

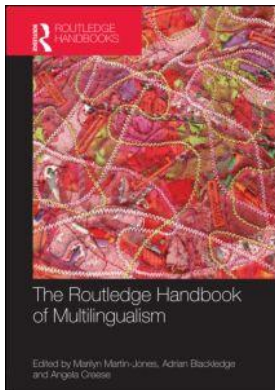
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Multilingualism and the media

Helen Kelly-Holmes

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the media as a key site of multilingualism. Given the role that media play in contemporary societies in many parts of the world, they are one of the main means by which individuals may engage with and be exposed to discourses about multilingualism and multilingual practices. As such, media have a major role to play in maintaining or challenging existing language regimes, attitudes and ideologies. I begin by looking at early developments in the field, particularly the evolution of parallel monolingualisms as a type of multilingual practice in the media, with a focus on multilingual media. I then go on to look at some key issues of theory and method, particularly in terms of media texts and mediatized texts and issues of policy and how these have evolved and impacted on multilingualism in the media, especially, although not exclusively, in relation to minority language media. I then go on to look at new research directions in the area of new media practices, which can be seen to have fundamentally altered the relationship between multilingualism and the media. Finally, I look at two contemporary multilingual media texts to illustrate how practices are constantly evolving and to show the extent of possibilities in the new media age.

Early developments in the field

The early development of media can be seen in many ways as a negative development from the point of view of multilingualism. Giving language written form that is to be widely distributed inevitably involves choices about that particular language, which both includes some and excludes others. Also, in practical terms and for reasons of cost as well as ideology (national media being an important vehicle for standardizing language in newly developing nations), those who produce media have tended to think of targeting geographic areas with standard media in a standard language.

For example, in its conditions for membership, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) automatically links national media with national language, and territory with speakers, invoking the territoriality principle in contrast to the individuality principle. For example, a multilingual country is conceived of by the EBU as a country with separate linguistic

territories, as exemplified by the statement: ‘Where in a country there are two or more linguistic areas, this criterion refers individually to each such area’ (European Broadcasting Union 2007). Because of its nature, in terms of the demarcation of media space, again highlighted in the EBU statement, media communication forces people into national and regional groups; they are categorized according to territory first, then language (which are assumed to be co-terminous). This conception is also based on the Herderian assumption that one national culture equals one language equals one people. This issue is not confined to broadcast media. When an attempt was made to launch a Turkish-German magazine, one of the first obstacles the producers came up against was the distribution of the magazine: newsagents were unsure of where to place it in their outlets – in the German section or in the Turkish section (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2005). As we shall see below, newer media challenge this categorization by having the capacity to address speech communities without regard to territory.

One result of this era of media and language policy and planning has been the codification of monolingualism as a normal state of affairs in the media through a variety of explicit and implicit policies and practices, with multilingualism being conceived as parallel monolingualisms (Heller 1999). This clearly differs from the everyday lived experiences of many people, which involve much more hybrid and blurred practices.

The developments in media outlined above are also crucially linked to technological and ideological developments. For example, representing variation in the media speech community became much more feasible with the development of multichannel broadcasting and the dismantling of state monopolies in broadcasting. Similarly, digital technology has led to exponential fragmentation as well as heteroglossic media practices. However, much of the implementation of linguistic human rights in the sphere of media (linked to the fragmentation of media speech communities) has actually reinforced the demarcating and monolingual ideology of one language = one people. This has in many instances led to multiple, parallel crops, rather than cross-fertilization to borrow the biodiversity metaphor. Also, the challenge to minority language media communities is to overcome their delineation by language and a resulting lack of what Moring (2007) describes as functional and institutional completeness. In other words, they are required to be all things to all speakers of a particular minority language, all of whom may have very diverse interests (for an overview of these issues, cf. Cormack and Hourigan 2007). Equally, even though media are now more easily and readily available to speakers of languages other than the dominant media language in a particular society, and bottom-up, heteroglossic and ideolectal practices are possible in new media formats (cf. Danet and Herring 2007; Androutsopoulos 2007, 2006b; Wright 2006), the representation of multilingualism is still a complex process (regardless of who is doing the representing), as the work of Jaffe (2007, 2008) and Johnson and Turner (2008) and others has shown.

