

1 Multilingualism and Historical Amnesia: An Introduction

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We have pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall and watched him shatter into thousands of little bits and pieces; and we have descended on the pieces and broken them down into progressively smaller bits and pieces. But we cannot put him together again because we find it much easier to analyze than to synthesize.

(Wright, 1982, p. 24)

Academic interest in multilingualism had waxed and waned throughout the twentieth century, but by the time I started a doctoral program in linguistics in 1992, researchers had articulated central questions (e.g., Fishman, 1965), written several introductions (e.g., Grosjean, 1982), and established the key lines of inquiry: bilingual brain, bilingual development, bilingual education, language policy, code-switching, and language contact, maintenance, and shift. By the time I defended my dissertation, the disparate lines of inquiry had come together as a field that coalesced around a dedicated publisher, *Multilingual Matters*; the first International Symposium on Bilingualism, organized in 1997 by Li Wei; the *International Journal of Bilingualism*, launched in 1997 by Li Wei, and *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, founded in 1998 by François Grosjean and his colleagues. At the time, no one could have predicted the explosive growth of the field. Today, no one knows how many professional journals there are and how many meetings on different aspects of multilingualism are held at any given point.

What's more, research on multilingualism was never confined to the four founding disciplines: linguistics, psychology, education, and anthropology. The influx of immigrants in the West and concerns about their integration raised interest in the history of linguistically diverse societies. The landmark collection by Adams et al. (2002) and Adams' magisterial *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (2003) inspired a plethora of publications on bi- and

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multilingualism in antiquity (e.g., Bowman et al., 2021; Clackson et al., 2020; Elder & Mullen, 2019; Jonker et al., 2021; Mullen, 2013; Mullen & James, 2012; Papaconstantinou, 2010; Smelik, 2013); Trotter's (2000) pioneering collection was followed by numerous studies of medieval multilingualism (e.g., Bloemendal, 2015; Classen, 2016; Jefferson & Putter, 2013; Pahta et al., 2018; Rubin, 2018); while Evans (2004) and Burke (2004) turned the tide in the study of linguistic diversity in early modernity and the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires (e.g., Fortna, 2010; Gallagher, 2019; Gilbert, 2020; Judson, 2006; Murre-van den Berg et al., 2020; Offord et al., 2018; Prokopovych et al., 2019; Tosi, 2020; Wolf, 2015).

The problem is that the twain rarely meet. Some historical studies, uninformed by recent research on multilingualism, are content to signal "multilingualism was here": they offer intriguing glimpses of language-mixing in ancient inscriptions and medieval manuscripts but fail to ask probing questions and fit their findings in the larger scheme of things. Sociolinguists, on the other hand, are cognizant of complexities of multilingualism but suffer from historical amnesia (Spolsky's (2009) historical sensibility is an exception rather than the rule). The purpose of this introduction – and of the volume at large – is to bring together these research strands.

I will begin by outlining the myths and misconceptions that inspired my own interest in the history of multilingual societies and, eventually, the round table at the Center for Multilingualism in Oslo and the volume you have in your hands. Then, I will place the chapters in context by discussing the paradoxes and contradictions of historical multilingualism in six institutional domains: administration, courts of law, religion, army, education, and public signage. In the last section, I will consider the picture emerging from recent work. The opposite of what we have come to believe, this picture undermines the sense of contemporary exceptionalism and opens up space for historically informed narratives and avenues of pursuit.

1.1 Academic Ignorance Pacts: The Joys and Dangers of Fragmented Conversations

Concerns about compartmentalization aren't new in academia. In March 1980, H. Curtis Wright, Professor of Library and Information Sciences at Brigham Young University, gave a heartfelt talk at a conference on Libraries and Culture, arguing that we have little chance of solving larger puzzles if we insist on breaking academic conversations into progressively smaller bits. I wonder if his naked frustration sounded misplaced to the meeting attendees, secure in their connections through dusty libraries and print journals that landed in their mailboxes with a predictable thud. Today, their world seems positively quaint to academics who access rare editions online and converse

with colleagues around the globe from the comfort of their cozy dens. Wright's (1982) fears, however, sound more resonant as technological advances accelerate centrifugal forces that create new academic connections but also new divides.

Psychologists, political scientists, economists, and sociologists are debating the decline of central questions in their disciplines, split into isolated academic tribes, with their own agendas, meetings, and publications, and so are scholars in communication science, "said to be more fragmented and hyper-specialized than ever before, producing an increasing number of small, niche research topics that lack intellectual coherence as a whole" (Song et al., 2020, p. 310). Cross-disciplinary divides elicit their own concerns. Evans (2004, p. 2) roasted historians for "neglect of the language issue," Edwards (1994, pp. 206–207) and Burke (2004) chided sociolinguists for neglect of history, and Fishman (1991) bemoaned mutual contempt between sociolinguists and sociologists:

After three decades, sociolinguistics has remained just as it was: a province of linguistics and anthropology, and a rather provincial province at that. The greatest loser by far in this 'reciprocal ignorance' pact is the sociolinguistic enterprise. (p. 132)

In the sociolinguistics of multilingualism, his unflinching description still rings true. Despite its self-avowed multidisciplinary nature, the field of multilingualism is undermined by ignorance pacts and the interplay between centripetal and centrifugal trends. The reasons are easy to understand. We all enjoy being with colleagues who share our jargon, rationales, conventions, and the politics of citation and review. As many of this volume's contributors found out, explaining to other academics what we do, how we do it, why our methods should be trusted, what we think of footnotes, and where our findings fit is an exasperating task. And while interdisciplinary collaboration is encouraged in academia, we all know the downsides: the need to master 'other' literatures when we can barely keep up with the flood of publications in 'our own' area, the risk that publications in 'other' journals would be invisible to 'our own' colleagues, and plain methodological distrust. Ethnographers are skeptical about the value of statistics and experiments, psychologists scoff at "pretentiousness and barren verbiage" in sociolinguistics (Edwards, 2012, p. 38), and no one but historical sociolinguists attends talks about code-switching in medieval sermons and manuscripts. Even when there is goodwill, the pressure to write and publish leaves us with little time to think, listen, and read.

What we don't often talk about are the dangers of fragmented conversations. In the field of multilingualism, the ever-narrowing circles of academic exchanges and peer review have led to slipping scholarly standards, the creation of journals that look suspiciously like self-publishing, the formation of echo chambers where no claim is too ridiculous to print, and the

proliferation of new subfields, such as ‘superdiversity’ and ‘material culture of multilingualism,’ innocent of all knowledge accumulated in the fields of archaeology, classics, history, and epigraphy. At the heart of this unilateral ignorance pact is a conviction that historical knowledge – and the disciplines that engage with it – have little relevance to multilingualism of the digital age.

The conviction isn’t new – history has been given short shrift since the inception of the field. When invoked, the historical narrative begins, pace Anderson (1991), with the formation of ideologically monolingual nation-states. *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism*, for instance, opens with the nineteenth-century national movements and identifies the period after World War II as the time when “the role of language in nation-building and in the organization of citizenship took on new salience in public and academic discourse” (Martin-Jones et al., 2012, pp. 2–3). So does *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*, where ‘history of the field’ begins with the rise of the nineteenth-century nation-states (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012).

Peeking through this narrow – and undeniably Western European – lens, study after study traces progress from the rigid national language paradigms to the unbridled diversity of our own world, which, we are told, is more multilingual than ever before or, in more elegant terms, is taking *the multilingual turn*: “Multilingualism in all its forms has taken center stage in the communicative environments of late modernity” (Jacquemet, 2018, p. 379). The differences between our multilingualism and its shabby predecessors are outlined in a recent bold manifesto:

In the first place, multilingualism in its present form has become an inherent and crucial property of society. This is in contrast to previous multilingual arrangements in the world, which although important too were far from being as central as they are now. . . . The multilingualism of the past was largely circumstantial, unevenly spread between groups and individuals. Being multilingual at that time was important for reaching specifically limited (but not unimportant) aims: multilingualism did not determine the development of humanity. . . . Today, multilingual practices comply with the current state of the world and new patterns are deployed anywhere from small groups to international, transnational corporations. In addition to the essential task of human communication, multiple languages have become inherent to the core undertakings of humankind, such as industry and business, medicine and earth sustainability activities, politics and state development, education and arts. (Aronin, 2020, pp. 20–21)

The assertion is theorized by Lo Bianco (2020), an expert on language policy, who contrasts past and present on three dimensions – dispersion, density, and practical challenge:

Today, there are fewer non-multilingual societies than at any time since the spread of nation-state ideologies premised on the idea that national unity required linguistic uniformity. In addition to population movements, this represents the defeat of extreme monolingual nation-making practices and of aggressive assimilation practices.

This greater dispersion of multilingual contexts is so extensive that we can speak of a near universality of the phenomenon of demo-multilingualism, or language diversity at the population level. In addition to spread, we can also observe greater density of multilingualism, involving intensity and depth, so that multilingual configurations merge with a proliferating number of semiotic systems and forms of difference and identity in single polities. The third characteristic of multilingualism today resides in the depth and persistence of the practical challenge that multiple languages and multilingual citizenries pose to public administration, education and commercial life. (pp. 42–43)

Together, Aronin (2020) and Lo Bianco (2020) make explicit four tenets that undergird a lot of recent scholarship in the field:

- **Modern multilingualism presents a greater challenge:** In the past, it was “largely circumstantial” (Aronin, 2020), while today we witness “the practical challenge that multiple languages and multilingual citizenries pose to public administration, education and commercial life” (Lo Bianco, 2020, p. 43); for similar arguments, see Geldof (2018, pp. 52–53).
- **Modern multilingualism is quantitatively different:** Language diversity at the population level is greater, more dense, and dispersed than ever before (Lo Bianco, 2020) and, according to some, is best understood as *superdiversity* (Arnaut et al., 2016; Canagarajah, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2018).
- **Modern multilingualism is qualitatively different:** Globalization gave rise to ‘increasingly unbounded’ transidiomatic practices, where speakers transcend the boundaries of named languages and blend semiotic resources into unprecedentedly complex forms (see Jacquemet, 2018; Lo Bianco, 2020, p. 41).
- **Modern language policies are more tolerant:** We are witnessing “the defeat of extreme monolingual nation-making practices and of aggressive assimilation practices” (Lo Bianco, 2020) in favor of more linguistically tolerant policies.

The absence of pertinent references makes it hard to decide what, if any, historical data the authors draw on to reach these conclusions. Fortunately, studies of historical multilingualism, based on material evidence spanning millennia, make it easy to put the claims to the test and to form a more informed opinion about the uniqueness of the modern-day ‘multilingual challenge.’

