literate in:

Ethnic Group/Language Literate in	1990 (%)	2000 (%)
<b>CHINESE</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
English Only	19.8	16.4
Chinese only	40.6	32.0
English and Chinese only	37.8	48.3
Others	1.9	3.3
<b>MALAYS</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
English only	3.2	2.0
Malay only	27.3	19.8
English and Malay only	68.1	76.7
Others	1.4	1.5
<b>INDIANS</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
English only	22.1	21.5
Tamil Only	14.5	8.9
English and Tamil Only	31.5	37.5
English and Malay Only	19.1	17.4
Others	12.8	14.6

Source: Adapted from: Department of Statistics (2000), *Census of Population 2000, Advanced Data Release*, p. 25

The learning of Arabic in religious classes have also influenced the Malays to gradually give up the animistic part of their Islamic beliefs and to become more “Muslim”. Historically, Islam has maintained a close syncretism with animistic religion especially in rural Malaysia (Benjamin 1979). Besides the worship of Allah in its classical form, the Malays also worshipped “Datuk”, a deity which existed long before the different religions came from India. Usually, it was a popular Malay person who

was loved by his villagers. After he passed away, the villagers would offer prayers at his “keramat” (the graves or shrines of Malay or Muslim holy men) to ask his soul to protect them. There were good and bad datuks, kind ones protect human beings and bad ones brought illnesses. Shrines built to datuks can be found at crossroads, sides of wells, under trees, construction sites, worksites, junctions and courtyards. Datuks not only granted wealth but could also grant peace.

It is interesting that some Chinese has been influenced by Malay animistic beliefs, not least because the origin of *datuk* is actually very similar to the Chinese Taoist deity, *Tao Pek Kong*, so it is not surprisingly that the Malay *datuk* has been titled “Datuk Kong”. He is currently worshipped at Kusu Island, a small offshore island containing both a Chinese temple and a Malay shrine, both of which are frequented by large numbers of Chinese up to the present time. In the period before 1965 when Bazaar Malay was a lingua franca for the different ethnic groups, it was not uncommon to find Malay influence in Chinese religious practices. Ng (1983) shows the absorption of Malay elements into divinatory and ritual practices among the Straits Chinese community.<sup>21</sup> In her study of spirit-mediumship at *the Sam Poh Neo Keramat*, she relates the assimilation of Malay titles or identities to Chinese deities. The names of the Deities, for example, Datuk Bakul and Datuk Puloh Besar are placed among the pantheon of Chinese deities. Other Malay elements that are adopted are e.g. lime, flower petals and benzoin incense. With the decline of Malay as a lingua franca has also come the decline of such practices.

## 9. Conclusion

The study reported in this chapter has given us a preliminary indication of how linguistic choices by national governments have direct and indirect consequences, both short and long term, on the religious and cultural orientation of their people. It has also summarized some factors behind language loss, language imposition, language shift and language death in the recent history of Singapore. The languages of Singapore are closely associated with religious practices. The use of Chinese dialects such as Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese and Hainanese is intimately associated with the practice of Chinese folk religion, that is, Taoism, and Mahayana Buddhism. The use of Mandarin is traditionally associated with the practice of Confucianism. Similarly, the Malay language is associated in Singapore with the practice of Islam as well as animistic practices relating to *keramats*, some of which have held special significance for the Chinese and have been incorporated into their religious practices.

The English language is not entirely related to Christianity since many people who speak English are not necessarily Christians. However, in Singapore, the 15% Christians are overwhelmingly English-educated. The more English a person uses, the more likely that they lose affinity with native religion, because language is by its very nature ideological and plays a major part in moulding our values and the way we perceive

our world. Language affects the way we see the world. Embedded within the English language are “western” values such as meritocracy and scientific rationality. Allowed to follow a natural cause, the hegemony of English has the potential power not only to diminish the use and value of native languages but also to replace or displace their religio-cultural framework altogether.

The decline of Chinese dialects within a generation in Singapore has led to the loss of discursive practices which are essential in the transmission and maintenance of folk religions such as Taoism. Without Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, and Hainanese, Taoists can no longer experience the immediate relevance and emotional reality of the Faith. Language predisposes us not only to certain ways of cognition but also of experiencing. Here, the ascendancy of the English language and the rise of Christianity at the expense of Taoism has already occurred and this trend will doubtless continue. Taoism’s impending demise may be equated in a sense to what Day (1985) calls “the ultimate inequality: linguistic genocide” – a result of cultural contact between two unequal societies – in terms of economic resource, international prestige and government support. Language death should be seen not merely as a linguistic problem but as a problem concerned with power and influence. What is unique about the decline of Taoism in Singapore is that it has occurred gradually and without a public outcry. For the sake of single-minded pragmatic gain, Singaporeans have unknowingly sounded a death knell in Taoism and a way of life which they have led for centuries. Another striking fact is that this religious transition has occurred within a generation without a public outcry and it is surprising that it has not yet been recognized as a “problem”.

However, one notes that there are instances when the promotion of a new language may not lead to religious conversion. The rise of Mandarin as an intra-ethnic language of communication did not lead to a corresponding interest in Confucianism, but this unusual factor is due mainly to reasons associated with the specific nature of Confucianism, that is, Confucianism is regarded not so much as a religion but as a philosophy or “way of life.”

The dramatic shift to the use of English by the majority of the population within one generation also means that to survive, religions must now speak the choice language of the people, especially if that particular religion wishes to reach out to other ethnic groups. The activities of the Muslim Convert’s Association are a case in point. It exists to give religious, institutional and social support to mainly Chinese converts, and uses English as its main language. Another case in point is the Ramakrishnan (Hindu) Mission which conducts *bajan* (hymn), singing session not only in Tamil, Hindi and Sanskrit but also in English. The mission has a venue for health talks, educational activities and family counseling session held in both Tamil and English and English-speaking groups from other races. Similarly, when religions, such as Buddhism and Taoism, begin to employ more English-speaking clergy or begin to print literature or perform religious ceremonies in English, it has and can continue to deal an effective challenge to Christianity.

Language is basic, important, and pervasive and an essential ingredient of civilization (Lutz 1996). But like anything that is basic, important and pervasive, it is often taken for granted and regarded as “invisible” and “neutral”. This study has shown that like the air we breathe which is so vital for survival, language is simply there for us to use. But just as we learn to pay attention to the quality of air we breathe every day, so we need to pay attention to the language we choose to use. Language predisposes us to certain ways of experiencing. This study has shown that the global spread of English has multifarious consequences, some of which reach to our deepest religio-cultural roots, to innermost areas where we least expect. It will be interesting to see whether the trends we have discerned in Singapore will continue on its way. More research will have to be done to examine the ethical dimensions of linguistic imperialism or hegemony in relation to religious and cultural life. Linguistic inequality, like other forms of social inequality is a problem of major dimension. This is a task both imperative and immediate because language is inextricably linked with religion and because language, like religion, is by and large, a shaper of behaviour and cultures.

## Notes

1. See e.g. *Straits Times* 16.1.1995. p. 19 “Singapore first World Religion Day draws 1000”
2. *Straits Times* 19. 5. 2000, p. 3 “Religion still relevant, says President”
3. For example, Scientology is banned, the Mormons who advocate pacifism and the avoidance of arms-bearing are tolerated while the Jehovah’s witness are disapproved because of their opposition to National Service (Compulsory military draft for males from aged 18–20).
4. In addition, to maintain the stability of the different religious groups, the *Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act* was passed by Parliament in 1990. This aimed to provide for the maintenance of religious harmony in Singapore and to ensure that religion is not exploited for political or subversive purposes. This act also provided for the establishment of a presidential council of religious harmony. Here any member of a religious group who causes ill-feelings between different religious groups or promote a political cause or carries out subversive act under the guise of propagating religion may be issued with a restraining order to stop such activities. Violation of restraining order lead to fine or imprisonment. This Act has been effective in slowing down the rise of Christianity in the period 1990 to 2000.
5. The following is the harmony pledge for Singaporeans:  
 “We, the people of Singapore, declare that religious harmony is vital for peace, progress and prosperity in our multi-racial nation. We resolve to strengthen religious harmony through mutual tolerance, confidence, respect and understanding. We shall always:
  - Recognize the secular nature of our state;
  - Promote cohesion within our society;
  - Respect each other’s freedom of religion;
  - Grow our common space while respecting our diversity;
  - Forster inter-religious communication.

and thereby ensure that religion will not be abused to create conflict and disharmony in Singapore.”

6. Go to <http://www.rediffusion.com.sg>.
7. Elliot (1990) reported over 500 Chinese temples in Singapore from attap house to elaborately carved ornamental roofs. It was a time when the Kitchen God was sent off to heaven on the occasion of every New Year to report on the behavior of the family. At the beginning of spring (Cheng Ming), families will burn joss sticks and offer wine and rice before the tombs of their ancestors. In mid-August, small piles of paper money are burnt on roadsides and street corners. August is also the feast of hungry ghosts (sometime in mid-August and celebrated by Buddhists and Taoists so as to alleviate the sufferings of ancestors and unfortunate spirits who have no one to care for them. The decline of Taoism is evident in the decline of religion-linked celebrations such as the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Chinese New Year and which were celebrated by Hokkien-speaking members.
8. Quoted in Wendy Bokhorst-Heng, Language Planning and Management in Singapore. In J. A. Foley et al. *English in New Cultural Contexts*. Singapore: Singapore Institute of Management, OUDP, 1998. p. 294.
9. The rate of increase was 201,947 in 1957 to 525,483 in 1970 for English; 257,482 in 1957 to 535,516 in 1970. Unfortunately, the 1970 census did not collect data in terms of dialect spoken but only in terms of “Chinese” speaking. We know however that in 1970, those who were literate in English and Malay was 80,975 or 37.7%; in English and Chinese 99,781 or 46.5%; and in English and Tamil 17,720 or 8.2%
10. A research study by Tamney and Hassan (1987) also support findings of adolescent susceptibility to switching mainly because of factors such as 1) cultural crisis, 2) attraction to general principles of similarity, and 3) the need to certify to the public one’s attainment.
11. This figure is very likely to have doubled today. .
12. This growth in Buddhism was also helped by the English media, which also realizes the importance of highlighting religious groups equally. In the last decade, they have been more obviously highlighting activities such by the Taoist group e.g. “ San Wang Wu Ti auctioned figurines as well as staging a Cantonese opera” (*Straits Times* 17. 11 1993 p. 67); “Taoist set gives 630K to NKF”(*Straits Times* 2. 12 1993) “Temple donate money to build dialysis center (*Straits Times* 15. 11. 1993 p. 73); “Buddhist center holds dinner to marks its opening” (*Straits Times* 21. 11. 1994 p. 4), etc.
13. *Straits Times* 18. 5. 2001, p. 1, “Going at the speed of Zen”
14. For example, the Buddhist Union Newsletter is in English. Groups like *Ananda Mayarama Buddhist Youth Circle* publish in English.
15. See *Straits Times* 3. 8. 1997 says that “Buddhist attracting better-educated Singaporean” p. 13.
16. *Straits Times* 26. 1. 1993. p. 16 “Taoist newsletter aims to explain beliefs and rites quarterly”
17. *Straits Times* 9. 11. 1993 p. 4 “English divination shops in Chinese temples”.
18. *Sunday Times* 13. 10, 2002 p.L6.
19. *Straits Times* 25.5. 1992, p. 25.
20. Chew (2000) also postulated that the ordinary Chinese person is not concerned much

with Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism, even though we hear such names vaunted in their literature. The real religion of the ordinary Chinese people is concerned with meeting their immediate needs, that is, the pursuit of worldly success, the appeasement of the dead and spirit, and the seeking of knowledge about the future.

21. The Straits Chinese are the Peranakan or Baba Chinese, a group of Chinese who adopted certain Malay cultural habits including the use of the Malay language, and who were often employed in the service of the British government.

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PART III

**Effects of language  
on religion**



# ‘Etymythological othering’ and the power of ‘lexical engineering’ in Judaism, Islam and Christianity

## A socio-philo(sopho)logical perspective

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*El original es infiel a la traducción*

‘The original is unfaithful to the translation’ (Borges 1943,  
cf. 1974:732)

### 1. Introduction

This chapter casts light on cross-religious interactions at the micro-level of lexis. It focuses on mechanisms of ‘*etymythology*’ (popular/folk-/synchronic etymology) and ‘*lexical engineering*’, especially within Jewish, Christian and Muslim groups. Lexical engineering reflects religious and cultural interactions and often manifests the attempt of a religion to preserve its identity when confronted with an overpowering alien environment, without segregating itself from possible influences. The result can be contempt, as in the case of *rejective* phono-semantic matching. But lexical engineering is not always rejective: it can also lead to a kind of ‘cultural flirting’, as in the case of *receptive* or adoptive phono-semantic matching. Thus, lexical engineering gives us a valuable window onto the broader question of how language may be used as a major tool for religions and cultures to maintain or form their identity.<sup>1</sup>

I came to the topic of language and religion as a linguist who has been especially interested in language contact and historical ‘camouflage linguistics’, the study of the various forms of hidden influence of one language on another (cf. Zuckermann 2000, 2003). In particular, I have been dealing extensively with Jewish languages: Israeli (a.k.a. somewhat misleadingly ‘Modern Hebrew’), as well as Yiddish and Biblical, Rabbinic, Medieval and Maskilic Hebrew, which contributed to the early development of Israeli in *fin de siècle Eretz Yisrael* (‘Land of Israel’; cf. Zuckermann 2003, 2005). The Jewish experience in Europe over the past millennium has been one of

cultural survivalism and isolation alternating with integration. I do not enter into a sociological discussion of the vicissitudes of this experience presently; it has been amply treated elsewhere.

In the course of my linguistic studies of Jewish languages, I have found numerous traces of this experience in a multitude of coinages in Hebrew, as well as Yiddish. These coinages were typically made by the most learned groups within Jewish society, that is to say those with the greatest exposure both to the ancient texts and those individuals with perhaps the strongest sense of cultural responsibility for how to guide their people over the perilous waters of the Diaspora.

My observation of this linguistic phenomenon within Judaism lead me, in turn, to speculate on how it might be manifested in other groups as well – for instance, Muslim and Christian, but also more recently emergent groups whose sense of shared identity and recognition by external society is not yet secure, such as the ‘Black Jews’.

In my view, a micro-analysis of a specific phenomenon, such as lexical engineering, can tell us about the whole sociological picture. *Maxima in minimis*. I believe that – as in a hologram, where the whole picture can be seen in each constituent element – individual word biographies contain micro-representations of the broader socio-cultural dynamics. Such a ‘holographic’ model of information distribution – cf. Sacks’ ‘order at all points’ view (1992) – ‘understands order not to be present only at aggregate levels and therefore subject to an overall differential distribution, but to be present in detail on a case by case, environment by environment basis. A culture is not then to be found only by aggregating all of its venues, it is substantially present in each of its venues’ (Schegloff 1992: xlvi).

This chapter does not pretend to provide the reader with exact details of the identity of the lexical engineers, how many people knew about their coinages and the nature and extent of their sociological influence. Rather, I intend to introduce the phenomena of lexical engineering and etymological othering from a sociolinguistic and theo-philological point of view, keeping in mind the cultural context of the coinage. I would invite colleagues in the field of the sociology of religion to consider further potential implications of this phenomenon for their own studies.

## 2. Rejective lexical engineering

The apparent identity of what appear to be cultural units – human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems, social organizations – are maintained only through *constitutive repression*, an active process of *exclusion*, *opposition*, and *hierarchization*. A phenomenon maintains its identity in semiotic systems only if other units are represented as foreign or ‘other’ through a hierarchical dualism in which the first is ‘*privileged*’ or favored while the other is *deprivileged* or devalued in some way. (Cahoone 2003: 11)

Consider the following expressions, found in early, uncensored copies of the Babylonian Talmud, Sabbath Tractate, 116a:

1. און גליון *lāwen gilyōn* ‘evil revelation-book’
2. עון גליון *lāwōn gilyōn* ‘sin revelation-book’
3. אבן גליון *lēben gilyōn* ‘stone revelation-book’

These terms all refer to the gospels and are adaptations of Greek εὐαγγέλιον *euangélion* (> Latin *euangelium*) ‘gospel’, lit. ‘glad tidings, good news; reward of good tidings, given to the messenger’, from *eú* ‘good’ + *ángelos* ‘messenger, envoy’. ) Only later did *ángelos* come to refer to ‘divine messenger, angel’, as in the diametric opposite – note the positive connotation and the direction of the etymythology – *Non angli sed angeli, si forent Christiani* ‘Not Angles but angels, if they were Christian’, attributed to Gregory the Great, when he was shown English children reduced to slavery in Rome in 573 AD – cf. German *englisch*, currently ‘English’, originally ‘angelic’.)

(Biblical) Hebrew גליון *gilyōn/gillāyōn*, which I translate as ‘revelation-book’, generally refers to ‘blank parchment, the margin of scrolls’, ‘writing tablet’ (cf. Syriac גליון *gelayona* ‘volume’). However, the etymon of גליון is the root גלי (cf. גלה) ‘to uncover, reveal’. Thus, גליון is a good nativizer of *euangélion* since the latter was associated with Apocalypse (the revelation), cf. Latin *apocalypsis* and Greek ἀποκάλυψις *apokálupsis*, the latter being a noun of action from ἀποκαλύπτειν, the meaning of which is exactly the same ‘to uncover, disclose’ (< ἀπό ‘off’ + καλύπτειν ‘to cover’).

Note the *structural compromise* in the expressions above. For example, און גליון *lāwen gilyōn* literally means ‘evil of book’ rather than ‘book of evil’. Switching places between the *nomen rectum* and the *nomen regens* – resulting in גליון און *\*gilyōn lāwen* ‘book of evil’ – would have been much better semantically but not nearly as good phonetically. A similar ‘poetic licence’ occurs in Maskilic Hebrew פאר עמוד *péeyr ámud* (pronounced in Polish Ashkenazic Hebrew *péayr amid*), lit. ‘glory of pillar’, an adaptation of European *pyramid*. פאר עמוד *\*ámud péeyr*, lit. ‘pillar of glory’, would have been much better semantically.<sup>2</sup>

The phrases און גליון *lāwen gilyōn*, עון גליון *lāwōn gilyōn*, אבן גליון *lēben gilyōn* and פאר עמוד *péeyr ámud* are but four examples of a widespread, non-anecdotal phenomenon, which I call ‘phono-semantic matching’ (henceforth, PSM; cf. Zuckermann 2000, 2003, 2003b). I define PSM as *etymythological nativization in which a foreignism is matched with a phonetically and semantically similar pre-existent autochthonous lexeme/root*. For the purpose of the following more specific, technical definition, as well as throughout this chapter, TL designates target language (recipient language, host language), SL denotes source language (donor language, stock language), and *neologism* is used in its broader meaning, i.e. either an entirely new lexeme or a pre-existent word whose meaning has been altered, resulting in a new sememe. Thus, PSM may alternatively be defined as *a multisourced neologism that*

preserves both the meaning and the approximate sound of the parallel expression in the Source Language (SL), using pre-existent Target Language (TL) lexical items or roots. The following figure is a general illustration of this process:

SL x 'a' → → → → → → → → TL<sub>(+PSM)</sub> y' 'a' ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← TL y 'b'

x is phonetically similar to y  
y' is based on y; a' is based on a

More specifically, און גליון *îawen gilyōn*, עיון גליון *îawōn gilyōn* and אבן גליון *îeḇen gilyōn* – as opposed to פאר עמוד *péeyr ámud* – are what I call *rejective PSMs*. I define rejective PSM as *politically incorrect PSM; a subversive PSM – produced by members of one religion or national group – which undermines or attacks those of another group, in some cases used for propaganda purposes*.

### 2.1 Anti-Christian rejective PSMs concocted by Jews

Yiddish טום *tum* ‘cathedral’ (cf. Middle High German *tuom*, Modern German *Dom* ‘dome’) was transposed into the following:

- Medieval Hebrew תהום *təhōm*, lit. ‘abyss’ (documented with the meaning ‘cathedral’ in the late thirteenth century)
- Yiddish טמאה *túmə*, lit. ‘abomination’ (cf. Hebrew טמאה *ṭumʾā* ‘abomination’)
- Medieval Hebrew טמיון *ṭimyōn*, lit. ‘oblivion’ (cf. Rabbinic Hebrew יצא לטמיון ‘was lost completely, was gone for good’, Medieval Hebrew ירד לטמיון ‘id.’) (documented in Mainz, 1150)

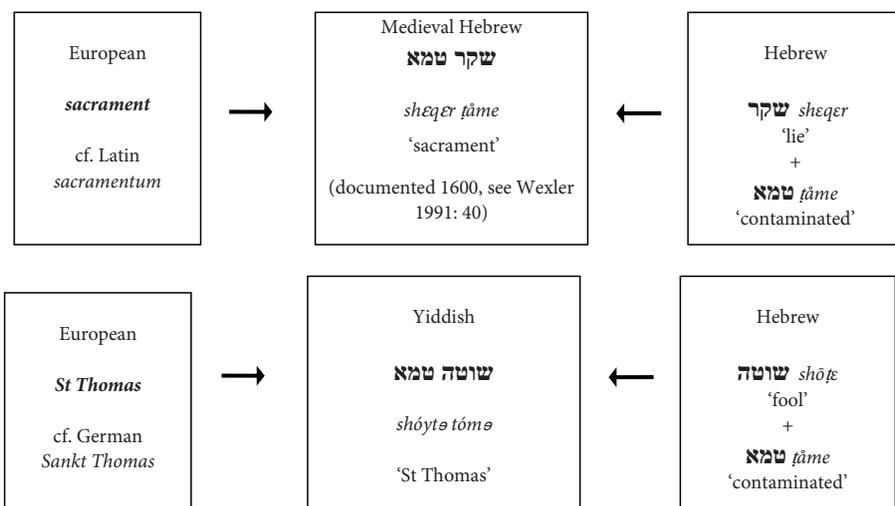
Latin (*dies natalis* (cf. Italian *Natale*, Dialectal Italian *nedal*) ‘Christmas (Day)’ (lit. ‘birthday’) was nativised as the following:

- Medieval Hebrew נתלה *nitle* / ניתלה *nītle*, lit. ‘(being) hanged’, present form of (Biblical) Hebrew נתלה *nītlā* ‘was hanged’. Hebrew ניתלה *nītle* ‘Christmas’ is documented in the writings of Ephraim ben Isaac of Regensburg from the twelfth century and is sometimes written as ניתל (see Lewinsky 1975:446a, Wexler 1993:69). There are two possibilities: (1) this PSM simply uses ‘hanged’ to refer to ‘crucified’ – cf. Ottoman Turkish: ‘Execution is often called *Salb*. Though literally meaning “crucifying” in the Ottoman kanun *salb* seems to be mostly synonymous with *asmak* “hanging” (Heyd 1973:260); (2) this PSM implies that there was a Jewish tradition according to which Jesus was literally hanged, as distinct from crucified; compare this with some medieval traditions

holding that Haman (the chief minister of Ahasuerus, as stated in the Book of Esther) was *not hanged (on the gallows prepared for Mordecai) but rather was crucified*.

- Medieval Hebrew נִיטַל *nittāl*, lit. 'taken' (cf. Biblical Hebrew נָטַל *nittal* 'was taken'), indicating that Jesus was taken from Judaism, see also חג הניטל *hag hannittāl*, lit. 'a holiday of the taken' or 'a holiday which was taken' (cf. Wexler 1990:60). Modern Hebrew נִיטַל *nitel* referring to 'Christmas Day' was used by Agnon (1962:70). Even-Shoshan (1997:1150c) and Klein (1987:414c) claim that the etymon is Latin *natalis* (i.e. נִיטַל is a mere loanword from Latin). They ignore the co-influence of Hebrew נִיטַל *nittāl* 'taken' or of Yiddish נִיטַל *nitl*, itself a PSM of Hebrew נִיטַל *nittāl* 'taken', as well as Latin *natalis*. Supporting the hybridizational view is the existence of [i] between the [n] and the [t], cf. the possible [i] insertion in Hebrew פּוֹלִין *polin* 'Poland' (see below).

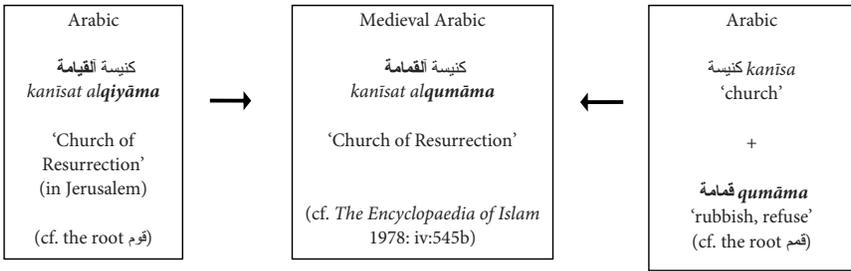
The following are other anti-Christian PSMs devised by Jews:



It is worth noting that such forms of 'travesty' are not limited to cross-lingual creations. Consider the following intra-lingual cases of lexical engineering. Medieval Hebrew בית תפלה *bet tiplā*, lit. 'house of tastelessness' (cf. Biblical Hebrew תִּפְלָא *tiplā* 'tastelessness', Yiddish *tifl*), refers to 'church' (documented 1382, Wexler 1991:39-40; cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:1961b). בית תפלה *bet tiplā* is modelled upon Hebrew בית תפילה *bet tēpillā* 'house of prayer'. One might say that the result was a minimal pair: בית תפלה *bet tiplā* 'church' (negative, non-Jewish) and בית תפילה *bet tēpillā* 'house of prayer' (positive, Jewish). Following this line, Medieval Hebrew חגא *hoggā*, lit. 'reeling, trembling, horror' (cf. Isaiah 19:17), refers to 'non-Jewish holiday', as opposed to Hebrew חג *hag* '(Jewish) holiday' (cf. Yiddish יום-טוב *yóntef/yóntev* 'Jewish holiday/festival', from Hebrew טוב *tov*, lit. 'good day'). The doublet חג-חגא is an imitation of

the dichotomy between Aramaic פּשחא *pashā* ‘Easter’ (originally also ‘Passover’, cf. Rabbinic Hebrew פּשחא *pishā* ‘Passover’) and Hebrew פּסח *pesah* ‘Passover’. Consider also the Yiddish form of this manipulation: Yiddish חגא *khógə* (< Hebrew חגא) also refers to ‘non-Jewish holiday’. Similarly, כּסח Ashkenazic Hebrew *kéysakh*, Yiddish *kéysəkh*, is based on the Hebrew root כּסח *k.s.ḥ.* ‘cut down’ and refers to ‘Easter’. It is modelled upon Yiddish פּסח *péysəkh* ‘Passover’, cf. Hebrew פּסח *pesah*. Thus, the coinage can be conceived of as serving to differentiate between the two parallel vernal holidays.