Key issues of theory and method

In many ways, multilingualism in the media could be treated in the same way as multilingualism in any other domain, private or public, in everyday life. Indeed, the distinction between ‘mediated’ and ‘real’ multilingualism has been criticized, particularly in terms of the valuing of the former as more authentic by sociolinguists (cf. Androutsopoulos 2007 for a discussion). What makes multilingualism in the media different from ‘everyday’ or ‘person-to-person’ or other occasions of multilingualism is the presence – seen or unseen, human or technical – of some intermediary or facilitator or controller. This mediation (or facilitation or control) links to policy, in the sense that decisions have to be made at a whole range of levels not just about what

multilingual practices to adopt, but also about how to depict and value multilingualism in a particular media context or channel.

Media can be seen to constitute speech communities, in terms of ‘location(s) in which the patterned variations in selection from the available repertoire takes place’ (Spolsky 2004: 27). The speech community constituted by media could be large, for example, an entire nation, as in the case of the target audience of a national broadcaster or national newspaper (cf. Billig 1995). It could also be much smaller, for example, a blog or discussion group on the Internet (cf. Baron 2008; Androutsopoulos 2006b, 2007; Thurlow *et al.* 2003). There is no limit on size or location, as a mediated speech community (like any speech community) is ‘defined by its sharing a set of language varieties (its repertoire) and a set of norms for using them’ (Spolsky 2004: 25). We can see, particularly in relation to new media, that size and location have become far less relevant factors in constituting bi- and multilingual, heteroglossic and minority language media speech communities (cf. for example Androutsopoulos 2006a, 2006b; Menezes 2006; Cunliffe and Herring 2005a; Danet and Herring 2003).

In practical terms, media constitute and demarcate homogenous or monolingual speech communities in a number of both explicit and implicit ways. First of all, by the provision of space and the demarcation or delineation of that space (e.g. printed paper, channels, etc.). Second, as pointed out above, by the use and dissemination of a common code, which involves not just the choice of one particular language or variety of a language over another, but also the dissemination of knowledge about language. The constitution and demarcation are further reinforced by some element of gatekeeping, which controls access or membership. This may involve material means (e.g. a licence fee, cost of newspaper) or it may involve having access to particular technology (e.g. having a television, computer, etc.), or it may simply involve registration of individual details. A further dimension to the demarcation and constitution of a homogenous speech community is the dissemination, through a shared code and nomenclature, of shared knowledge, cultural references, etc. (cf. Billig 1995). Finally, and particularly relevant to Ricento’s first era of language policy and language planning (see below) are the explicit policies enacted by media actors to constitute and demarcate speech communities.

In terms of looking at the relationship between multilingual practice and its connection to policy, it might be useful to think in terms of a continuum of texts and speech acts, ranging from *media* texts and speech acts to *mediatized* texts and speech acts. Text here is of course understood as encompassing not just written, but all kinds of media texts – audio, visual, hyper, multimodal, etc. Media texts and speech acts can be understood as being specifically related to and in fact inseparable from a medium, and would not be possible or would be radically altered without mediation (e.g. news reporting, advertising, television drama, editorials, radio show, etc.). They tend to be monologic (cf. Bakhtin 1981) in nature in terms of the relationship between audience and media text – even though they may contain dialogic speech acts (e.g. soap operas, radio dramas). They are also generally rehearsed, scripted, edited, planned, researched, staged in some way, with attention being given in advance to language choices. Finally, they lack the ‘noise’ (Shannon and Weaver 1949), mistakes, interventions, etc. that characterize ‘normal’, face-to-face communication.

One good example of a media text is advertising, which, as Piller (2003) points out, is a key site of language contact, with brand names, slogans and marketing texts such as advertisements frequently featuring multilingual and heteroglossic play (cf. for example Martin 2006; Bishop *et al.* 2005; Ustinova and Bhatia 2005; Piller 2003). This process is perhaps best described by Haarmann’s (1989) term ‘impersonal bilingualism’, by which he means the practice of a type of multilingualism in advertising and marketing that has practically nothing to do with everyday lived multilingualism on the ground and everything to do with symbolic

associations and a type of safely packaged and contained otherness. Global brands use languages to divide up the market into speakers of different languages and create glocalised marketing and advertising materials for these language groups. For instance, the provision by a global brand of advertising and product information in a central or peripheral language (de Swaan 2001) may be motivated less by a desire to communicate a message that would not otherwise be understood, as speakers of peripheral languages tend by definition to be multilingual, than by a desire to be seen as sympathetic to speakers of the group, to be supporting diversity or simply to stand out as being different from other brands, particularly dominant national brands. For example, two airlines, which specifically position themselves as ‘European’ (rather than national) and ‘budget’, Ryanair and EasyJet, have offered options in Catalan on their global websites, whereas the Spanish national carrier, Iberia, has offered only Castilian/Spanish and English.