1.2 ‘The Multilingual Challenge’ through History: Paradoxes and Contradictions

Multilingualism can be examined through a variety of lenses, including that of a single manuscript, but to make claims about multilingual societies scholars need to consider *language management* (Spolsky, 2009), defined here as explicit

efforts to regulate the choice of languages and scripts in institutional domains and communication with the public. These norms and accommodations may vary greatly across domains and a full picture of a single society requires a systematic analysis of practices in the international, institutional, and private spheres. We won't go that far. Since claims about 'the multilingual challenge' have focused on the public domain, I will skirt the private sphere and international commerce and diplomacy, where multilingualism has been traditionally par for the course, and focus on six institutional domains: (1) administration; (2) courts of law; (3) religion; (4) army; (5) education; and (6) public signage.

These domains will be considered in nine focal settings, some of which are also featured in the chapters: Ptolemaic Egypt (see also Chapter 2); the Roman Empire (Chapters 2, 3, and 4); Norman Sicily; medieval England (Chapter 5); medieval Castile; the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; Pennsylvania; the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Chapter 10); and the Russian Empire (Chapters 8 and 9). Clustered in Europe, with forays to Africa and North America, these choices are selective, not exhaustive, and the same can be said about the case studies in the volume at large. To put forth a compelling argument and illustrate it with examples of different approaches to language management, I chose the best-documented settings from the Graeco-Roman world, the Middle Ages, and the early modern empires.

The data comes from published studies, primary sources, and, in the case of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Russian Empire, and Pennsylvania, from my own ongoing archival research. Like all historical evidence, the data on language management and institutional practices is constrained by the vagaries of survival and, in the case of premodern multilingualism, the fragmentary nature of much of the evidence and dissociation from its original contexts, authors, and addressees, which places limitations on scholarly understanding and interpretation (Pavlenko & Mullen, 2015). Nevertheless, it is sufficiently informative to revise the claims made about premodern and modern multilingualism and to articulate an alternative vision of the field.

1.2.1 "The Kingdom with One Language Is Weak and Fragile": Multilingual Administrations

The chapters by Maravela, Mullen, and Wright highlight the normativity of bi- and multilingual bureaucracies and documents in, respectively, Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt and medieval England. Of course, the Ptolemies were not the first to preside over a bilingual administration (cf. Jonker et al., 2021). Prior to the takeover by Alexander the Great and his self-appointed successor Ptolemy I, Egypt was part of the multiethnic Persian Empire whose officials eschewed Persian in favor of Aramaic, the lingua franca of the east. Nevertheless, thanks

to its obsession with record-keeping and dry sands, perfect for preservation of writing on papyri and potsherds, Ptolemaic Egypt is the world's first fairly well-documented state and, by definition, the first well-documented bilingual society – no other kingdom boasts such a wealth of official records, trial proceedings, business contracts, marriage certificates, and tax receipts (Bagnall, 2009a; Manning, 2010, pp. 6–10). The Ptolemies also make an intriguing case. As Macedonian Greeks, they were proud speakers of the language of Homer, averse to learning 'barbarian tongues',¹ but in the countryside everyone spoke Egyptian, creating a knotty problem: How do you rule the people whose language you don't speak and don't care to learn?

To foster Greek literacy among Egyptian scribes, Ptolemy I dangled a promise of social mobility and offered tax exemptions to teachers of Greek (Clarysse & Thompson, 2006). The incentives worked. The scribes learned Greek, just as they learned Aramaic under the Persians, and his successors presided over a bilingual administration, where the upper echelon worked in Greek and local officials conducted bilingual auctions, issued tax receipts in Demotic Egyptian, and wrote reports in synthetic bureaucratized that fused Greek recording practices with an Egyptian calendar and measurements (Bagnall, 2009a; Manning, 2010, 2019; Vierros, 2012). What made the Ptolemies unique was their uncanny ability to promote Hellenization, without suppressing Egyptian, and to incentivize bilingualism, without becoming bilingual themselves.

Romans maintained the Greek bureaucracy with one exception: birth certificates, military diplomas, and wills of Roman citizens in Egypt were issued in Latin (cf. Maravela, Mullen, this volume). To encourage Greek in private transactions, authorities expanded the number of Greek notary offices in the hinterland and required the deposition of Demotic contracts in Alexandria – a complication Egyptians wished to avoid. By the end of the first century AD, even private correspondence between Egyptians was in Greek, while Demotic disappeared from sales deeds, contracts, and tax receipts (Yiftach-Firanko, 2009). In one of the greatest paradoxes of our multilingual history, Romans Latinized their western provinces (cf. Mullen, this volume) and Hellenized Egypt more successfully than the Ptolemies ever did.

Medieval Norman conquerors faced an added problem: their own vernacular had no written tradition. In England, they started out with English charters but then switched to Latin. The only Romance documents known from the Norman era are a grant of land to the Knights Hospitaller (1140) and a draft

¹ 'The language of Homer' appears here in a metaphoric sense. In the literal sense, this mixture of different forms of Greek was not spoken by the Ptolemies. What's more, their native dialect, Macedonian Greek, was looked down upon by Athenians and other Greeks. The medium of the Ptolemaic administration was the most prestigious variety – Attic Greek (Maravela, this volume).

returned by mistake during Henry II's inquest of sheriffs in 1170 (Clanchy, 2013). The error reveals multilingualism behind the Latin façade: the kings articulated their wishes in Romance, the clerks transformed them into formulaic Latin, and public criers read the texts in Latin and *patriae lingua* [native tongue], that is, Romance and regional varieties of English. The towering monument to this multilingual bureaucracy is the first English census – the *Domesday Book*. To survey his lands, resolve ownership debates, and fix the rates of tax, in 1085 King William dispatched representatives to all the shires to collect *verdicts*, oral testimonies on property. The *Domesday Book* names five interpreters, *latimers*, but they may have been a fraction of the total interpreter corps that collected the *verdicts* in English, Romance, and, on one occasion, Welsh, and translated them into Latin (Clanchy, 2013; Tsurushima, 1995).

In southern Europe, Normans captured Greek-speaking Calabria and Arab Sicily. Balarm (Palermo), taken over in 1072, became the first Muslim city to be (re-)conquered by Christians. To rule his motley crew, King Roger II adopted a novel solution (for medieval Europe, that is): a trilingual administration. Arabic documents, issued by the royal chancery, followed Islamic notary manuals; Greek charters adopted Byzantine conventions; and Latin *diplomata* conformed to the patterns of the papal chancery and the Duchy of Normandy (Johns, 2002; Metcalfe, 2003). The choice of language depended

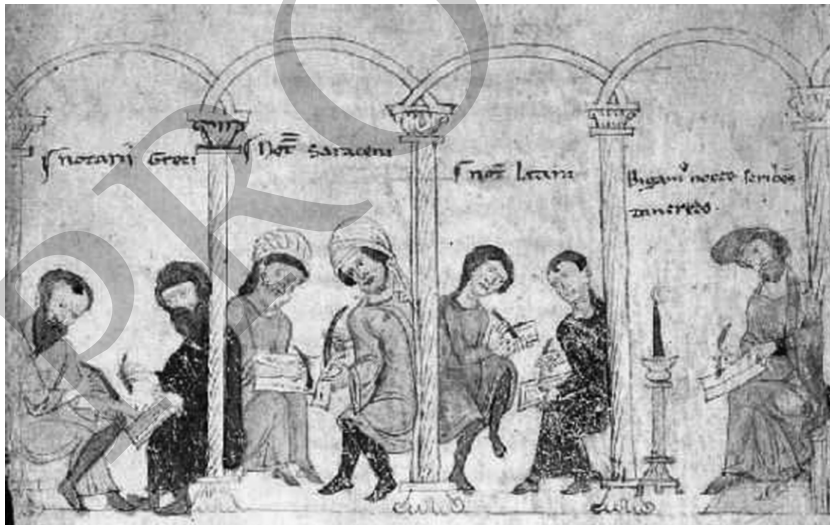


Fig. 1.1 Trilingual royal chancery in Palermo, with Greek, Saracen (Arabic), and Latin scribes. Illustration from the manuscript by Petrus de Ebulo, *Liber ad honorem Augusti*, c. 1194 AD. Bürgerbibliothek, Bern. Codex 120 II, f.101 r. Public domain.

on the issuing authority. Many charters were composed in Greek but the fiscal administration, created on the model of Fatimid Cairo, operated in Arabic, and Norman barons needed translators to figure out what the paperwork said. Royal ministers Christodoulos and George of Antioch were fluent in Greek and Arabic, Matthew of Salerno spoke all three chancery tongues, and the kings – or the scribes writing on their behalf – signed charters in Greek, Latin, or with a flourish of an Arabic motto-signature, ‘*alāma*’ (Johns & Jamil, 2004). Missing in chancery action was the mother tongue of the Norman Franks.

Lithuanian dukes faced a similar challenge: most of the territory of their Grand Duchy – today’s Lithuania, Belarus, and parts of Ukraine, Russia, Poland, and Moldova – was populated by Rusyns and their native Lithuanian wasn’t a written tongue. To communicate with their subjects, the dukes adopted *ruthenicum* [Ruski] as their chancery language and *Ruska Pravda* as their law code.² The first Lithuanian coins, minted in Vilnius in 1386, had a Cyrillic legend *Kniaz’ Iaga*, Duke Jogaila, and the chancery, founded in 1392 by Grand Duke Witold, employed two teams of scribes: Rusyn scribes issued domestic charters in Ruski and corresponded with Muscovy, while Polish clerks issued Latin charters to Catholic churches and corresponded with Rome in Latin and the Teutonic Order in German (Grusha, 2015; Kosman, 1971). To repopulate his lands and benefit from foreign expertise, Duke Witold welcomed German colonists and Armenian, Jewish, and Tatar settlers from Crimea. The Burgundian envoy to his court, Guillebert de Lannoy, was surprised by the vibrant diversity of the town of Troki (modern Trakai), with its mix of Saracen Tatars, “Germans, Lithuanians, Rusyns, and a great quantity of Jews, each group speaking its own tongue” (de Lannoy, 1840, p. 25). Tatar scribes were also on hand: when de Lannoy was ready to leave, Witold equipped him with safe-conducts in Ruski, Latin, and Tatar.

King István I of Hungary (1000–1038) also welcomed colonists and advised his son that *unius linguae uniusque moris regnum imbecille et fragile est* [the kingdom with one language and one custom is weak and fragile] (Evans, 2004, p. 3).³ To rule the kingdom, inhabited by Magyars, Slavs, and German colonists, the kings relied on Latin. From the eleventh to the mid-nineteenth century, Latin would serve as the language of bureaucracy, parliamentary debates, and interaction with foreigners, and many a visitor would be surprised by village notaries using Latin as “the language of office and business throughout Hungary” (Beudant, 1823, p. 21). Only in 1844 was Magyar

² ‘Ruski’ is the name used in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania but not a conventional linguistic term. Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Russian linguists variously call the language Old Belarusian, Old Ukrainian, Western Russian, or Lithuanian Russian, while Western linguists favor the artificial label *Ruthenian*, derived from the Latin *ruthenicum*. To convey local perceptions and blurry boundaries between Slavic vernaculars, I decided to keep the authentic term.

³ Modern historians doubt the royal authorship of the admonition.

declared official – to the great disappointment of Croatian deputies who filibustered in Latin to no avail (Almási & Šubarić, 2015).