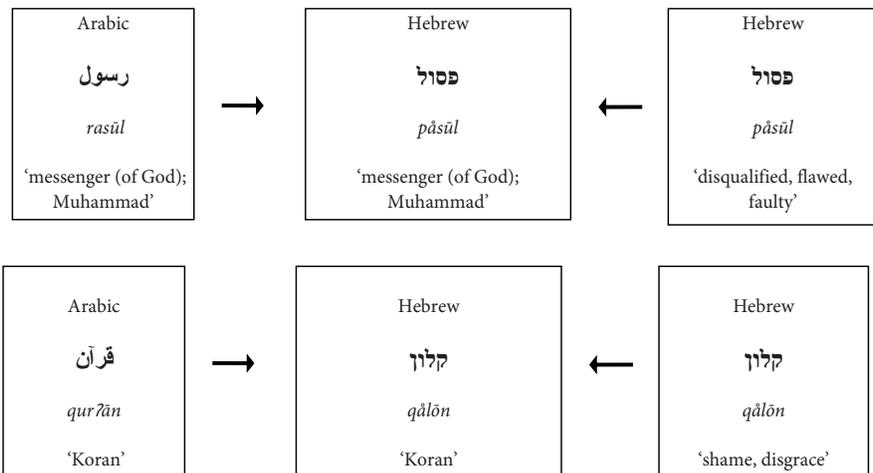
But the Jews were not the only group to engage in rejective PSM. An anti-Christian (intra-lingual) rejective PSM produced by Muslims is كنيسة القمامة *kanīsat alqumāma*, lit. ‘Church of Rubbish’, referring to ‘Church of Resurrection’, as following:



This Arabic example leads to Jewish PSMs designed to reject Islam.

### 2.2 Anti-Muslim rejective PSMs concocted by Jews

Lexical engineering by Jews has not been restricted to rejecting Christianity. Consider the following anti-Muslim PSMs:



The tension between Muslims, Christians and Jews is, of course, an ancient one. However, such inter-cultural rivalries can be attested linguistically in the New World too.

### 2.3 Anti-Jewish etymythology concocted by ‘Black Jews’

The rhetoric of the ‘Black Jews’ – or ‘Black Hebrew Israelites’ – who belong to the *Israeli School/Church of Universal Practical Knowledge* (cf. Israelite Church of God and Jesus Christ) contains many subversive rejective etymythologizations. In all their publications, there is an emphasis on the written word, typical of fundamentalists. Each claim is substantiated by references to the Old and New Testaments. As I have been particularly interested in their rhetoric, I have observed these Black Jews at one of their main propaganda centres: the intersection of Times Square and 45th Street in New York City. They gather there daily in order to persuade African-Americans and Hispanics to join their movement, preaching and distributing leaflets to their target audience (white people are welcome to listen but are not given leaflets). The Black Jews believe *inter alia* that they are the real Jews, that Jesus was black and that UFOs are the ‘Chariots of God’. They claim that the following are the real twelve tribes of Israel: Juda – the Negroes, Benjamin – West Indians, Levi – Haitians, Simeon – Dominicans, Zebulon – Guatemalans through Panamanians, Ephraim – Puerto Ricans, Manasseh – Cubans, Gad – North American Indians, Reuben – Seminole Indians, Naphtali – Argentinians and Chileans, Asher – Colombians through Uruguayans, and Issachar – Mexicans.

The Black Jews believe that the Ashkenazic Jews are in fact Khazars in origin (i.e. people of Turkic origin who occupied a large part of southern Russia from the eighth century to the eleventh century).<sup>3</sup> Thus, the main preacher suggested homiletically that the word *Khazar* derived from Hebrew חזיר *hāzīr* ‘pig’ H (cf. Yiddish חזיר *khāzər*) (obviously, he pronounced both with [k]). In other words, ‘white people are no more than pigs’.

On another occasion, the homilist insisted that the word *Jewish* (as used by white Jews) actually derived from *Jew* and *-ish*, the suffix meaning ‘round about’, ‘somewhere near’ (cf. *elevenish*) or ‘approaching the quality of, somewhat’ (cf. *yellowish*). Thus, ‘white Jews are not the real Jews, but are pseudo-Jews’.

*Schindler* (cf. Steven Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List*, 1993; etymologically ‘shingler’) for the Black Jews is a *swindler*, justifying their belief that ‘the Holocaust is nothing compared to the tragedy of one hundred million black slaves’.

Listening to the Black Jews’ rhetoric, I was reminded of the lexicological anecdote which I have heard in Germany, according to which the German word for ‘key’ is *Schlüssel* (cf. *schliessen* ‘to close’), whereas the Hebrew word for ‘key’ is מפתח (cf. Israeli *maftéakh*; deriving from Hebrew פתח ‘to open’), because ‘the Jews were wandering thieves who *opened* the gates to farms, which had been *locked* by their

German owners'. Consider also the etymologies linking *Jew* with *jewellery*, *German* with *germ*, *French* with *frog* (note here the influence of the French culinary delicacy frog legs, and possibly also of *quoi quoi quoi*, reminiscent of a frog's croaking).<sup>4</sup> Consider also Russian жидёнок *zhidénok* 'Jewish child (derog.)' (cf. *kike*), based on the model of чертёнок *cherténok* 'little devil' and ягнёнок *yagnénok* 'lamb' (Malkiel 1968:232), and (the now rare) Spanish *pecadezno* 'little devil', modelled on (the now rare) *judezno* 'Jewish lad' and *morezno* 'young Moor' (ibid.).

Such philological rationalizations were conducted by Friedrich Nietzsche – to ground his moral theory. For example, in the highly (if perhaps fancifully) etymological First Article (Chapters 4-5) of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887) (cf. 1966: ii: 774-7), Nietzsche suggested that there was a link between lexical items such as:

- German *schlecht* 'bad' and *schlicht* 'plain, common' (cf. 1966: ii: 774-5) (Note that in pre-late eighteenth century Yiddish literature, טשלקט *shlekht* meant 'simple')
- Latin *malus* 'bad' and Greek *mélas* 'black' (ibid.: 776)
- Gaelic *fin* 'gentle, fine' and its earlier form, which meant 'blond' (ibid.: 776)
- Latin *bonus* 'good' and *duonus* (< *duo* 'two') 'duellist, fighter' (cf. *bellum-duellum-duen+lum*) (ibid.: 777)
- German *gut* 'good', *göttlich* 'god-like' and *gotisch* 'Gothic' (ibid.: 777)

## 2.4 Othering and apollonianism

The most basic motivation for rejective lexical engineering is OTHERING, defining and securing one's own (positive) identity through (the stigmatization of) the 'Other'. The 'Other' is what permits us to discover – and even constitute – the 'self'. The self is defined thanks to the mirror reflection that the Other represents. In other words, we define ourselves through the 'Others'.

Instead of the 'thinking I', epitomized in Descartes' (1637) revolutionary phrase *Je pense, donc je suis* (*cogito ergo sum*, 'I am thinking, therefore I exist', a.k.a. 'I think, therefore I am'), Lévinas (1972) begins with an 'ethical I'. According to Lévinas, the self is possible only with its meeting of the Other. (The self is seen and defined thanks to a deep 'shock' which destabilizes one's whole being until one discovers that one is defined as responsible for the Other. This discovery of oneself carries responsibility toward the Other without waiting for reciprocity. Thus the 'Other' constitutes the basis for ethics.) Following othering, an empowering sense of unity is created within a religious/national group, countering a perceived threat from outside the group.

Besides othering, lexical engineering can also be the result of APOLLONIANISM (see *la tendenza apollinea* 'Apollonian tendency', Pisani 1967: 160 and Zuckermann 2004).<sup>5</sup> I use the term Apollonianism in a general sense denoting the wish to describe and create order, especially with unfamiliar information or new experience. An updated, albeit frivolous, example of this general tendency is the story about the South Dakotan who went to Athens and was happily surprised to find out that the Greeks are

fans of NASA's projects: wherever he went, he saw the name *Apollo*.<sup>6</sup> As this anecdote shows, the 'Apollonian tendency' would also seem to include a significant dimension of ethnocentricity.

Specifically in linguistics, Apollonianism is manifested in justifications for the use of a word and in the craving for meaningfulness. Consider the perception of naïve young Israeli readers of the name דוקטור סוס *dóktor sus* (cf. *Dr Seuss* ['dɔktə(r) su:s]), the pseudonym of Theodore Seuss Geisel, an American author and illustrator of children's books (1904-91). Many Israelis are certain that he is 'Dr Horse' since Israeli סוס *sus* means 'horse'. I have heard an etymythology that this arises from the prevalence of animals in Dr Seuss's stories. This 'misunderstanding' might correspond to Haugen's general claim with regard to borrowing, that 'every speaker attempts to reproduce previously learned linguistic patterns in an effort to cope with new linguistic situations' (1950:212).

Apollonianism often includes a significant dimension of ethnocentricity. But not necessarily. When travelling, I often ask locals trivia questions to find out what they know about world affairs. In Fiji I asked my taxi driver, who took me to Navala village: 'Have you heard of Clinton?' 'Yes!', he answered. 'Do you know of Kennedy?' 'No!'. 'How about Chomsky?', I continued. 'Yes!', he said, to my great surprise (How come a taxi driver in Fiji knows Noam Chomsky?). 'What do you know about Chomsky?', I said. 'It is from China', he retorted. 'You eat with it!'... The phonetic appropriation of *Chomsky* as *chopsticks* is Apollonian.

One may argue that othering and Apollonianism contradict each other, as othering is defining oneself *vis-à-vis* the other whereas Apollonianism is defining the other by appropriation to one's own *Weltanschauung* and reference-point system. I propose two solutions for this alleged paradox. First, complementary distribution: lexical engineering is sometimes the result of othering and other times the result of Apollonianism. Second – and more spectacularly – Apollonianism can be seen as ripples within the tsunami of othering. In other words, lexical engineering often encompasses both processes simultaneously.

## 2.5 Other motivations and effects of rejective lexical engineering

There are many other reasons for lexical engineering and etymythology. The PLAYFULNESS of PSMs in Hebrew, Yiddish and Israeli can be linked to the Jewish midrashic tradition of homiletic commentary on the Hebrew scriptures, in which puns, or the use of serendipitous similarity between distinct words, were employed in the service of interpretation. In later generations too, wordplay has been a conspicuous feature of Jewish oral argumentation – cf. פלפול *pilpul*, which should be distinguished from the universal 'Apollonian tendency'. Producing witticisms (in both the general and the contemptuous sense of the word), which create humour at the expense of another, and often at the expense of oneself, is cherished in Judaism (known also for its self-deprecation).

Regarding the effect of rejective lexical engineering, my intuition suggests that in Judaism, theo-linguistic metaphors, etymology and lexical engineering might perform sublimation, i.e. they might release negative energy towards the 'enemy' and thus reduce or neutralize possible violence among the 'lexical manipulators'. In other words, *cross words, not swords or make words, not wars*. Alternatively, lexical engineering might be a symptom of pacificity rather than a cause for it. All that said, this chapter does not attempt to provide evidence for such a 'pacific claim', and the relative pacificity of the Jews throughout history can obviously be explained in other ways. Furthermore, it is hard to provide sociological insights for lexical engineering concocted in the past as there is no possibility of interviewing and surveying speakers. Still, it would be undesirable to reject 'socio-philology', i.e. socio-linguistic research of the past. Future research should analyse whether current etymological and lexical manipulations, for example by the Black Jews, really reduce possible violence among those who produce them, as well as among their listeners.

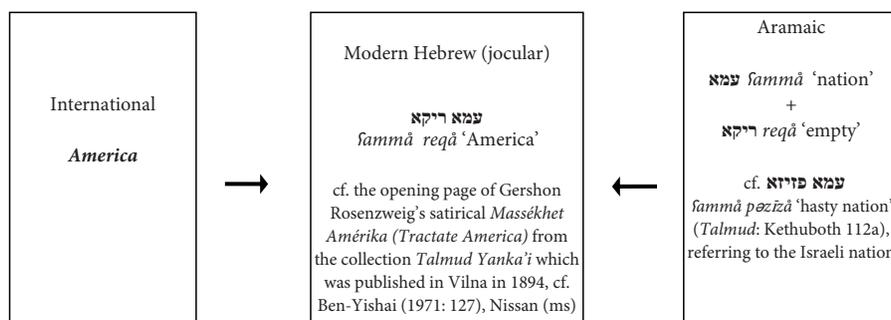
One of the main motivations for rejective PSM is ICONICITY, the belief that there is something intrinsic about the sound of names/words. The very iconicity might be the reason for refraining from translating *Hallelujah* and *Amen* in so many languages, as if the sounds of such basic religious notions have to do with their referents themselves – as if by losing the sound, one might lose the meaning. Compare this to the *cabbalistic* power of letters, for example in the case of *gematria*, the method of interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures by interchanging words whose letters have the same numerical value when added. A simple example of *gematric* power might be the famous proverb *יין יצא סוד נכנס יין* *nīknas yayin yāšā sōd*, lit. 'entered wine went out secret', i.e. 'wine brings out the truth', *in vino veritas*. The *gematric* value of *יין* 'wine' is 70 (י=10; ו=10; ך=50) and this is also the *gematric* value of *סוד* 'secret' (ס=60; ו=6; ד=4). Thus, this sentence, according to many Jews at the time, had to be true.

A similar mechanism appears in the case of rejective PSMs. Consider Lithuanian Ashkenazic Hebrew *רע דם* *ra dom* (cf. Yiddish *ra dam*), lit. 'of bad blood' (from Hebrew *רע דם* *raš dam* 'of bad blood'). This is a toponymic rejective PSM of Polish *Radom*, the name of a town in Poland (approximately 100 km south of Warsaw), or of its Yiddish adaptation *rōdam* (see Weinreich 1955: 609, Wexler 1991: 42). Thus, if a pogrom had occurred in Radom, it would surely have been rationalized by *ra dam* 'of bad blood'. Obviously, providing such an etymological explanation for the pogrom was regarded by some Jews as a mere play on words. However, others might have conceived of *ra dam* as having deep intrinsic truth, which might have been religiously and homiletically based. One should not forget that at that time it was a common belief that all languages were God-created and that Hebrew was the divine *Ursprache*.

In Dovid Hofshsteyn's poem *Kindershprukh* (first published in 1920, cf. Shmeruk 1987: 261), *Kiev* is rhymed with Yiddish *איב* *iev* 'Job' (the ancient patriarch whose story forms a book of the Old Testament), from (Biblical) Hebrew *איוב* *īyyōb* 'Job', the connotation being of distress and disaster, corresponding to the life story of the biblical Job. Such iconicity is implied jocularly in one of Amos Oz's stories, where a

German-speaking Israeli is talking about going to the Negev (Hebrew נֶגֶב, a geographical region in southern Israel). Owing to a German-based final devoicing (although it is now established that the natural default of all speakers – not only of Germans – is final devoicing, cf. Singh 1987), instead of pronouncing *négev*, she says *négef*, which means 'plague'.<sup>7</sup> In reality, the *Negev* (especially for someone who was brought up in Germany) is a terribly hot desert, hard for living.

Yiddish צאר *tsar* 'tsar' (the Russian emperor) has sometimes been associated with (Hebrew>) Yiddish צער *tsar* 'grief, sorrow', whilst Israeli צאר *tsar* 'tsar' was understood as an enemy (cf. Avinery 1946: 139) due to (Biblical Hebrew>>) Israeli צר *tsar* 'enemy' (cf. Esther 7:6: Biblical Hebrew איש צר ואויב *ish šar wəʔōyeb* = 'adversary and enemy').<sup>8</sup> The youth movement in Israel השומר הצעיר *hashomér hatsáir*, lit. 'The Young Guard', was derogatorily acronymized as שמוץ *shmuts* (cf. Yiddish שמוץ *shmuts* and German *Schmutz* 'dirt, filth'). Interestingly, this name was later adopted by the members (*shmútsnikim*) themselves. This is certainly not the case with the following *fin de siècle* anti-American PSM:



Similarly, Israeli עַם רִיקָנִי *am reykaní*, lit. 'empty nation', can jocularly replace (International>) Israeli אַמֶּרִיקָנִי *amerikáni* 'American'. Compare this to the diametrically opposite Chinese 美国 MSC *měiguó*, Cantonese *meiko*<sup>k</sup>, lit. 'beautiful country', a domestication of *America*. There are, however, also Chinese examples of rejective toponymic PSMs, used to propagandize against hostile nations. For example, the *Turks* were called in Classical Chinese 突厥 (MSC *tūjué*), consisting of 突 *tū* 'attack, invade' and 厥 *jué* 'stone-launcher' (sixth-ninth centuries). *Mongol* was allied with Classical Chinese 蒙古 (MSC *méngǔ*), consisting of 蒙 *méng* 'dark, obscure, abuse' and 古 *gǔ* 'old, locked, stubborn' (introduced around the eleventh century but still used).

Similarly, Hawaiian *Pukikí* 'Portuguese' might constitute a xenophobic PSM deriving from English *Portuguese* and Hawaiian *pukikí* 'strong, violent, impetuous' (cf. Deroy 1956: 287). Note that Hawaiian *k* is *inter alia* the common replacement for English *t* and *g* (see *ibid.*: 243). Medieval Hebrew עַמְלֵק *ʾāmlēq* 'Amalek', a nation epitomizing evil since the days of the Old Testament, was used to refer to hostile *Armenia*. Ostra (south-east of Rovno) – cf. Yiddish סטרע *óstrə* and Polish

*Ostróg* – was referred to in Yiddish as אויס תורה *óys tóyrə* ‘without Torah’. However, by others (or by the same people in other times), it was Ashkenazic Hebrew אות תורה *oystóyro* or Yiddish אות תורה *ostóra*, i.e. ‘sign of Torah’ (cf. Bar-Itzhak 1996:29). Hebrew אות תורה, as well as Chinese 美国 ‘beautiful country; America’, lead us to a discussion of ‘politically correct’ PSM.

### 3. Adoptive lexical engineering

#### 3.1 Politically correct PSM

The following are ‘politically correct’ toponymic PSMs:

- Ashkenazic Hebrew שפירא *shapíro* ‘Speyer’ (a town near Heidelberg) (cf. *ibid.*) <<
  1. Aramaic שפירא *shappirā* ‘beautiful’, the female form of Aramaic שפיר *shappīr* (Daniel 4:9) ‘handsome, pleasing, good, cheerful’ (Jastrow 1903:1616b).
  2. Yiddish שפייער *shpéyər*, German *Speyer* (toponym).  
The positive connotation of this toponymic PSM might explain its frequent appearance in many Jewish surnames appearing from the beginning of the sixteenth century, e.g. *Shpiro*, *Shapirin*, *Shapira*, *Sapir* (cf. Beider 1993:532b).
- Ashkenazic Hebrew מן וצנה *mógeyn vetsíno* ‘Mainz’ (cf. Wexler 1991:42) <<<
  1. Biblical Hebrew מן וצנה *māgen wəšinnā*, a conjunction which appears in Jeremiah 46:3, Ezekiel 39:9 and Psalms 35:2, meaning ‘shield and shield’.<sup>9</sup>
  2. Hebrew מאגנצא *magéntsā* ‘Mainz’, Yiddish מאָגענצע *magéntsə*, Polish *Moguncja*, Latin *Maguntia* (*Moguntia*, *Mogontiacum*) (toponym).
  - 3.
- Ashkenazic Hebrew הר אדני *har adó(y)noy* ‘Hrodna, Grodno’ (Weinreich 1955:610)<<
  1. Ashkenazic Hebrew הר אדני *har adenóy* ‘The mount of the Lord’, from Hebrew הר אדני *har ʾādonāy*, cf. הר יי ‘The mount of the Lord’ in Isaiah 2:3.
  2. Yiddish גראָדנע *gródnə*, Polish *Grodno*, Belorussian *Hrodna*, Russian Гродно *Gródno* (toponym).

Consider Medieval Hebrew פולין *pōlīn* ‘Poland’. Blanc (1989:57) claims that there is no reason for its [i] vowel, cf. Yiddish *pólyŋ*, Polish *Polska* (*polski* ‘Polish’), Russian *Польша* *Pól’sha*, Italian *Polonia*, English *Poland*.<sup>10</sup> This might lead to the conclusion that פולין is a semanticized phonetic matching (henceforth, SPM) based on the Hebrew autochthonous root לין *l.y.n.* ‘lodge, stay’. (As opposed to PSM, where the target language material is originally similar to the source language lexical item both

phonetically and semantically, in an SPM the target language material is originally similar to the source language lexical item phonetically but not semantically. The semantic rationalization is *ex postfacto*).

Blanc mentions the well-known popular rationalization according to which 'when the Jews came to Poland, the skies ordered them to stay there'. A detailed investigation is presented by Bar-Itzhak (1996:30-7). However, my explanation, which may refute Blanc's claim regarding the [i] in פּוּלִין, is that Yiddish *póylm* was spelled in pre-Modern Yiddish as פּוּלִין or as פּוּילִין (cf. the current spelling פּוּילִין). Note that the pronunciation of (Medieval Hebrew >) Israeli פּוּלִין by some speakers of Israeli, especially in the past, has been *pólin*, which resembles the German and the Yiddish forms (as distinct from *polín*). This pronunciation could serve to strengthen the orthographic explanation. It seems that Medieval Hebrew פּוּלִין was not an SPM *ab initio* but rather a phonetic adaptation that has been rationalized etymythologically *ex postfacto*. The success of the etymythology is apparent among a few Israeli-speakers who pronounce בּפּוּלִין 'in Poland' *bepólin* – rather than *bepolín* – although this kind of (Hebrew) spirantization is in decline (in Israeli).

Another name for Poland is Israeli פּוּלָנְיָה *polányá*, which could be reanalysed as יְהוָה לֵךְ פֹּה 'Here stays God'. However, the term might have been induced by analogy to other Israeli country names corresponding to the feminine form of the noun which refers to the person who lives in the country (or to the feminine adjective), cf. אַנגְלִיָּה *ángliya* 'England' versus *angliyá* 'English (feminine)', and רוּסִיָּה *rúsiya* 'Russia' versus *rusiyá* 'Russian (feminine)'. Consider also Italian *Polonia* 'Poland'.

Such concoctions were very common among *maskilim*, followers of the Jewish Enlightenment movement *Haskalah* in Germany (1770s-1880s; cf. *Aufklärung*), led by the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86) and the poet, linguist and exegete Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725-1805, also known as Váyzl). Thus, Maskilic Hebrew פּוּעֵלָא טבָא *poyálo tóvo* (Israeli *poalá tavá*), lit. 'good workingman/labourer' (an Aramaic expression appearing in the *Talmud*, as [pōʿala ṭāḇā], cf. Jastrow 1903:281b, 1145a), was the name some *maskilim* used for *Poltava*, a city in the Ukraine (south-west of Kharkov, east of Kiev), with a thriving Jewish community – cf. Yiddish פּאָלְטאַװע *poltávə*, Russian Полтава *Poltáva* and Polish *Pottawa* (cf. Aviner 1946:135 and Klausner 1949:97).

Maskilic Hebrew פּוּ נִי זֶה פּוּ נִי זֶה *po novi ze* (Israeli *po naví ze*), lit. 'here (this) is my (beautiful) dwelling', was an SPM of Yiddish פּאָנִיוועז *pónivezh*, the name of the town in Lithuania, famous for its Jewish centre (cf. Lithuanian Yiddish *pónivez*) (used by Gordon 1883:151, cf. Klausner 1949:97). Maskilic Hebrew שַׂר טוֹב *sar to(y)v*, lit. 'good ruler', was an SPM of Russian Са́ра́тов *Sarátov* (the name of a city in Russia), cf. Weinreich (1955:610fn). One of many *anthroponymic* positive SPMs was Maskilic Hebrew רַבַּת פֶּאֶר *rabes-per* (Israeli *rabát-peér*), lit. 'full (feminine) of glory', for *Robespierre*. Compare it to various Chinese SPMs of names of famous Westerners.

A politically correct PSM word (rather than name), which gained currency in Israeli is גַּ'גֵּ or גֵּ'גֵּ *geé* 'gay, homosexual', as following:



Israeli גַּאָה *geé* ‘homosexual’ seems to override Israeli עליז *alíz* ‘homosexual’, which originally meant ‘gay (merry, cheerful)’ and thus constituted a calque of English *gay*. Note the semantic connection of the literal meaning of גַּאָה ‘proud’ to the use of English *gay pride* to imply an empowered homosexual community. For many lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered native speakers of English, signifiers which include the word *pride* immediately imply gay pride, cf. *pride week* (Israeli שבוע הגאווה *shvúa hagaavá*), *gay pride parade*.

Israeli גַּאָה *geé* ‘homosexual’ is a politically correct PSM, which is in contrast to *rejective PSM*, which is politically incorrect. On another continuum from *rejective PSM* is what I call *adoptive PSM*. Below, in §3.3 I shall provide a religion-related example of what I mean by *adoptive PSM*. But first, let us briefly discuss a related philological problem.

### 3.2 Multiple causation versus multiple etymology

The story goes that Osama Bin Laden died and went to heaven. He was greeted by George Washington, who slapped him and yelled, ‘How dare you try to destroy the nation I helped conceive!’ Patrick Henry then approached and punched Osama in the nose. After that, James Madison entered and kicked him in the shin. He was followed by an angry Thomas Jefferson, who whacked Osama over the head with a cane. The thrashing continued as John Randolph, James Monroe and sixty-six other early Americans came in and unleashed their anger on the terrorist leader. Suddenly, as Osama lay writhing in unbearable pain, an angel appeared. ‘This is not what you promised me,’ Osama said to the angel. ‘Come on, Osama,’ the angel replied, ‘I told you there would be seventy-two *Virginians* waiting for you in heaven.’

This amusing anecdote brings to mind a recent case of a scholarly reanalysis of the Koranic ‘virgins’ promised to Muslim martyrs: Luxenberg (2000) suggests that حورعین *hūr sīn*, promised to the faithful in Suras 44:54 and 52:20 of the Koran, are not seventy-two ‘dark, wide-eyed (maidens)’, as most commonly believed, but rather seventy-two ‘white (grapes), jewels (of crystal)’. In other words, Muslim martyrs will not get virgins but sultanas(!), the latter with the meaning of white raisins. Note that in Syriac the word *hūr*, a feminine plural adjective meaning ‘white’, is associated with ‘raisin’.

If this alternative interpretation is true, or rather, if one can convince fundamentalist Muslims that it is true, it has the potential to change the course of history, at least in cases like the story of a Palestinian teenager caught in Israel with his penis wrapped with delicate white cloth just before attempting a suicide-bombing. When asked about it, he said that his mother had told him that when he arrives in paradise he would get seventy-two virgins and his penis needed to be ready.

One could consider the various analyses of Arabic *hūr* to be a case of *multiple etymology*. Another multi-etymological lexical item is the internationalism *pidgin*, for which at least seven possible etyma have been offered, e.g. English *business* (as corrupted by Chinese; *OED*), Hebrew פדיון *pidyon* ‘barter’, and Yago *pidian* ‘people’ (see Hall 1966: 7, Mühlhäusler 1986: 1, Aitchison 1981: 192, Todd 1974, Hancock 1979, Baker and Mühlhäusler 1990). Another famous example is the English expression *OK*, allegedly deriving from *ole korrek* ‘all correct’ or *Old Kinderhook* or Choctaw *okeh*, and so forth.<sup>11</sup> Consider also *macabre*, which is traceable either to Hebrew מכבי *makkabbī* (cf. *Judas Macabré*, *OED*) or Arabic مقابر *maqa:bir* ‘tombs, graveyards’.

In some cases, however, it is very hard to distinguish between multi-etymology and multiple causation. In other words, one should be careful not to mistake a multi-etymological lexical item for a PSM. Consider Rabbinic Hebrew פקר *pāqar* ‘was heretic/irreligious/licentious, broke faith (masculine, singular)’, which has two possible sources:

1. Eponymous verbal morphemic adaptation of the name of the irreligious Athenian philosopher *Epíkouros* (Ἐπίκουρος) ‘Epicurus’ (c.300 BC).
2. Metathesis of Rabbinic Hebrew פרק *pāraq*, cf. Rabbinic Hebrew פרק על תורה *pāraq sol tōrā* ‘threw off the yoke of the Torah, became a heretic’, from Biblical Hebrew על פרק *pāraq sol* ‘shed responsibility’.