The term *mediatized* speech acts, on the other hand, can be used to refer to ‘spontaneous’ or ‘real world’ speech acts that become mediated (e.g. texting, email, blogging, Internet chat, phone-in, reality TV). They tend to be dialogic in nature in terms of the relationship between media actor and audience and are generally linked to new media. A further feature is that they are characterized by the participation of non-professionals (Sky News, for instance, urges watchers to send in their news stories and images, which may then be broadcast, using the slogan ‘You make the news’) or a mix of professional and non-professional, and they are generally subject to (or at least appear to be subject to) less editing and preparation. These seem more obviously like ‘real’ sociolinguistic data about multilingualism and linguistic diversity; however, there is still some degree of mediation, gatekeeping or editing. As the next section highlights, new media in particular have facilitated the growth of mediatized texts featuring multilingualism.

The distinction between media speech acts and mediatized speech acts can be seen as more of a continuum than a dichotomy. In terms of multilingualism, top-down media speech acts would be situated at the start of the continuum. In general, these are conceived in terms of monolingualism as the norm – and even where such texts and speech acts are multilingual, the multilingualism is in fact parallel monolingualisms, with strict borders being maintained between languages. At the other end of the continuum, we have bottom-up mediatized speech acts, which feature heteroglossic and mixed forms (cf. Androutsopoulos 2007, 2006b; Mahootian 2005; Pietikäinen 2008a). Linking back to policy, it seems clear that media speech acts are much more a product of top-down policies (identified by Ricento (2006) as the first and second eras of language policy – see below) and which correspond loosely to Wenham’s (1982) first and second ages of broadcasting, whereas mediatized speech acts are bound up with the later era of fragmentation, what Wenham has termed the third age of broadcasting. At the end of this chapter, we will look at an example of a media speech act and a mediatized speech act.

Policy issues

Media can be seen as key agents in the process of ‘political interventions into collective patterns of language use’ (Coulmas 2005: 185). For example, media institutions may have explicit (Shohamy 2006) language policies, which are part of larger, macro-level policies concerned with maintaining or changing a particular language regime; or, in the absence of specific policies relating to them, media actors may interpret and disseminate directly or indirectly national or regional language policies or de facto language policies, or mediate what is perceived as the sociolinguistic status quo. For instance, in the USA, where there is no national official language, the majority or national media still broadcast predominantly in English, thus replicating and reinforcing the dominant language status quo, with bilingual media being left generally to

regional and local levels. There may be a mix of both explicit (official or overt) policies and implicit (covert, unofficial) policies, which are constituted by practice. Language practices, as Shohamy (2006) points out, are a key aspect of policy and may in fact constitute policy in the absence of explicit policy statements. So, in a media context, we can see that discourses about multilingualism (cf. Johnson and Ensslin 2007a, 2007b for an overview of thematizing of language in the media) as well as actual practice and indeed any decision about language that is practised in a habitual way, becomes a type of policy. For example, linguistic decisions about the target audience, decisions about what is appropriate style, language, etc. for communicating with this particular speech community (cf. Bell 1984), and the assumptions underpinning these decisions about what the norm is (e.g. whether the ‘normal’ or ‘average’ listener is multilingual or not), all combine to constitute policy.

Media can therefore be seen to carry out all of the key functions of language policy and planning for the regulation of linguistic variation and multilingualism in speech communities. They act as agents of corpus planning, by using official terminology and disseminating new terminology, a particularly strong feature of minority language media (cf. O’Connell 2001). They also act as agents of status planning, for example, by allocating space, prominence, etc. to particular language(s) and variety(ies) (cf. Cormack and Hourigan 2007; Kelly-Holmes 2001), and as agents of standardization, spreading a standard language and notions about norms (implicitly through use and explicitly through prescriptive comment and advice). Furthermore, they act as agents of language diffusion, by encouraging people to learn a particular language (e.g. BBC, Deutsche Welle), by decisions taken about dubbing versus subtitling, and as agents of language learning (e.g. by scheduling foreign language learning programmes or showing television programmes in other languages). Finally, media act as agents of language ideology – they constitute their speech community, both explicitly (through policies) and implicitly (through practice in terms of actual language choices and discourse about language) as mono-, bi- or multilingual, and through discourse about language(s) they inform perceptions by members about their particular speech community as mono-, bi- or multilingual (cf. Horner 2007; Johnson and Ensslin 2007a; Milani 2007; Blackledge 2006).