In the Russian Empire, Peter I and his successors adopted a territorial approach to language management: Baltic provinces were administered in German, Finland in Swedish, and Poland in Polish until the advent of Russification reforms (Kappeler, 2001; Pavlenko, 2011a). Peter I also invited foreign colonists, many of them German speakers. Together with Baltic Germans from Livland, Kurland, and Estland, the new arrivals played an important part in the imperial administration, modeled on the Swedish and Prussian counterparts, with the colleges named in a Germanic manner *Iustits, Kommerts, Politsei*. Each college had a German interpreter on staff and the documents, including the all-important *Table of Ranks* (1722), were published in both tongues, enriching Russian with countless German titles (Dahmen, 2015).

In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the 1867 *Ausgleich*, Compromise, created the Dual Monarchy that embodied the tension between competing visions of language and power. The 1868 Nationalities Act of the Kingdom of Hungary reinforced the status of Magyar and made language equality conditional:

This equality of rights, insofar as it applies to the several languages in use in this country, may be modified by special dispositions only so far as these comport with the unity of the state, the practical necessities of government, and the administration of justice (translated in Maxwell, 2009, p. 26).

In contrast, in Cisleithania – most of today's Austria, Czech Republic, and Slovenia, as well as parts of Italy, Romania, Poland, Croatia, Montenegro, and Ukraine – Article 19 of the 1867 Constitution declared all languages equal, with no one obliged to learn additional tongues:

All the state's ethnic groups [*Volksstämme*] are equal, and each has an inviolable right to preserve and cultivate its nationality and language. The state recognizes the equality of all languages current in a region within schools, administration and public life. In those lands which are home to various ethnic groups, the institutions of public education shall be organized in such a way that each of these groups receives the means to be educated in its own language, without being forced to learn a second regional language (Article 19, *Reichsgesetzblatt*, translated in Wolf, 2015, p. 42).⁴

Then, the two monarchies took diverging paths. Hungary unrolled a Magyarization campaign, while in Austria, the central government functioned in German and regional bureaucracies employed bi- and multilingual civil servants who worked in German and official regional languages,

⁴ The provision about not being obligated to learn a second language was added under the pressure of influential Bohemian deputies, concerned that German speakers in Bohemia might be forced to learn Czech (Judson, 2019).



Fig. 1.2 100 Austro-Hungarian krona (1912), obverse. Public domain.

Landessprache – Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, Czech, Romanian, Ruski, and Polish (Berecz, 2021a; Prokopovych et al., 2019; Wolf, 2015; see also Fellerer, this volume). The two-faced nature of the Dual Monarchy is captured on its banknotes that feature Magyar on the Hungarian side and ten languages on the Austrian side (Csernicskó & Beregszászi, 2019) (Fig. 1.2). Gal (2011), an expert on the history of language ideologies and practices in the Austro-Hungarian empire, has long argued that “the conventional, *monolingual* image of European linguistic nationalism that is evident in the scholarship of our day misrepresents the European past” (p. 31). The banknote illustrates the point starkly: modern scholars see the single-language side and miss the polyglot side.

1.2.2 Linguistic Diversity in the Courts of Law

Court records, argues Fellerer (this volume), offer a unique window into the workings of bi- and multilingualism in daily life. This is especially true for premodern polities distinguished by *legal pluralism*, a coexistence of multiple systems of normative law, often practiced in different tongues (Ando, 2016; Czajkowski et al., 2020).

In Egypt, Ptolemy II sanctioned one court for Greek speakers, another one for Egyptians, plus the royal court that heard cases in Greek on an ad hoc basis; Jews, granted self-governing privileges, had their own courts and an option to

appeal to Greek judges, which they often exercised (Bagnall & Derow, 2004; Manning, 2010, 2019; Yiftach-Firanko, 2009). The language of legal documents was subject to choice. Greek was favored in petitions to high officials, wills, and transactions with high sums and Demotic Egyptian preferred in marriage contracts, property deeds involving Egyptian inheritance laws, and contracts for small sums drawn on the cheap (Vandorpe & Waebens, 2009; Vierros, 2012). Greek courts accepted translated evidence but judges were inconvenienced by Demotic deeds. In 146 BC, Ptolemy VI decreed that Demotic contracts should be registered in the official archives with a summary in Greek and in 118 BC, Ptolemy VIII curtailed consolidation of power in Greek hands and made the language of the contract the deciding factor in the choice of the court (for the texts of the decrees, see Bagnall & Derow, 2004).

In Sicily, Norman conquerors preserved the status quo ante, allowing Muslims, Greeks, and Jews to follow their own laws (Metcalf, 2003). So did King Alfonso VI in Tulaytula (Toledo), (re-)conquered from Muslims in 1085. Eager to gain support of the city's influential Arabic-speaking Christians, *Mozarabs*, Alfonso VI offered them self-governing privileges, *fueros*; later on similar privileges were extended to Castilians, Franks, Muslims, and Jews (for Spanish texts, see Garcia-Gallo, 1975). Taxation was organized on the Castilian model, but in other domains Mozarabs were ruled by their own *alcalde*, mayor, and followed their traditional Visigothic code, *Liber Iudiciorum*, mixed with customary Islamic law (Moreno, 2012).

This wasn't the only code they preserved. For two centuries after the Christian takeover, Mozarabs, Muslims, and Jews maintained Arabic and relied on documents that followed Islamic notary manuals, complete with the traditional opening *bismillah al-rahman al-rahim*, "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate" (Beale-Rivaya, 2012; Beale-Rivaya & Busic, 2018; Moreno, 2012; Witcombe, 2018). Their transactions with the Catholic church were also recorded in Arabic, as seen in the nearly 1,200 charters of land sales, donations, leases, property rentals, and wills preserved in the archives of the Cathedral of Toledo and the convent of San Clemente. The choice is not as surprising as it seems: the documents were meant for Mozarab courts, where judges dealt easily with pre- and post-conquest Arabic deeds and offered an extra layer of protection in civil proceedings by requiring witnesses to confirm the validity of their signatures (for the documents, see González Palencia, 1926–1930; for discussion see Beale-Rivaya, 2012; Moreno, 2012; Witcombe, 2018).

Legally homogeneous settings weren't exempt from linguistic challenges. In medieval English courts, judges and pleaders – often good Englishmen, with names like Denham, Howard, King, Huntingdon, Heyham, and Westcote, and a fondness for English proverbs – listened to testimony in Romance/French and English, made pleas in French, composed writs in Latin, and had

proceedings recorded in Latin by trilingual clerks (Brand, 2000; Woodbine, 1943). In 1285, one author justified writing a treatise on law in Romance by the fact that the pleas were *in romanis verbis, et non in latinis, pronunciat* (Woodbine, 1943, p. 428).

One such proceeding, discussed by Kerby-Fulton (2015), is illustrated in a picture from an office manual, composed in Ireland circa 1420 (Fig. 1.3). To total up the accounts at the royal accounting office, the Exchequer, the clerks gathered around a table covered with a checkered cloth with moveable counters – a medieval version of the spreadsheet. The piteous little figure at the bottom is the hapless sheriff being audited and on the right are the three suitors pleading on his behalf. Seated on the left are three magistrates, headed by the judge identified as Sharpe on his sleeve and at the back is a row of clerks, including the Chief Remembrancer (checking on his pen) and the Clerk of the Pipe (preparing a writ). Speech bubbles reveal that everyone is speaking French: the magistrates exclaim *Voyr dire*, the suitors protest *Chalange*, and the usher is announcing the adjournment of the court: *A demain*. The Clerk of the Pipe, meanwhile, is performing routine translation, composing a Latin writ.

In modern times, the challenges didn't subside. The complexity of law enforcement in the Habsburg Empire is well illustrated by the trilingual warrant issued in May 1848 for Slovak activists Jozef Hurban, Michal Hodža, and Ludovít Štúr (Fig. 1.4). Issued by commissioner Beniczky in Magyar, German, and Czech, the warrant is signed with three versions of the commissioner's first name – Lajos, Ludwig, and Ludewjt. Missing in action is the activists' native Slovak, treated as a dialect of Czech (Komora, 2015, p. 87; for discussion of linguistic diversity in the courtrooms of Dualist Hungary (1867–1918), see Berecz, 2021b).

A single language didn't solve the problem – instead it necessitated reliance on court interpreters, as seen in sixteenth-century Spain (Sarmiento-Pérez, 2016), seventeenth-century France (Cohen, 2016), and colonial Pennsylvania, where William Penn made English official in court:

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid that all pleadings Processes and records in Court shall be Short and in English and in an Ordinary and plaine Character that they may be Esily read & understood and Justice Speedily administered (*Great Law of Pennsylvania*, 1682).⁵

The founding father of Pennsylvanian court interpreting was Penn's real estate agent, a multilingual Swede named Lasse Cock. In 1683, Cock interpreted at the trial of a Swedish woman, Margaret Mattson, accused of putting spells on her neighbors' cows – the jury found Margaret guilty of having a fame as a witch but innocent of the actual deeds (*Minutes of the Provincial*

⁵ www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/documents/1681-1776/great-law.html



Fig. 1.3 Dublin Court of Exchequer at work. The Red Book of the Exchequer. Reproduced by permission of the National Archives.

Council of Pennsylvania, 1683–1700, pp. 94–96). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the influx of German immigrants brought in a new twist: court proceedings in German. In 1876, German-born journalist Ludwig Wollenweber was greatly surprised by the ease with which judges and lawyers



Fig. 1.4 Trilingual arrest warrant (1848). Slovak National Museum. Public domain.

in the city of Reading conversed in the local variety of German, Pennsylvania Dutch. “The proceedings naturally occurred in English,” he reported,

but since most of the residents of Berks County, especially those from outside of Reading, can express themselves more clearly in German than in English, even if they have been born here, plaintiffs, respondents and witnesses often prefer to be examined in German (translated in Loudon, 2016, p. 251).

This wasn’t an isolated case. In Harrisburg in 1907 “a witness spoke High German, Judge Thomas Capp spoke the Pennsylvania Dutch of Lebanon County, and Senator John E. Fox, the defendant’s counsel, spoke the Pennsylvania Dutch of Dauphin County” (Loudon, 2016, p. 251). And in Allentown in 1904, proceedings in the mysterious murder of Mabel Bechtel were “carried on in the ‘Pennsylvania Dutch’ dialect, which was understood

not only by the judge, jury and lawyers, but by most of the spectators in the crowded courtroom” (*New York Times*, January 22, 1904). The only ones in need of interpreters were the journalists. “The continued use of German as the household language, for three or four generations,” grumbled *The Washington Times* reporter, “tends to isolation from the world, non-comprehension of its affairs and a conservatism which might as well be called pig-headed” (January 24, 1904). The critique is familiar to us but the acceptance of foreign language testimony is not – nowadays in the USA, bilingual jurors are struck down by peremptory challenges or instructed to attend only to English interpreting.