There are five possible analyses:

1. The etymon is (1) with (2) being a rationalization *ex postfacto*.
2. The etymon is (2) with (1) being a rationalization *ex postfacto*.
3. The etymon is (1) induced by (2).
4. The etymon is (2) induced by (1).
5. The origin is both (1) and (2), i.e. it is a PSM of *Epíkouros*.

### 3.3 Adoptive PSM: a tool for concealing the influence of non-Jewish traditions

In the following example, Wexler (1993) suggests that the Hebrew etymon is an *ex postfacto* interpretation serving to Judaize a foreign term (and tradition). In other words, his analysis is parallel to Analysis (1) above, and accordingly, if one confronts Wexler’s ‘foreign’ etymology with the traditional Hebrew etymology, the following is a multi-etymological lexical item.

- Eastern Yiddish חלה *khálə* (Southeastern Yiddish *khólə*) ‘braided (white) bread loaf (eaten on the Sabbath), *hallah*, *chollah*’ (cf. Western Yiddish ברכת *bárbkhes* / *bérkhes* ‘id.’ below; Both *khálə* and *bárbkhes* are mentioned in the list of lexical isoglosses between Western and Eastern Yiddish by Weinreich 1973: ii:390 and Katz 1983:1025a) <<<
  1. (Biblical) Hebrew חלה *hallā* – cf. Yiddish *khálə*, Southeastern (Ukrainian) Yiddish *khólə*, Israeli *khalá* – ‘dough loaf offered to the priest in the Temple in Jerusalem’ (e.g. Exodus 29:2, 23). I believe that the etymon of Hebrew חלה is the Hebrew root חלל *ḥ.l.l.* ‘hole’. However, Even-Shoshan (1997:538a) points out that a possible etymon is the Hebrew root חלי *ḥ.l.y.* (cf. חלה *ḥ.l.h.*) ‘sweet’, but note the *dagesh* in the ל of חלה *hallā*, which I analyse as *dagesh compensativum*. The semantic explanation for the use of the root חלל *ḥ.l.l.* might be the fact that the ancient *hallah* had a hole in it, like today’s bagel, so that it could be put in a high place in order to prevent mice and other animals from spoiling it. Biblical Hebrew חלל *ḥ.l.l.* might be related to Akkadian *ellu* ‘pure’ (see *Entsiklopédya Mikraít*: iii:143), and Biblical Hebrew חלה *hallā* sometimes referred to ‘unleavened bread’ (usually called in Hebrew מצה *maṣṣā*), see Leviticus 8:26, Numbers 6:19. It is important to note that before it gained its current sememe, Yiddish חלה *khálə* referred to the part of the (non-braided) loaf separated out for sacred purposes, a tradition known as מפריש חלה (Israeli *mafrísh khalá*) ‘dedication/offering of *hallah*’.
  2. *Frau Holle*, a goddess/witch in German folklore (recounted by the Brothers Grimm), one of whose tasks was to inspect the braids of girls during winter (Wexler 1993:116-7) – cf. the German idiom *Frau Holle schüttelt die Betten (aus)*, lit. ‘Mrs Holle is shaking the duvets’, i.e. ‘It is snowing’ (or, as children might say, ‘The old woman is plucking her geese’).

Figuratively speaking, Wexler suggests that the Hebrew etymon is the official step-father of the Germanic word but not the biological father. Following this line of thought, the Jews needed this step-father not in order to make the lexical item acceptable but rather in order to adopt officially the originally non-Jewish tradition denoted by the lexical item. The transplanted Hebrew etymon served as a passport. Like Nietzsche (see above), the iconoclastic Wexler uses philology in an *attempt* to kill some sacred cows, challenge our cultural mores and reveal the genuine origins of Jewish traditions and values. If Wexler’s foreign etymon is false, he can then be regarded as an etymological manipulator. Should it be true, however, it has the potential to change our perception of Jewish history (it is currently too shocking to be confronted by puritan Jewish institutions). His data are nonetheless valuable for the philologist since the Germanic (and, in other cases, Slavonic) etymon might have played a role in the creation of *some* of the phrases he discusses. That said, whilst Wexler seems to consider the Slavonic/Germanic etymon to be the only true origin

and the Hebrew to be a mere rationalization *ex postfacto*, my own tendency – being a strong believer in multiple causation – would be to argue that *both* Slavonic/Germanic and Hebrew took part in the nativization, thus constituting (adoptive) PSM. Hence, one could say that the lexical biography is *mosaic*, not only *Mosaic*.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

Language is a guide to ‘social reality’.

(Sapir 1949: 162)

Some linguists regard any study related to popular etymology and humour as apocryphal. It is time to overcome this prejudice and to realize that humorous concoctions are indicative of personal and national attitudes, and that popular etymology shapes speakers’ perceptions and words’ connotations, and thus influences speakers’ actual lives. Since *etymythology* often results in altering the meaning and associations of a word, it, in fact, changes the ‘real etymology’. Thus, it should not be overlooked even from a strict linguistic perspective, *a fortiori* a cultural one.

Sociolinguistically, *etymythology* is often more influential than ‘real etymology’. The English word *bugger* originally denoted ‘Bulgarian’ (French *bougre*, Latin *Bulgarus*), referring to a sect of heretics who came from Bulgaria to France in the eleventh century. But since the real etymon (origin) is forgotten, Bulgarians don’t normally complain about the sodomite meaning of the word in English.

On the other hand, on 15 January 1999, David Howard, a white aide to Washington DC Mayor Anthony Williams, who happens to be black, used the word *niggardly* – which means ‘miserly, stingy’ – in a conversation with two colleagues. Eleven days later, he resigned as rumours were spreading that he had used a racial slur. Speakers linked *niggardly* to the politically incorrect *nigger* and *negro*, although, initially, *niggardly* had nothing to do with *nigger*.

A simple, non-charged example – as opposed to the cases above – is the tradition in some western Ashkenazic Jewish communities to eat cabbage soup on Hoshana Raba (the seventh day of the Sukkoth holiday, when every man’s fate for the coming year is irrevocably sealed in Heaven). The reason for this is the name of the Jewish prayer recited on this occasion, Hebrew קול מבשר *kōl mēbāšer*, lit. ‘a voice announcing’, pronounced in Ashkenazic Hebrew *kol meváser*, which was playfully reinterpreted as Western Yiddish קאָל מיט וואַסער *koul mit vāsēr* (cf. Yiddish קאָל מיט וואַסער *kol m’vāsēr*) ‘cabbage with water’, cf. German *Kohl mit Wasser* (cf. Weinreich 1973: i:7, 192). Consider also Swedish *Vår fru dagen*, lit. ‘Our Lady’s Day’, which used to be the signifier for Lady Day (25 March), the Feast of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is allegedly the day on which the Virgin Mary was told that she was going to give birth to Jesus – exactly nine months before Christmas. Throughout time Swedish *Vårfrudagen* has been reinterpreted as *Våffeldagen*, lit. ‘Waffle Day’. Consequently, on

that day Swedes traditionally eat waffles with jam or cream. The waffles are sometimes heart-shaped, and those who still know about the connection with the Virgin Mary might rationalize the form in terms of the Virgin Mary's heart.

Similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, Jimi Hendrix occasionally kissed a man on stage after singing 'scuse me while I kiss the sky (from the song *Purple Haze*, 1967) because he was familiar with the mondegreen 'scuse me while I kiss this guy (on mondegreens – misunderstood or misinterpreted phrases resulting from a mishearing, especially song lyrics – see Zuckermann 2003:248, 2000:24). Such shifts in reality alone render popular etymology a worthy subject for research.

One might argue against the PSMs discussed above: *canis a non canendo* 'The word *dog* is such because the dog does not sing/play' (note the phonetic similarity between Latin 'dog' and 'sing') – cf. the 'etymythological fallacy'; or *lucus a non lucendo* 'The word *grove* is thus named because it does not shine'. Thus, there are ugly women called *Bella* 'beautiful' (provided that *Bella* is not a phonetic matching of a Slavonic 'white', cf. the case of the 'Red (i.e. Beautiful) Square' in Moscow). However, such a claim disregards the power of etymythology, which in many of the aforementioned examples even results in a new lexical item.

Naphtali Herz Torczyner, who acted as the last president of the Hebrew Language Council (1942-9) and the first president of the Academy of the Hebrew Language (1953-73), wrote in 1938:

קדמונו דרשו כתב הנשתון 'כתב שנשתנה', חילקו את המלה פת-בג לשתיים ומצאו בה את המלה העברית פת 'לחם', וכדומה. דרשות אלו רחוקות הן מן האמת הבלשנית כמו הדרשות שטיפלו גם בשמות הפרטיים הפרסיים שבתורה, עד שנעשה שם בנו של המן הרשע פרשנדתא לשם תפארת בשביל רש"י 'פרשן הדת' המפורסם. אין אלו אלא משחקי מליצות ולא לשון חיה ואמיתית.

Our ancestors interpreted *ktav hanishte'vân* as 'script that has been changed' [mis-linking *nishte'vân* with *nishtaná* 'changed'], divided the word *pat-bag* into two and found within it the Hebrew word *pat* 'bread', and so on. These homiletic interpretations are far from the linguistic truth, in the same way as the interpretations of the Persian proper names in the Old Testament, so that even the name of the son of Haman the Wicked, *Parshandâta*, became a name of glory, the famous *parshân hadât* ['interpreter of religion'], for Rashi. These are nothing but rhetorical games [cf. *melitzah*, an intertextual citational style] and not part of the living and true language. (Torczyner 1938: 8)

Whilst I completely agree that such 'homiletic interpretations are far from the linguistic truth', this chapter shows that such 'games of rhetoric' are in fact an integral part of a 'living and true language'. In an article punningly entitled *balshanút uvatlanút* (i.e. 'Linguistics and Idleness'), Torczyner – after phonetically matching his surname to Tur-Sinai (lit. 'Mount Sinai) – scorns laymen who think that German *privat* is derived from Hebrew פרטי (*Israeli prati*) 'private' (see Tur-Sinai 1950:5). While Tur-Sinai's criticism is correct, he does not for a moment wonder whether such coincidental similarity can actually affect language itself, and not only meta-language.

Thus, Intl *private* increased the use of (Hebrew>) Israeli פּרטי *prati* ‘private’. Torczyner, as well as many other good linguists, is blinded by an indoctrinated linguistic desire to reprimand laymen for linguistic ignorance. The result is insensitivity, neglecting the fact that the subject of the matter, language, is, after all, spoken by these very laymen.

The linguistic analysis of popular etymology should not restrict itself to discussing cases of mistaken derivation because – again – popular etymology often results in a new sememe/lexeme. Most importantly, this chapter demonstrates that etymythological methods are employed by educated, scholarly religious leaders. The distinction between *créations savantes* and *créations populaires* is not so categorical since many *créations savantes* are in fact ‘*populaires*’ (and many *créations populaires* are indeed ‘*savantes*’).

This chapter also shows the power of SERENDIPITY: coincidental phonetic similarity induces PSM, which might result among other things in the revival of an obsolete lexical item. Life and death – even for lexical items – are sometimes a matter of luck. Finally, then, lexical engineering reflects religious and cultural interactions and often manifests the attempt of a religion to preserve its identity when confronted with an overpowering alien environment, without segregating itself from possible influences. The result can be contempt (as in the case of *rejective* PSM) or ‘cultural flirting’ (as in the case of adoptive – or *receptive* – PSM).

## Notes

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2. Note, however, the non-Semitic order in some Hebraisms coined within Yiddish, e.g. בַּחֹר יֵשִׁיבָה *yeshivá bókhar* ‘Yeshivah student’, cf. Israeli בַּחֹר יֵשִׁיבָה *bakhúr yeshivá*. Structural compromises as in און גליון *lâwen gilyōn* and פאר עמוד *péeyr ámud* are also apparent in Chinese. Consider Modern Standard Chinese (henceforth MSC) 福特 *fútè* ‘blessing+special’, a domestication of *Ford*, indicating that buying this car is a serendipitous choice. Semantically, 特福 *\*tèfú* ‘special+blessing’ would have been better. The same applies to MSC 波音 *bōyīn*, lit. ‘wave+sound’, a domestication of *Boeing*; whereas 音波 *\*yīnbō* ‘sound wave’ would have been a better semantic match.

3. Cf. similar claims by Koestler (1976) and Wexler (1993).

4. A similar case arose in March 2003, due to American anger over France’s refusal to support the US in its position on Iraq. On the cafeteria menus in the three House office buildings in Washington, the name of *French fries* appeared as *freedom fries*, and *French toast* as *freedom toast* (What about a *freedom kiss*?)

- <sup>5</sup> Cf. *Apollinisch* 'Apollonian' versus *Dionysisch* 'Dionysian' in Nietzsche's works. *Apollo*, the beautiful sun-god of the Greeks and Romans, is symbolic of *reason*, whilst *Dionysus*, the Greek god of wine and fertility of nature, is associated with *wild* and ecstatic religious rites.
6. The same applies to the Indian scholar who went to Rome and was happily surprised to find out that the Italians are fans of Sanskrit grammar: wherever he went, he saw *PANINI* (Italian for 'sandwiches', as opposed to Pāṇini, the fifth-century BC Indian grammarian).
7. Cf. the story about the German Jew, a survivor of the Holocaust, who arrives in Roehampton (London) after the war, and enters a grocery store. While examining the oranges, he suddenly gets extremely upset when the grocer tells him: 'The small ones are for juice'.
8. Compare these to Yiddish נאַר *nar* 'fool', which was sometimes spelled as (Biblical) Hebrew נער 'boy'.
9. Cf. the same conjunction but in reverse order, צנה ומגן in Ezekiel 23:24, 38:4.
10. English *Poland* may be a partial PSM since the paragogic excrescent *d* might have been introduced in order to imitate the existent word *land*, as in *England*.
11. I have met Israeli speakers who provided the etymology that the English initialism *OK* is an acronym of Hebrew כן אומנם *omnām ken*, lit. 'indeed yes', but they were aware of the manipulative recalibration.

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# Language, culture, science and the sacred

## Issues and concerns in curriculum development for Indigenous Americans

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### 1. Introduction

In many cultures of the world, language and religion are intertwined and inseparable; religion and language are at once perceived as culture. Take away language, you lose culture; take away religion, you lose culture; take away culture, you lose both language and religion. This is the perspective of most Indigenous Americans. How then can we discuss the Sociology of Religion without also discussing the Sociology of Language? How can we discuss the Sociology of Language if the language in question is inseparably tied to religion?

What is science, what is religion and what is culture? Where is the fine line between science and religion? What is the relationship between Native language, science and culture? What should or should not be taught in the schools? What social and community forces hinder or promote Native science knowledge, language, culture and religion in the schools? Is teaching about and through the local Native language and culture also teaching about religion? Is a language or certain varieties of a language perceived as sacred and therefore not able to be taught in schools? Should the schools be involved with teaching Native language culture? These questions produced heated discussions by Indigenous American communities involved in a study by Carrasco and Gilbert (1999). In this chapter we discuss some of these questions and bring into focus the juxtaposition of the Sociology of Language and the Sociology of Religion.

We analyze the relationship between language, culture and the sacred. We also briefly describe the Native Science Connections Research (Carrasco and Gilbert, 1999) since it was from one of its activities that the above-mentioned questions arose. The research project sought to integrate Indigenous American beliefs and views into the basic American elementary science curriculum. They wanted to develop a culturally responsive and effective science curriculum through which students actively learn. Such a curriculum capitalizes on students' cultural backgrounds rather than attempting to override or negate them. Furthermore, it enables students to develop

pride in their own culture's contributions to school content, and to recognize school content as being part of their everyday lives.

Carrasco and Gilbert (1999) learned that Eurocentric boundaries between the disciplines do not hold true for Indigenous Americans. Rather, language, culture, science and the sacred are one. This "oneness," however, makes it difficult to know where, if and when certain pedagogical materials reflecting cultural/religious beliefs can be incorporated into the science curriculum.

For this analytical discussion we provide examples of basic American school science that require special treatment in the classroom due to their sacred nature. We cite Native community members, some of whom believe that the home and community are the only places where language and culture acquisition can occur, while others see the school as the only possibility for Indigenous children to learn their language and culture. Opposing perspectives often exist simultaneously within the communities in question.

We begin with a discussion on issues about integrating Native knowledge into the curriculum. We offer a glimpse into Native community opinions and attitudes about the sacredness of language. We identify and elaborate upon several external sociological factors that have influenced language and culture loss. These underlie decision making about what knowledge is appropriate to be taught in the schools. Our discussions are always predicated on the fact that respect for Native knowledge and its incorporation into the curriculum increase student academic achievement and cognitive development.

## **2. Integrating Native knowledge into American science curriculum**

In the last three decades, American educators have successfully incorporated local knowledge and languages into school curricula, especially in the areas of reading, writing, and history. However, American school science and mathematics curricula have virtually remained unchanged in their cultural perspective due to a false logic that these subjects are "culture-free" because they are absolute and universal sets of knowledge. The fact is that science in American schools is indeed funneled through a Western European perspective. Clearly, Indigenous Americans, like all cultures, have been using science for all aspects of life to insure for their survival. Yet, local Native community knowledge, what Moll and his colleagues termed "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992; 1997) has not been included in the basic American school science curricula.

Indigenous Americans certainly have different cultural perspectives on the same science concepts and universals. For example, a Western European perspective teaches the names, uses and the related iconic forms of the constellations (e.g., The Big Dipper/*Ursa Major*). Native Americans have for centuries known and used these same constellations, and like Western Europeans, they, too, have attached special

names and meanings to them. The phenomenon is the same but the perspectives regarding names, uses and meaning differ. While most science concepts are absolute and universal, the cultural difference lies in their interpretation and use.

Many teachers and curriculum developers believe that when Indigenous American children are grounded in their own cultural “science” knowledge and experiences, their learning of basic American classroom science concepts increases (Abdal-Haqq, 1994; Rab, 1998; Kawagley, 1998; Marinez, 1988; Butterfield, 1994; Skinner, 1991; Johnson, 1993); Preston, 1991; Garrouette, 1999). However, very few researchers have actually tested for the effectiveness of cultural content incorporated into American classroom science lessons (Abadl-Haqq, 1994; Davison & Miller, 1998; Hakes, 1980; Carrasco & Gilbert, 1999). Carrasco and Gilbert (1999) tested the hypothesis that Indigenous American students are more successful in basic elementary school science if it is grounded in local “Native” science perspectives. Carrasco and Gilbert first developed science curricula that included local “Native” knowledge. The Native Science Connections Research Project (*ibid*) collaborated with 10 schools, 14 elementary classrooms, and 225 students in four Indigenous American Nations from the Southwestern United States to conduct this study. Native science cultural knowledge from the Navajo, San Carlos Apache, Hopi and Zuni Nations was incorporated into the regular school science curriculum and tested. Since all four cultural groups differed in their interpretations and perspectives about science, four different sets of cultural knowledge were developed and incorporated into the respective nations’ science curricula. This warranted four separate studies on the effects of specific local Native knowledge in science education.

The results from each of the four nations vary. Navajos are the largest Indigenous American tribe in the United States. Hopis, San Carlos Apaches, and Zunis are among the smaller tribes in Arizona. The Navajo study showed that fifth grade students in Navajo classrooms significantly learned science better when the science lessons were also grounded in local cultural science knowledge (See Appendix A for the Navajo Study Results). The Hopi results, while not statistically significant, showed an upward trend toward significance. The San Carlos Apache and the Zuni findings are inconclusive due to caveats encountered in the research process, e.g. extremely small school population size, with typically only one fifth grade classroom in the villages and with about N=10 students. In addition to the quantitative data, the research included direct observational ethnographic field notes, videotaping of the “experimental” classrooms, and teacher journal reports. These data produced qualitative evidence showing that in all of the Indigenous American Nation’s experimental classrooms under study, students were reported as being actively engaged in the science lessons that included Native science knowledge.

This study produced the issues and concerns discussed in this chapter. The immediate initial goals of this research project were to obtain the local Native science cultural knowledge and then to transform this knowledge into Native science modules to be “connected” to, or incorporated into the basic American elementary school

science curriculum. Native educators, elders, medicine men and women, and other respected adults and students from each of the four nations contributed knowledge toward the development of each Native science curriculum. All four nations discussed the appropriateness of the subject matter to be taught.

Carrasco and Gilbert (1999) anticipated working smoothly with local Native Elders, community members (young and old), parents and teachers. They thought that they would simply have to provide Native science content that was to be connected to the basic science topics taught in upper elementary schools. Meetings served as catalysts for addressing the important questions and issues mentioned above as well as providing Native science content for the lessons.

One topic of major importance was the issue of how to separate science from religion. For most Native American cultures, science and religion are intertwined and inseparable. This posed a major problem in developing the supplemental curriculum. Religion cannot be taught in American public schools. Elders and medicine men and women stated that Native religious beliefs and rituals should not be taught in public schools. We found that there are also culturally specific times during the school year for teaching and not teaching certain Native science topics. Some Native science topics are age-dependent, e.g., some tribal students had to be a certain age before they could be introduced to certain science topics in school. Moreover, when the science topic is appropriate to address, we learned that “how” one studies that topic may be inappropriate. For example, dissecting frogs, while a common practice in American middle and high school laboratory science lessons, is culturally inappropriate for the Hopi who view frogs as sacred.

### **3. Issues and concerns that underlie science curriculum development**

Below we present issues and concerns that underlie science curriculum development, particularly those areas that involve the sacred and Indigenous religions. We also elaborate on external factors that either inhibit or promote language revitalization and stabilization. We are concerned not only with the integration of language and culture into the curriculum for reasons of language stabilization and acquisition, but also, and more importantly, as a means for insuring for increased children’s academic achievement and cognitive development; it has been repeatedly shown that the incorporation of language and culture in the curriculum leads to increased learning. The Native Science Connections curricular integration of Native science units based on community knowledge proved to contribute to science learning, and also to improved attitudes toward science by children who frequently rejected and/or failed science in the past.

In this section, we integrate examples from the literature. We also include quotes from Indigenous Americans that demonstrate the sacredness of their respective languages. Following this discussion, we review some important sociolinguistic factors

that indigenous peoples and researchers have discussed as significant determiners of language maintenance and use in their communities. These include a discussion of church policy toward Indigenous languages and cultures, the boarding or residential school phenomenon, racism, punishment and healing.

The fact that Indigenous Americans consider their languages to be sacred contributes to the difficulties in determining what Native community knowledge, if any, can be taught in the schools. In the case of science, an area that generally has not been infused with Native knowledge, the fine line between the sacred and the secular becomes even more apparent. Educators and community members alike must never lose sight of the fact that using such knowledge in the classroom enhances student learning.

#### 4. Language as sacred

One area that has received repeated attention has been the sacredness of Indigenous languages (Anonby, 1999; Krauss, 1997; Clarke, 1997; Cantoni, 1997; Zepeda, 1997; Fishman, 1997a; Trujillo, 1997; Antone, 2002; Reyhner, 1999; Littlebear, 1999; Anonby, 1999; Greymorning, 1999). Language, culture, religion, and even life itself are seen as inseparable to Indigenous Americans as is illustrated in the quotes and analysis found below. One of the principal reasons why “writing” Indigenous languages has been problematic is the sacred nature of language, something meant to be heard, absorbed, filtered and connected to other human experiences. Writing, according to many Native spiritual and community leaders, is an act and process of petrifying what is meant to be fleeting, at least at the level of the words themselves. Brandt (1981, p. 186) notes that attitudes toward literacy often are “grounded in religion.”

Littlebear (1999, 2), observes that “the continuing loss of our languages separates us from our sacred references and our sacred sites.” He notes that those who have used their languages for rituals are dying and that “When they die, all of this language will be lost forever.” (3) Littlebear (1999, p. 5) underlines the importance of the Cheyenne language to him at a spiritual level where he notes that eventhough both Cheyenne and English are his languages, Cheyenne is his spiritual connection with the afterlife since “it is Cheyenne I want to use when my time is completed here on this earth and I journey on to the spirit world. I want to greet in our Cheyenne language those who’ve journeyed on before me because I know that Cheyenne is the only language they know, the only language they ever needed to know.”

Trujillo (1997 p. 15) provides a segment from the 1984 Pascua Yaqui Tribe Language Policy which alludes to the cultural and spiritual importance of the Yaqui language. “The Yaqui Language is a gift from Itom Achai, the Creator, to our people and, therefore, shall be treated with respect. Our ancient language is the foundation of our cultural and spiritual heritage without which we could not exist in the manner that our Creator intended.”

Hopi Elders remark on the sacredness of the Hopi language, its strength, value

and power noting that there are various types of Hopi and that the sacred language used for rituals is powerful and must only be learned in appropriate contexts and only by those who have been initiated. The newly initiated are now allowed access to the holy variety much in the same way as are Classical Arabic and Hebrew. These varieties are clearly religious and therefore are domains to be avoided in the schools. Curriculum developers must be sensitized to the fact that it is difficult to know how, where and when to separate social language from sacred language. "I told you already we are speaking the everyday language. At the Kiva, whoever is in charge, speaks a different level language. In that way, that person is pure...the language [prayers] are strong. This has power."

In these Indigenous American beliefs we see that language is the embodiment of life, the spirit, providing sacred teachings within it and through it. Fettes (1997) notes that religious or spiritual discourse seems to insist on the use of Indigenous languages the longest.

Fillerup (2000, p. 34), in his plea for the restoration of life into the Navajo language, since "Ultimately, it is through language that we not only preserve what we have but create and re-create that which is to come." He continues by acknowledging the spiritual aspects of the Native language and efforts at maintaining it: "And if we can ignite the fire of everyday life back into the language, we will no longer be racing against the clock, but instead trying to outrun the sun: the former quest is finite, the latter eternal."

## 5. Racism, punishment and healing

An area highly related to the sacredness of indigenous languages is their role in healing. This topic has received a great deal of attention in recent literature and combines language as sacred with language as a factor in physical and mental well-being (Goodluck et al, 2000; Fillerup, 2000; Weenie, 2000; Cantoni, 1997; Littlebear, 1999; Anonby, 1999; Reyhner, 1999; Reyhner, 1997; Krauss, 1997). These researchers also lament the lingering negative effects of racism and punishment due to native language use.

We discuss some institutional forms of racism, such as punishment for speaking Native languages in the schools. We also elaborate on the role of Indigenous languages and cultures in healing the wounds caused by such antagonistic behavior toward Native languages and cultures.

Institutionalized racism toward Indigenous Americans has occurred both on and off reservations, in government and in Christian institutions. It is generally felt that attempts at the eradication of Native languages and cultures are at the basis of many of the ills experienced by those brought up on U.S. Indian Reservations. These include problems such as poverty, alcoholism, high school drop out rates, suicide, unemployment, school failure, and even diseases (Fillerup, 2000; Greymorning, 1999; Bielenberg, 1999; Krauss, 1997; Greymorning, 1999; Reyhner et al, 1999). These nega-

tive experiences have led to the need for healing, and frequently such healing involves the revitalization and stabilization of Indigenous languages and the incorporation of Native culture into all aspects of the curriculum, and of life in general.

Wallace (1997, p. 103) notes that “the power of language is that it heals; it sets the mind negatively or positively in whatever endeavor is undertaken and that it is critical to being whole and well.” In Walter’s comments (Wallace, 1997, p. 107), she notes that “Sometimes elders have an emotional connection with language that is associated with pain. We handle that pain, to our detriment, by avoiding it.”