As pointed out by Anderson (1983) and others (e.g. Wright 2000; Billig 1995), media play a major role in constituting this ‘virtual’ or ‘imagined’ speech community. In his historical overview of language policy and language planning (LPP), Ricento identifies the ‘decolonization, structuralism and pragmatism’ era as one characterized by ‘the pervasive belief at least in the West that language problems could be solved through planning, especially within the public sector’ (2000: 197). Linguistic diversity was seen as problematic for the modernization project and for the provision of national media. Therefore, one result of this era is that a diglossic situation emerged in media contexts with the ‘first age’ of broadcasting Wenham (1982) characterized by a great distance between how people speak in ‘normal conversations’ and how people in the media speak (cf. Smith 1998).

In the next era of language policy and planning, Ricento identifies a move away from this, and a recognition that this modernizing project, distinguished by the attempt to create homogeneous speech communities, had failed. The privileging of some languages (or varieties) over others was no longer seen as acceptable (Ricento 2000). In terms of media, this was reflected in a move away from prescription towards greater recognition and representation of variation within the speech community in national media and the development of some subnational (primarily regional) media, and greater diversity in terms of the range of accents and varieties represented in these media. This also corresponded with Wenham’s (1982) second age of broadcasting, when the monopoly of state control of broadcast media was broken down gradually, due to a combination of ideological and technical factors, and multiple media channels emerged (cf. Smith 1998).

The next development in LPP identified by Ricento, which corresponds roughly to the contemporary era (the third age of broadcasting (Wenham 1982) and what is now the digital age), is characterized by ‘[a] new world order, postmodernism and linguistic human rights’ (Ricento 2000: 203). The features of this era include the penetration of English-language media and cultural products throughout the globe, as well as an emphasis on individual agency rather than explicit ideologies. The issue of language loss is a key focus of this era with the employment of notions of biolinguistic diversity and linguistic imperialism. This has been reflected in media contexts by the fragmentation of media and traditional media speech communities (cf. Morley and Robins 1995; Richardson and Meinhof 1999), the activation and implementation of language rights through media (cf. Pietikäinen 2008a, 2008b; Hourigan 2003) and the realization that media could be a tool in ‘saving’ endangered languages (cf. Cotter 2001). Furthermore, digital technology in particular can be seen to have taken control of media production away from institutions more closely associated with macro-level LPP objectives. Thus, the crucial difference between the second and third eras is that in the second era, the speech community was dependent on media institutions to represent their multilingualism and linguistic diversity in a particular way, whereas in the third era, speech communities have the possibility, with obvious limitations, to represent themselves.

New research directions

As Cunliffe and Herring (2005b) point out, ‘the relationship between minority languages and communications technology in the broadest sense has always been complex and problematic. On the one hand communication technology can be a powerful force for propagating a majority language and its cultural values; on the other hand it can provide vital new opportunities for media production and consumption in minority languages’ (Cunliffe and Herring 2005b: 131). Despite initial fears that English would become the normal or default language of the Web and yet another tool of English language imperialism (cf. Crystal 2001), studies have shown increasing rather than decreasing linguistic diversity on the World Wide Web (cf. Danet and Herring 2007, 2003; Androutsopoulos 2007, 2006a, 2006b; Menezes 2006; Cunliffe and Herring 2005a, 2005b; Wright 2004), also seen in commercial contexts (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2006a); particularly as technical improvements have made it possible to provide content not just in different languages but also in an increasing number of alphabets other than Roman that require non-ASCII characters (cf. Wong *et al.* 2006; Gee 2005). Such technical improvements can clearly be seen to have had an impact on normalizing language relations in a number of diglossic or contested contexts. Technical improvements have meant that minority language communities have not had to compromise in terms of omitting special characters, which would fundamentally change and homogenize their alphabets, bringing them visually closer to majority languages and consequently reducing their visibility and the ability to perform meaningful searches in them (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2006b).