1.2.3 *Sacred Tongues*

Maravela’s chapter focuses on religious settings, a vantage point essential in historic inquiry because religious pluralism was the second linchpin of peaceful coexistence and so was the diversity of sacred tongues. Savvy Ptolemies, eager to secure support from Egyptian priests, pretended to worship sacred animals, gave land grants and donations to temples, and safeguarded the rights of Egyptians, Greeks, and Jews to worship as they wished (Manning, 2010, 2019). Appreciative of royal protections and subventions, the priests reciprocated by learning Greek and using it to offer oracular advice, interpret dreams, and issue bilingual decrees that stressed Ptolemaic legitimacy and bestowed divine honors on pharaohs-kings. Burials followed the faith and the language of choice of the deceased, but there were also those who hedged their bets with paired tombstones in Greek and Egyptian addressed to all gods (Manning, 2019).

The Roman elite was also fond of bilingual tombstones, where Latin texts named the deceased and celebrated their accomplishments and verses in Greek signaled – one last time! – their erudition and wit (Noy, 2000). Immigrants added their own flourishes to linguistic diversity in the graveyard: The earliest Jewish cemetery of Rome, the Monteverde catacomb, yielded 155 epitaphs in Greek (76 percent) and 49 in Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic (24 percent) (Abrecht, 2020; on multilingual tombstones, see also Mullen & James, 2012). The scarcity of Hebrew hints at attrition of the Holy Tongue among the Jews. Even in Syria Palaestina, formerly Roman Judea, by the late second century AD, the readings of the Torah were accompanied by Aramaic translations. The practice angered Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, aka Judah the Prince: “Why Aramaic in the land of Israel? Either the holy tongue or Greek!” (Bava Kamma 83a, translated in Smelik, 2013, p. 92).

Medieval societies also furnish examples of religious-linguistic pluralism. In Norman Sicily, Count Roger de Hauteville forbade his Catholic priests to proselytize among his Muslim troops and let his new subjects keep their mosques, churches, and synagogues (Metcalf, 2003). His widow, Countess

Adelaide, followed in his footsteps: the oldest paper document in Europe is a letter from Adelaide, written in 1109 in Arabic and Greek, which asks Muslim officials of Enna to protect the Greek abbey of San Filippo di Fragalà (Booms & Higgs, 2016). And when her son, Roger II, was crowned as king in 1130, religious hymns were sung in Greek and Latin and royal symbols engraved in three tongues. The obverse of the gold coins praised “King Roger, sublime and powerful, by the grace of Allah” in Arabic and the reverse declared “Jesus Christ conquers” in Greek. The monetary reforms of 1140s added silver ducats with a Latin motto *Iesus Christus regnat in aeternum* (Booms & Higgs, 2016; Metcalfe, 2003).

Roger II’s courtiers followed suit. When his minister George of Antioch built a church of Santa Maria dell’Ammiraglio, he added a column with Quranic mottos (Fig. 1.5a). And when the mother of the royal priest Grisandus passed away in 1148, she was commemorated with a marble plaque: in the center was the Greek cross and the letters IC XC NI KA [Jesus Christ is victorious], invoking the resurrection and the victory of Norman Christians, and on the sides inscriptions in Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Arabic in Hebrew script (Houben, 2013; Zeitler, 1996).

Similar spirit reigned in post-conquest Toledo, where King Alfonso VI married a Muslim princess, declared himself the Emperor of Two Religions, and had a daughter who married Roger II of Sicily. In 1156, relatives of a Mozarab parishioner of the church of Santas Justa y Rufina commissioned a tombstone with two inscriptions: the Arabic one began with a *bismillah* “In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate” and the Latin one with “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Dodds et al., 2008). Kufic inscriptions also had other functions, the first of which was to convey respect: when Toledan Jews built a new synagogue in 1357, they added medallions with formulaic wishes of fortune and prosperity in Kufic script (Fig. 1.5b). The second was to proselytize. From 1172 to 1214, King Alfonso VIII minted golden dinars in Arabic (no Latin!) that declared him ‘the Emir of the Catholics’ and ‘the Imam of the Christian faith’ and promised that “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Ecker, 2004) (Fig. 1.6).

The most ‘inclusive’ arrangement can be seen today in the Cathedral of Seville on the tomb of Fernando III, the leader of the ‘Reconquista’ and a self-proclaimed King of Three Religions. Commissioned in 1252 by Fernando’s son, King Alfonso X the Wise, the grandiose tomb is flanked by epitaphs in Latin, Castilian, Arabic, and Hebrew, each with appropriate names (Hispania, España, Al-Andalus, Sefarad) and calendar dates (from the birth of Christ in Latin; from 38 BC, the beginning of *Pax Romana*, in Castilian; from Mahomet’s flight from Mecca in Arabic; and from the creation of the world in Hebrew). And while one doubts that Muslims were enamored of the conqueror-king, the display was

(a)



(b)



Fig. 1.5 (a) Quranic mottoes in the church of Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio, Palermo. Photo by the author, April 2017. (b) Medallion with formulaic wishes of fortune and prosperity in Arabic in the Samuel ha-Levi (El Tránsito) synagogue, Toledo. Photo by the author, September 2019.

good politics and the discordant verbal note was neither Arabic nor Hebrew but the upstart Castilian (Dodds et al., 2008; Nickson, 2015).

In contexts where the faithful had trouble understanding the sacred tongue, religious authorities turned to interpreting, as in Palestinian synagogues (Smelik, 2013), bilingual sermons, as in medieval English churches (Fletcher, 2013), and the mixing of languages and scripts, as in sixteenth-century Castile, where crypto-Muslims copied the Quran in *Aljamiado*, Arabicized Romance in Kufic script (García-Arenal, 2015).



Fig. 1.6 Maravedi of Alfonso VIII, minted in 1191 AD. Classical Numismatic Group. Wikimedia, CC license 2.5.

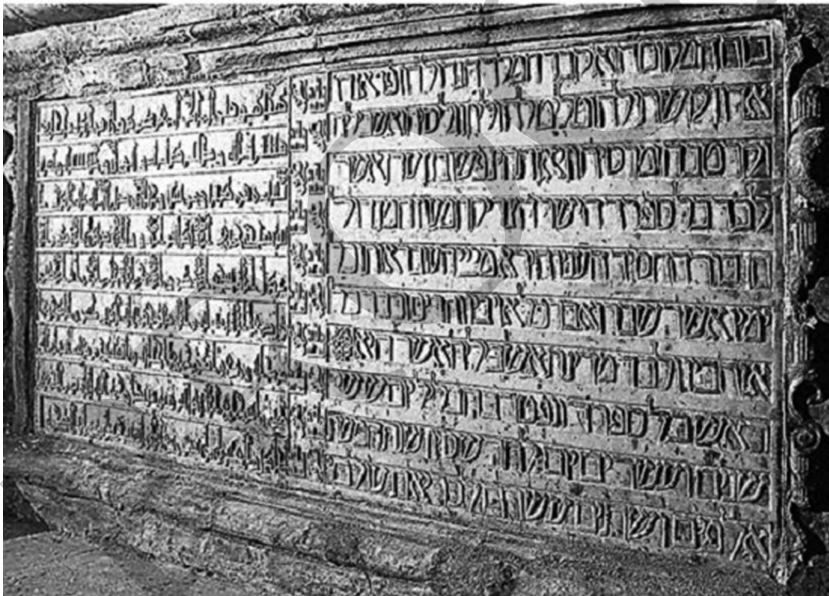


Fig. 1.7 Arabic and Hebrew on the tomb of Fernando III, Cathedral of Seville. Wikimedia.

Similar practices are documented in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Established in 1569 as the union of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in 1573 the Commonwealth adopted the Warsaw Confederation Act that granted religious freedoms to all: Catholic, Lutheran, and Orthodox churches,

Tatar mosques, and Rabbinic and Karaite synagogues. What worried the Armenian priests, Jewish rabbis, and Tatar imams was attrition of sacred tongues among their young men, fluent only in Slavic vernaculars. To preserve the sanctity of worship, they translated religious texts but retained the sacred scripts. The Armenians of Lwów, for instance, translated the Psalter into their native Kypchak in Armenian script – published in 1618 it is now celebrated as the first Kypchak book in print (Garkavets, 2002). Tatar imams composed *tafsirs*, the Quran with interlinear Slavic translations, and *kitab*s, idiosyncratic anthologies, whose Arabic façade concealed a blend of four tongues: religious passages, penned in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, and translations and comments in Ruski and Polish (Akiner, 2017; Kulwicka-Kamińska & Łapicz, 2015). The oldest extant Slavic translation of the Quran is the Minsk Tafsir (1686), whose medium is variously described as ‘Polish with elements of Belarusian’ or vice versa, but cannot be named with certainty because of its Arabic script. In the territories that later became Belarus, locals mixed Ruski and Polish in speech and in writing distinguished the two by script, Cyrillic vs Latin. When such speech is transliterated in Arabic, scholars lack reliable means to decide which is which. As a consequence, both Poland and Belarus claim credit for the first Slavic Quran (Kulwicka-Kamińska & Łapicz, 2015).

In Russia, Peter I promoted a limited version of religious tolerance (minus the Jews). The monument to his vision is St. Petersburg’s Nevsky Prospect, where, within steps of each other, we find a Russian Orthodox cathedral, a Dutch church, a German Lutheran church Petrikirche, an Armenian church, and Russia’s oldest Catholic church that offered services in German, Italian, Polish, and French. In the nineteenth century, a celebrity visitor, Alexandre Dumas-père, dubbed the Nevsky *la rue de tolérance*. By the twentieth century, the city also housed one of Europe’s largest synagogues (opened in 1893) and a beautiful Tatar mosque (1913), facing the Fortress of Peter and Paul. Unlike in Europe today, construction of the mosque elicited no protests nor heated debates (on Muslim St. Petersburg, see Bekkin, 2021; Bekkin & Tagirdzhanova, 2016).

1.2.4 A Multilingual Army: A Boon or a Bane?

Mairs’ chapter draws attention to multilingualism of the military enterprise. For the ancients, linguistic diversity in the army was a double-edged sword. Carthaginians, wrote Greek historian Polybius (1.67.2–9), hired Libyan, Iberian, Celtic, Ligurian, and Greek troops in hopes they wouldn’t band in dissent. Yet in doing so, they placed generals at the mercy of interpreters and sowed confusion and distrust in the camp. Ptolemy IV, noted Polybius, also relied on an interpreter to address the Egyptian phalanx of his troops, while the Roman army of his era, the second century BC, was commendable for its linguistic homogeneity. Later on, Romans would prove Polybius wrong – the

imperial army would be both victorious *and* diverse (on linguistic diversity and interpreting in the Roman army, see Felice, 2019; Mairs, this volume; Peretz, 2006).

The second driver of multilingualism in the army was the language of the enemy. In England, at the start of the Hundred Years war the parliament decreed

que tout seigneur, baron, chevalier et honnestes hommes de bonnes villes mesissent cure et dilligence de estruire et aprendre leurs enfans la langhe françoise par quoy il en fuissent plus able et plus coustummier ens leurs gherres.