Language and culture loss in the United States and Canada are at least partially a result of Boarding or residential Schools. Indigenous Americans were forced to leave their communities and to adopt the whiteman’s ways and to use English at all times, even with members of their own communities (Greymorning, 1997; Reyhner, 1997; Fillerup, 2000; Parsons-Yazzie, 2003).

Indigenous language speakers, educators and researchers, as well as numerous United States Hispanic researchers (Carrasco and Riegelhaupt, 2002), have discussed the systematic use of punishment, whether by hitting hands with a straight edge or placing soap in the mouths of students for using their native languages in the schools. This factor clearly has contributed to language loss. Krauss (1997, p. 21) believes that such punishment “now represents the most important barrier that impedes the stabilization, revival, and maintenance of our languages.” In his analysis, he attributes denial about language loss, “to the fact that when these Canadian peoples attempted to use their language, they were punished and forbidden to do so and therefore were forced to replace Kwak’wala with English.”

Another Canadian example, this time about the loss of the Oneida language, demonstrates the pervasiveness of punishment practices where “people lost their language and culture, so the traditions were lost. The foreign residential school model broke the family connections. When the children were returned to their families, they were unable to cope with the changes.”

A Hopi Elder (Kewanwytewa, 2002) provides further documentation of punishment practices, this time in the U.S. Southwest where “... at that time, they were still scolding us and threatening to wash our mouth with soap if we spoke Hopi. I think it would have helped those kids as having to speak in English was difficult. They were labeled as “slow learners.”

Goodluck et al. (2000, p.112) document experiences by Navajos who were forced to attend boarding schools “I was told that I would no longer live in my hogan and shade house”(Mary S. Begay) and “we were all forced to change our Navajo language into English. Speaking my language became hard for me to speak in front of the dorm aide. I had to stay quiet around them.”(Eleanor Smiley). Greymorning (1997, p. 22) attributes much of the attempt to eradicate Native languages to the forced use of English in boarding schools.

Batchelder and Markel (1997, P. 241) quote a Navajo woman who not only discussed the punishment received during her boarding school experiences, but also

the forced departure from her home when she turned school age. It is truly hard to imagine such insensitive treatment. Even under the best of circumstances beginning school can be traumatic to a child. It is no wonder that this Navajo woman, like many other Indigenous Americans in Canada and the United States, made a concerted effort not to teach her children the language of their grandparents and ancestors. She states that she was only five when she was forcibly removed from her home and put in a boarding school and prohibited from speaking Navajo. "If we did, we were punished... We girls, we would whisper in the dormitory, and if they caught us speaking Navajo, they would wash our mouths out with soap. I did not teach my sons Navajo. I did not want them to go through that. It was awful."

This sort of treatment did not only occur in government boarding schools; it also was a common practice in Christian schools. Reyhner and House (1997, p. 133) quote Theresa Yazzi, a 20 year old college student taking Navajo classes at Northern Arizona University. She describes various forms of cruel punishment inflicted on students for attempting to use their language in and out of school during the 1950's and 60's where they were forbidden to speak Navajo. "To punish them, their hair was shaved, they were locked in closets, their mouths were washed out with soap, and they were made to hold books in their hands with their arms stretched out parallel with the floor. Her father was made to wear a gunnysack to the cafeteria."

A policy that forbade Native language use also existed in Guam, U.S.A., a United States territory in Micronesia, as Riegelhaupt and Carrasco (1989) observed in their final report to the Chamorro Language Commission. Anita Cruz, a student at the University of Guam, reported that while her parents did not mind the school ruling that penalized students a nickel for speaking Chamorro in school, she sees this practice as clearly discriminatory. "I now realize that being penalized for speaking your own native language is discrimination against the Chamorro students, since there were other ethnic groups in our school and they were not penalized in any way for speaking their own languages."

Antone (2002) notes that use of the Kwak'wala language of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, was strictly forbidden at St. Michael's Residential School in Alert Bay. He attributes the subsequent decline in language use and proficiency from the 1920's through the 1970's to this language annihilation practice.

Weenie (2000, p. 69), a Canadian Aboriginal female educator attributes her low self concept to the racism that she experienced in the mid-sixties where she "was made to feel ashamed because of my race." She traces her feelings of inferiority and inadequacy to "my early school experiences because of the manner in which my history, culture, and language were devalued and excluded from the curriculum. There was much to be angry about and that anger was directed inward."

## 6. The spiritual power of language in healing

What can be done to begin to heal the scars caused by racism and linguisticism? Many traditional Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States are promoting a renaissance for dying or weakening languages and cultures. Greymorning (2000), Weenie (2000), Clarke (1997), Cantoni (1993) and Antone (2002) remark on the powerful healing effects of Native language use in ceremonies. The rebirth they suggest can begin through language revitalization efforts that incorporate concepts of healing wounds through the teaching of language and culture at all levels, home, community, church and schools. Antone states that the healing power of traditional languages and beliefs is inherent in them since “Healing is found in our language. Healing is found in our stories. Healing is found in listening to our Elders. Healing is found in education. Healing is found in our traditional ceremonies. Healing is found through the drumming, singing, and dancing. He further notes that “Healing is found in the traditional foods of our Nations. Healing our emotional, our mental, our physical and our spiritual aspects- all these bring me back to you.” (p. 530) Once again, traditions and more specifically, the very language used to enact them, are the route to healing; and in this process the language itself becomes healing medicine.

## 7. Church policy on Indigenous peoples languages and cultures

In this section, we discuss contrasting beliefs about the role of Native language and culture in the schools. We begin with a discussion of church policy and its effects on language maintenance or shift. We include both positive and negative experiences with Christianity as enacted on reservations.

Various Christian Churches have taken different stances on the use and maintenance of indigenous languages. For example, at different periods in history following the conquest of the Americas, Catholic missionaries have either promoted, ignored or prohibited indigenous language use. The same holds true with various Protestant and non-denominational Christian churches. Some have encouraged language and cultural maintenance and the enactment of cultural rituals considered religious by their members, while others have discouraged and, in many cases, have forbidden the practice of Native religions and the use of Native languages.

Adley-Santamaria (1997), a member of the White River Apache community and a linguist, notes that the impact of Protestant missionaries has seriously impacted on the loss of Apache. According to her survey, 72% of Protestant Apaches was taught that traditional Apache beliefs are wrong or paganistic. These Protestant churches forbade their members to participate in traditional Apache ceremonies. On the other hand, Roman Catholic churches on the White Mountain Apache reservation presently teach their parishioners to value their culture and spirituality. Therefore, more than 72% of Roman Catholic Apaches claimed both Catholic and Apache spiritual beliefs.

Batchelder and Markel (1997, 242) present a case supporting language and culture maintenance from a Protestant missionary on the Navajo reservation. In the following quote this missionary, rather than seeing the loss of Navajo as positive for the people and the Church, laments its disappearance. He states that when he began his thirty-five years as a missionary in the Checkerboard area, no one spoke English while “Now it is very typical for someone to ask a question in Navajo and have the answer come back in English. It makes me sick to my stomach that the language is going. Somebody has to stop this!”

Another paradigm shift in church policy from negating to promoting Native languages and cultures as important is evident in the 1986 response to a challenge presented to the United Church of Canada, a union formed in 1925 by Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in Canada, by Alberta Billie, in 1985 (Antone, 2002). The Church provided a formal apology for its policy of “trying to make Indian People into European people.” Consequently, the Church began efforts to encourage members to hold onto their traditional languages and beliefs while continuing to practice Christianity.

## 8. Teaching language and culture: school, home or both?

The belief about the spiritual power of language has been both a factor in promoting and preventing language maintenance. However, it is spiritual discourse which is not permitted to be taught in the schools. The most traditional and sacred language, therefore, must be taught by the most religious members of the society. Many feel it is dangerous to include religious rites as part of secular education and that there is a thin line between the language used for religious purposes and the language required for everyday use:

There were several times when people thought we were going beyond our rights. I guess people were saying we were going into Wiimi, but we are not going into that because that is something that we cannot do. We are not initiated into these societies, so we cannot talk about these things, so we are only basing it on simple everyday language (Kewanwytewa, 2002)

While most tribal members believe that language is sacred, they also see their languages as dying and therefore believe that the schools must begin to take an active role in their revitalization and stabilization. They see the teaching of Native languages and the infusion of language and culture into the curriculum as valuable methods for promoting their maintenance. At the same time, they also agree that religious rites and language should not be taught in the schools.

Language researchers, educators and indigenous community members alike all agree that the principal place for acquiring and maintaining indigenous languages should be the home and the community. Fishman has repeatedly stated (1997b) that

the assurance for language maintenance is its intergenerational language transmission in authentic community settings, with the home being paramount. Educational researchers and many educators agree that including Native language and culture in the basic school content areas increases student success.

Batchelder (2000) provides examples from interviews with Navajo community members who believe that “no aspects of the Navajo culture should be “taught” in the way that schools “teach,” and that “teaching Navajo culture is not a good use of school time.” (3) Some even believe that the practice of incorporating language and culture in the schools is dangerous. However, Batchelder also documented an equal number of participants who felt there was some place for Navajo language and culture in the schools, although what that place should be remains a topic for ongoing discussion and debate.

Fillerup (2000) documents parental and community attitudes toward the implementation of a bilingual program where Navajo language and culture would receive equal attention to other aspects of the curriculum in Leupp, Arizona, a community on the Navajo reservation. The support was astounding; over 95% of parents and community members were in favor! Yet, in a nearby Navajo town, the school community was mostly against the teaching of language and culture in the schools (Carrasco and Gilbert, 1999).

Batchelder and Markel (1997, p. 241) offer a quote from a Navajo Elementary Teacher who observed strong opposition to a bilingual program. “The parents don’t want a bilingual program. They don’t want teachers to teach Navajo to their children. They don’t really listen to me.” She suggests that “The Chapter leaders and the tribal leaders should explain to parents and they’ll listen to them. I know that students will comprehend more things with two languages, but I can’t get parents to listen to me.” (p. 241).

Anonby (1999) describes community attitudes that indicate that schools should have responsibility for Kwak’wala’s maintenance and teaching on Vancouver Island, Canada. Stiles (1997, p. 257), in her comparison of Cree, Hualapai, Maori, and Hawaiian indigenous language programs, found that:

All of the communities in these four programs experienced community objections to a program that taught the native tongue so seriously. Elders objected to the writing of the language; elders and parents feared teaching the children a language other than English because of past oppression for use of their native language (all programs), parents as non-native speakers doubted the ability of their children to achieve fluency, and teachers were convinced the languages were unsuitable for academic endeavors.

A Hopi Tribal member explains the limitations of relying on the schools to teach what should be taught at home:

As parents, we need to start teaching them the value of the language at home. Everything has to start in the home. We cannot just bring it to the school and

expect them to see the values of the language, because at the school, we are limited to do a certain amount of Hopi teaching, and at home, you have all the time and at home you can teach your children what you feel they should know. (Kewanwytewa, 2002)

The problem is that, unfortunately, learning and teaching of Native language and culture at home are generally not happening. Therefore, many traditional tribal members are beginning to see the schools as a last resort in maintaining language and culture:

The Hopi language has to be a part of the school system, as even though we might say, we the parents, mother and father will teach our children the language, but we are not doing that, and it must be put first [in the schooling system]. “Whatever they are teaching in the schools should come after that. (Hopi Elder, Kewanwytewa, 2002)

## 9. Discussion

Languages and religions inform cultural behaviors and beliefs. They serve both to unite and to divide. We discovered that the American Indigenous peoples we collaborated with see their languages as vehicles for preserving their cultures and religious beliefs. Frequently, they expressed a holistic perspective, where language is considered sacred in and of itself; language is religion and cannot be divided from it or the culture it represents.

Some Christian non-denominational churches, and hence their converts, have seen language as a threat to the “culture” of their Churches. They, like the traditionalists in the tribes themselves, disapprove of teaching language and culture in the schools. The preachers and the traditional Elders recognize the power of the sacred and the sacredness of their languages. Other Churches have come to respect language and culture maintenance and see it as able to coexist with Christianity and to transmit its beliefs as well. This conflict has created problems of individual and community identity within Indigenous communities. Since members of these communities come into contact with government and Christian institutions, they frequently possess the same attitudes found within them. Some traditional Elders recognize that the school may be the only place where children can be exposed to their language and culture since many parents have chosen to use only English with them. The parents from this generation were emotionally and physically abused for using their language in school. How could this generation deprived of their language rights, be responsible for providing their children with the very language and culture they were taught to avoid, forget and be ashamed of? Why would they willfully expose their children to something that caused them so much pain?

The dilemma is this: We now know that language and culture maintenance are

essential to the emotional, spiritual and physical health of Indigenous communities and to the individuals who make them up. We also know that a culturally appropriate education based on support and respect of local community knowledge, and an integration of such knowledge into the learning environment promote academic success and emotional well being. The children in these communities, especially when they reach their teens and early twenties, are begging for a sense of Native identity, which at least partially necessitates knowing the language through which cultural and religious knowledge is transmitted. Their parents frequently have either lost their language or have chosen not to use it. This practice has prevented them from transmitting it to their children.

How, when and where can this generation retrieve cultural and linguistic knowledge? Aware of this dilemma, many Elders and community members who previously were against the teaching of language and culture in the schools, now are taking a less extreme position. As long as they can be involved in helping to determine what, when and how much language and cultural information can be taught in the schools, they are beginning to see the schools as possible partners in an effort to insure for the academic success of their children. They have begun to note that transmitting important cultural and linguistic knowledge which strengthens their children's self-concepts and emotional well-being also strengthens their communities.

## 10. Concluding remarks

A new era of collaboration and trust between researchers, educators and community members needs to be forged. While schools in the past have negated Indigenous peoples' languages and cultures and promoted their eradication, schools today need to develop strong links with the communities they serve. Even though research has demonstrated the cognitive, linguistic and academic advantages of bilingualism and biculturalism, language revitalization and stabilization, this information has not been effectively disseminated to parents and community members, who continue to harbor mistrust for outside institutions, such as the schools. Participation in the system is an essential element to school success. Schools can only meet community needs if they become aware of them.

Even in cases where communities disapprove of the teaching of language and culture in the schools, there is still a need for teachers to develop cultural sensitivity, respect and awareness of linguistic and cultural issues in their communities. Schools certainly can be the promoter of Native languages and cultures by continuing to emphasize that there is no such thing as an inferior language, dialect or culture. No matter what, the school should strive to provide the most effective learning environment possible. Such an environment must be predicated upon supporting and respecting the language and culture of the children and their families. If integrating Native community knowledge into the curriculum enhances learning, then appropriate means for accessing and disseminating such knowledge, must be devised.

We provide the following recommendations for successful curriculum development efforts for Indigenous American cultures:

1. There must be dialogue between the community and the schools regarding the role of schools in teaching language and culture.
2. There must be dialogue between the school and research communities.
3. These dialogues must include research findings that underscore the value of incorporating Native knowledge into the curriculum. At all times, it must be remembered that such practices lead to increased academic achievement.

Theory informs practice and practice must continue to inform and challenge theory. Theory needs to continue to be challenged since practice ultimately is how humans behave, linguistically, spiritually, and emotionally. Behavior is the enactment of culturally determined patterns and it is through language that we express the essence of our beliefs. An approach that recognizes the circularity and interconnectedness of language, culture, and religion, and their importance to individual and community well-being can be derived by effective collaboration between insiders and outsiders, university researchers and educators with community leaders, parents and local educators. Discussions on the sociology of language and religion at all levels play a major role in determining culturally appropriate and effective school content and pedagogy.

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## Appendix A

### Navajo Study Results

Results of the NSCRP-Navajo Study is presented to compare means and standard deviation using Student t-tests: Independent t-tests with separate variance for group comparisons and Paired t-tests for pre- and post-tests comparisons.

Chart 1.

Navajo Control and Experimental Group Comparison on Science-Means

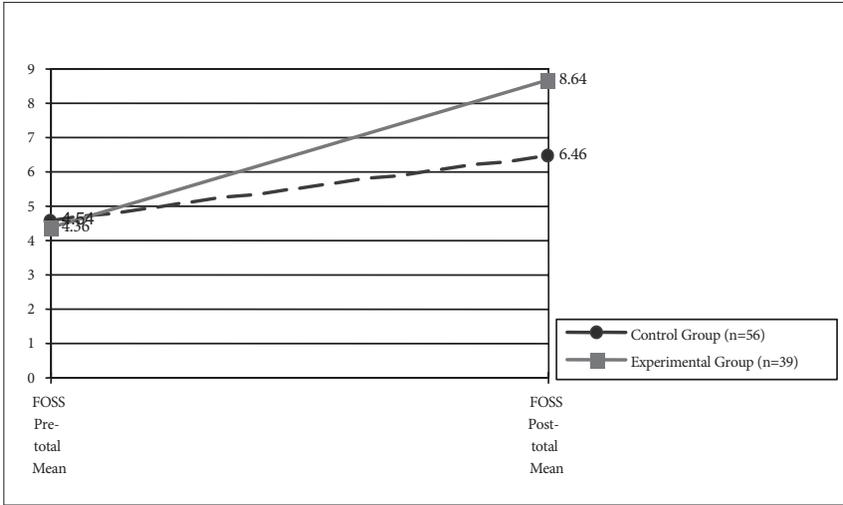


Table 1. Comparison of Navajo Control and Experimental Group on Science means with Independent t-Statistics and p-Significance

Variable	Control group [n=56]		Experimental group [n=39]		t-Statistics with DF	Significance of p
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Separate Variance</b>	<b>*/**</b>
FOSS	4.54	2.18	4.36	1.83	t=0.43; DF = 89.8	p=0.67
<b>Pre-total</b>						
FOSS	6.46	1.72	8.64	2.68	t=4.47; DF = 59.4	p=0.000**
<b>Post-total</b>						

Carrasco and Gilbert, 1999

## Prayers as an integrative factor in Jewish religious discourse communities<sup>1</sup>

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ואהבת את יהוה אלהיך ושמרת משמרתו  
וחקתיו ומשפטיו ומצותיו כל הימים  
(Deuteronomy 11.1)

### 1. Introduction

This chapter discusses a socio-ethnic identity formation process based on particular Jewish religious discourse texts. The notion of *discourse* is understood to be a dynamic and changing phenomenon which is profoundly rooted in its nonverbal context (i.e. its *situational, social and cultural embeddings*). I shall claim that the decisive element in the formation of a discourse community is the existence of specific discourse forms proper to that community. One of the issues raised in this paper regards the suggestion of viewing prayers as texts of highly *intertextual* nature. With reference to this issue I analyse selected Jewish benedictions and places them within their ever changing *extralinguistic* environment.

Bearing in mind the profound impact that religious practices may have on the lives of people, the present study is an investigation of how religious texts and the ideology behind them may influence individual lives as well as change the history of whole ethnic communities. One of the best examples of such a community is the Jewish nation, which can also be considered an ethnic community, considering how important a role religion plays in Israel. In this paper I have two objectives. First, I present the structure of Jewish discourse as a developing social heteronomy of language (see for discussion Pietraszko 1992, Wąsik, 1996, Chruszczewski 2000). Second, I discuss the verbal and nonverbal integrative dimensions of prayers performed in Jewish communities, wherever they meet for religious reasons. One of the questions is considered is the ethnic identity formation process aided by particular religious texts.

## 2. Jewish religious discourse in its communicative context

It appears that Judaism is one of the religions where texts play a very significant role. I begin by explaining what I call *Jewish discourse*.

From the linguistic point of view discourse is perceived to be a dynamic and changing phenomenon, profoundly rooted into its nonverbal context (see for discussion van Dijk, 1997a and 1997b, Fairclough, 1992). The core of any discourse is established by particular texts formed by their speaker (see also Chruszczewski, 2003). The meaning of the texts and their interpretation by the hearer seems to depend to a great extent on the context, which I divide into three subcategories, or contextual embeddings. They are as follows:

- a. *the situational embedding* – that is, where the text is produced;
- b. the social embedding – that is, within what social group the text is produced; and
- c. *the cultural embedding* – this one is apparently the most difficult to grasp, what we understand under the nebulous term *culture*.

In my opinion, however, the cultural embedding of texts ought to be held responsible for the projected associations a text may induce in the receiver of textual messages, and at the same time the types and patterns of nonverbal cultural scripts and schemata (see for example Yule, 1996) that are supposed to accompany a verbal text. In the light of the above, a model (see figure 1), wherein we have certain *verbal texts that trigger certain socially and culturally specific behaviors can be called for the sake of simplicity the communicational grammar of a particular discourse*. In our case that would be the communicational grammar of Jewish religious discourse. Having stated this, one must logically regard the texts of Jewish prayers to be of vital importance for any further discussion of the issue.

## 3. The heteronomous and integrative nature of Jewish prayers

From the social perspective any heteronomy involves a certain dependency. In the case under question any Jewish religious discourse is highly embedded in the context of its origin (ethnic, linguistic, etc.) and is thus dependent on its contextual embeddings. The dictionary understanding of heteronomies is based on Greek words *héteros* “other”, and *nómos* “law”, which literally can mean an entity that governs itself according to laws or rules different from all other entities. Any heteronomy can be dependent on a higher level entity, the relative autonomy which usually engulfs a number of dynamic and developing heteronomies. This may be due to functioning in a dynamically developing society. For that reason *religious discourse, legal discourse, medical discourse, political discourse and many other discourses can be called social heteronomies of language*, for language encompasses them all. It would be impor-

tant to remember that if a certain entity begins to acquire features which prove it is becoming relatively independent and after certain time it starts “deciding for itself to a reasonable extent and scope” (Pietraszko, 1992:59), then one could note that this heteronomy is becoming more and more autonomous.

Zdzisław Wąsik (1996:26) states that “one should speak rather about the relative autonomy of language, or about a relative autonomy of its standard literary variety in relation to its spoken varieties which are heteronomous by nature.” Wąsik has made another interesting observation on the heteronomous nature of any discourse and its context. He notes that “with regard to its investigative approachability language as a real object does not constitute an autonomous phenomenon since it is embedded in different heteronomous dependencies” (*ibid.*). Thus, any discourse, being a particular language heteronomy, can be researched as an integral element of language, due to a number of linguistic elements which constitute also discourses. However, it needs to be kept in mind that any discourse encompasses also its nonverbal, contextual embeddings.

Religious discourse is dynamic and is produced in social and cultural circumstances. It is a phenomenon through which its users shape various discursive practices in interpersonal communication. Having the above in mind, it can be argued that the texts of prayers constitute the core of Jewish religious discourse.

In the above regard, Jewish religious discourse is an evolving social heteronomy of language which is constructed (by the people), derivative (because it is shaped by their culture), rule-governed to a certain degree (there are certain constraints which may vary from culture to culture), and dependent (on its situational, social and cultural *contextual embeddings*).

### 3.1 Integration through language

Prayers in a number of literary forms, like “(...) thanksgiving, supplication, praise, intercession, petition, confession (...)” are supposed to be as old as Israel itself, and are to be found in every part of the Bible (see Martin, 1968:3). However, modern Biblical scholars note the possibility that *the Song of Miriam* be the oldest passage of the Bible (*ibid.*). The passage in question reads as follows:

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. (Exodus 15:20)

And Miriam chanted for them:

[שירו ליהוה כי גאה גאה סוס ורכבו רמה בים]

Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously, Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea. (Exodus 15:21)

I agree with Yehezek Kaufman (1960:112) and Bernard Martin (1968:4–5), who are of the opinion that prayer was often accompanied by an elaborate sacrificial cult at the “time of the Temple”. They conclude that sacrifice was regarded as a sign of obedience

to the will of God. Martin also points out that prayer was of paramount importance in the worship at the Temple (ibid.), which is indicated by the very text of Isaiah (56:6–8), where it is stated that:

6 “(...) All who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it,  
 And who hold fast to My covenant –  
 7 I will bring them to *My house of prayer*.  
 Their burnt offerings and sacrifices  
 Shall be welcome on My altar;  
 For My House shall be called  
*A house for prayer for all peoples.*”  
 8 Thus declares the Lord God,  
 Who gathers the dispersed of Israel:  
 “I will gather still more of those already gathered.”

With regard to the above I need to mention that prayers have also played a highly integrative role in the sometimes very sad and difficult recent history of the contemporary Jewish community in Wrocław, Poland. At the end of 1990s there were about 200 Jewish families living in Wrocław; however, there were only 220 people registered at the Jewish community (Ziątkowski, 2000: 125). Nevertheless, now there is a considerable increase in the number of people attending religious services as compared to the early 1970s, when the authorities of the communist regime literally organized a hunt for Jewish leaders and intellectuals and made a great number of them leave the country. In 1974 the state took over the beautiful Wrocław synagogue *Under the White Stork*. It was apparent that, without this house of prayer, the community was rapidly driven into a significant crisis. There were difficulties with collecting a *minian*, that is the required number of ten adult Jews gathering to pray (see also Ziątkowski, 2000: 123). Fortunately the crisis is over now, and the community has started to develop. The synagogue has been given back to its owners. The number of Jews is gradually increasing. After 36 years, there was a Jewish wedding celebrated at the synagogue in the year 2000 (Ziątkowski, 2000: 125). The wedding gathered people who after a long time could hear again *Adonai* being blessed in the words of the *sheva berakhot*, the “seven blessings” which are traditionally uttered during weddings.

### 3.2 Ethnolinguistic issues of Jewish religious discourses

It is an interesting issue whether Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), an Austrian journalist regarded as the creator of Zionism, while turning the attention of Jews toward the necessity of having their own state was also thinking of “state-creating” factors at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I think that he had to consider such factors, being aware of the international situation at that time as well as of the *multiethnic and multilinguistic standing of Jews*. It is apparent, and seems to be natural, that in the unprecedented case of reactivating one’s own motherland, thoughts of those who were involved in the above process were flowing in the direction of the language and religious denomination

of people who would inhabit the created state. It is a reasonable assumption that it was *the sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic factors influenced to a great extent not only the character of the state but also the very thought of its organization*. It is estimated that the years 1880–1910 there were 30 000 Jews<sup>2</sup> who arrived in Palestine (Sacerdoti, [1998] 2001:42). The years 1919–1933 witnessed the arrival of about 200 000 people, the majority of whom were from Central and Eastern Europe (see also Sacerdoti, [1998] 2001:44). The general reactivation of a common knowledge of Hebrew is a factor of paramount importance in the process of constructing the ethnicity of the contemporary citizens of the state of Israel.

#### 4. Religious discourse communities

Linguists observe (see for example Duszak, 1998:253) that the term “discourse community” is a recent outcome of research and is associated mainly with Swales (1990). The most important idea of Swales (1990:24–27, cited in Duszak, 1998:253–255) is a threefold one. First, *discourse communities are established by public goals, be they convergent religious beliefs, political stands, or the same legal system, concerning certain group of people*.

Secondly, *the decisive element in the formation of a discourse community is the existence of discourse forms proper to the community*. In a religious discourse community there are various kinds of religious texts, e.g. prayers. I would also point out the importance of the existence of particular situations which are planned and scheduled in advance or according to an annual cycle during which fixed religious texts are delivered. Thus, the identification of an individual with a particular discourse community would mean not only the ability to produce and comprehend specific texts, but also that its members can distinguish among a number of situations and moreover can adjust their texts to them. It is obvious that morning benedictions and evening benedictions are two different genres of Jewish religious discourse because their emphases differ. However, I do not think that in this case we would meet two different discourse communities, because the temporal and cultural circumstances are never contrastive and always complementary. The point to remember is that discourse communities are established to a great extent by the level of discourse competence of their participants. In this case the same participants display equivalent competence in complementary religious activities/gatherings.