The technical possibilities afforded by digital technologies also mean that content can now be made available in an economically viable way, not only in any number of languages, but also in ‘small’ languages that do not have large numbers of speakers to support correspondingly large print runs. Such availability inevitably challenges existing hierarchies and the status quo, whereby common-sense assumptions about language are disseminated and reinforced by the ideologies and norms of the publishing and traditional media industries. Seeing content equally available in multiple languages, as, for example, in situations where parallel monolingual versions are made available, in commercial and other ‘real world’ domains, removed from official domains that are frequently subject to language policy regulations (e.g. European

budget airlines' Ryanair and EasyJet use of Catalan on their websites as mentioned earlier) can be argued to have a strong effect in normalizing a minoritized language. The Dingle Skelligs Hotel on the Dingle Peninsula in Ireland, an Irish-speaking or *Gaeltacht* area, offers eight language options on its website that lead to synopses of the main site, which is in English. The language selection includes a predictable set of supercentral languages (de Swaan 2001) French, German Russian, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese, as well as Italian, a large central (ibid.) language and Irish. Furthermore, what were previously covert policies and decisions in terms of which language communities to provide with localized content are now made overt in new multimedia environments, thus highlighting language norms and ideologies, which in turn can be utilized for claiming linguistic rights. The use and indexing of minority languages in Web environments can have multiple outcomes and effects: what is used by the tourist provider to differentiate or authenticate their product can be a feel-good factor and attractive package for the tourist or consumer and may potentially be empowering for minority language speakers, leading either to an up-scaling of their linguistic resources or conversely a feeling of disenfranchisement. It may be all of these things at one and the same time. In Figure 19.1 we can see the example of the Dingle Skelligs Hotel, situated in the *Gaeltacht* area of Kerry in the West of Ireland. An Irish-language version of the site is offered alongside French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese versions.

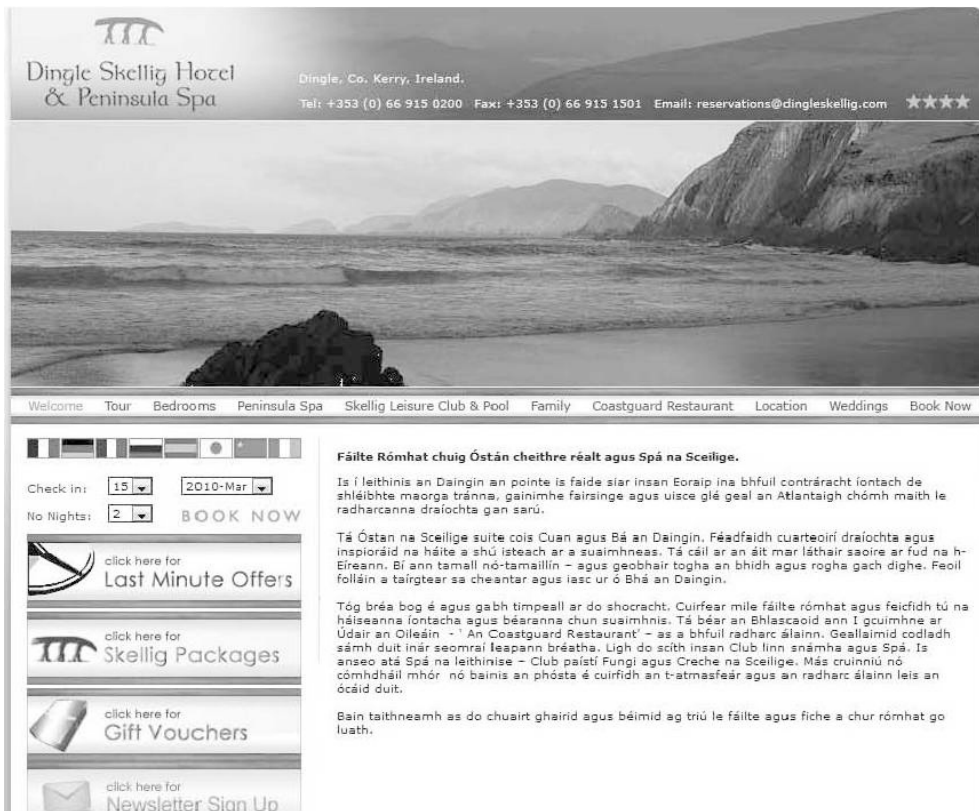


Figure 19.1 The Irish-language version of the Dingle Skelligs Hotel website.