[that all lords, barons, knights and honest men of good towns should exercise care and diligence to teach their children the French language in order that they might be more able and better equipped in their wars.] (Froissart, 1867, p. 419)

To drum up support for his unpopular war, Edward III told the parliament in 1344 and again in 1346 that Philip IV of France was striving to destroy the English language. Ironically, the only record of these warnings is in French. In another paradox of our multilingual history, the reigns of Edward III (1327–1377) and Richard II (1377–1399) were the height of the anti-French propaganda and the heyday of administrative French. At the end of the war, the English knew more French than before, thanks to military campaigns in France (on languages and the Hundred Years war, see Butterfield, 2009; on multilingualism in the English army, see Curry et al., 2010).

The third driver of multilingualism in the military was the need for foreign expertise. In the fledgling army of Peter I, Prussian and Saxon officers used German as the language of command: in 1698 an eyewitness noted that “German colonels trained [Russian] soldiers every day in German” (Dahmen, 2015, p. 26). Russian military code was published in both languages (Fig. 1.8) and army titles, like *fel’dfebel’* [sergeant] or *unter-offitser* [corporal], had a distinct Germanic ring. Peter’s navy favored English and Dutch: Vice Admiral Cornelius Cruys was a Dutch-speaking Norwegian and the *Naval Statute* was issued in 1720 in Russian and *Hollands*. As time went by, borrowings from Dutch – *matros* [sailor], *shturman* [navigator], *kajuta* [cabin], *trap* [rope ladder], *verf’* [shipyard], and *shvabra* [mop] – became everyday Russian words.

In the Austro-Hungarian army, on the other hand, diversity turned into a liability. The army’s *Kommandosprache* was German, and each recruit was required to learn eighty or so commands, such as “March!” and “Open fire!” The training of new recruits, however, was in their native Serbo-Croatian, Czech, German, Magyar, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Ruski, Slovak, and Slovene, and if 20 percent of the regiment shared a native tongue, it became one of the official *Regimentsprache* (Evans, 2004; Prokopovych et al., 2019; Scheer, 2016; Wolf, 2015). In the summer of 1914, 142 regiments were monolingual (31 in German), 162 bilingual, 24 trilingual, and a few quadrilingual. Officers were required to learn their soldiers’ tongues, with the help of multilingual



Fig. 1.8 Russia's bilingual military code, second edition, 1737. Public domain.

handbooks – a requirement that posed challenges in peace time and was nearly impossible at the front. A career officer, August von Urbanski, recalled getting a battalion that

consisted of about 50 per cent Czechs, 20 per cent Germans, 20 per cent Poles and 10 per cent Italians. Half of the Czechs were able to speak German, while almost no Poles spoke it. The Italians spoke Italian and German, while our Greek spoke only broken Czech. ... They even don't understand each other. The company leader speaks only German. I failed to talk to the Czechs. They always answered: no German, Pan Hetman. Only after several days when I used some Czech words – the only ones I knew – they started to talk to me in broken German. (translated in Scheer, 2016, pp. 70–71)

To communicate, commanding and medical staff relied on interpreters, on gestures, on English and French as the lingua franca, and on multilingual booklets and forms (Fig. 1.9). Yet communication wasn't the only challenge at the front – officers also needed a sense of the soldiers' loyalties and moods. "It was very difficult," recalled officer Ernst Horsetzky, "to try and grasp the thinking of everyone in a multilingual army and explore their true sentiments" (translated in Scheer, 2016, p. 74). Polybius, it appears, did have a point after all.

Leicht verwundet	verwundēt	schwer verwundet	krank	schwer krank
kōnyen megsebesült	megsebesült	bajos megsebesült	beteg	bajos beteg
lehee ranĕn	ranĕn	tĕžee ranĕn	nemoeen	tĕžee nemoeen
lecko raniony	raniony	ciężko raniony	chory	ciężko chory
легко раненый	раненый	тяжко раненый	хорый	тяжко хорый
leggiermente ferito	ferito	gravemente ferito	ammalato	grave ammalato
lako ranjen	ranjen	teško ranjen	bolestan	teško bolestan
lahko ranjen	ranjen	težko ranjen	bolan	težko bolan
ușor rānit	rānit	greu rānit	bolnav	greu bolnav

Fig. 1.9 Multilingual communication form for doctors and wounded soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian army (Scheer, 2017). Public domain.

1.2.5 Bilingual Education and the Diffusion of Knowledge

Rubin’s and Argent’s chapters draw attention to education and intercultural contacts as a site of language learning and the diffusion of knowledge. The origins of bilingual education are commonly traced to elite and scribal schooling in the Near East (Griffith, 2015). In the Old Babylonian scribal program, the Eduba [Tablet House], dated to 2,000–1,600 BC, Akkadian-speaking students were instructed in Sumerian, a non-Semitic language that had not been spoken for centuries but was seen as the proper conduit for traditional texts. Thousands of clay tablets found at Nippur, Ur, Sippar, and Kish show that at the upper level, Eduba pupils were encouraged to be “radically bilingual, constantly switching back and forth, even within the same text, between Sumerian and Akkadian” (Griffith, 2015, p. 9). By 500 BC, scribes were taught in Akkadian and Aramaic but translanguaging was still par for the course, as seen in a Babylonian tablet displayed at the British Museum under a label “A classroom experiment.” Imprinted on the clay tablet is an exercise that required future scribes to use the traditional cuneiform syllabic signs of Akkadian to express the sounds of Aramaic.

In Rome, where Greek was quintessential for social mobility, we find bilingual education for the upper class (Criboire, 2001; Mullen, this volume). Not everyone ended up as fluent as Cicero who peppered his letters with Greek verse, but Homer’s *Iliad* was as familiar to educated Romans as Shakespeare is in the English-speaking world. Moreover, while royal libraries often held books in multiple tongues (cf. König et al., 2013), Romans created bilingual *public* libraries. Julius Caesar, reports Suetonius (*Iul.* 44.2), charged Varro

with opening public libraries with works of Latin and Greek. The idea came to naught but a decade after Caesar's death, his follower Gaius Asinius Pollio used the spoils of a successful campaign in Illyria to rebuild the Hall of Freedom, *Atrium Libertatis*, and to endow it with a bilingual library, adorned with Greek art. Emperor Augustus added bilingual libraries on the Palatine and in the Porticus of Octavia and Vespasian in the Temple of Peace (Dix & Houston, 2006). As patrons, the emperors had the privilege to add manuscripts and an obligation to replace damaged scrolls. When a fire wrecked Rome's libraries, tells Suetonius (*Dom.* 20), Emperor Domitian restored them at enormous expense, procuring copies of texts from all over and sending scribes to Alexandria to make fresh copies of important manuscripts.

In the Middle Ages, kings saw rare books as a point of pride and sponsored translation projects and new works. In Palermo, Roger II commissioned al-Idrisi to write a description of the known world (in Arabic) and Doxopatrios to pen the *History of the Five Patriarchates* (in Greek) (Houben, 2013). In Castile, Alfonso X assembled a team of Castilian, Italian, and Jewish scholars to produce a Castilian compilation of world history, updated astronomical tables, treatises on law, and translations of the Visigothic Code and the Talmud (Goldstein, 2009; O'Callaghan, 1993). And in Baghdad, Abbasid rulers sponsored translations of Greek works of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, physics, and astrology that preserved Hellenistic scholarship for the Western world and enriched it with Arab discoveries (Gutas, 1998). In the twelfth century, itinerant scholars rediscovered these riches in Castilian libraries, mastered Arabic, and translated them into Latin with the help of multilingual Mozarabs, Muslims, and Jews (Burnett, 2001). Copied and recopied in the monasteries and Latin-medium universities in England, Italy, and France, these translations brought the ideas of Greek, Muslim, and Jewish scholars to the wider world.

Modernization of Russia – and Russian – also proceeded on borrowed words. Peter I encouraged the import of foreign texts and turned a blind eye to enlightened plunder: 2,000 German volumes appropriated in Mitau and Riga during the Northern War became the foundation of Russia's first public library opened in St. Petersburg in 1714 (Dahmen, 2015). The tsar also initiated a monumental translation project: having sent many Russian youths to study abroad, on return Peter I directed them to translate manuals on modern technologies (Cracraft, 2004). In the absence of adequate Russian terms, it was a nearly impossible task – one translator, unable to deliver, slashed his wrists in distress. Others muddled along, with the help of foreign associates – Englishman Henry Farquharson, Scot Jacob Bruce, and Peter's African godson, Abraham Gannibal, who trained as a military engineer in France (posterity remembers him as Pushkin's great-grandfather and forgets that he was also a talented engineer, translator, and Tallinn's first – and so far only – Black mayor).

As time went by, grammars, dictionaries, and translations created on Peter's orders filled linguistic gaps with neologisms, foreign loans, and calques.

The children of the Russian elite were taught in German, Russian, and French (cf. Argent, this volume), but university lectures were mostly in Russian, until Alexander I reopened the German-medium University of Dorpat (modern Tartu) (1801) and the Polish-medium University of Wilna (Vilnius) (1803) and founded the University of Warsaw (1816). Non-Russian primary education thrived because the government was opposed to assimilation of pagan nomads, Muslims, and Jews treated as 'aliens' (Pavlenko, 2011a). The Jewish statute of 1804, for instance, sanctioned Jewish schools, provided they taught some Russian, Polish, or German. And when Tatar missionaries sparked a wave of apostasy from Orthodoxy in the Volga region, an 1870 decree sanctioned transitional bilingual education that began in the pupils' mother tongues and then shifted to Russian with the mother tongue as an aid (Dowler, 2001).

In Austria in 1870–1871, 9 percent of the schools taught in two, three, or four languages and switching between tongues was a daily routine for teachers and students alike (Wolf, 2015). And in Pennsylvania, in 1839 the State House of Representatives decreed that

in districts or primary districts whose citizens speak the *German* language, the directors shall establish schools in which the exercises shall, if suitable teachers can be procured, be either wholly or in part conducted in that language as said citizens may desire. (*Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools*, 1839, p. 18)

From then on, 'the German question' would stir controversy in the state, yet some schools remained bilingual until the advent of World War I (Donner, 2008).

In the twentieth century, multilingual schooling reached its height in the USSR, where titular republics offered parents a choice of (a) schools with titular languages (e.g., Latvian) as the medium and select subjects in Russian, (b) schools with Russian as the medium and select subjects in titular languages, and (c) schooling in Russian and minority languages (Pavlenko, 2013). When the USSR collapsed, Latvia, where Russians constituted 42.5 percent of the population, tried to close all Russian schools but the accession to the European Union forced Latvian authorities to keep some open: to save face, the authorities rebranded bilingual schools from the sites of occupation to symbols of multiculturalism (Pavlenko, 2011b; Silova, 2006).