Thirdly, it is claimed that *discourse communities are constituted with a hierarchical structure based on the gradual competence of the community members*. This could lead to the conclusion that within any discourse community there are experts and novices, as well as all community members in between the two levels who may become experts in due time. One can deduce that in a given discourse community members can acquire skills or knowledge which will allow them to join the group of experts of the particular discourse. Anna Duszak (1998:256–257) observes that:

[The expert's] competence is applied at the time when there come into being appropriate situational, social and communicational circumstances. (...) [T]here is, within the concept of the discourse community, the quite useful notion of an expert and a novice. This categorial hierarchy is of the varying levels of substantial and textual-communicative competence of individual members of a given community. Due to the above one can talk about members who take both central and peripheral places. Contrary to language communities, "full" membership in a given discourse community means a high level of the communicative activity.[Trans. P.C.]

In this regard one could draw the conclusion that the higher the position of a member in a discourse community, the higher the level of expertise one could expect in the texts that the member under question produces.

## 5. Selected Jewish blessings: An outline typology

Bearing in mind the above, one of the very first questions that arises concerns the sense of praying. Why do people pray? This leads to a more precise issue, namely, why do Jews pray? There may be found many reasons for answering the question why people worship God by means of texts. The answer to why Jews pray and attempt to refine their ways of addressing *Adonai* may be expressed in either a multitude of volumes or just one sentence:

(...) Jewish communities and their leaders continually refined the details of this system [of prayer] to ensure its ongoing ability to please God's continuing providential care for Israel. (Langer, 1998: IX)

Moreover, in the view of Ismar Elbogen ([1913] 1993: 3–4) Jewish liturgy has achieved great importance in the history of religions, for among other issues, it "(...) freed itself of all external paraphernalia, such as worship sites endowed with special sanctity, priests, (...) and became a completely service of God. Because its performance required no more than the will of a relatively small community, it was able to spread easily throughout the world. It was also the first public liturgy to occur with great regularity, being held not only on Sabbaths and festivals, but on every day of the year, thus bestowing some of its sanctity upon all of life." Even though Elbogen's claim regarding the "external paraphernalia" of Jewish religious services may be questioned, the central phenomenon toward which he turns our attention remains the issue of Jewish communities which gather together in order to worship God by means of their verbal prayers.

It appears obvious that the texts of the prayers uttered vary to a great extent as a result of dynamic changes in their contextual embeddings. I am of the opinion that *one of the most rewarding types of texts of prayers for analysis, with reference to changing contextual variables, are the texts of Jewish benedictions.* "A benediction

as formula or expression of prayer is a manifestation and translation into words of *berakah* as an interior attitude in relation to God.” (Sante Di, [1985] 1991: 133) It is worth mentioning that with reference to their communicative function, benedictions can also be seen as prayers by which one expresses a profession of faith, regardless of the distinctive communicative aim of a specific benediction. In light of the above and due to the fact that the thoughts of religious Jews ought to be directed toward *Adonai*, one may consider a praying individual to be a “shrine”. In a more general sense, a household where religious texts are produced can also be thought of as a shrine of a very special type. It is Millgram (1971:290, cited in Sante Di, [1985] 1991: 141), who is of the opinion that:

This is not a poetic exaggeration, for the Jewish home was, in a sense, a little sanctuary. The family table was regarded as an altar, each meal was a holy ritual, and the parents were the official priests. Family worship accompanied many of the daily activities and transformed the biological and social relationships of the family into a spiritual kinship.

Slightly extending this picture, one may draw the conclusion that is also true as concerns any benediction which is supposed to transform or extend the dimension of the situational, social and cultural embeddings of texts into a spiritual relationship of the text author with *Adonai*. Benedictions can be divided in many ways. There can be benedictions classified as public and private ones (see also Sante Di, 1991: 133). These can be further subdivided into blessings supposed to be recited every day and the ones pronounced on particular occasions only. Therefore, our preliminary division would be as follows:

## 1. Private benedictions

### 1.1 *Recited every day*

One of these benedictions would be the one uttered by an individual Jew upon washing hands before eating bread: “Blessed are You, *HASHEM*, our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us regarding washing the hands.” (Scherman, Zlotowitz & Brander [eds.], [1988] 1999: 225)

### 1.2 *Pronounced on special occasions*

One would add to this category the blessing expressed upon smelling fragrant herbs or flowers: “Blessed are You, *HASHEM*, our God, King of the universe, Who creates fragrant herbage.” (Ibid.) In a country like Poland, where a rather harsh winter can last for a good few months, such a blessing would truly be pronounced only on a special occasion like a beautiful summer day.

## 2. Public benedictions

### 2.1 *Recited every day*

To this category one can include for instance the blessing pronounced by the father of the family before eating: “Blessed are You, *HASHEM*, our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.” (Ibid.)

### 2.2 *Pronounced on special occasions*

An example of a text of this type could be the blessing recited upon affixing a *mezuzah* to the doorpost: “Blessed are You, *HASHEM*, our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to affix a *mezuzah*.” (Scherman, Zlotowitz & Brander (eds.), [1988] 1999:227)

## 5.1 Morning and evening benedictions as means of delimiting time

It appears that for a religious person the concept of time without the presence of *Adonai* would be useless, for it is *Hashem* who by His presence fills the time with transcendental and everlasting meaning. One might say that Judaism is a religion of time<sup>3</sup>, a religion where time is of paramount importance, for it is in time where the supreme harmony of creation is to be felt. Thus, certain benedictions can be regarded as particular verbal means delimiting sequences of the flow of time. By fulfilling them one can properly worship the supreme presence of *Adonai*. In the words of Di Sante, ([1985] 1991:134):

The act of getting up, (...) is to be accompanied by series of blessings. The Babylonian Talmud describes in detail the various phases in the passage from sleep to wakefulness; 1. awakening; 2. hearing the cock crow; 3. opening the eyes; 4. rising to a sitting position; 5. putting on the first garment; 6. rising from the bed; 7. touching the floor; 8. standing up; 9. putting on the shoes; 10. tying the belt; 11. putting on the headdress; 12. putting on the tassels; 13. putting on the phylacteries; 14. washing the hands; 15. washing the face.

It is to be noted that each of the above stages is accompanied by a verbal text. In this way the entire process of awakening is precisely delimited and devoted to *Adonai*. Similarly, the act of retiring in the evening is also devoted to God by delimiting time with verbal means.

In the morning God is invoked as the one who “removes the bonds of sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids”: here he is invoked as the one who “makes the bonds of sleep to fall upon my eyes and slumber upon my eyelids.” God is the source of both wakefulness and sleep, of day, which is the symbolic place involvement and responsibility, and of night, which is the symbolic place of the suspension of all activity. (Di Sante, [1985] 1991:137–138)

These are just two vivid examples of the presence of *Adonai* for a religious Jew. The

communal belief in this very presence is considered as one of the factors which define a Jewish community, even if the community is dispersed for the remaining six week days. A prayer text is but a starting point in the holistic process in which texts are regarded to be measures that, in the words of Hoffman (1987:172) “reconstruct the identity of people who pray [them].” Hoffman (1987:173) is of the opinion that:

The focus of the study should then not be the text at all, but (...) the liturgical field, the holistic network of interrelationships that bind together discrete things, acts, people, and events into the activity we call worship – or better still, ritual.

In other words, Hoffman (ibid.) postulates the need to look at a prayer text from a much broader perspective, where a prayer can be seen as a constitutive unit of religious communication. In light of the above, one can precisely name the perspective embarked upon. It can be called the communicational grammar of religious discourse, with its core being established by prayer texts. They are, however, profoundly rooted in situations and engulfed by praying groups of people who are deriving from a certain culture. In our case the Jewish one. Thus, *the entire set of rules which organize both the verbal and extralinguistic behavior of the group of people who produce prayers aimed at Adonai, can be called the communicational grammar of Jewish religious discourse.* Applying this perspective one can clearly see prayer texts as units which undoubtedly play a pivotal role in integrating Jewish religious communities, be they large groups of people gathered to worship in a synagogue or just a two or three persons in a family gathered in their dining room and praying before sharing their meal.

## 6. Religious texts as “social events”

Now consider the fact that prayers are usually produced within particular embeddings. Therefore, such a situation can be regarded as a factor triggering verbal behaviors. In the words of de Beaugrande and Dressler, ([1972] 1981:116), “intentionality designates all the ways in which text producers utilize texts to pursue and fulfill their intentions.” I presume that intentions of those who produce the texts of Jewish prayers are, generally speaking, concerned with addressing *Adonai*. Therefore, whether a text is a prayer depends on its function in communication, more than on its form (see also de Beaugrande and Dressler, [1972] 1981:185). Intentionality is of crucial importance.<sup>4</sup>

There is another important issue concerning texts which was nicely described by Heinrich Plett (1991:17), who notes that “Charles Grivel’s dictum <*Il n’est de texte que d’intertexte*> (1982:240) claims that no text exists in isolation but is always connected to a ‘universe of texts’ (Grivel, 1982).” This is very true of religious texts because prayers can be regarded as textual structures of a relatively high intertextual status, for they refer to a multitude of other texts. In my view prayers are also inherently related to a number of situations, for it is they by which certain situations of religious discourse are called into being and the call to worship is probably the most rigidly fixed

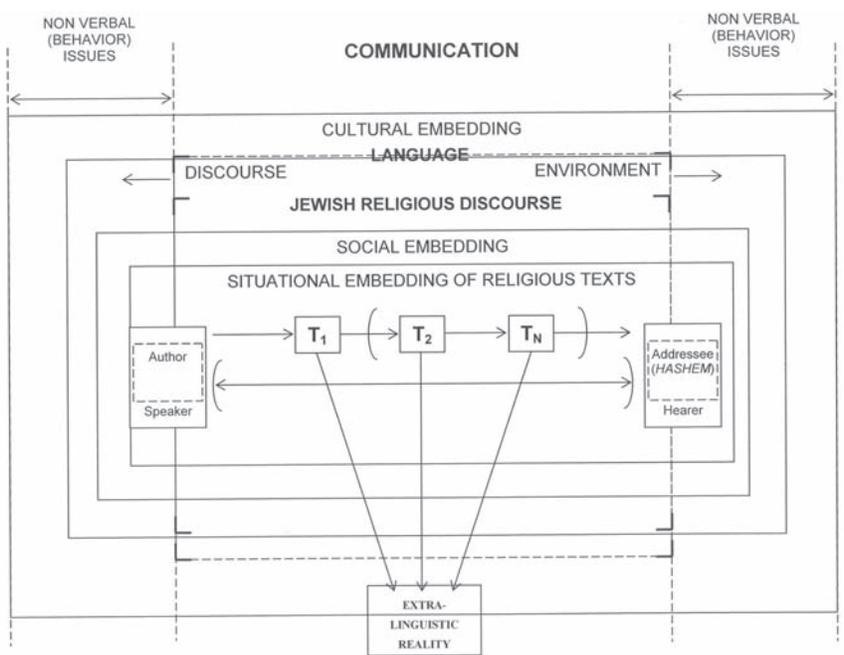


Figure 1. The communicational grammar of religious discourse (see also Chruszczewski 2002, 2003)

in form, relative to the type of worship introduced. Texts, and in particular texts of a religious nature, do not just communicate information, but by the very act of being uttered evoke other texts, mainly because, as Plett (*ibid.*) observes “[n]o hermeneutic act can consider a single text in isolation. Rather it is an experience with a retrospective as well as prospective dimension. This means for the text: it is an intertext, i.e. simultaneously post-text and pre-text.” this is also true for the texts of benedictions which in Judaism are most often uttered at noticing specific situational variables of a non-linguistic nature.

One of the issues raised in this paper regards the suggestion of viewing prayers as texts of highly intertextual nature, which “(...) can be analyzed in a threefold semiotic perspective (...): syntactically, as based on relations between texts; pragmatically, as the relation between sender/receiver and intertext; and semantically, with respect to the referentiality of the intertext. Not a single semiotic perspective but only their combination constitutes the intertext as a whole.” (Morris, 1938 cited in Plett, 1991:6) I decisively agree, however, with the perspective presented by Ruqaiya Hasan (1978:229), who states that, “[a] text is a social event whose primary mode of unfolding is linguistic.” She adds that, “[i]f text can be seen as a bridge between the verbal symbolic system and culture, this is because of the relationship between text and social context: text is ‘in language’ as well as ‘in culture.’” This is very true of

Jewish blessings. Apart from their unifying role within religious discourse communities, where a prayer carries the precise meaning of Hasan's "social event", it is also clearly visible that they function within the communicational grammar of religious discourse both linguistically and culturally (see figure 1). The prayers discussed are first of all texts of a specific religious denomination<sup>5</sup> and thus they are also profoundly embedded within respective cultural frameworks.

## 7. Conclusions

Summing up, it is to be noted that in the light of the material presented and the issues described, Jewish religious discourse can be considered to be a quite highly developed social heteronomy of language which is not self-existent (because it cannot fully exist without people), derivative (because it is shaped by people and their culture), self-governing to a certain degree (there are certain rules which may vary from culture to culture), and dependent (with respect to its context, i.e.: the specific situational, social and cultural embeddings).

With regard to its ever changing extralinguistic environment, Jewish religious discourse can be perceived as a dynamic phenomenon of a communicative nature whose core establishes texts of prayers. It is also this particular discourse, whose users form distinctive as well as highly diversified practices of religious interpersonal communication. Moreover, it is to be highlighted that against the vast background of the multiethnic and multilinguistic standing of Jews, it is their religious discourse, where one ought to seek the incarnation of Jewish ethnicity and also contemporary Jewish identity<sup>6</sup>. The aforementioned can be easily observed in the character of the state of Israel and its organization. Having noticed the above one can conclude that texts of Jewish prayers establish very important factors which in the long run can be truly named as factors that play a pivotal role in integrating Jewish religious discourse communities.

## Notes

1. I wish to thank dr. William Sullivan, who has proofread the text and whose remarks I have incorporated into the paper.
2. More than that went to NYC.
3. Similarly true of traditional (Orthodox, Catholic pre-Vatican II) Christianity, though much less so of most Protestant dominations and untrue of Christian Scientists, Unitarian, and many others whose origin was a particular heresy on Christianity.
4. I am aware that there are scholars who may disagree with me on this; the ancient principle *lex orandi, lex credendi* is correct, as the Protestant and post-Vatican II Roman Catholic experience

shows. In ritual liturgy, intentionality and fixed form seem to be inextricably bound together. The *Bogomil* and *Cathar* heresies are early European examples of what happens when the forms are abandoned. Intentionality is of crucial importance in individual contributions to prayer, form is crucial to community.

5. One needs to keep in mind that the visible first step in any schism is a change in form. Translations are particularly dangerous, because mistranslations can be used to disguise heterodoxy from those who do not understand the original.

6. I should add here that there are many atheist and agnostic Jews who flatly reject this definition. There are also non-orthodox Jews in Israel who would also object to a stringent application of this principle.

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# Maligned and misunderstood

## Marginal movements and UK Law

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### 1. Introduction

The sociology of language deals with the relationship of any two or more of the following: language usage, language users, language uses (functions), attitudes toward language and overt behaviours toward language (e.g., overt behaviours of a fostering or of a prohibitory nature) (Fishman, 2002: 123).

The sociology of language and religion thus deals with the above but with religion added to the mix. This is quite complex but relevant and necessary. To make it even more complex, in this chapter I add a legal dimension. This is done to show the relevance of examining the sociology of language and religion.

In this chapter I do two things. The first is to outline the way in which the language of marginal religious movements is constitutive of community and identity.<sup>1</sup> (The terminology chosen here, marginal movements, is derived from Harper (1982)). Membership, which involves learning, demonstrating and internalising certain ways of using language (and particular ways of seeing the world) is closely bound to identity. Indeed for many marginal movements, membership appears to be the most salient aspect of personal identity (Harper, 1982: 33). Such movements are interesting in that while it is possible to be born into them, there is still an active practice of conversion (and arguably recruitment). This is in part because many of them are relatively recent (at least in terms of mainstream world religions). At a superficial level, joining such a movement can be seen as a lifestyle choice (Giddens, 1991) but it is routinely of much more significance than this. Because of the marginal status of such groups, they tend to borrow discourse forms from existing repertoires. This can be understood as a re-embedding or re-contextualisation of certain language habits (Giddens, 1990) and is symptomatic of their marginal status.

The second part of the chapter seeks to show why the sociology of language and religion matters, by considering a third element – that of the law. One might think that because of the borrowing of mainstream discourse practices, marginal movements are somewhat invisible, or at least not perceived in a negative way. When marginal movements come up against the law, however, what we see is a case of language contact

(or rather, language conflict). It is not simply that there is not alignment with the way in which language is used (though this is also present). The conflict makes clear that language is constitutive of discourse communities in at least two ways; it underpins epistemic concerns, and it (thereby) underpins action. Both are in conflict with the hegemonic language of the law and the dominant ideology that it represents. Further, especially in this contact situation, the law can be seen as functioning somewhat like a religion itself. I use a particular case to discuss these issues, one involving consent to treatment with a blood transfusion by a Jehovah's Witness.

## Part 1

There are a number of ways that marginal religious movements draw on conventions already established in other discourse communities. Interestingly, this is contrary to Fishman's third suggestion in his decalogue (this volume). Billig writes that 'Large numbers of adherents cannot be attracted if the specialist vocabulary and modes of thought of the ideology are employed in the proselytizing propaganda' (1982:229). Certainly, such groups develop their own languages, which outsiders may view as 'totally private' (Barnes, 1984:366). This is a view commonly held with respect to the Church of Scientology, for example. Of the movement, Wallis writes,

Hubbard has invented several hundred neologisms, for example: 'Randomity', 'itsa', 'opterm', 'midruds', 'expanded gita', 'disenturbulate' and 'as-isness'. In his writings and those of his followers, verbs and adjectives are often employed as nouns ('a withhold', 'a static') and nouns transformed into verbs ('squirrelling', 'short sessioning'). Prepositions are used in unfamiliar ways ('at cause'), and numerous contractions and acronyms are employed ('MEST', 'D of P', "Exec Sec", 'Qual', 'Org'). (Wallis, 1976:231).

While English itself is not sacred (even though it is the language chosen by, for example, L. Ron Hubbard) such inventions may be. The Jehovah's Witnesses have their own dictionary<sup>2</sup> and are said to have a particular fondness for the rhetorical question. Botting notes that "The rhetorical question is a major linguistic tool used by the Witnesses. So ingrained is its use that even casual conversation around the dinner table is permeated with self-answered questions" (1984:88). But at the interface between discourse communities, these groups are forced to coin a discourse which is not completely their own (i.e. novel) simply because other people need to understand it. At the same time, common vocabulary does not always have common meaning. Walter Martin notes this process with respect to the Mormons. A member can build a relationship with a potential member simply by using familiar language:

It is therefore possible for the Mormon theologians to use the terminology of the Bible and historic theology, but in an entirely different sense from that intended by the writers of Scripture (1985:18).

Non-members are encouraged to see similarity of belief rather than difference and any difference may be glossed over by using a familiar word in an unfamiliar way.

While a great deal of sociological work has been conducted on these marginal movements (also called New Religious Movements, 'sects' and 'cults' (see, for example, Barker, 1984, 1989; Bainbridge, 1997; Gallanter, 1999; Hall, 2000, there is very little attention given to the language of such groups (see however, Heather, 2000 and Agne and Tracey, 2001). What can be done in this chapter is only a small part of what needs to be done. For this chapter, I highlight two aspects relevant to discourse of marginal movements – science and biography. These both emerge in part 2. Further, biography especially is constitutive of identity and action in these movements.

## 2. Science

Science and religion have long had an uneasy relationship. An important way in which marginal movements capitalise on existing establishment practice is the way in which they routinely turn to science for justification of their own epistemologies and cosmologies. In our society, 'science' has a certain talismanic value, one which marginal movements (like other groups) are quick to utilise. Weaver writes, "The word [science] as it comes to us then is a little pathetic in its appeal, inasmuch as it reflects the deeply human feeling that somewhere somehow there must be people who know things 'as they are'" (1953: 216) (thus it is an excellent choice for marginal movements). That's as may be. But the appeal to science is a potent and common one. We see it in advertisements for shampoo, arguments for new psychological theories and so forth.

This is not to say that the practice of science is 'pathetic'. Harré makes a distinction between "scientific rhetoric" for which "the terminology and the general form of the discourse is the way it is because of certain features of the activities of the community of scientists" and "scientistic rhetoric" which uses the forms of scientific rhetoric without the corresponding scientific activities (1985: 180). Using scientistic rhetoric makes claims to "a place in a moral order, claims which by no means have been established beyond reasonable doubt" (Harré, 1985: 181). The use of scientistic rhetoric can obscure the absence of convincing proof. Generally, people are primed to accept the discourse cues of science as evidence of scientific rhetoric, that is, of the practice of science.

We see even in the name of the Church of Scientology an appeal to science. This appeal continues in the movement's texts. In *Dianetics*,<sup>3</sup> the reader is told that experiments proving the efficacy of Dianetics have taken place. Yet data from these experiments is never given. The conclusions supported by this absent data are merely asserted. One is often simply told "This is scientific fact" (1992: 236). One is also given spurious 'scientific' axioms such as "Only things which are poorly known become more complex the longer one works on them" (1992: 5). The most striking example of this in Scientology material is, however, semiotic. In a number of magazines intended

for members, graphs are presented with no labelling of axes whatsoever. These grids and bar charts, however, serve as ‘quantitative’ proof for arguments mounted in the text.<sup>4</sup>

Marginal movements’ appeal to science is not always one of simple invocation. The Family distinguish between ‘true’ and ‘false’ science and explicitly distinguish evolution (for example) from true science. In paragraph 3 of “The Big Lie” Berg writes, “THIS DOCTRINE OF DELUSION HAS BECOME THE GENERAL THEME OF MODERN SO-CALLED SCIENCE, which is therefore no longer TRUE science, but pure, imaginary, evolutionary BUNK!” (Berg, 1977:3).

The Jehovah’s Witnesses consider science to be the enemy of religion. They distinguish between ‘useful’ science and ‘useless’ science (an example of the latter being evolution (Botting and Botting, 1984:114)), yet they rely on science as vindication of the truth of the Bible. This is not completely congruent either. In “A Book For All People” which argues for ‘consideration’ of the Bible, the Jehovah’s Witnesses vacillate between reading the Bible literally and figuratively. In the section “Does this Book Agree with Science?” (Watchtower, 1997:18–21), the Bible is said to be literal and scientific. In an earlier section, “A Book That is Misrepresented” (1997:4–5), on the other hand, the Bible is said to have been “misinterpreted”, read literally rather than “in the language of ordinary people, often using vivid figures of speech” (1997:4).

The appeal to science is not always obvious or straightforward. It is often used to bolster an argument for the particular world-view of a movement. Like the use of common religious language, the non-member may think s/he is aware of what is at stake. This is not always the case. It is also perhaps symptomatic of the kind of people that these movements minister to. Without wanting to endorse profiling of members of marginal movements they can be seen, as Barrett describes the Family, as appealing “largely to the unchurched: individuals who cannot – or will not – be attracted to mainstream Christian denominations” (1996:112).

### 3. Autobiography

The use of biography in marginal movement texts is pronounced, occurring as founding texts and as displays of membership. The leaders of movements produce well structured accounts of their own lives which are frequently repeated as an exemplar to those within the movement. L. Ron Hubbard (various), Mary Baker Eddy (Church of Christian Science; *Retrospection and Introspection*), the Reverend Moon (Unification Church; *The Divine Principle*) have all produced well rounded accounts of their own lives which are canonical texts within their respective movements. The way in which these texts are composed, justify their authority within the group (whether the leaders are still living or not) and also impart to group members a template for life in the group. It is a template not only to be lived, but also to be told. Scientology is worth

mentioning because of its celebrity members, centres and resulting positive testimony about the movement. Such accounts capitalize on mainstream ‘fame’.

These texts also draw power from association with the textual lives of other great religious founders, Christ and Buddha for example. The power of the autobiography as a canonical text cannot be underestimated. The form allows the author to take advantage of anecdotal forms, which will be discussed shortly, while also allowing the founder to present a human face. In this way, leaders are able to bridge the gap between their ordinary human members and the (divinely) inspired self.

For the member of a movement, the autobiographic form allows for expression of affiliation with the group. Taking their cue from the leader, members construct and rehearse autobiographies which frame their lives in the ideological terms of the group. These texts allow members to express their affiliation with the movement – to self, to other members and indeed to outsiders (for the purposes of outreach and also for displaying faith). For the latter reason, these texts are often identified as witnessing texts. ‘Witnessing’ is usually associated with religious groups, but other groups perform similar discourse activity. While it is not possible to go into detailed analysis of witnessing texts,<sup>5</sup> it is important that the significance and function of these texts is outlined. Vibeke Steffen has examined the use of autobiographical material in the story telling that takes place as part of AA meetings (see McCarron, this volume).

The anecdotal form, anecdotes from one’s life, is suitable for witnessing as they bridge the gap between the personal and the general. Steffen writes, ‘Anecdotes are characterised by retaining their authenticity as individual experiences while simultaneously demonstrating relevance to other contexts’ (1996:111, my translation). Anecdotes thus contribute to a common experience, or a common way of understanding experience, by way of articulating individual experiences. Thus they are inductive, like science. The use of the witnessing structure is thus common in marginal movements. It is a way, if nothing else, of building tradition. The telling of a personal story is, Steffen writes, essential and therapeutic (1999:99).

Not for AA, but certainly for other groups, this telling of narratives is not only a way of speaking within the ‘discourse community’ but also of presenting to the outside world (Steffen, 1996:101). For Jehovah’s Witnesses the telling of personal stories, witnessing, is a moral obligation entailed by membership (Rogerson, 1969:51–2).<sup>6</sup> Part of membership is *learning* how to tell one’s story. One sees this in common structures for witnessing texts. Life before joining the movement is fraught with difficulty; conversion resolves this. How conversion occurs and what articles of faith are stressed, vary with belief content.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are often described as having a ‘rational’ conversion process (Beckford, 1975). Thus it is perhaps not surprising that they produce a periodical which is both informative and affirming of faith. *Awake!* often includes contributions from members of the movement about their personal experiences and challenges, and how their faith helped them through. In addition to this, the peri-

odical provides a forum for witnessing in the form of letters to the editor. Publication provides an international context for what also happens locally. Conversion into the Jehovah's Witnesses is usually said to occur through building relationships with a small number of existing members (Hamilton, 2001: 245).

The Family resemble an evangelical Christian group in that they witness in public. They also distribute literature during this – thus the activity is known as 'litnessing'. The celebrity portion of Scientology has been mentioned. Their testaments to the value of the movement and its teachings are used essentially as product endorsements.

The actual participation in the narrative event is a way of affirming membership status, rehearsing commitment and inculcating new members into the narrative practices of the group. These narrative practices further determine what meaning is to a group. Katz writes, "*Meaning* is a personal and subjective coloration, a texture that people engrave into all their intellectual abstractions" (1993: 55). Meaning is inscribed in narrative. If a group conditions the narrative action of its members, they also condition meaning that the members understand. Naturally, this has broader ramifications in terms of the control that a group may have over a member's world-view and decision making processes.

Part of what is at stake in this conditioning of meaning is the question of identity, as witnessing texts are a form a self-representation. The question of identity is closely tied to the 'us/them' bifurcation. Identity is not natural, it is constructed. The ideologies that we identify with identify us.