For these reasons, new media contexts could be a potentially positive development for minority languages and linguistic diversity, in general, in terms of making documents and text available in those languages (cf. for example, Nicholls *et al.* 2005). A further claim made for the Web and digital technology goes beyond simply the provision of content in a variety of languages (which could be seen to support maintenance or even status aspirations) to predict an active role for new media in promoting revitalization. The potential of this role is highlighted by Kalish (2005: 182), who claims that ‘questions asked by Tribal people who are engaged in revitalizing language and culture, and those that are asked by people who build various language technologies define the revitalization landscape’. However, Cunliffe and Herring (2005b) caution against an assumption that the mere presence of a minority language on the Web will automatically guarantee maintenance and revitalization (something that was previously claimed for traditional media, not only in terms of status (Fishman 1991) but also in terms of creating a media speech community to replace or supplement a ‘face-to-face’ speech community). As they point out, ‘the actual effects of the Internet, and of computer technologies in general, on minority languages vary from situation to situation’ (Cunliffe and Herring 2005b: 131). Furthermore, where language provision on the Web is driven primarily by top-down agents who are complying with language policy, rather than having a normalizing effect, the provision can reinforce existing norms and hierarchies (Kelly-Holmes 2006a). An important step forward, therefore, is to move beyond a situation whereby minority language speakers are simply consuming content made available in a minority language and using applications such as email, to developing bottom-up content that reflects the needs of minority language speakers and communities (cf. Cunliffe and Herring 2005a), summed up by Nicholls *et al.* (2005) as ‘empowerment rather than gifting’.

Cunliffe and Herring (2005b: 131–2) also propose rethinking the digital divide not just in terms of those who have access to the Internet and new technologies, but also in terms of the divide between languages that are ‘information rich’ and languages that are ‘information poor’ with regard to online content and services’. Despite growing multilingualism and the conviction that the Internet is increasingly a space for other language communities (Block 2004: 23; cf. also Androutsopoulos 2007, 2006a; Danet and Herring 2007; Wright 2006, 2004; Cunliffe and Herring 2005a, 2005b), English has established itself as the language of science and technology (cf. Carli and Ammon 2008), and much World Wide Web housekeeping language takes place through English despite localization of content into other languages. Thus, even where a website is predominantly in a minority language, the housekeeping and legal aspects of the site may well be in the relevant majority language or in English, reinforcing in visual and paralinguistic terms, the marginal status of the particular language and its lack of global capital. Therefore, although it is still possible for the English speaker – and arguably also speakers of languages such as French and Spanish – to use the Web exhaustively in a monolingual way, for the speaker of a smaller language or even a big language that has limited Internet resources (e.g. Arabic), Internet use is predicated on being multilingual.

From the user point of view, multilingual use means many things. For example, individuals may use different languages for different purposes on the Web. For instance, university students in Kenya used Kiswahili for email correspondence with friends; however, the same students use English exclusively for consulting Internet content for general information or for their studies (Kelly-Holmes 2004). This shows how the Internet can reinforce existing diglossic situations, as sociolinguistic norms and language ideologies get transferred to a new medium. An additional dimension to multilingual Internet use is not just the idea of the multilingual individual using different languages to access different types of content and use the Internet in different ways, but also the provision of multilingual content, not just in terms of content being made

available in multiple languages (parallel monolingualism), but also in mixed languages (heteroglossia) (cf. Androutsopoulos 2006a, 2006b; Wright 2006; Cunliffe and Herring 2005a; Danet and Herring 2003, 2007). The publishing norms of hard copy, which dictate generally that a text be in one language or another, do not necessarily apply in Internet publishing, particularly in bottom-up type applications such as blogs, chat rooms and social networking sites, and we are witnessing a huge wave of innovative and emergent heteroglossic practices in such forums, which involve not just mixing between languages but also between a range of semiotic resources (cf. Pietikäinen 2008a). Such heteroglossic and multimodal practices not only challenge existing norms, but also create new norms in terms not just of mixed language practices, but also in terms of combining language, paralanguage, visualities and genres, etc., and this too poses a challenge to prevailing language ideologies and new ways of thinking about and defining language.