1.2.6 *Multilingual Public Signage*

Public displays in multiple languages are well documented in the ancient world (Adams, 2003; Bowman & Crowther, 2020; Bowman et al., 2021; Jonker et al., 2021; Mullen & James, 2012) The most famous is the Memphis decree of 196 BC, aka the Rosetta Stone, inscribed in Hieroglyphic Egyptian, Demotic

Egyptian, and Greek. Other bilingual decrees that came to light in Egypt since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone show that the priests favored their own tongue: Greek text was relegated to the bottom, to the back or to the sides, and sometimes omitted altogether, despite explicit orders to inscribe three texts (Bagnall & Derow, 2004; Bowman et al., 2021; Cole, 2015). The Middle Ages left their own multilingual legacy, from trilingual inscriptions of the Norman kings in Palermo to the tomb of Fernando III in Seville.

The Enlightenment brought in an urban innovation – street signs. In St. Petersburg, where many immigrants spoke German, the first plaques were bilingual, courtesy of Catherine the Great, who wrote to her chief of police:

Order that, at the end of every street and alley, signs are to be attached bearing the name of that street or alley in the Russian and German languages; if any streets and alleys are as yet unnamed – please name them. (May 8, 1768; translated in Franklin, 2019, p. 158)

By the turn of the twentieth century, many cityscapes were vibrantly diverse: Ottoman cities featured street signs in French and in Turkish in Arabic script (Strauss, 2011); Prague displayed German-Czech plaques (Fig. 1.10b); Sarajevo authorized signs in Latin, Cyrillic, and Arabic scripts (Berecz, 2019); businesses, from St. Petersburg to Philadelphia, advertised their wares in multiple tongues (Fig. 1.11; see also Fortna’s and Pavlenko’s chapters); and Warsaw, Tallinn, and Helsinki added imperial Russian (Fig. 1.12a). This isn’t to say that everyone was charmed by linguistic diversity in the public space. While imperial officials and foreign visitors welcomed familiar languages, for Poles, Estonians, and Finns, Russian was an unwelcome reminder of who was in charge; Czechs and Slovenes were eager to



Fig. 1.10 (a) Russian-German sign for Pochtovaya Street installed in 1768. Dvortsovaya naberezhnaya 34, St. Petersburg. Photo by the author, September 2018. (b) Restored German-Czech street sign, Prague. Photo courtesy of Matyaš Viktora, June 2020.

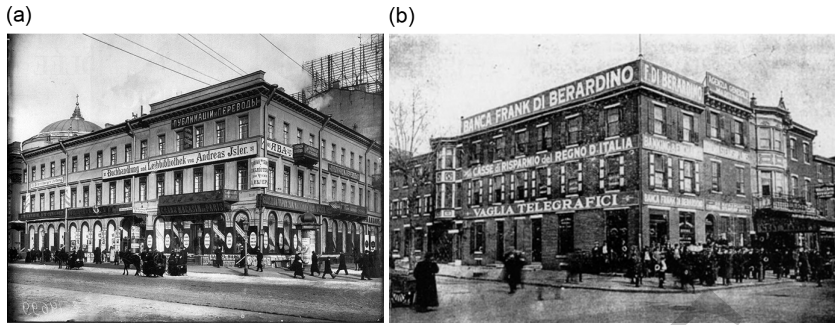


Fig. 1.11 Multilingual signage at the turn of the twentieth century:
(a) St. Petersburg: Nevsky 20, home of St Petersburg Zeitung, the German bookstore and library of Andreas Isler, and the Grand Magasin de Paris.
(b) Philadelphia: Christian Street 821, home of Banca Frank di Berardino that doubled as an Italian travel agency and a telegraph office. Public domain.



Fig. 1.12 (a) Street sign in Swedish, Finnish, and Russian from the early twentieth century, Helsinki. Photo courtesy of Ekaterina Protassova, June 2020. (b) Street sign in Slovak, German, and Magyar from the 1920s, Bratislava. Photo by the author.

remove German; and Saxon towns of Transylvania resented the imposition of Magyar (Berecz, 2019).

In the wake of World War I, Istanbul, St. Petersburg, and Philadelphia scaled back on the visibility of 'foreign' tongues, but in the city called Pressburg in German and Pozsony in Magyar trilingual signage was at its peak (Fig. 1.12b).

Founded by German colonists, Pressburg-Pozsony had served as Hungary's royal seat (1536–1783), coronation town (until 1830), and home of the

Hungarian parliament (until 1848). Following the collapse of the Dual Monarchy, in April 1919 the city was renamed Bratislava and declared the capital of Slovakia, part of the newly formed Czechoslovakia. And since the population of Bratislava was almost evenly split between Germans (36.3 percent), Slovaks (32.9 percent), and Magyars (29 percent), municipal authorities issued a decree to create trilingual signs but “in such a way that the Slovak language is in the first place and the inscription in a non-Slovak language is not bigger than the Slovak text” (translated in Bugge, 2004, p. 223).

1.3 Toward a History of Multilingual Societies

1.3.1 *The Ubiquity of Multilingual Administrations*

Historic studies of institutional and societal multilingualism allow us to discard the four tenets listed in the opening of this chapter and to replace them with the findings to date. The first key finding is the ubiquity of ‘the multilingual challenge’: all conquerors, empire builders, and rulers who welcomed foreign colonists had to deal with linguistic diversity of their populations. The second finding is the ubiquity of the multilingual response. To communicate with their linguistically diverse subjects, rulers selected languages well suited for administrative purposes and, in the best-case scenario, familiar to the people they ruled (if not, town criers translated decrees into local vernaculars). Rulers’ mother tongues took a back seat to efficiency and image: decrees in the languages of the addressees were more effective in conveying orders, and multilingual inscriptions projected power, dominance, and strength. The cornerstones of language management were the hierarchies of prestige, where the top tier was occupied by *Kultursprache*, like Latin, Arabic, or Greek, and the bottom tier by vernaculars, ignored by chanceries, like Romance in Norman Sicily, Lithuanian in the Grand Duchy, or Magyar in the Kingdom of Hungary. These hierarchies resulted in five types of arrangement:

- (a) The conquerors’ *mother tongue*, as seen in the Roman west (Mullen, this volume);
- (b) A *lingua franca*, as seen in the Persian Empire, where the elite eschewed Persian in favor of chancery Aramaic; in the Roman east, administered in Greek (Maravela, Mullen, this volume); in Indonesia, where the Dutch favored Malay (Willemyns, this volume); or in Hungary, where Latin bureaucracy persisted until 1844 (Almási & Šubarić, 2015);
- (c) *Language(s) of the subjugated populations*, as seen in Norman Sicily and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where the conquerors’ own vernaculars lacked tradition and prestige, or in the Mongol Empire, where the khans realized that orders in Mongolian in Uyghur script went unread and

changed the chancery tongues: in Iran to Persian and in the Golden Horde, inhabited by Turkic tribes, to Kypchak, the lingua franca of the east (Abzalov, 2008; Akiner, 2017);

- (d) *Bi- and multilingual arrangements* that combined the languages of the rulers and the ruled, as in Ptolemaic Egypt (Maravela, this volume) or the language of the rulers and lingua francas, as in eighteenth-century Russia, where decrees appeared in Russian, German, and French;
- (e) *Hierarchical multilingual arrangements* with the dominant language and titular, regional, or minority tongues, as in Habsburg Austria (Prokopovych et al., 2019) or the USSR, where by 1938 primary education was offered in more than seventy languages (Pavlenko, 2013).

And since nowadays institutional multilingualism is firmly linked to ‘social inclusion’ and ‘tolerance,’ it is tempting to project this view backward and to congratulate enlightened Norman kings and Lithuanian dukes on their progressive views. Yet to do so would be an anachronistic mistake. ‘Tolerance’ refers to reluctant acceptance of the phenomena one dislikes, deems undesirable, and has the power to eradicate. In the context of religion, for instance, the idea of tolerance becomes relevant with the rise of monotheistic faiths. When it comes to languages, ‘tolerance’ is a fairly modern lens. For most of history, linguistic diversity was a fact of life, not a benevolent choice.

1.3.2 *The Birth of Linguistic Intolerance*

The third finding is that the dogmatic view of linguistic nationalism as a post-1789 phenomenon, recycled in our textbooks and handbooks, displays “a certain present-minded arrogance” (Davies, 2004, p. 569) and is off by several centuries. The oldest policy that tells people what to speak and *not* to speak – or at least the oldest one I know of to date – are the Statutes of Kilkenny (1366) directed by Edward III at English settlers going native in Ireland:

now many English of the said land forsaking the English language, fashion, mode of riding, laws and usages, live and govern themselves according to the manners, fashion, and language of the Irish enemies; and also have made divers marriages and alliances between themselves and the Irish enemies aforesaid; whereby the said land and the liege people thereof, the English language, the allegiance due to our lord the King, and the English laws there, are put in subjection and decayed. . . it is ordained and established, that every Englishman use the English language, and be named by an English name, leaving off entirely the manner of naming used by the Irish. . . and if any English, or Irish living amongst the English, use the Irish language amongst themselves, contrary to this ordinance, and thereof be attaint, that his lands and tenements, if he have any, be seized into the hands of his immediate lord, until he come to one of the Places of our lord the King, and find sufficient surety to adopt and use the English language, and then that he have restitution of his said lands (translated in Berry, 1907, pp. 431, 435).

The Statutes are strikingly modern in equating language with loyalty, creative in the penalties for Irish use, and a bit self-defeating in the fact that they were articulated in French.

A century and a half later, King Fernando of Aragon and Queen Isabel of Castile forged a new path, with a nudge from a linguist, Antonio de Nebrija, whose Castilian grammar opened with a glib motto: *que siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio* [that language always accompanied the empire]. The idea would be put to practice in the New World but the people Nebrija had in mind were closer to home – in Granada, surrendered on January 2, 1492 by its last Muslim king. In the prologue to his grammar, Nebrija listed French and Italian traders among the addressees but singled out “the enemies of our faith, who now have the need to know the Castilian language” (translated in Armillas-Tiseyra, 2016, p. 204).