The linguistic resources developed by marginal movements define membership and also identity. That affiliation with the movement should be the primary source of identity is not surprising for at least two reasons. First, the level of commitment that many (though not all) of these movements require means that most activities in a member's life are guided by their belief system. To take an extreme example, the Heaven's Gate movement allegedly guided members in everything – to the extent of giving detailed instructions about how to mix and make pancakes.

Each day required intricate scheduling that endlessly dealt with minutiae: who would peel carrots, who would bag garbage, who would drive whom to work. A Procedures Book, big as a phone directory, was kept. It mandated the direction for pulling a razor while shaving and the proper circumference of a pancake.<sup>7</sup>

The question is, are these identities ratified when they come into contact with other discourse communities? In the next section, I will examine a particular case of contact. However, first, it is worth noting that these groups are marginal exactly because their discourse, epistemology and habitus are not in alignment with that of the dominant hegemony. This explains why groups can be marginal in one place and not another (the best example being Falun Gong, which is an evil cult in China, but considered benign elsewhere). Because of this dissonance or tension (Hamilton, 2001: 262), it is hardly surprising that the 'general public' are not always well disposed to marginal movements. This relative alignment is also important as it informs the discourse

choices of marginal movements. It is not necessary to look at accounts of marginal movements given by the mainstream 'general public' to know that these movements are marginal. Their peripheral status is evident in their own discourse choices, in that they rely on established and respected resources.

The two features mentioned above (science and biography) are not accidental choices. Science has a prestige in the West. Biographical accounts of founders are considered normal for religious groups. Such texts are the sacred foundation of many such accepted movements. It is possible to see these choices as 'aspirational' in that they can be read as taking advantage of repertoires already existing and already esteemed. Why one might read them as aspirational, however, is crucially linked to the status of marginal movements. They have to draw on existing repertoires in some way not because they are not capable of generating their own, but exactly because they are marginal.

#### 4. Discourse context

Swales' discourse community provides a useful way of understanding the epistemic and pragmatic underpinnings of groups (1990). However, to completely understand marginal movements, they need to be seen in conjunction with the discourses that they are responding to and which respond to them. For example, they need to be seen in conjunction with the discourse repertoires on which they rely. The notion of a 'discourse context' allows us to examine the juncture points between discourse communities. Discourse does not take place in a vacuum. It can only be understood in ideological (and may I suggest 'meaningful') terms if we negotiate the boundaries of communities. In short, this is a way of theorising language contact which takes into account the epistemic and identity potential of language variants.

Essentially, the 'discourse context' takes into account the fact that discourse communities talk to, about and respond to, each other. In the marginal movement discourse context we find not only movements themselves but also those opposed to the movements sociologists working in the field of 'new religious movements' (and the like) and indeed any discourse community talking about marginal movements. Thus, the discourse context is a collection of discourse communities.

In a very real sense, marginal movements only exist in the context of a discourse context. Macdonnell notes that "meaning exists antagonistically: it comes from positions in struggle" (1986: 47). The groups that one might like to identify as marginal movements would not identify themselves in this way, even though they would see themselves as discourse communities, and as separate from the mainstream. It is only in context that we can see ideological positions at work.

## Part 2

The particular vertex in the discourse context that will be considered here is that between an marginal movements and the law. I have chosen a very particular case in order to make some general points about the way in which the law (in the context of the UK courts) articulates and forcefully reproduces its own moral and epistemic values. In this case of language contact, the discourse of the marginal movements is reframed in terms of, and subordinated to, the dominant discourse of legal objectivity and paternalism.

Although Gearon (2002:3) remarks that “The term ‘religion’ is seen to be self-designating” in reality it is not allowed to be. The law limits and defines what religion is allowed to mean, and how religion can and must be manifest while taking into consideration such things as ‘democracy’, national security, public health and morals and the ‘rights and freedoms of others’. In short, the law decides for society what can be sacred and what is profane (to use Durkheim’s distinction). Further, and increasingly, the UK inscribes religion into a shifting order of democracy and morality (Presently, this order is also responding to the ‘evil other’, terrorism (Edge, 1999)).

### 5. Refusing to eat blood

*CHRISTIANS are forbidden by God’s law to ingest blood by any means. (Acts 15:28, 29) ([www.watchtower.org](http://www.watchtower.org))*

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are a well known religious movement. This is probably due to two reasons: their door to door proselytising, and their refusal to accept blood transfusions. It is the latter that in many ways has led to their marginal status. It is probably safe to say they are certainly not considered pernicious even though they have their critics (e.g. Wells, 1986). When they come up against the law their marginal status is clear. Wybraniec and Finke report that religions “in tension with society are more likely to be involved with the judiciary” (2001:433). Essentially, this tension means that such groups seek the protection of the courts (for religious freedom, for example) but are less likely to receive favourable judgements than their mainstream counterparts (Wybraniec and Finke, 2001).

The situation in the case examined here, is one of blood transfusion. The case concerns a minor, just shy of his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. In the case he is identified as A.<sup>8</sup> For ease of reading, I will call him Andrew. Andrew was suffering from leukaemia. The “conventional treatment in the sense that it is recognised by haematologists worldwide to be the norm” (per Ward J.) is to treat with four drugs, the effects of these being such that blood transfusions are necessary. Andrew and his parents (all committed Jehovah’s Witnesses) did not wish this treatment to be carried out. The alternative, which was already being pursued, was a regime of two drugs. This did not

require blood transfusions. One assumes Andrew was already a full baptized member of the church because he did not wish to receive a blood transfusion. The Watchtower Society, that is, the Jehovah's Witnesses, defines baptism (which results in full membership) as follows: 'This act symbolizes one's dedication to God and is taken by those of *responsible* age who have made an informed decision. Baptism is by complete water immersion' (my emphasis).<sup>9</sup>

The 'responsible age' here is crucial as this is one of the issues raised in the case. UK law is well established such that a mentally competent adult can refuse medical treatment, even if this may result in their suffering or death (Kennedy and Grubb, 2000; *Airedale NHS Trust v. Bland* (1993) AC 789). If a medical professional provides treatment when such consent has not been given, they risk being prosecuted for assault and/or trespass to the person (*Sidway v Bethlem Royal Hospital Governors* (1985) 1 BMLR 132 at 139–40).

The legal equivalent to 'responsible age' is 16. The Judge, Justice Ward does not accept any argument about this. He does consider whether Andrew is 'Gillick' competent (*Chatterton v Gerson* [1981] Q.B. 432), as, if this is the case, a minor under the age of 16 can consent. I shall return to this presently. Normally, parents would provide consent on behalf of a minor, that is (since the 1969 Family Reform Act), any child under the age of 16 years. In this case, however, the parents agree with Andrew not wanting to consent to blood transfusion. In this case, then, the doctors treating Andrew are not so much challenging his legal ability to give or withhold consent, but that of the parents to make a particular withdrawal of consent.

Without going into all the details of the judgment, Justice Ward held (and this is relevant to Gillick competence):

I am quite satisfied that A does not have any sufficient comprehension of the pain he has yet to suffer, of the fear that he will be undergoing, of the distress not only occasioned by that fear but also – and importantly – the distress he will inevitably suffer as he, a loving son, helplessly watches his parents' and his family's distress. They are a close family, and they are a brave family, but I find that he [Andrew] has no realisation of the full implications which lie before him as to the process of dying.

Whether anyone has realisation of the full implications of dying is questionable. The difference is that with respect to a minor, the Court is able to do something. Indeed as Justice Ward has already indicated, Andrew's understanding is beside the point; as he is not 16 it is not his choice to make. Further, Justice Ward appears to be making a distinction between Andrew's faith, which he attests he respects, and the actions that this faith would entail, which he will not allow.<sup>10</sup> This passage, it seems to me, is a way of rhetorically paying respect to the family and their beliefs, while legally denying what the family want this to mean.<sup>11</sup>

Justice Ward then turns to the question of whether the Court can make Andrew a ward of the Crown and allow the blood transfusion and treatment. Here, the question is whether withholding consent is congruent with,

...the well-being, welfare or interest (each expression occasionally used but each for this purpose synonymous) of the human being concerned, that is, the ward herself or himself (Re B (a minor) (1987) 2 BMLR 126 at 133).

Justice Ward states that the judgment as to welfare needs to be taken 'objectively'.<sup>12</sup>

The objective standard by which I therefore judge this case is the standard of the ordinary mother and father. In that sense it is wholly objective. In another sense, of course, it is subjective in that I am not looking at an ordinary child but I am looking at this particular child. I have, therefore, to apply that objective basis to this particular ward of court, given the question that is to be decided, and given his own position as a boy of growing maturity living in the religious society that he does.

In this, Justice Ward implicitly makes the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses un-ordinary, at least in this particular religious society (that is, one in which the Witnesses are a minority and not properly accommodated). The religious welfare of Andrew is not fully taken into account; however his commitment is praised. The only welfare that the court considers is physical. If this is not enough, Justice Ward continues to question the influence that Andrew's faith and faith community have had on his convictions. In the following, there is a suggestion that, not only are the Jehovah's Witnesses a minority, they are a group who bully their members.

Without wishing to introduce into the case notions of undue influence, I find that the influence of the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses is strong and powerful. The very fact that this family can contemplate the death of one of its members is the most eloquent testimony of the power of that faith. He is a boy who seeks and needs the love and respect of his parents whom he would wish to honour as the Bible exhorts him to honour them. I am far from satisfied that at the age of 15 his will is fully free. He may assert it, but his volition has been conditioned by the very powerful expressions of faith to which all members of the creed adhere. ... I respect this boy's profession of faith, but I cannot discount at least the possibility that he may in later years suffer some diminution in his convictions. There is no settled certainty about matters of this kind.

It seems to me that there is never any settled certainty about matters of this kind, whether one is a teenager or not. Essentially, this case depends on the fact that the refusal to accept blood transfusions is not one accepted by the dominant ideology of Western society. It is not accepted in a medical, legal or even moral sense. Unsurprisingly, Justice Ward cites with approval the landmark American case, *Prince v Massachusetts* (1944) 321 US Rep 158 where Judge Holmes H held,

Parents may be free to become martyrs themselves, but it does not follow that they are free in identical circumstances to make martyrs of their children before they have reached the age of full and legal discretion when they can make choices for themselves.

Ward continues,

... here is compelling and overwhelming force in the submission of the Official Solicitor that this court, exercising its prerogative of protection, should be very slow to allow an infant to martyr himself.

Andrew has thus been re-lexicalised. He was a 'teenager'; he is now an 'infant'.

If we consider here the case of 'true' infants, that is, newborn babies, and another kind of medical intervention we see a very different state of affairs. Bridge points out that circumcision "does not belong to the 'fringe' but constitutes a part of the majority norm. As such it has always been acceptable to society at large" as it is associated with majority religions (1999:5). She further notes that generally in cases of consent for medical treatment of minors "The personal convictions of the majority are ranked more highly than the 'crank' opinions of the minority" (1999:11). In short,

"the courts have not yet come to terms with religious and cultural diversity. Although the courts are clearly right in overriding sincerely held beliefs that would endanger the life of a small child, the court has not yet embraced the concept of religious and cultural welfare" (1999:15).

Interestingly, she also points out that courts are likely to give more parental freedom in the case of non-religious values (1999:15).

Andrew's account of his life and beliefs (his autobiography), was not accepted by the court. Instead, conventional medical (scientific) and legal values determined, against his and his parents' wishes, what would happen to him. Even though marginal movements have attempted to stake a claim on establishment discourse ground by using respected repertoires, it is clear that when they come into contact with the mainstream, they are considered little better than trespassers.

## 6. Conclusion

Certainly all individuals who come within the reach of the law can be said to exist in the society of that law. However, the *habitus* in which they actually live may well not be that of the cultural majority. It seems to me that it is possible to understand the law itself as religion which seeks to put down those religions which come into conflict with the dominant ideology that supports the law. Knott notes that for many "religion is like stamp-collecting or playing squash, a minor hobby" (1986:4). It is not considered significant enough to challenge established science and law; especially if it is a marginal religion.

Giddens remarks that religions seem to have the following in common: "a set of *symbols*, invoking feelings of *reverence* or *awe*, and are linked to rituals or ceremonials (such as church services), engaged in by a community of believers" (1993:458). Without wanting to detail the comparison, it seems to me that the law (because of

the way it is made and those who practice it) could also be called a religion. Thus to hold that the UK is largely secular in its politics, is to miss the sublimation of religious beliefs (though routinely labelled ‘democratic’) into its very foundations. These beliefs will, in a legal setting, always win out over competing beliefs. Haynes writes,

with the specific Durkheimian stipulation of *church* as the generic concept for *moral community*, *priest* for the *custodians of the sacred law*, and *state* for *political community* can we comfortably use these concepts in Islamic and other non-Christian contexts (1998: 3), like, for example, the law of the state itself.

Sarat makes a distinction between the “legitimate force” of the state applied to those who through acts of violence come into the consideration of the law (1996). This is essentially done through linguistic force; speech acts coming from suitably qualified legal voices. The law, in applying violence and punishment, seeks to protect society from what *it* defines as violent, coercive, and immoral from what it defines as a threat. In the case of religion, the law sanctions actions which cohere with its own ideology; it punishes beliefs that do not.

According to Durkheim (1969: 17), “Law reproduces the principle forms of social solidarity”. In multi-cultural, multi-faith states, this solidarity is either problematised and complex or non-existent. This is the central paradox with which the law deals in cases of religious freedom. Bourdieu, drawing on Weber, notes that “dominant groups always need a ‘theodicy of their own privilege’, or more precisely, a sociodicy, in other words a theoretical justification of the fact that they are privileged” (1998: 43). I am not arguing that the personal religious convictions of legislators and the judiciary define the law. Rather, it seems that the structures of the law (which are not dissimilar to those of religion), determine what is acceptable as ‘religion’.

## Notes

1. This is derived from a larger piece of work which focuses on the ‘recruiting’ language of marginal movements. The movements discussed there are the Church of Scientology, The Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Family. Thus I also focus on them here. See Mooney, Annabelle. *The Recruiting Rhetoric of Religious ‘Cults’: Terms of use and abuse*. Palgrave: London (2005).
2. See [www.eecs.umich.edu/~lnewton/glossary/](http://www.eecs.umich.edu/~lnewton/glossary/)
3. This is a foundation text for the movement. Dianetics is the therapy which underpins the practice of Scientology.
4. Unfortunately I have no reference for these member texts, having only had them for a couple of days in 1994.
5. However see Mooney, Annabelle. “Showing Who You Are: Witnessing Texts”, *ARC* 2004, 32: 182–211.
6. “[N]o Bible student was entirely [52] sincere unless he felt it was his duty to disseminate the

truth. In practice this means walking from door to door trying to sell Watchtower magazines and other Society literature”

7. [http://www.stolaf.edu/people/leming/soc260fam/news/April\\_28.html](http://www.stolaf.edu/people/leming/soc260fam/news/April_28.html)
8. *Re E (a minor)* [1993] 1 FLR 386, 9 BMLR 1, [1993] Fam Law 116; retrieved from lexis-Nexis.
9. <http://www.jw-media.org/beliefs/membership.htm>.
10. *C.f. Arrowsmith v. United Kingdom* (1978) 3 EHRR 218, Cm. para. 71
11. *C.f.* Section 13 of the Human Rights Act (1998). See Crumper, 2000:263–5.
12. See also *Re South Place Ethical Society* [1980] 3 All ER 918 at 924 for an appeal to objectivity in definition ‘religion’.

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PART IV

**Language and religion  
on literacy**



## The role of liturgical literacy in UK Muslim communities

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### 1. Introduction

This chapter draws on a wider study<sup>1</sup> that aims to explore some of the social and cultural processes which have given rise to what I have termed 'liturgical literacy'. Wagner et alia (1986) use the term 'religious literacy' to describe having attended a Qur'anic school in urban or rural Morocco. I prefer 'liturgical' as it restricts the literacy involved to that used exclusively for ritual and devotional practices, and, in itself, is a word intimately linked with notions of words, texts and scripts. The liturgical literacy of Islam is Qur'anic Arabic and is an example of what Fishman (1989) calls a 'religious classical' and shares a similar sociolinguistic position to, among others, Biblical Hebrew and Ecclesiastical Greek within certain Jewish and Greek communities respectively. This chapter discusses perspectives on liturgical literacy, offers some definitions and explores its role within a small but typical UK Muslim community. It addresses three linked questions: What is liturgical literacy generally and in this community? What role does it play in this community? How does it interact with and relate to other literacies?

Fishman (1989) reminds us that, universally, the status of liturgical literacy, which he categorises linguistically as a *religious classical*, once in competition with other languages (vernaculars) and literacies for community support, is privileged:

Ethnocultural minorities with religious classics are engaged in a two-front struggle. Not only must they seek to maintain control of their intergroup and intragroup boundaries insofar as their vernaculars are concerned...but they must also seek to do the same insofar as their religious classics are concerned...[W]hen differentials develop, it is recurrently the religious classical that is retained longer than the vernacular. The religious domain has more authoritative (and, therefore, more resistant) boundaries than does the minority ethnocultural system as a whole, it is less exposed to majority society, its language use is more ritualised and more sanctified, and its whole tradition is more tradition-and-stability oriented. (Fishman, 1989, p.229, my emphasis)

In this chapter I attempt to show that a particular 'two-front' (or 'three-front') struggle

taking place at present within a UK Muslim community is being clearly won by the religious classical, Qur'anic Arabic, at the expense of the community's vernacular languages, Mirpuri-Punjabi and Urdu.

The domain of liturgical literacy is wide and complex. It has a long and often controversial history. Its place in the twenty first century is also varied and contested. It has often had a bad press, particularly in its Islamic form, and held up in a bad light in comparison with other forms of literacy. MacDonald, for example, emphasises the 'rote' nature of the learning involved:

It trains the memory and the power of reasoning – always in formal methods – and then gives to neither any adequate material on which to work. The memory is burdened with verbatim knowledge of the Qur'an and some outlines of Theology and law, and the reason is exhausted in elaborate argumentations therefrom deduced. (MacDonald, 1916 pp 228–289)

Qur'anic school imposes on the child a purely mechanical, monotonous form of study in which nothing is likely to rouse his interest. (Zerdoumi, 1970, p 96)

And when an attack on such literacy is not intended, writers often reveal their subconscious distaste with value-laden words and expressions making invidious comparisons with Western learning as in Bledsoe and Robey:

Arabic is traditionally studied from the Qur'an under a karamoko (Arabic teacher, Islamic scholar) who demands *stringent discipline, laborious work, and long-term commitments* from his students. (Bledsoe & Robey, 1993 p.116, my emphasis)

English (or any other non-liturgical literacy) is obviously taught and learnt effortlessly in an environment of perfect motivation needing only a short time for its mastery...

However, it is not only Qur'anic liturgical literacy which is thus disparaged. Reder and Wikelund (1993) report that the Old Church Slavonic liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church still present in Alaska is being slowly but surely replaced by the dominant English literacy introduced by Baptists:

The technology of the Baptists' literacy was English-based and used the Roman alphabet, whereas the Orthodox literacy used Cyrillic script in Slavonic and Alutiiq. Few if any Orthodox parishioners understood the Slavonic services they attended; participation was by rote, and comprehension of the oral languages was limited. (Reder and Wikelund, 1993, p. 184)

Note here the substitution of not only language but also script (there are no linguistic reasons why Alutiiq could not be maintained with a Slavonic script.) This colonizing aspect of the seemingly neutral technology of a script is discussed below where the script associated with a dominant language comes to be used for other languages. One might argue that a single script, when dealing with several languages, would be economic and more practical, allowing for the transfer of skills learnt acquiring the script in one language to facilitate learning literacy in another. It is rare that such a

decision, one that is likely to be made officially once official resources come into play, is made solely on linguistic grounds. Rather, the dominant script will be adopted by default for political reasons. Azerbaijan is currently experiencing its fourth major alphabet change in a century. Originally using an Arabic-Persian script reflecting its geographical position and political ties to the Ottoman Empire, the language briefly flirted with Roman script immediately following the Communist Revolution, was obliged to conform with the rest of the Soviet Union and adopt a form of Cyrillic, and is now once again attempting to re-introduce a Roman script in the wake of the break-up of the Soviet Union (Grimes, 1992). A script is rarely neutral. The use of other scripts is a vital issue for the community featuring in this chapter.

The ethnocentrism of the remarks made above is sometimes matched by the ‘chronocentrism’ of other writers describing literacy practices from the past. Graff (1979) argues that the claims for universal literacy in Sweden before the end of the eighteenth century are weakened when we bear in mind that the literacy in question was guided by religious considerations:

...good reading ability did not relate strongly to the ability to understand. Popular skills tested well in assessments of oral reading and in memorisation. They were, however, much less useful when it came to comprehension... (Graff, 1979, p.310)

With religion becoming less and less of an influence on the lives of many people living in the world today, particularly the Western world, it may seem bizarre to focus upon a literacy practice which, to some minds, appears irrelevant, outmoded and clearly unsatisfactory. As the authority on learning to read, Frank Smith, reminds us, exclusive attention to the phonic dimension of the reading act leads to what he terms ‘barking at print’. Reading without meaning? Where is the point in that? (Smith, 1994, p. 7)

However, millions of people, worldwide, participate in this literacy practice, many on a daily basis, and do not, in the slightest, perceive their practice to be meaningless, but are obviously satisfied with it.

## 2. Liturgical literacy: Defining remarks

Liturgical literacy is understood as that use of reading, more rarely writing, which is essential to ritual and other devotional practices connected with an established religion, usually a ‘religion of the book’, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The language of the liturgy is often different to that spoken by the congregation, such as Arabic in non-Arab countries, Old Church Slavonic in the Russian Orthodox Church, or the retention of Latin in some aspects of Roman Catholicism<sup>2</sup>. Even when the language of the liturgy is considered the same as the spoken tongue of the congregation, there is often a difference in register, style and vocabulary which can problematise

meaning. This is the case in the Arabic-speaking world where the Arabic of the Qur'an is not the same as the spoken Arabic of the congregation. That there is a difference is due to the considerable passage of time that has elapsed from the period of the first scripted Qur'an (650 AD) to the present moment and to the extensive geographical spread of the Arabic language. Although the written form of the Qur'an crystallises a moment in the history of Arabic, and indeed has acted as a conservative force on the Arabic language throughout its history, the spoken language moves inexorably on through time and place. An English reader with little appreciation of the diglossic situation which exists with many languages in the world would do well to think of the differences between the language of Shakespeare, a version of English crystallised at a particular moment in history, and the spoken language of today four hundred years later. For a large part of the population, much of what Shakespeare has written is hard to understand on first hearing without the aid of the text.

### 3. Islamic liturgical literacy

The liturgy often is derived from the central scripture of the religion involved. In the liturgical literacy in this chapter the liturgy is derived from the Qur'an. The Qur'an, according to Muslim belief, was a book revealed to the Arabian Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century AD. It was revealed in Arabic and committed to memory by the early followers of Islam many of whom had memorised the entire book. Soon after the death of Muhammad, when many of the memorizers of the Qur'an had died and there was a fear that the Qur'an might be lost, the Prophet's inheritor, Abu Bakr, ordered the Qur'an to be written down. The first written version of the Qur'an is almost identical to any copy of the book found in any mosque today.

Islam is, *par excellence*, a religion centred on literacy. The first word revealed was the imperative 'iqra''(Read!)<sup>3</sup>. This was, in Islamic tradition, a miraculous event in many ways. The Prophet Muhammad was unable to read having never been taught. Despite the primacy of the overwhelmingly oral culture of seventh century Arabia and the Prophet's own lack of literacy, reading from very first days of Islam was always of the utmost importance and was considered a pathway to virtue. An early instruction of the Prophet was to free prisoners-of-war who were able to teach someone to read. Alongside memorisation of the Qur'an, a common practice was to memorise sayings of the Prophet. These too were eventually written down after the compilers of collections of these sayings<sup>4</sup> devoted their lives to authenticating them and arranging them. In the Islamic religion, therefore, there are two scriptural sources. However, it is the Qur'an which is used most extensively in the liturgy in the mosques and in private devotions. Chapters and verses of the book are used regularly in congregational and individual prayers. Indeed, it is impossible for a Muslim to pray without reading the first chapter of the Qur'an, the Opening<sup>5</sup>, which is always followed by other verses:

*The Opening**In the name of God, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate**Praise be to God, Lord of all worlds,**The Merciful, the Compassionate,**The King of the Day of Judgment.**It is You we worship and it is from You we seek help.**Show us the straight path,**The path of those you have favoured**Not the path of those with whom you are angry, or of those who are astray**Amen (my translation)*

The Qur'an is read individually as part of one's individual devotions. It can also be read in a group as part of group devotions. It is often read aloud for people to listen to. It is often read in its entirety during the month of Ramadan, either individually or by the congregation as a whole during the nightly extra prayers of tarawih<sup>6</sup>. It is read aloud to accompany birth and to accompany death. It is read in times of distress and in times of joy. It is referred to in nearly every sermon and religious talk with verses quoted and explained. In the Arabic-speaking world, its language has entered common parlance. As the human form is not generally depicted in art form, the words of the Qur'an have become of great significance in the Islamic art form of calligraphy. Most mosques will have decorations featuring Qur'anic verses and words. Copies of the Qur'an will also be very much in evidence on window shelves or in bookcases. The Qur'an will also feature in the home with decorative calligraphy on walls and copies of the Qur'an on shelves often decorated. The car will also usually contain a Qur'an. Wallets may have small credit-card size verses. Jewellery will often feature verses, in particular the 'Throne' verse for protection<sup>7</sup>

The community who are the subject of this chapter do not speak or understand Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. For them, the language of the Qur'an has a sound they can replicate, a form they can recognise, but a meaning which eludes them. For an understanding of their religion, they have to be taught in their mother tongue by, in theory, someone with access to the meaning, or they have to read in a language they understand. When they pray, they use their liturgical language which is Arabic. They will also be able, at varying stages of proficiency, to read the Qur'an. This will be decoding and may be aloud or silent. They will probably also know a few common interjections and sayings in Arabic which they will use regularly in conversation such as 'al hamdu lillah' (thanks be to God), 'subhan Allah' (glory to God) and 'astaghfirullah' (May God forgive us).

In order to be able to participate in this liturgical language considerable investment in terms of time and money has to be expended. Instruction is begun on a part-time basis at the age of six and continues until a reasonable level of proficiency in decoding is achieved. At the end of this period a young person is left able to read the Qur'an and able to conduct his or her prayers correctly.

The meaning of the words which are read or recited in the prayer are usually *not*

known apart from a general sense of ‘these words are good and are directed to God’. In theory, the imam of the mosque, who is often the Qur’anic instructor as well, has a good enough command of Arabic to understand what he reads. In practice, this is not necessarily so. Many UK imams, though studying for many years a range of Islamic sciences, end up with an imprecise knowledge of Arabic that renders their interpretations insecure, were they to attempt them. Thankfully, it may be argued, this they do not generally do. There is a lengthy and respectable tradition of commentaries in Urdu, their preferred literary language, which provides them with all the interpretations and explanations they will ever need. Sadly, for many of the members of the community involved, particularly the young, these Urdu commentaries and explanations are, too, beyond their understanding, as literacy in the mother tongue is often lacking. Such members of the congregation find themselves marginalized in their communities though without ever fully realising so.

This particular form of liturgical literacy, where the language of the literacy is removed both geographically and temporally from the language of the participants, is not that uncommon, and can be found in many other examples from around the world. For example, the Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, although not native speakers of Hebrew, learn to read and recite Biblical Hebrew in order to allow them to fulfil their religious responsibilities. Until recently, Latin was an integral part of the liturgy in both the English and French Catholic Churches. The Coptic Church in Egypt has a liturgy in Copt, a language not spoken for over 1500 years.