Multilingualism in a media text and a mediated text

In this final section, I would like to look at two linked examples of multilingual practices in contemporary media. One is at the *media* end of the textual continuum (an advertisement on an ‘old’ medium, namely television), and the other at the *mediatized* end (a discussion of the advertisement in a new media environment, namely the youtube.com website). In the television advertisement for Carlsberg lager, three young Irish men arrive in a bar in Rio de Janeiro, and are encouraged – perhaps even harassed – by their hosts (who speak English to them) to ‘do something Irish’. After a brief consultation among themselves, one of the group begins to recite stock phrases and random words associated with school Irish (‘May I go out to the toilet’; ‘I like cake’; ‘And a fox’), his friend telling the gathering that this is ‘a poem in our native Irish tongue’. He then goes on to relate more meaningless phrases and words: the name of an attractive Irish-speaking female television presenter (Sharon Ní Bheoláin); ‘I’m wearing a jumper’; ‘There’s a cloud in the sky’. In response to his passionate rendering of ‘Give me the cake’, the transfixed crowd repeat ‘cake’. At this point, the Carlsberg ‘voice’ interjects with the current slogan ‘It’s not A or B, there’s probably C’, and switches to an image of a glass of the lager. Finally, we return to the bar to see that ‘doing something Irish’, in this case speaking Irish in this context, has made the young Irish man the most popular man in the Brazilian bar, and in the final shot he is pictured dancing with an attractive woman, who demands that he ‘speak more Irish’. Now in full stride, his original hesitancy forgotten, he responds with the meaningless string of words ‘quiet, road, girl, milk’. The following is a transcript of the advertisement (Irish text is highlighted in bold with explanations in parentheses and italics underneath):

IRISH MAN 1: Three Carlsberg please.
 BARMAN: Sure. Where are you from?
 IRISH MAN 2: Ireland
 BARMAN: Ireland? Do something Irish.
 THREE IRISH MEN: Like what?
 MALE CUSTOMER: Do some Irish singing.
 BARMAN: Exactly. What about the Irish dancing?
 FEMALE CUSTOMER: Dance, or sing!
 IRISH MAN 1: **An bhfuil cead agam dul amach go dtí an leithreas?**
 [May I go out {{}} of the classroom{{}} to the toilet?]
 IRISH MAN 2: A poem in our native Irish tongue.

IRISH MAN 1: **Agus mádra rua. Is maith liom cáca milis.**

[And a fox. I like cake.]

IRISH MAN 2: **Cáca milis**

[Cake.]

IRISH MAN 1: **Agus Sharon Ní Bheoláin. Tá geansaí orm. Tá scammail sa spéir. Tabhair dom an cáca milis.**

[And Sharon Ní Bheoláin. I'm wearing a jumper. There's a cloud in the sky. Give me the cake!]

TRANSFIXED CROWD: **Cáca milis!**

[Cake!]

MALE IRISH VOICE: It's not just A or B, there's probably C.

FEMALE CUSTOMER: Speak more Irish!

IRISH MAN 1: **Ciúnas, bóthar, cailín, bainne**

[Quiet, road, girl, milk]

This media text represents a highly controlled and planned genre, which in turn reflects minute attention to language choices and combinations – dictated by the cost of prime time television advertising. In official terms, Irish is, of course, the first official language in Ireland, with English being recognized as an additional language for use. However, as has been well documented (for an overview of the issues and the current sociolinguistic situation of Irish, cf. Ó Laoire (2005, 1995) and Mac Giolla Chríost (2005)), the reality of everyday usage is rather different. Irish is privileged in certain official domains, in particular the educational domain, through the operationalizing of an acquisition policy, which had its roots in the attempt by the newly independent state to make Ireland monolingually Irish-speaking. The policy has changed and adjusted over the decades since independence from the UK in the 1920s, and a monolingual Ireland is no longer an objective of the policy, with bilingualism favoured instead. However, the low level of fluency achieved by the majority of second language (L2) learners in schools, which is the primary means of achieving this bilingualism (along with regionally targeted support for first language (L1) speakers in *Gaeltacht* communities), is frequently the source of public debate and discussion. This low level of fluency is reflected in the young men's use of school Irish in the advertisement. The ad is bilingual, bilingualism here being interpreted as mixing Irish and English rather than parallel or strict bilingualism, which represent parallel monolingualisms reinforcing the territoriality principle. The use of the protagonists' limited school Irish in the context of an ad for a global brand, can be seen perhaps to legitimize, within this domain at least, their particular type of 'less than perfect' bilingualism.