The surrender of Granada inspired Fernando and Isabel to create a purely Christian Spain. Their first step was the Alhambra decree that ordered the Jews of Castile and Aragon to convert or leave by July 31. The Muslim community – large, armed, and essential for the local economy – was left alone until 1499, when Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, the archbishop of Toledo and the primate of Castile, arrived in Granada and, with his usual fanatic zeal, turned the Great Mosque into a church, mass baptized 3,000 Muslims in one day, and in October of 1501 oversaw a bonfire of confiscated Arabic books (Gilbert, 2020; Harvey, 2005; Pick, 2004). In 1502, the Edicts of Conversion ordered the Muslims of Castile and León to accept baptism or leave. To help new converts, nicknamed *Moriscos*, remain Christian, the authorities decided to eliminate the language of the Quran. “We order,” declared the 1526 Edict of Granada,

that from now on none of them, nor their children, nor any other person of theirs, speak in Arabic or write anything in Arabic, and that they all speak the Spanish language. (translated in Giménez-Aguibar & Wasserman Soler, 2011, p. 235)

With the help of 80,000 ducats, Morisco leaders negotiated a forty-year period of grace. Once it expired, King Philip II had no mercy. The royal decree, published on January 1, 1567, revoked the legal validity of Arabic documents and ordered Moriscos to replace Arabic with Castilian in three years on the threat of jail (first offense) and exile (second offense):

We decree and order that after three years, that they be counted starting from the day in which our letter is published and promulgated in the aforementioned city of Granada, a period of time given to them so that they may learn to speak and write in our Castilian language, which they call *Aljama*, none of the aforementioned newly converted of the kingdom of Granada, either man or woman, can speak, read, or write in the aforementioned Arabic language, either in their house, outside, in public, or in secret. (translated in Giménez-Aguibar & Wasserman Soler, 2011, p. 241)

In another innovative touch, in 1575 Philip II ordered Toledan officials to raze all Kufic inscriptions and install Latin plaques. His successor Philip III went one better – in 1609, he issued a decree of expulsion of Moriscos. By 1614, the authorities deported 300,000 ‘enemies of Christian faith,’ many of them devoted Christians who spoke only Castilian (Harvey, 2005). For me, this is the turning point in the history of linguistic nationalism and language policy (see also Spolsky, 2009, p. 153). Spanish kings weren’t the first to scrape words from stone, tell their subjects what *not* to speak, or expel undesirable ‘others.’ Their innovation lies in using the time-tested methods of inscription razing, book burning, and deportation to eradicate the enemy tongue with the help of a linguist, the Inquisition, the church, and, ultimately, the fleet.

1.3.3 *Un-diversifications of the Twentieth Century*

“Whoever is growing up today in cities like Brussels or Antwerp, Rotterdam or Amsterdam, Paris or Marseille, London or Birmingham, Berlin or Frankfurt – just to mention European cities – can scarcely imagine how little ethnic-cultural diversity there was in the middle of the 20th century,” professes Belgian politician-academic Geldof (2018, p. 43). In contrast, today “in cities such as Brussels, Rotterdam, Amsterdam or The Hague, migrants and people with foreign-born parents. . . make up a bit more than half of the population” (Geldof, 2018, p. 45). This demographic change is linked by the author to twentieth-century migrations:

Contemporary superdiversity and the present-day population of Western Europe builds largely upon the migrations and migration policies implemented since the Second World War. . . . After post-war reconstruction had been completed, Europe enjoyed a period of unparalleled economic prosperity. . . . From 1950 on, Western European countries therefore sought foreign workers, either from their former colonies such as Suriname and South East Asia or from Poland and Southern Europe, focusing upon Italian, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese migrants. (Geldof, 2018, pp. 43–44)

I won’t dwell too much on the shrunken definition of ‘Europe’ whose ‘unparalleled economic prosperity’ never extended to those of us growing up in its Central and Eastern parts, and since misery loves company, I welcome the news that Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal aren’t entirely ‘Western’ either. I also don’t dispute the number of migrants in London and Rotterdam. What concerns me is the willful blindness with which migrations of the twentieth century are reduced to labor migration, the disregard of the reasons post-war Berlin, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam were deprived of the joys of diversity (could it be the Holocaust?), and the stubbornness with which a Western European lens is applied to Europe as a whole and sometimes to the world at large.

Historical studies complicate the picture: migration and language contact are common already in antiquity (cf. Clackson et al., 2020), while the distinguishing feature of the twentieth century is the relentless ‘unmixing of peoples’ in the memorable words of the British Foreign Minister Lord Curzon. In 1923, Curzon headed the Military and Territorial Commission that signed the peace treaty of Lausanne. The treaty granted Turkey immunity for crimes committed between 1914 and 1922, including Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek genocide, and approved a Turkish–Greek population exchange. Privately, Curzon deemed it “a thoroughly bad and vicious solution for which the world will pay a heavy penalty for a hundred years to come” (Barutciski, 2003, p. 25). Publicly, the Lausanne treaty set the international legal precedent for expulsions and deportations in the service of greater good. Fortna’s pivotal chapter in this volume traces the transition from multilingualism to monolingualism in post-Ottoman Turkey. Here, I will illustrate the unmixing through changes in the ethnolinguistic makeup of three cities: Russian St. Petersburg, post-Ottoman Alexandria, and Slovak Bratislava, formerly Austro-Hungarian Pressburg-Pozsony (for other examples, see Pavlenko’s chapter).

In 1771, Scottish classicist William Richardson wrote in a letter from the Russian capital:

It is said that, except Constantinople, no city in Europe contains a greater variety of strangers than St Petersburg. In London and Paris you have Europeans of all nations; but you have not, additionally to these, different races of Tartars, Circassians, and Armenians. (Richardson, 1784/1968, p. 412)

In 1869, St. Petersburg population census found that 17 percent of the city’s residents were foreigners: 7 percent were Germans, 2.7 percent Finns, 2.2 percent Poles, and the remaining 5 percent were split among Swedes, Estonians, Latvians, French, Dutch, English, Italians, Armenians, Tatars, and Jews (Duke, 2008). Linguistic diversity was higher since many citizens were of non-Russian descent and still spoke their *Muttersprache* at home. Following the 1917 revolution, this diversity – and multilingualism at large – were obliterated by out-migration, purges of suspect speakers of foreign languages, and deportations of Germans and Finns. Nowadays, ethnic Russians constitute 92.5 percent of the city’s population, fluent Russian speakers are at 99.7 percent, and the cityscape reveals a uniformly Russian façade (Baranova & Fedorova, 2019; see also Pavlenko, this volume).

In Alexandria, ethnolinguistic *mélange* was at its height in the early twentieth century, with diverse communities connected by French. In 1927, the first post-Ottoman census found that residents with foreign passports – Greeks, Jews, Italians, French, Brits, Austrians, Germans, Cypriots, and Maltese – constituted 17.4 percent of the population (Mabro, 2004). As in St. Petersburg, linguistic diversity was much higher because many Ottoman Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, and Turks took advantage of the offer

of Egyptian citizenship. It is only in the wake of the Arab–Israeli wars of 1948 and 1956 – when Jews were expelled and other foreigners were ‘encouraged’ to leave – that Alexandria acquired a truly Egyptian face.

Bratislava started out in 1919 with administration in Magyar, German, and Czechoslovak. Yet leaders of the Slovak People’s party – Father Andrej Hlinka, Father Jozef Tiso, and lawyer Vojtech Tuka – disliked the constitutional term ‘Czechoslovak’ that didn’t distinguish between Slovak and Czech. The party’s official organ, *Slovák*, scorned Jews for refusing to embrace Slovak and reminded the party faithful that Slovak was purer than Czech. In 1937 Father Hlinka proposed a constitutional amendment that made Slovak the only official language in Slovakia. To popularize the idea, his officials printed 60,000 stickers with a motto *Na Slovensku po slovensky* [In Slovakia in Slovak language] and pasted them all over Bratislava (Bakke, 1999).

In 1938, Hlinka passed away, but Prague, shaken up by the Sudeten crisis, gave Slovakia its long-sought autonomy. On October 8, 1938, Father Tiso returned to Bratislava as a premier and gave a reassuring speech in Slovak, Magyar, and German (no Czech). Soon after, thousands of Czech officials and teachers were expelled. The guiding principle of the new Slovak leaders, reported in 1939 by George Kennan, the Secretary of the American legation in Prague, “has been linguistic chauvinism in its most petty and shortsighted form” (Kennan, 1968, p. 25).

Following Tiso’s meeting with Hitler, Slovakia was declared independent and placed under the protection of the Third Reich, making Father Tiso the only Catholic priest to head a European state other than the Vatican. The Prime Minister’s post went to Tuka, the idol of the paramilitary Hlinka guard and the author of its slogan *Hitler, Hlinka, jedna linka* [Hitler, Hlinka, on the same track]. Then, Slovakization took a new turn. The remaining Czechs were expelled and the Jewish Question found a permanent solution: under the pretense of sending workers to the Third Reich, 58,000 Jews were deported to Nazi camps, with the help of the Hlinka guard (Ward, 2013). After the war, Tiso and Tuka were executed for crimes against humanity but in the midst of expulsions and extermination their dream of *Na Slovensku po slovensky* came true.

The Czechoslovak government also pitched in. In 1945, President Beneš signed decrees that stripped Germans and Magyars of their citizenship, property, and civil rights and declared them traitors and collaborators, guilty of the disintegration of the Czechoslovak state. By 1948, three million Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia. Magyars, following a population exchange treaty, were transported to Hungary and resettled in the houses of deported Germans (Molnár & Szarka, 2010).⁶ From 1950, Slovaks have been dominant

⁶ Importantly, not all Magyars elected to leave. Today, Magyar is still spoken along southern borders and the Slovak government is criticized by Council of Europe experts for constraints placed on the use of Magyar as a minority language.

in Bratislava, rising from 32.9 percent to 90 percent of the population (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2012).

What we see through a post-imperial lens is the new international norm: two World Wars, the partitions of Palestine, Cyprus, and India, and the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the USSR were all accompanied by migrations of linguistic and ethnic unmixing (Brubaker, 1998). But when you read multilingualism textbooks and handbooks, like *The Routledge Handbook of Migration and Language* (Canagarajah, 2017), you won't find a single word about the twentieth-century expulsions, deportations, population transfers, ethnic cleansing, inter-ethnic warfare, and genocide that un-diversified countless polyglot cities with the same ruthless efficiency with which their Catholic majesties and the Inquisition purified Spain between 1492 and 1614.

1.3.4 *The Banal Normativity of 'Translanguaging'*

Language-mixing in writing and speech has long been at the center of academic attention: at the first International Symposium on Bilingualism in 1997 all but one plenary were dedicated to code-switching. In the decades since, declares Jacquemet (2018), "the study of multilingualism in transnational communities has generated an impressive array of new terminology, from codemeshing. . . to translanguaging. . . to transglossic language practice, to explain the increasingly unbounded nature of communicative practices" (p. 379). The clunky terms are definitely new but the pretense that the 'increasingly unbounded' practices are also new and are explained, rather than labeled, by modish coinage puzzles me no end. I am by no means the only one confounded by this development. Edwards (2012) notes offhand that

those guilty of using these ugly terms have remarkably stannous ears, a particularly unhappy circumstance, surely, for those who are language scholars. On a particularly critical day, I might be tempted to suggest that those who write in this way have forfeited any claim on our serious attention. (pp. 34–35)

If anything, the fascination with code-switching on the part of language scholars (and every student in a bilingualism class!) says more about us than it does about multilingualism: we see the practice as transgressive in some way, akin to cross-dressing. Of course, we aren't the only ones to think so: in Rome, Cicero urged his son Marcus not to sprinkle his native tongue with alien words. But then again it was also embarrassing not to understand a reference in Greek and Cicero didn't always follow his own advice: the king of code-switching, he once crammed a short letter of recommendation to Caesar – whom he always tried to impress – with three Greek quotes from the *Odyssey*, three from the *Iliad*, and a fragment from the now lost play of Euripides (on Roman bilingual epistolography, see Elder & Mullen, 2019).