However, the liturgical literacy does not exist in a vacuum, there to be learnt and used regardless of the social context in which it finds itself. In this community, alongside the role of the liturgical literacy, there are other languages and literacies, each with its varying social role and function. The fate of the liturgical literacy is intimately linked with the fates of those other literacies, and the interplay among them is crucial in any understanding of the literacy practices of this community. Thus it is important to note the respective importance given to liturgical literacy in comparison to literacy in English or literacy in Urdu, or knowledge of poetry in Punjabi. Gregory and Williams (2000) have used a model of contrasting literacies in order to illustrate this interplay and have suggested that teachers in mainstream schools who ignore community-based literacy practices deprive themselves of important knowledge about the children they teach:

It is a model based on the belief that contrasting rather than similar home and school strategies and practices provide a child with a larger treasure trove from which to draw for school learning. The key task for teachers is to tap into this knowledge and to teach children to become conscious of existing knowledge and skills, to enable children to compare and contrast different languages and literacy practices. It is a model that is particularly relevant for children whose families do not share the literacy practices of the teachers and the school and whose

reading skills, therefore, risk remaining invisible. (Gregory and Williams, 2000, pp 10–11)

The amount of time and effort devoted by this community to liturgical literacy suggests that it has a very high priority. This is not to say that the community does not value other literacies. In fact, it is fundamentally unfair to claim that this community, or any other similar community, can make a genuine choice regarding preferred cultural and social practices when its marginalized position militates against realistic choices. Would not every community, given the appropriate amount of resources and support, wish to maintain and nourish its cultural heritage, as well as confidently adapting to new situations, preserving literacies as well as developing new ones?

#### 4. Origins of the wider study

The study from which this chapter is derived has its origins in my own professional experience. I have spent the majority of my career teaching English in UK secondary schools with significant numbers of pupils who have English as an additional language and, significantly, who are Muslim. As a teacher of reading, I noted quite quickly that these pupils were able to decode text in English very proficiently, in a manner well in advance of their comprehension ability, and often in advance of their chronological ages or even their monolingual non-Muslim peers. Initially, I naïvely put this down to a successful programme of bilingual support provided by a team of peripatetic teachers. For instance, in the mid-nineteen eighties it was still quite common for Local Education Authorities to have a separate centre where English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils followed an intense programme of English away from their peers until such a time as was considered appropriate for them to be admitted to mainstream classes. However, when this method of support fell from favour, in the interests of inclusion, these pupils were managed within the secondary school through a balanced programme of in-class support and occasional withdrawal. However, as the perceived advanced decoding continued to manifest itself in the reading behaviour of these pupils, my original conclusions as to where this superior decoding was developed had to be re-assessed.

Alongside this professional experience, I was also able to draw on my own experience of learning to read in other languages, and more significantly, in different scripts. Having learnt Russian, and therefore the Cyrillic alphabet, at secondary school, and Arabic whilst teaching in Egypt, and as a consequence of embracing Islam, the written Arabic of the Qur'an, it became apparent that mastery of a code was a linguistic skill often easily developed in isolation from other skills such as reading for meaning. If you also add to this exotic mixture my self-taught musical notation, without being able to create music in any form whatsoever, then it became equally apparent that it was possible to develop a highly developed skill which, for cultural or religious reasons,

was often detached from more meaning-laden aspects of language such as creativity and comprehension.

Furthermore, teaching practice in the mosque which I observed in the course of my own visits, and also, in my own experience of teaching adults and children to read the Qur'an in an informal manner at home or in other houses, led me to reflect on the nature of learning to read the Qur'an for the pupils in the school who shared this religious practice. This led to a small-scale quantitative study undertaken to demonstrate the advanced decoding ability of Muslim secondary school pupils when reading texts in English, and the discrepancy between it and the same pupils' comprehension ability (Rosowsky, 2001).

It was clear that a possible reason for this advanced decoding ability was the intense decoding activity experienced by these pupils on an almost daily basis from the age of six until thirteen, albeit in a language other than English. It was also clear that the liturgical literacy learnt in the mosque, in the eyes of the dominant community, was a marginalised and under-reported social and educational practice which deserved a more just and detailed description. As a form of community education, it had provoked little research, either in terms of community culture and identity or in terms of its relationship with other, including schooled, literacies.

## 5. The minority community

This chapter features one of the large number of Muslim communities now present in many cities of western Europe, and, in particular, those communities of a south Asian origin which are found in many cities and towns, often in the Midlands and the north of the United Kingdom. The languages spoken by these communities are varied and fully support the notion of the United Kingdom as very much a multilingual society (Trudgill, 1984). The fact that they all share a common liturgical language, or more precisely liturgical literacy, means that their linguistic profile is a complex one.

This particular community has its origins in the Mirpur province of Pakistani Punjab and Azad Kashmir. From the 1950s onwards, men came from this province<sup>8</sup>, sometimes via the British merchant navy, to work in the steelworks and related industries in South Yorkshire. Wives and sometimes other family members followed later. The community settled in cheaper, inner city, mainly terraced housing in east Sheffield and either side of Riverton city centre. Nowadays, most of the jobs which brought them to the UK have gone. Many males now work in the taxi industry. Others are unemployed. The national statistics for ethnic minority unemployment apply strongly in the area. Children attend local primary and secondary schools. In the late seventies, recognition of the educational needs of these children meant that additional resources were provided to Local Education Authorities in the form of Section 11 of the Commonwealth Immigration Act which later became the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG). As the community has become more

affluent, travel to and from Pakistan has increased for adults and for children with long spells out of the classroom affecting educational progress. However, it is also true that, with each new generation born in the UK, links with Pakistan, and, as a result, reasons for travel, are becoming weaker.

The language spoken by the community is generally Mirpuri-Punjabi, a dialect spoken in the corresponding region in Pakistan. The dialect has a written form which uses the Urdu script (which in turn is derived from Arabic script via Persian). However, this written form is generally only encountered in poetry. The principal literary language is Urdu which is the literary language of the state of Pakistan, and before that the written language of the Muslims in pre-partition India. Hindi and Urdu are mutually intelligible. Not all of the community will speak Mirpuri-Punjabi as their mother tongue.

Among the younger generation, particularly, the grandchildren of the first immigrants (third generation), there is much greater use of English at home, particularly when conversing with siblings, though it would be more accurate to describe this use of English as elaborate code-switching (Baynham, 1993). At school, Mirpuri-Punjabi is used freely among friends, though schools (and teachers) vary in their response to its use, with some warmly celebrating the linguistic repertoire of their pupils whereas others feel the need to restrict its use in the classroom. Urdu is now being offered to pupils, though again schools vary in their provision. Some are very imaginative and offer the language as a second language to all pupils regardless of ethnic background. Other schools target the language at only 'relevant' pupils and thus underline their marginalisation.

Subsequent studies to this one will have to plot the development of the Mirpuri-Punjabi dialect in the UK, but, with its close proximity to English, and distance from its geographical roots, it is highly unlikely that it will follow the same course as the same dialect in Pakistan. However, it is also apparent that this dialect is now very much part of the linguistic tapestry of the United Kingdom. The community, however, is significantly concerned about the long-term future of its mother tongue, which is already showing signs of shift among the younger generation.

It says something about the community and its religion when it is obvious that it invests considerably more time, and money, to developing literacy in the Qur'an than it does to developing literacy in the most appropriate literary language, Urdu. Although Urdu is taught in the mosques (though not in all), it is always subordinate to Qur'anic Arabic.

There is little doubt that of the four languages in use in the community, it is the Qur'anic Arabic that is the most closely preserved and nurtured. If one measures the importance of a cultural practice of a community by the amount of time, effort and resources put into it by community members, it is overwhelmingly evident that liturgical literacy is its most important cultural practice. Complex and extensive arrangements have been and are in place for the continuation of this practice:

**How long have they been teaching children in the mosque?**

*From the beginning, but mostly when we had the mosque at Church Walk. At that time not mostly families, all single men. Families started coming to this country in 1965/1967, after that they started to come in this country. And when children arrived, there was a need to be Muslim. It was realised that there needed to be teaching in the mosque. And they started teaching.*

**In the Midboro area what percentage of children attend the mosque classes, do you think?**

*At the early age of 5 or 6, I think all children.*

**Are there any families who do not send their children to the mosque school?**

*As far as I know, I think it is all families. No one refuses to send their children. They contribute money as well for reading. One pound a week for each child.*

**Your brother mentioned about how hard it is to pay the imam a decent wage...**

*All the people who go to the mosque they pay everything.*

**Does the mosque have to pay for the imam's house?**

*Actually, they do. They pay wages which includes rent and everything. (Mahmood)*

We can see from this brief exchange the commitment that is given to liturgical literacy within the community. Of course, the principal advantage liturgical literacy has over its secular rivals in the language maintenance race is that liturgical literacy is an essential part of the community's deeply held religious faith. We have already seen that knowledge of liturgical literacy is necessary in order for a Muslim to pray. Reading, in the decoding sense outlined here, is a cultural activity not about seeking knowledge from books in order to inform faith, but is the very stuff of religious worship. A Muslim believes that he or she is participating in a sacred act whilst reciting the Qur'an. With religion being the principal identifying factor within the community it is no surprise that the community's resources are directed towards liturgical literacy.

**How important is it for your children to learn the Qur'an?**

*(i) Very very important, this is our religion you see. Qur'an is part of our life. And there is a big thawab (reward), you know. For reading the Qur'an. When I was young, I didn't know anything about this Qur'an. Now I understand, I am a Muslim, I should know. (Munir)*

*(ii) We are Muslims, I myself think so it is very important for Muslim children actually. Because we are here and we live, children need to learn the Qur'an, no matter where they are, this country, or somewhere else. This is very important. (Hameed)*

*(iii) Very, very important. To the children. Especially on the religious side. **More important than Urdu or Punjabi.** The Qur'an. I tend to believe it is very important. It doesn't matter where you live, to keep one's religion is very important. (Hanif, my emphasis)*

Furthermore, there is evidence in the comments made by interviewees that this particular religious and literacy practice is, unlike spoken Mirpuri and written Urdu, gaining strength within the community. Many of the fathers mentioned how their experience of liturgical literacy as a child was less intensive and more casual than that experienced by their own children.

**Where did you learn to read the Qur'an?**

*I learnt in Church Walk mosque.*

**So you didn't learn when you were a child?**

*No, no. At that time actually, I was only young and nobody guided me, this is very important...*

**You grew up in a village, and you had a school, did they do the Qur'an in the school?**

*Yes, they used to give a lesson in middle school. Not in primary school. When I went to middle school at about 12 years old, I finished after about 3 or 4 years, and they used to give a lesson, and I can't understand at that time, I was young.*

**So the young ones didn't go to the mosque after school to learn Qur'an like they do here?**

*At that time, the children used to go the mosque, but our father used to work at sea, on a ship, and nobody in our family told us to go the mosque it is very important. It's like now, the children go the mosque and they go to school as well. And at that time, we weren't bothered about it. And now I am grown up and I understand this is very important, you know, reading the Qur'an. Very, very important. (Munir)*

In addition, they, too, had taken advantage of the arrangements made for their children to learn or re-learn liturgical literacy. With the presence in the community of scholars and qualified imams, they could, for the first time, benefit from informed and experienced teaching. This was not necessarily the case back home when they were children themselves where facilities and personnel were not always available:

**When you came to England when you were 16, was that it? You could read the Qur'an, or have you learned more while you have been here?**

*I have learned in the last two years in here. I have tried to learn it for about two months. With the imam in Church Walk mosque. And they teach very very differently there than how we read in our village. He teaches us very different there...*

**Does he teach you more accurate pronunciation?**

*Yeah, more accurate...because the reading of the Qur'an is where the words come out from the throat, the nose. And he tries to explain that. It is not easy for us...*

**Did he just teach you or was there a group?**

*We were a group of 5 or 6. Same as my age. 50-55.*

**Once a week?**

*No, every day we did that. (Hameed)*

Therefore, not only are the children of the community benefiting from the expertise of experienced scholars and teachers, but so are their parents. Mufti Siddiq, a leading imam in the community, finds time every week to provide lessons in Islam to those attending afternoon prayers. The imam at University Road mosque not only teaches the children but also adults in the afternoons.

## 6. Knowledge of the Qur'an

The limitations of their knowledge of Qur'anic Arabic are admitted by those who practise liturgical literacy:

**So your knowledge of just reading the Qur'an, you wouldn't consider that knowing Arabic?**

*No, no. Not at all. Nowhere near. Not even basics. Though I'd like to learn Arabic. Because I went to Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and...I was lost. Because last year I went to Hajj I was lost, I couldn't ...I didn't know....what I was talking to...what I was saying...you know, picked up a few words here and there while I was there... (Wajib)*

Knowledge in liturgical literacy is bound up, not with understanding, but with accurate and precise pronunciation and melodious and correct recitation. Thus, expertise in Classical Arabic is to do with, within the community, the beauty of the sound of the Qur'an. The recitations which take place at the regular celebrations are listened to for their sound and the association they have with the word of God, not for the profundity of their words.

*Do you see, so the child, I want for Qur'an better Arabic teacher. With better pronunciation (Mahmood)*

**What are the qualifications for an imam?**

*He reads the Qur'an well, (Ghulam)*

*The main duty of an imam is...his recitation of the Qur'an has to be perfect... (Maulana Shabbir)*

For those who take an active interest in their faith, and who read more widely, in English or in Urdu, a restricted comprehension of Arabic words and phrases develops which can give satisfaction to the reader.

**How much do you understand? You have already touched on this when you said that you recognise names...anything else?**

*I recognise the names...there are some landmarks I recognise...like, Bayt ul Quds<sup>9</sup>, Masjid al Haram<sup>10</sup>, even other people, not only including rasools<sup>11</sup> of Allah, I'm*

*talking about Nabis<sup>12</sup>, I'm talking about the people of the Book as well, whether they be good-doers or evildoers...the places...like as I said, Bayt ul Muqadus, Bani Israil<sup>13</sup>, the children of Israel, basically the connections between what I have just read, until I read it in English, it doesn't come into any focus...there are some sayings like, 'ghafoor ar-raheem<sup>14</sup>', 'rabbi alameen<sup>15</sup>'; where you do have this basic understanding that 'the most gracious, the most merciful'. There are so many differences ...'(Bashir)*

The primacy of Arabic in Islamic liturgical literacy is self-evident. The tradition of insisting on the use of Arabic in prayer and other ritualised practices ensures that all Muslims are initiated into the written code of Qur'anic Arabic. Even if a Muslim never reads the Qur'an, he or she will only ever be able to perform prayer in Arabic. These restrictions ensure that the ability to decode and recite Arabic is at the heart of the process of acquiring liturgical literacy. The educational process involved in its acquisition is a time-honoured and universal literacy practice, and as Wagner reminds us (1982), is one of the largest forms of alternative schooling in the world today.

Although the principal theme of this chapter has been the acquisition and maintenance of liturgical literacy, it is impossible to examine this literacy practice in isolation from the other literacy practices with which it interacts. The future of the mother tongue of this community, Mirpuri-Punjabi, hangs in the balance. Its lack of an officially recognised script hinders its survival, though even that development is no guarantee of a future. The position within the community of Urdu, which does have a rich and strong literate and literary legacy, is uncertain. The growing use of Roman script to capture the sounds and words of popular religious songs and poems is helping the two languages to survive albeit in a transformed way. The younger generation are, in a true sense, using the linguistic resources it has at its disposal to harness and engage with an art form, and a literacy, which risked being beyond its linguistic reach. The community's relationship with its mother tongue is, therefore, an ambivalent one.

## 7. Issues and themes

There is little doubt that the community in question values highly the acquisition of its Qur'anic liturgical literacy and expends considerable effort in this respect to ensure its continuation through successive generations. This manifests itself in both institutional structures and personnel and in notions of cultural capital which informs identity.

The value placed upon liturgical literacy has to compete with a range of other literacies which are also deemed important. The relative weight given to each literacy can be demonstrated in the amount of time, resources and energy given to it by the community. In an ideal situation, each literacy would complement the other, but as the chapter illustrates, there are limiting factors affecting each literacy.

Linked to the above, is the complex picture emerging of the home language, in this case Mirpuri-Punjabi, and its past, present and future role in the linguistic and literate

development of the community. In this instance, the situation has much more in common with mother tongue maintenance in any recently settled community within the UK. However, its lack of an orthodox literacy adds to its precarious position.<sup>16</sup>

The teaching of the liturgical literacy is intimately linked with the role played by the imam in the Qur'anic school. The authority inherent in the relationship of pupil and teacher is extended to the congregation as a whole. The close link between liturgy and authority is partially derived, and maintained, through the complex relationship between the languages involved (Arabic, Urdu, Mirpuri-Punjabi and English).

The Muslim identity of the community is also partially determined by its common use of the liturgical language. It is one of the unifying elements which this community shares with the Islamic world. In terms of embodied cultural capital (Luke, 1996) it is an aspect of literacy which shapes people's lives for those both acquiring it and those who have it. To watch a young Muslim boy or girl reading a novel by Roald Dahl in the school library, and then observe the bodily movements associated with reading the liturgical language in the mosque, is to realise quickly how literacy can be 'embodied' (Rosowsky, 2001).

In discussions with parents and imams it is quite apparent that traditional forms of Qur'anic education are being questioned. One significant development is the erosion taking place of the central role played by the Arabic-Urdu script. This manifests itself in both use of Roman script for mother tongue and Urdu texts, and in the increasingly more common use of Roman script in the mosque to facilitate learning the liturgical language. This is a relatively recent development, but can be interpreted not only as an aspect of the complex tension between home literacies and mainstream literacy, but also as a local example of the more general linguistic move to prioritise the English language, and in this case, its Roman orthography.

Finally, the opinions expressed in interviews with parents regarding the quality of education provided by the mosque, reflect a similar anxiety linked to linguistic issues. Although generally satisfied with the success of the mosque in teaching its young people liturgical literacy, a widespread concern emerges with the lack of understanding both of the liturgical language and of Urdu, or even Mirpuri-Punjabi, in instruction and in the general ritual. There is a growing demand for the use of English in the mosque.

## Conclusion

Fishman (1995) refers to the two-front struggle in which ethnocultural minorities with religious classical are regularly engaged. They seek to retain community use of the vernaculars whilst at the same time promote and maintain their religious classical. When one of the two is threatened, it is more likely to be the religious classical that survives. In this particular case, there are two vernaculars and one religious classical. The community has put in place carefully maintained structures and routines that

ensure more resistant boundaries around its liturgical literacy and is what Fishman denotes as ‘more ritualised and sanctified’ and ‘more tradition-and-stability oriented’ than the vernaculars which are much less protected from change and erosion.

## Notes

1. Heavenly Readings: a study of the place of liturgical literacy within a UK Muslim community and its relationship to other literacy practices (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2004)
2. Of interest is the support the late Pope, John Paul II, gave to the revival of Latin in many aspects of the Roman Catholic Church (Catholic World News, 13th May 2003)
3. The verses traditionally understood to be the first of the Islamic revelation came to Muhammad whilst he was meditating in seclusion. The account relates how the Angel Gabriel appeared with a sheet in his hand and asked Muhammad to read. He answered, ‘What shall I read?’ and the command was repeated. This happened three times after which the first verse was revealed, ‘Read in the name of your Lord, the Creator, Who created man from a clot of blood. Read, for your Lord is Gracious. It is He who taught man by the pen that which he does not know.’ (Chapter 96 verses 1–5) (Haykal, 1976)
4. These are known as collections of ‘Hadith’ or sayings.
5. Known by Muslims as the ‘Fatihah’.
6. Extra prayers said in congregation in the mosque through the month of Ramadan.
7. Verse 255 of chapter 2 of the Qur’an.
8. Abdullah Hussein has written an interesting fictional account of this experience in *Emigré Journeys* (2000).
9. The Holy Mosque in Jerusalem
10. The Holy Mosque in Mecca
11. Messengers of God
12. Prophets of God
13. The Children of Israel
14. The Forgiving, the Compassionate
15. Lord of all worlds.
16. Tariq Mehmood, a Manchester writer and activist, is currently coordinating a movement to promote literacy in Mirpuri-Punjabi in the UK publishing a regular newsletter and dual text Mirpuri-Punjabi-English children’s books.

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## The Shamanic book

### Diversity, language and writing in an indigenous community in Brazil

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#### 1. Introduction

If Fishman's concept of "societal multilingualism" (1978) is a plea for diversity, it then also indirectly functions as a reminder that respect for sociolinguistic and sociocultural variation may not always occur even where indications of sociolinguistic awareness may be present in a particular situation of sociocultural complexity.

In this chapter, I examine the connection between linguistic diversity, religious diversity and cultural diversity. I examine a specific instance of the literacy practices of a Brazilian indigenous community where the perception of, and thus the respect for, diversity is shortcoming; in this specific case, although an awareness of societal multilingualism is indeed present in terms of verbal language, there seems to be no related awareness of the diversity of literacy and religious practices present in the same community, nor of the interrelationship between the community's multilingualism, its religious and literacy practices. I propose to show that this occurs due to different and conflicting conceptions of religion, *writing* and the *book* and consequently of the literacy practice associated with these conceptions.

The community in question is that of the shamanic culture of the Kashinawá Indians of the western Amazon in northwestern Brazil, consisting of 4,000 members (Aquino and Iglesias 1994, Monte 1996). They have been exposed, over the last twenty years both, to literacy campaigns in Portuguese (the national, federal language) and Kashinawá (the local community language) and to recent legislation for indigenous schools,<sup>1</sup> all of which have instituted a complex diglossic continuum englobing both languages. As I intend to show, in spite of a conscious, desired and declared effort to respect the indigenous culture and language, a clear, albeit unconscious, preference for dominant western cultural values such as the concept of writing and the book, unwittingly threaten the very same community values that these policies purport to defend and protect.

Having established and officially recognized the Brazilian nation as multilingual,

the federal constitution of 1988 allocates greater linguistic and political status to the indigenous communities of Brazil. As a result, in 1998, the Ministry of Education published a curricular proposal for indigenous schools.<sup>2</sup> It is this proposal that forms the point of departure for the present study. First, however, it is worth remembering what Barton (2001) states, in a study of literacy practices, as an indictment of the shortcomings of sociolinguistics:

Sociolinguistics (...) has focused primarily on spoken language. However, the physical existence of texts makes their study different from sociolinguistic studies of how, where and when spoken language is used. (...) Sociolinguistic research on interaction has primarily been of spoken language and of face-to-face interaction. Literacy Studies broadens the notion of interaction by focusing on the importance of texts and examining the various roles texts have in interaction. (98–99)

Here, I would add and emphasize that the focus of Literacy Studies on texts and their roles in interaction can and should be read against a sociolinguistic background of societal multilingualism in contexts such as that of the Kashinawá. The context of the Brazilian curricular proposal for indigenous schools is clearly stated in the following terms:

In recent years indigenous teachers, like teachers in many other schools in the country, have been insistently stating the need for curricula nearer to their own realities and more relevant to the new demands that their communities are facing. These teachers demand the development of new curricular proposals for their schools, in order to replace those models of education which have been imposed on them throughout history, especially as these models never corresponded to their political interests nor to their own **cultural pedagogies**. (11)

The objective of the proposal is made clear in the following terms:

In short, it is the objective of this document to aid in a) the development and implementation of school curricula which attend to the expectations and interests of the indigenous communities, b) the training of educators capable of assuming these tasks and of educational technicians capable of aiding the educators in making these tasks viable (13)

Unlike most curricular proposals, this particular one does not establish or propose any specific contents for indigenous schools; what it does instead, is to attempt to supply indigenous teachers with concepts and knowledge of various areas to enable them to elaborate their own curricula in accordance with local community needs and preferences, always presupposing a respect for the cultural and linguistic specificity and plurality existent in indigenous communities:

It is important, however, to make clear that, as a proposal for a country with such diverse indigenous societies, and having as an aim and as a basis, the respect for plurality and diversity, this proposal is not a ready-made curricular document to be mechanically used in any context: it aims solely at aiding and offering support

to teachers in the task of the continuous invention and re-invention of their school practices (14)

In the section on Languages (111–153) of the curricular proposal, several pages are dedicated to the introduction and explanation of various sociolinguistic concepts such as multilingualism, verbal repertoires, language revitalization, language maintenance, differences between orality and writing, etc. There is even an attempt at transforming the present de facto diglossic continuum between Portuguese and the indigenous languages into an official form of bilingualism:

All languages are complete, rich and are fully capable of all the uses to which they are put. **The inclusion of an indigenous language in the school curriculum has the function of attributing to it the status of a full language and of putting it, at least in the school context, on par with Portuguese, a right which is guaranteed by the Brazilian Constitution.**<sup>3</sup> (118)

Moreover, in a previous chapter, cultural pluralism is also discussed. However, what are not discussed are the concepts of writing and the book and possible interconnections between these and the cultural and religious values of indigenous communities. Taken for granted, these concepts appear to be seen by the same sociolinguistically aware authors of the curricular proposal as being “universal”, neutral, unproblematic and not culture-bound. As I hope to show below, this is not however the case.

In terms of religion, I reject (with Langdon 1996) the traditional identification of shamanism with magic as opposed to religion, and with individualistic interests as opposed to social interests. I also reject the traditional tendency (Castro 1999 in Bird-David) to see Amazonian shamanism as epistemology as opposed to ontology. As Mignolo (1995) points out, one’s attitude to a culture depends on whether one adopts a posture of cultural relativity or cultural diversity. The posture of cultural relativity presupposes that the cultures under analysis are essentially similar at a deep level, but superficially dissimilar at a surface level. The posture of cultural diversity, on the other hand, presupposes that the cultures in question are incommensurably different.

Traditionally, anthropology has been moved by the relativist thesis which generally leads to shamanism, for example, being considered as an epistemology (a way of knowing), rather than as an ontology (a theory of being). From this view, shamanism as a way of knowing has also ended up being seen as a “mistaken” or “deficient” way of knowing. Cultural relativism has, in this sense, not taken into account what Mignolo (op. cit.) and Bhabha (1994) call the *locus of enunciation* of the observer-analyst. The western analyst has thus tended, from the comparativist, cultural relativist (eurocentric) stance, to take for granted his own ontology and see shamanism as a mere, lesser, mistaken, epistemology. This has led to shamanism being compared to “magic” as opposed to religion, and has resulted in the apparently well-meaning efforts to convert indigenous communities to Christianity as a means of compensating and overcoming their apparent lack of religion and what would seem like their consequent, misguided, use of shamanic ‘magic’.

The cultural relativist eurocentric stance has also resulted in attributing a certain transparency and neutrality to the concepts of “writing” and the “book”; this has meant that, given the perceived absence in the Kashinawá community of the values that western culture attributes to “writing” and the “book”, it is therefore considered that these values need to be introduced.

## 2. Writing, the book, grammars and conversion

In the past, the conversion to Christianity necessarily called for the need for literacy in order to read the Holy Book. However, as Castro (1992) has pointed out, Christian missionaries since the fifteenth century have constantly complained that the indigenous populations of the Amazon are incapable of being converted. At the same time as they apparently did not resist conversion, they consistently reverted back to their so-called magical shamanic practices.