This multilingual media text in turn prompted the creation of a second mediatized text. The advertisement was posted on the youtube.com video site and has to date attracted 107,200 viewings and 387 comments (available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTNBmFveq2U, accessed on 8 May 2009). Perhaps encouraged by the protagonists in the advertisement and by the flexibility and freedom afforded by new media writing practices, contributors to the discussion have also tried out their 'imperfect' bilingualism, creating a linguistically hybrid site consisting of creative and idiolectal linguistic play, involving Irish and English, as the following examples highlight (translations appear in italics in parentheses below the particular terms):

(1) **Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam!**

[a country without a language is a country without a soul!]

In example 1, the poster has posted an Irish phrase into an otherwise predominantly English-language discussion, in response to a comment in English. The poster does not offer a translation of the phrase, which s/he assumes to be well known to the other posters.

(2) **Tar éis an fógra sin bainneann níos mó daoine trial as a chuid Gaeilge a labhairt!**

[This ad encourages people to use their Irish more]

Using **cúpla focail** in every day speech keeps the language alive.
[a few words]

The poster in example 2 starts his/her post with a sentence in Irish, for which s/he does not offer a translation, and then continues in English, with a borrowing from Irish ‘cúpla focail’ or ‘couple of words’ used in the otherwise English-language sentence. The posts in general are characterized by a large degree of ‘fluidity’ in terms of language choices, mixing and standardization – with many different spellings being used for both English and Irish words. Overall, it is hard to classify the language of the entire conversation – it is neither fully Irish, nor fully English, but a mixture of both.

The language of the comments posted in response to the youtube.com video exemplify the phenomenon of mediatized texts, whereby texts can be created by individuals using their own linguistic norms, and without the intervention of a top-down agent of language policy. The freedom that mediatized texts afford, as well as the technology that makes them possible, fundamentally alters the relationship between multilingualism and media – multilingualism becomes a bottom-up rather than top-down phenomenon. Any individual (within the significant economic, education and geographical limits of access to digital media) can now create their own multilingual media.

Conclusion

Although new media seem to challenge diglossic media practices of previous eras, by breaking down the dichotomy between producer and consumer in media, and by a flowering of heteroglossic and idiolectal practices in new media forums, many global media products still either enforce a one-language policy, generally English, or provide parallel monolingual channels (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2006b). So, although bottom-up media practices are growing, top-down policies do still dominate in many domains, and although there is greater control over the self-representation of speakers of various languages, there is still representation of speakers by others through media texts and speech acts (cf. Jaffe 2007). Furthermore, in many parts of the world, even national media have had to rely heavily on imported media products, and media products leak easily across designated ‘linguistic borders’, thus making the creation of homogenous speech communities more an aspiration than a reality in many cases. As the chapter shows, mediatization clearly seems to impact on multilingualism, but this is a reflexive relationship, and increasingly so. Multilingualism too impacts on media contexts, actors and speech communities that are constituted by media, and multilingual practices inevitably challenge the way in which media are constituted and perceived (cf. Androutsopoulos 2006a; Busch 2004; Leitner 1997; Boyd-Barrett *et al.* 1996). Media are a key site of multilingualism: a place where national and regional policies in relation to multilingualism are enacted, where speech communities are constituted, represented, fragmented and reconstituted, where the speech community experiences and learns about its multilingualism, and, increasingly too, a place where individuals and groups can create their own multilingualism.

Related topics

Multilingual citizenship and minority languages; multilingualism on the Internet; multilingualism and popular culture; multilingualism and multimodality; codeswitching; heteroglossia.

Further reading

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2007) 'Bilingualism in the mass media and on the Internet', in M. Heller (ed.) *Bilingualism: A Social Approach*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan. (Provides an overview of research in the area of multilingualism and media.)
- Cormack, M. and Hourigan, N. (eds) (2007) *Minority Language Media*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. (Brings together case studies in and overview of the development of minority language media.)
- Danet, B. and Herring, S. (eds) (2007) *The Multilingual Internet: Language, Culture, and Communication Online*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Brings together the latest thinking on the area of new media and multilingualism.)
- Johnson, S. A. and Ensslin, A. (2007b) 'Language in the media: Theory and practice', in S. A. Johnson and A. Ensslin (eds) *Language in the Media: Representations, Identities, Ideologies*, London and New York: Continuum. (Provides an overview of how multilingualism is treated in the media.)
- Kelly-Holmes, H. (2005) *Advertising as Multilingual Communication*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan. (Provides an overview of commercial multilingualism in the media.)

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