As we have seen, the relativistic posture which has looked on shamanism as a (mistaken) deficient way of knowing and not as an ontology, has refused to see shamanism as being incommensurable with western ontologies. As Castro suggests, belief presupposes submission to a given set of rules, and this in turn presupposes a centralized, coercive system such as a monarch, a state, or a religion. The social structure of indigenous cultures, on the other hand, with (from the western perspective or locus of enunciation) the absence of anything resembling a state, a monarchy or an institutionalized religion, seems to reinforce the view that these cultures are apparently individualistic and chaotic.

In his discussion of South American cosmologies, Sullivan (1988) shows how, unlike Christian cosmology, shamanic cosmologies are based on an ontological interconnectedness between Man and other beings in nature. For these cosmologies, at the moment of creation, all beings were considered to have the capacity of metamorphosis and were able to change into any other being; this capacity however was suspended as the result of a primordial cataclysm which caused all beings to remain in the forms they had acquired at the moment of the disaster; this, in short, means that there is an essential interrelatedness between Man and other forms in Nature. This is also considered to be the basis for the power of the shaman to shape-shift and transform himself into other beings by accessing the plane of primordial time, before the end of metamorphosis.

In contrast to this shamanic view of interrelatedness, Amin (1989:99) shows a radically different view present in western Christian cosmology: “The West sees itself as Promethean par excellence, in contrast with other civilizations. Faced with the threat of an untamed nature, primitive humanity had two choices: blend into nature or destroy it. Hinduism, for example, chose the first attitude, which renders human impotence tolerable by reducing humankind to a part of nature. In contrast, Judaism and its later Christian and Islamic heirs proclaimed the original separation of human-

kind and nature, the superiority of humankind, made in the image of God; and the submission of nature, soulless and reduced to the object of human action.”

Thus, in western cosmology, Man sees himself as having been made in the likeness of his creator and is thus superior to and separate from other, soulless and inferior beings in nature. This belief imposes a primordial hierarchy of human agency over nature and forms the basis of various western philosophies such as rationalism and humanism. Such a belief in hierarchies is also the basis for the belief in normativity, understood here as the imposition of a preconceived abstract structure whose function is as much to include and establish order, as it is to exclude elements not conducive to, or that pose a threat to, order.

This belief leads in turn, to the perception that the apparent absence of a similar order of separability and normativity in Amazonian indigenous cultures requires and justifies their need for order. Together with their previously mentioned perceived need for religion, these perceptions also establish the basis and justification for the introduction of formal education (Mignolo 2000) not to mention, ‘civilization’. It is thus, as an instrument of literacy, itself seen as a tool for education and conversion that the book enters the scene, with writing and literacy seen as essential instruments of access to the book.

If, as Mignolo (1996) suggests, writing is seen as a *practice*, then the book must be seen as a *product* of a particular writing practice and its attendant culture-specific conceptions; therefore, the book must be seen as culture-bound, as part of a writing practice and not as a mere ideologically neutral object. Mignolo further suggests that, although writing may be a universal phenomenon, the book is extremely culture-bound; here Mignolo (1996: 120) conceives of writing as part of the human communicative behavior of exchanging and transmitting signs; in this sense of semiotic interaction, writing is defined as “the use of hands and the extension of hands with a sharp instrument, brush, pen, fabric etc.”; as semiotic interaction, and not necessarily as the register of speech or sound, writing may thus be pictographic or alphabetic or acquire any other form which may represent ideas, values or events and may not necessarily represent speech or verbal language.

As the product of a particular practice of writing, however, the ‘book’ for Mignolo may have one of two possible meanings: “book as object” or “book as text”. As an object, “book” may refer to the material surface(s) on which writing (in the semiotic sense given above) is done. As “text” the concept of “book” transcends the concept of “book as object” and acquires culture-specific value-laden connotations such as “Holy Book”, “Source of Knowledge”, “Sacred Word”, “Wisdom” etc. Hence, when connected to and the object of a religious and cultural practice, the book becomes a “book as text”. With the dense cultural import attributed to the “book as text”, such books also gain a high normative value.

However, this is not true only of religious practices and also applies to other forms of dominant cultural practices. Bhabha (1994), for example, postulates the western ‘book’ as the product of a particular cultural practice; in the sense of “book as text”,

the western book appears as an incorporation of specific normative religious, ideological and cultural values. For Bhabha, within the colonial context for example, the western book conceived as such could only be repeated and reproduced, but never transformed or adapted. This western culture-bound book in its normative mode thus becomes a significant instrument of coercion. With Castro (1992) one may ironically ask: is it possible to conceive of a political power that is not founded on the normative exercise of coercion? Is it possible to conceive of a religion that is not founded on the normative (hence coercive) experience of belief?

As Derrida (1976) shows, western logocentrism is based on the primacy of orality as the source of knowledge and meaning and hence “presence”; writing is subsequently held to be a secondary representation of orality, as ‘speech written down’. Following from this, Derrida goes on to show the curious logic of logocentrism, which in spite of allocating primacy to orality as the source of meaning and presence, in fact considers orality from the perspective of writing; that is, logocentrism in fact postulates “voice” or orality, as ‘voiced writing’ instead of ‘speech written down’. In spite of the primacy it allocates to orality and voice, western logocentrism gives centre stage to writing and the book; with the accompanying preference for presence and closure, and for a rejection of difference, a normative, coercive force becomes culturally inscribed in the concepts of writing and the book.

In a similar vein, Auroux (1992) shows how grammars originated in written and literate cultures and, as purported descriptions of linguistic knowledge, had as their primary objective, the pedagogical function of serving as an instrument for the teaching and learning of languages. Linguistic knowledge was considered to be of two types, *epilinguistic* and *metalinguistic*; whereas the former was considered to be the oral knowledge held and produced by native speakers about their language, the latter was considered to be a written description of this knowledge. As a product of written culture the metalinguistic knowledge of grammars was postulated as only possible thanks to the affordance of writing as ‘speech written down’. Following this rationale, as ‘speech written down’, removed from the immediacy of a particular context of use and users, and permitting speech to become an object of analysis, it was now supposedly possible to rationally analyze language. As a written description, the abstract metalinguistic knowledge manifested in a grammar was considered to be superior because it was decontextualized, rationalized and objectified.

Another feature of the origin of grammars in the west, according to Auroux, was their role in creating and fixing, in writing, forms of language that were until then vernacular. Purporting to be valued descriptions of linguistic knowledge, and used as pedagogic instruments to disseminate this knowledge, grammars and the linguistic variants they described and fixed acquired a normative and coercive social role. Considering that the primary function of grammars was pedagogic, that is, to teach or learn the knowledge of a language held by a native speaker, in practice however, the epilinguistic (oral) knowledge of the native speaker was substituted by the metalinguistic (written) abstract knowledge of the literate analyst; as such, the genealogy

of grammars seems to trace the same tortuous steps of the cultural logic of western logocentrism, alleging the primacy of orality and then contradictorily allocating centre stage to writing.

The conversion to Christianity of indigenous cultures, with the accompanying emphasis on the spread of the written word and the western Book, thus brought in its wake the cultural logic of the concept of the fixity of a norm, and its coercive power of containment and the elimination of difference and of otherness.

If, as we have seen, Amazonian indigenous shamanic cultures were resistant to Christian conversion, then one may assume that these cultures were somehow also resistant to the concept of centralization, coercion and normativity which, from the indigenous perspective characterized European Christian culture; as such, one can also reasonably assume that if indigenous cultures come to produce and use what appears to be a book, given that a book is the product of a particular practice, then the shamanic, Kashinawá book will probably be non-coercive, non-normative and open.

### 3. Kashinawá cosmology: Openness to otherness and perspectivism

In order to understand Kashinawá writing from this perspective, one must persist in the venture into Amazonian indigenous ontology. As a shamanic culture, the Kashinawá (Lagrou 1996, 1998) postulate the universe as consisting of several interconnected and interrelated worlds unified by a vital life-force which causes the elements in these worlds to periodically undergo cycles of birth, reproduction and decomposition. In this culture, so-called everyday reality is but one of these several interconnected worlds, and the visible is but a fraction of the largely invisible cosmos. In Amazonian shamanic cultures, the shaman is seen as a manipulator of this life force and, as we have seen, as a shape-shifter, he is a traveler between this and other worlds. The shaman thus does not follow a fixed system of beliefs nor an established orthodoxy; though he is respected and feared for his powers, he does not occupy a position of social authority; in fact, the proliferation of shamans and shamanic discourses in these cultures impedes the formation or sedimentation of any form of shamanic orthodoxy.

According to Castro (1992) and Levi-Strauss (1995), Amazonian shamanic cultures are based on an ontology of interrelatedness and openness, not of closed or separate totalities. The *socius* is constituted in a *relation* with an Other, where the incorporation of the Other depends on moving outwards from oneself; in this sense, the exterior is in a continuous process of being internalized, and the interior is none other than a movement outwards. There is no totality, monad or self-identity that obsessively guards its boundaries against invasion from the exterior; on the contrary, the *socius* is moved by a necessary productive relation with the exterior. The Other is not a mirror but a destination. (Castro 1992).

As we have seen, Amazonian shamanism is a cultural order that is not founded on normativity nor on the monadic exclusion of Other cultural orders. It is an order

where the interior and identity are dialogically involved with an exteriority and with difference; *becoming* and *relation* prevail over *being* and *substance*. It is important to note that the absence of normativity does not indicate an absence of systematicity. Systematicity necessarily occurs but is never seen as static. It is constantly and dynamically undergoing change, always in *relation* with alterity and difference. The system is thus paradoxically never complete and always in a state of *becoming*. In Castro's words, for these Amazonian cultures, "the Other is a solution rather than a problem as it was for the European invader" (1992:39.). Difference is thus constitutive and essential and not to be eliminated.

Linguists such as Beier, Michael and Sherzer (2002:133) have already observed that "evidentiality, or the grammatical marking of the epistemological status and basis of utterances, has been proposed as an areal feature of the languages of the Amazon basin and adjacent areas", and that, given the widespread existence of elaborate systems of evidentiality in the languages of this region, there is a lack of linguistic studies of this feature. However, even in existing linguistic analyses of this "areal feature" almost no connections are made between this feature and Amazonian ontologies.

Castro (2000), in his discussion of Amazonian shamanic ontology, shows how the ontology of interrelatedness and inseparability gives rise to a perspectival epistemology in which Nature does not consist of a facile dichotomy between (human, animate) subjects and (non-human, inanimate) objects; rather, nature is seen to be constituted by a complex network of interrelated subjects, in which the difference between one subject and another is a difference of *perspective* or point of view. This difference in perspective is not however individualistic or absolute, but contextual, mutually constitutive and relational. In this sense, "Whatever possesses a soul is a subject, and whatever has a soul is capable of having a point of view. Amerindian souls, be they human or animal, are thus indexical categories, cosmological deictics whose analysis calls not so much for an animist psychology or substantialist ontology as for a theory of the sign or a perspectival pragmatics" (314).

Castro goes on to show how every possible point of view is a subject position, and contrary to western epistemologies where *the point of view creates the object*, in indigenous perspectivism, the point of view creates *the subject*. As such, in the shamanic cultures of this region, modality and truth-value, rather than being seen (as in the West) as pertaining to the *object* and objectivity, is seen to pertain to the *subject* (remembering always that these subjects are not individual nor isolated, but always interconnected and situated in particular contexts in relation to each other). This ontology of interrelatedness and relationality and its attendant perspectival epistemology are manifested in the languages of the region by the evidentiality mentioned above.

Evidentiality in the languages of this region is basically *sensory*, and indicates that the truth of a speaker's utterance is derived from his personal sensory experience and therefore from his own perspective in relation to a perceived interlocutor. Camargo (1996), in an analysis of evidentials in Kashinawá shows how the suffix *-ki* signals

personal sensory evidentiality, indicating that the truth value of the utterance is based on the speaker's personal perception and perspective; as such, this suffix is used to indicate what in European languages would be unmarked, apparently "objective" or perspective-free constatives:

*Ikis, in nami pi-a-ki*

Today I ate meat

*Na nami nudi-ki*

The meat is salty

Related to this non-existence of unmarked constatives is the attendant concept that there is no privileged subject position and no abstract objectivity. Information or knowledge considered non-personal and independent of a personal experience, cannot, in this culture and language, be perceived as objective and independent of perspective or subject position. The nearest equivalent to such a form of knowledge is that marked by a collective, shared perspective or social subject position – 'the community', or 'everybody'; this form of shared knowledge includes important cultural, spiritual, philosophical and historical information valued and held to be true by the collectivity in spite of not being the fruit of personal sensory perception. Such knowledge is marked by the quotative suffix *-kin* in Kashinawá:

*Disi wa-kin-dan ainbu-an sapu bi-kin, (...) tudu wa-kin*

To make a hammock, the woman collects a lot of cotton and weaves it.

*Mai dami wa-kin-dan, tai wa-kin-dan, mai hidabi dami wa-kin-dan*

The whole world changes, and that is the origin of everything; the whole world changes Camargo 1996.

Besides its interrelated holistic ontology, and connected to its perspectival intersubjective epistemology, Kashinawá culture like other Amazonian cultures, is visionary and based on the ritualistic consumption of *ayahuasca*, a drink that brings on a vision seen as the source of knowledge and culture. The patron of the vision is the anaconda spirit, considered to be the bearer of knowledge and culture. The information obtained from a vision, though framed collectively, is considered to be personal. This personal vision, however, is changeable, transformative and perspectival and cannot be compared to a dogmatic, objective, concept of *revelation*, as in *non-shamanic religions*.

The vision, as a process of knowledge acquisition, consists of two phases: the first, abstract, phase is the encounter with the anaconda spirit, manifested by a perception of the geometric patterns of the anaconda's skin. This is seen to indicate the collective, social, frame that encompasses the whole vision and signals the threshold of the passage from the normally visible everyday world to an Other cosmological plane, made visible and accessible by the *ayahuasca* drink. The second phase of the vision is the reception of the message and of the new information; this appears as a non-abstract figurative visual narrative interpreted by the seer as being of personal relevance to his specific present situation. It appears that the all-englobing continuous presence of the geometric patterns during the two phases of the vision, frames and guarantees that the

information acquired in the vision is perceived as knowledge.

In the vision, the encounter with otherness, in the form of the encounter with the anaconda, is potentially dangerous, but nonetheless desirable (Lagrou 1998). It is the price to be paid for openness to the potentially new knowledge that the Other has to offer. In this process both, the knowledge received from the other, and the receiving subject, undergo mutual transformation. As a process of knowledge acquisition, the vision stresses the fact that any knowledge acquired is inseparable from and transforms the knower; in other words, knowledge is *experience* rather than mere abstract content.

As the result of an ontology of interrelatedness and openness, where the exterior is dynamically and constantly being internalized, all Kashinawá systems are open and in a constant process of transformation and change. Whereas for western culture 'remaining the same' means preserving an essence of self-identity, for shamanic cultures such as this, the means of 'remaining the same' is by *becoming different*: a process personified by the anaconda that changes its skin periodically in order to survive (and remain 'the same').

Relating to the linguistic markers of evidentiality, the first phase of the *ayahuasca* vision, marked by the abstract geometric patterns indicative of an encounter with the anaconda spirit may be considered as corresponding, in oral speech, to the quotative marker *-kin*; this marks the presence in the first phase of the vision of a collective, non-personal, social perspective. Following suit, as the second phase of the vision contains new and personally relevant information, it may be considered as corresponding to the sensory evidential marker *-ki*; in oral speech, the information marked by *-ki* becomes knowledge exactly because it is supported by personally verifiable (as opposed to collective) sensory evidence.

#### 4. The Shamanic book vs. the western book

As a result of their shamanic ontology and perspectival and evidential epistemology, and their recourse to visions as a source of knowledge, the Kashinawá produce a multimodal form of writing which consists of alphabetic writing (in Portuguese or Kashinawá) accompanied by a visual component consisting of two different forms of drawing: a geometric line drawing normally framing the text, called *kene*, and figurative drawings organized normally in a narrative sequence, called *dami*. The alphabetic text may be interspersed with the *dami* drawing, both framed by the *kene*, or remain parallel to and form a composite whole with the *kene-dami* visual text.

An examination of the multimodal texts of the Kashinawá reveals the fact that the concept of 'writing' goes beyond the merely alphabetical representation of speech and includes, on paper, the non-alphabetical multimodal representation of the *ayahuasca* vision. Considering the vision as a source of knowledge, and writing as an inscription of knowledge on paper, then multimodal writing on paper for the Kashi-

nawá constitutes a shamanic concept of the 'book'. Unlike the normative, abstract, purportedly objective western book which imposes decontextualized information as objective and therefore universally valid, the multimodal shamanic book presents information which is always contextually and perspectively marked, whose value has to be read in relation to a specific context of intersubjective interaction, and open to other interpretations.

The geometric abstract lines of *kene* can now be seen to transpose to paper the framing and marking of the truth-value of information acquired from a vision. In turn, the content of the message of the vision is transposed to paper by means of the figurative *dami* drawings organized in narrative order. As we have seen, the resulting composite whole, the Kashinawá multimodal text on paper, indicates that contrary to beliefs implicit in the culture of western alphabetic literacy, knowledge for this culture does not originate in speech and is never objective, neutral or abstract. As in their oral language, knowledge has to necessarily be marked for perspective and modality or truth-value, all of which result from the perspective of the communicating subject.

The resulting process of writing/reading and meaning construction (and hence of knowledge acquisition), involves an interaction of the 'given' (*kene*, collective, quotative) and the 'new' (*dami*, personal, sensory), where the 'given' is knowledge that is collectively held, or previously known, as marked by the quotative suffix *-kin* in speech. The 'new', similar to the information marked in speech by the suffix *-ki* can only occur in the context of the 'given'; as in the ontology of interrelatedness, the personal and the individual can only occur in the context of and interrelated with the social collectivity. Like the personal, the collective, however, is not static and fixed, dogmatic, or normative; as a collective perspective, it seems to presuppose that it was also once, in its genealogy, sensory and personal. In this sense, even the 'given' or collective may undergo transformation, transforming what to the West for a long time appeared to be perennial *myths* into dynamic *history* (Gallois1994); not an abstract neutral or objective history, but a collective, 'updateable' one.

## 5. Conclusion

The Kashinawá process of reading/writing and knowledge acquisition cannot be easily represented by alphabetic writing; for the Kashinawá, writing cannot be easily conceived as the recording of context-free, neutral, universally valid meanings; nor can reading be easily conceived as the normative, context-free process of the recuperation of already-constructed objective meanings; the same incommensurability exists for the Kashinawá in relation to the western concept of the book as an abstract static fixed normative totality. Like any other culture, the Kashinawá produce a culture-bound writing and culture-bound texts; more specifically, in accordance with the values of its language, culture and shamanic ontology, the Kashinawá postulate a multimodal shamanic 'book' which manifests their openness to otherness, their rejec-

tion of abstract, context-free, perspectively unmarked knowledge, even when writing in Portuguese.

Read as a form of resistance to the models of writing taught in Portuguese and Kashinawá in the literacy campaigns to which they are exposed, and therefore as reminiscent of similar indigenous resistance to conversion to Christianity in the past, this leads many well-meaning outsiders to unwittingly persist in the imposition of the model of the coercive, normative western Book. Ironically, this occurs even as these outsiders, (our focus here is on linguists and literacy educators) piously believe that the Kashinawá language and Kashinawá knowledge has to be written to be preserved; besides the concepts of writing, language and religion, what also seems to be at issue here is the very concept of preservation; as we have seen, to western eyes this involves stabilizing and normativizing a postulated essence of being (unfortunately bringing coercion in its wake); for the shamanic Kashinawá, on the contrary, preservation lies not in *being* but in *becoming*, in change, in openness to difference. Like the anaconda, one changes to remain the same. Thus, the Kashinawá have not resisted writing *per se*, but have learned to write in accordance with their culture, interrelating, transforming and being transformed by the concepts of writing and the book.

It is thus that in the case of indigenous education in Brazil, where an awareness of societal multilingualism and religious and cultural diversity is indeed present, this awareness appears to focus mainly on spoken language and abstract descriptions of it and not on its interrelationships with the cultural and religious practices of the community. Consequently, diversity in the conceptions of language, writing and the book go unperceived, and with this the interconnection between language, shamanic ontology and writing also go unperceived.

As a result, if one continues to unwittingly impose one's western concepts of normativity, the book, writing and religion, indigenous cultures such as this may well be at risk in the very hands of sociolinguistically aware caretakers.

## Notes

1. It is important to distinguish between indigenous education and indigenous schools; whereas the former has always existed in indigenous communities, and has been carried out by various means, formal and informal, the latter refers to the form of education carried out formally by teachers in school houses, generally modeled on western standards.
2. Referencial Curricular Nacional para as Escolas Indígenas, Brasília 1998. All further citations of this document are translated by me from the original in Portuguese.
3. Emphasis as appears in the original

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## Epilogue

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The beauty of an epilogue is the benefit it has of hindsight. We can reflect on the project and with no critical genius point out the flaws in the completed work in the hope that those who attempt to extend the frontiers of the discipline can avoid some of the shortcomings inherent in the initial effort.

As some of the references in the introductory chapter show, some researchers had previously carried out (socio)linguistic investigations of religions and religious communities. However, these efforts were not conceived within the framework of sociology of language and religion as a field of inquiry. In most cases, a religion or religious community was a context for examining some aspect of linguistic theory. However, Joshua Fishman's (1966) study of the decline of the Missouri Synod's German language parishes in the USA is obviously indicative of an earlier interest on the interface we have more systematically explored in this volume even though he modestly denounces my attempt to credit him with any such grand achievement.

Understandably, the body of scholarship attributed to Charles Ferguson especially his work on Arabic and some of the languages of Asia (see for instance Ferguson 1968, 1969, Ferguson and Das Gupta 1982, 1986) must have pre-eminence with regard to this interface, hence our decision to part-dedicate the volume to him. In a sense then, this volume is a return to that early drawing board, propelled as it were by events in our rapidly changing world.

The individual authors in this volume have presented findings from specific studies in some cases or raised and thrashed out some theoretical issues in others. Whatever they chose to do, they provided a window into contexts of interaction between language and religion. Therefore our intention in this final chapter is to wrap up the volume appropriately by raising other yet unexplored issues as an indication of possible ways forward from this initial attempt at opening up the sociology of language and religion as a field of scholarship.

The volume had a rather long period of gestation and in the time between Fishman's first conception of it in 1999 and now, a few other smaller projects have started and completed or are in a state of near-completion, some of which have obviously fed off of the initial zeal generated by this project. We are delighted to acknowledge some of those efforts to buttress our claim of the potential vibrancy of the new field. Pandariphande (forthcoming) is a monograph length detailed exploration of the issues that she could merely scratch on the surface in her chapter for this volume and

should provide an effective window on the world of the complex interplay of language and religion in Asia. Woods (2004) is a full-length monograph that contains again more detailed arguments on the community in Melbourne, Australia. The research for this monograph presumably commenced around the same time as Fishman's initial idea was taking root. It was in serving as a critical reader for the monograph that I discovered and invited Anya Woods to contribute to this volume. Bernard Spolsky has indicated in Part 2 of the introduction to this volume his own interests in exploring the language and religion interface. His (2003) paper published in the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* cross-references earlier drafts of some of the chapters in this volume. As a follow up, a monograph on religious language management is now in preparation. Also, Palgrave-Macmillan, which supported our sociology of language and religion project in its initial phase, commissioned an edited volume on language, religion and gender.

Yet these efforts represent only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the possibilities. There are still whole areas of potential research interest waiting to be opened up. For instance, there are issues of interest in the negotiation of the relationship between state language policy and language practices of faith schools especially in multiethnic and multireligious societies and liberal democracies as well as in theocratic states. How do we characterise the subsystems that minority groups constitute within these mainstreams and the ways in which the relationships potentially challenge notions of community and national identity? There are issues of rights and legality anchored to these, which in turn challenge the fundamental principles of governance subscribed to by diverse political philosophies. Similarly, how do we reconcile the potential conflict between the structural hegemonies inherent in some faiths and a global social conscience that increasingly seeks to eradicate all manners of inequality in linguistic expression? The existing structures conveyed in religious texts are a reflection of values and practices that together define their sanctities.

Then the question arises as to what extent changes in socioreligious practices such as women ordination by the Church of England, the ban of headscarf for Moslem female students in France (Kamwangamalu, this volume) and installation of Gay bishops in the American Episcopalian Church are matched by changes in the discourse? And where there is no consensus, how is the conflict between subgroups represented? These issues are definitely worth addressing in the pursuit of Project Global Harmony.

In terms of coverage, the chapters have a broad regional spread extending to North and South America, Africa, Europe, Asia and Australasia. Still they are mere tokens because in reality they represent only a small fraction of all the contexts that may together define the sociology of language and religion interface globally. We have tried to reach beyond the often narrow conceptualisation of 'religion' as Christianity and Islam by including other faith practices such as Native American religions, Bah'al, Hinduism and Orisa worship. Some of these are localised and shape potential contexts of the ethnography of communication. Others have a relatively universal spread to

varying degrees and contribute immensely to the growth of regional or state multi-faithism.

While researchers have addressed perspectives on diversity such as multiculturalism, multilingualism, multiethnicity, multiracialism and so on, multifaithism has attracted very little attention. Some of the tensions and conflicts often traced to the former are connected directly or indirectly to faith diversity. How are intrafaith differences conveyed in various languages? Are we able to measure faith communities' acceptance and tolerance of diversity by looking at language? To what extent do the Jewish benedictions that Piotr Chruszczewski analysed in making a case for contextual embedding represent universal Jewish experience? Or on the contrary, are there local cultural variations in the Jewish Diaspora? Would his communicational grammar theory of religious discourse in fact work with any other set of prayers, which are specific to an identifiable culture group? What would we find if we took Dipo Salami's enquiry a step further to determine why some traditional references to the Deity are adaptable for worship within the Pentecostal framework and others are not?

Omoniyi's references to multifaithism and difaithia as parallels of multilingualism and diglossia also leave a number of loose ends that require lightening. For instance, how real are the phenomena on a global scale and do these pairs always work in conjunction where both language and religious diversity exist? It would be interesting to investigate and comment on the ways in which various forms and degrees of mixing impact upon the issues that Roberto Carrasco and Florencia Riegelpaut raise with regard to the Native American nation they studied. Would the observations apply for other Native American nations who may have steered slightly different trajectories vis-à-vis the United States as a modern nation?

Secularism is becoming more and more widespread in Europe and changing the social dynamics of society. French secularism has occasioned a drop in the number of young persons entering priesthood. Consequently, Catholic priests are now being recruited from Francophone Africa to take charge of some French dioceses. Such developments certainly open up new contexts for examining the native versus non-native varieties of language debate. How does language affect the message (cf. Woods 2004) across religious cultures, especially on the ethnic margins of major Western nations?

In Kenya, it is reported that the Catholic Church has changed from its traditional ways to modernise in a bid to attract the youth and stand up to the challenge that Pentecostalism now poses. And, to what extent do preachers adapt their sermons linguistically both to preach faith and attract the youth to the church? All of these developments have implications for research at the interface we have been exploring and warrant being investigated. To what extent do they lend themselves to analysis using Fishman's Decalogue and other paradigms explored in this volume? Meyjes' chapter on the BahaI Faith as well as Mooney's and McCarron's chapters which focus on less traditional approaches to looking at religion and religious practices also open new pathways for examining this interface. Whichever way this volume is received, it

cannot be outside its remit as an exploratory effort to identify issues of mutual interest to the two disciplines that make up the interface. Our hope is that the studies reported here and the many others that may subsequently be inspired by reading these will contribute usefully to a further understanding of humanity and equip our management and resolution of some of the problems that plague it especially in the area of social conflicts.

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