The fifth important finding is the banal normativity of script- and language-mixing in business records, private letters, and religious texts in many historical settings (Maravela, Mullen, Wright, Argent, Fortna; see also Pahta et al., 2018). Historical evidence also furnishes echoes of mixed speech in the classroom (e.g., Griffith, 2015), in church (e.g., Fletcher, 2013), and in the courts of law: One memorable character in the seventeenth-century court records of the Armenian community of Kamieniets-Podolsk is a belligerent youth who defied his elders with a mix of elaborate Turkic curses and Polish threats (Garkavets, 2002, pp. 940–943).⁷ All this is to say that translanguaging, or whatever you prefer to call it, is unremarkable in and of itself.

What made it look transgressive was normalization of monolingual practices that restricted mixing of languages and scripts to the private domain. Nowadays, even studies of ‘superdiversity’ admit that the public sector is a linguistically unified marketplace (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2018) and fail to find translanguaging in the workplace (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2018). Paeans to ‘increasingly complex’ immigrant practices are at best virtue signaling and at worst a diversion from linguistic inequalities in public life (for a similar argument, see May, 2016).

1.3.5 *Linguistic Tolerance: A Study in Affective and Cognitive Dissonance*

The greatest innovations of modernity in the area of language management are the idea that each and every language can satisfy all needs (‘one language fits all’), compulsory linguistic assimilation policies, and systematic erasure of ‘undesirable’ tongues.

In the Russian Empire, Polish-speaking territories were the first to feel the brunt of imperial Russification. After the Polish uprising of 1830–1831, Tsar Nicholas I closed Polish-medium universities and replaced Polish with Russian in the administration of the Western provinces and state-supported schools. Following the 1863–1864 Polish rebellion, Alexander II extended language reforms to Congress Poland, replacing Polish with Russian, first in administration and official press, and then in education and court proceedings; in Lithuania even the use of Polish during school breaks became a punishable offense and so did tombstones in languages other than Russian (Kappeler, 2001; Kryczynsky, 1937; Pavlenko, 2011a). In the 1880s, Alexander III expanded Russification to the Baltic provinces, with an aim to replace German with Russian as the language of administration, court proceedings, and secondary schools (Pavlenko, 2011a).

⁷ Arrivals from Tatar Crimea, Armenians of Lviv and Kamieniets-Podolsk spoke Kypchak as their mother tongue.

In the USA, in 1917 the authorities unrolled their own anti-German campaign: Louisiana prohibited German teaching from elementary schools all the way to the university; in Iowa, Governor Harding issued the ‘Babel proclamation’ that banned sermons, instruction, public addresses, and “conversation in public places, on trains and over the telephone” in any language but English, and in South Dakota, several men and women were fined \$10 to \$25 for speaking ‘the Teutonic tongue’ in public and one manager paid \$100 for allowing it in his store.⁸ Then, in a striking legal development, fifteen states – Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, and Texas – made use of foreign languages in elementary schools a criminal offense, punishable with imprisonment (ranging from 10 days to 6 months) and fines (ranging from \$25 to \$100, approximately \$315 to \$1,260 in today’s dollars). A second offense in Nevada and Oregon cost violators a year in county jail or a fine up to \$1,000 (approximately \$12,600).⁹

The severity of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russification, Americanization, or Magyarization (cf. Berecz, 2021a) makes the assertion that we are witnessing “the defeat of extreme monolingual nation-making practices and of aggressive assimilation practices” (Lo Bianco, 2020, p. 42) intuitively appealing, despite the underwhelming integration of immigrant languages in the ‘superdiverse’ public space (King & Carson, 2016), the decision of the council of London’s ‘superdiverse’ borough, Newham, to boost integration by slashing translation funding and removing all foreign language newspapers from the libraries (Nye, 2013), or a German public campaign that tried to compel immigrants to learn *Deutsch* (Fig. 1.13a).

When we turn to Eastern Europe, the argument loses its appeal. A quick look at the Council of Europe (CoE) experts’ reports from Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, or Lithuania, posted on the CoE website, reveals that aggressive assimilation practices are still alive and doing well. Estonia, for one, created a novel institution, the Language Inspectorate, aka ‘language police,’ to monitor the compliance with the state Language Law under the threat of fines and termination of employment. The Inspectorate, complained CoE experts, “continues to wield wide powers in the field of employment, including in particular verification of language proficiency and imposition of fines” (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2015, p. 1). Public campaigns aimed at migrants in

⁸ <https://iowaculture.gov/history/education/educator-resources/primary-source-sets/immigration-regulation-response-and/babel-proclamation>; “Fines imposed for speaking German,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, November 2, 1918.

⁹ For collections of relevant laws, see Hood (1919), Lischka (1926).



Fig. 1.13 (a) “Out with the language” / “I speak German,” a German-medium campaign aimed at migrants in Germany, 2010–2011.¹⁰ (b) “Untie your tongue” / “Learn the language – it’s worth it,” a Russian-medium campaign aimed at Russian speakers in Estonia, 2010. Public domain.

Germany and Russian speakers in Estonia are emblematic of the differences between East and West (Fig. 1.13).

The concluding chapters in this volume engage with the tension at the heart of present-day European multilingualism, where ‘celebration of linguistic diversity’ coexists uneasily with the establishment of official ‘language police.’ Sokolovska’s analysis of CoE language debates shows that multilingualism in the abstract is easy to ‘celebrate’: Parliamentarians from Lithuania, Spain, Ukraine, and Ireland are all in favor of plurilingual repertoires. It is the individual constellations of languages and the embedded hierarchies of prestige that cause frustration and strife, evident in the complaint of Lithuania’s representative about foreign investors who rely on English and never learn Lithuanian. The ‘celebration of linguistic diversity,’ promoted by CoE, argues Sokolovska, reproduces existing hierarchies under the guise of equality.

Lane’s chapter draws attention to emotional consequences of another quintessentially modern practice, language revitalization, highlighting the shame, anxiety, and guilt experienced by those who speak their ‘heritage’ languages poorly

¹⁰ www.languageonthemove.com/the-cult-of-personal-responsibility/

or not at all. Beale-Rivaya analyzes the reproduction of linguistic stereotypes in a popular form of Spanish public entertainment, the festival of Moors and Christians, while Pavlenko considers ways in which former polyglot cities appropriate ghost signs in dissonant languages, no longer spoken on city streets, to create a simulacrum of linguistic diversity and conceal the suppression of minority tongues. Together, the two chapters spotlight the contestation and commodification of historic multilingualism in the public space by political actors invested in certain visions of the national past. The purpose of this introduction – and the volume at large – is to show that such distortions of history are facilitated by the disregard of the past in multilingualism as an academic field.

1.3.6 *The Field of Multilingualism and Historical Amnesia*

The millennia-long history of institutional and societal multilingualism reveals that the claims of uniqueness of today's 'multilingual challenge' are patently false, deeply ignorant, and utterly absurd. To see multilingualism through the keyhole of the nineteenth-century Western European nation-states, twentieth-century labor migrations, and their twenty-first-century 'superdiverse' outcomes is to emulate a man who touched an elephant's ear and exclaimed, in the unforgettable words of John Godfrey Saxe, "Deny the fact who can, this marvel of an elephant is very like a fan!"

But then again every storyteller knows that their storyline depends on their point of view. There is even a name for shifting narrative perspectives – the Rashomon effect, after Kurosawa's classic film *Rashomon* (1950), where four witnesses retell 'the same' event differently to present themselves in the best possible light. Academic narratives are governed by the same principle. The history of multilingualism is often told from the perspective of ideologically monolingual – or bilingual – nation-states because that's where many influential scholars reside. The Whig history of progress from 'circumstantial' multilingualism of yesteryear to 'superdiversity' of the present-day is a self-serving enterprise that reinforces the established academic hierarchy and allows its adepts to 'defend' and 'celebrate' immigrant multilingualism and to brand their own work as new, superior, and distinct (cf. Pavlenko, 2019). The non-history also benefits the field at large by giving it a compelling *raison d'être* – exceptionality of today's 'multilingual challenge.'

Yet the causes of historical amnesia run deeper than academic fragmentation and conceit. While science is, or at least aims to be, objective and international, academic departments are housed in national universities that privilege national languages, literatures, and histories. Habsburg history, noted Evans (2004), has long suffered from the legacy of this tunnel vision, whereby "historiographical traditions have been defined and often hermetically sealed off by language, to yield narrow and exclusive interpretations" (p. 24). Normative multilingualism, until recently, fell through the cracks as no one's history.

The neglect is exacerbated by demands on academics' language skills. In the study of Ptolemaic Egypt, for instance, labor was traditionally divided between classicists focused on Greek (and some Latin) papyri and Egyptologists who studied Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, and Demotic texts (Bagnall, 2009b, pp. xvii–xviii). Both groups had their conferences and publications, and it is only recently that the interest in bilingualism inspired scholars to acquire additional expertise or work in teams. In other contexts, multilingual documents still gather dust in the archives. “It is . . . one of the tragedies of early modern American history,” bitterly complained German historian Wellenreuther (2005), “that so many of the [American] historians working in this field are unfamiliar with quaint European languages like Latin, French, Dutch and German” (p. vii).

Sociolinguists are prey to a different trend. A century ago, noted Piller (2016), German linguist Hugo Schuchardt comfortably addressed his international audience in German with quotes and references in Latin, Spanish, and French. In contrast, today linguistic diversity is celebrated in English Only, under the premise that a lingua franca levels the playing field. The purportedly democratic fashion has led to two paradoxical outcomes: (a) a privileged class of monolingual English-speaking sociolinguists who study multilingualism ‘in translation,’ with the help of research assistants, and (b) English-medium textbooks and handbooks with nary a non-English reference that render invisible – and irrelevant – publications in other tongues.¹¹

This volume aims to dispel the fog of historic amnesia with studies that go against the grain of traditional language histories, challenge clichéd beliefs, foreground historic normativity of institutional multilingualism and language-mixing, examine the transformation of polyglot societies into monolingual ones, and bring out the dissonance in our orientations to linguistic diversity. Most crucially, it reinforces Judson’s (2006, 2019) argument that linguistic diversity per se *does not* cause political conflicts – languages became implicated in strife following their politicization by nationalist activists and instrumentalization by populist demagogues.

Having worked at the intersection of psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and forensic linguistics for over two decades, I am fully aware of the challenges of interdisciplinary dialogs and advantages of staying put. Yet I also see big questions as an important centripetal force. My hope is to initiate a conversation about multilingual history in the *longue durée* and from multiple points of view, based on five ontological and epistemological assumptions:

¹¹ *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Superdiversity* edited by Creese and Blackledge (2018) is a good example. Its 536 pages contain 2,048 references, of these only 37 (0.02 percent) are in languages other than English. If you subtract the three chapters that contain an unusually high number of such references – namely, Geldof (2018), Nekvapil and Sherman (2018), and Sabaté-Dalmau (2018) – the total of foreign references drops to 8 (0.004 percent).

- **‘languages’** are social and linguistic conventions whose institutional and perceptual realities, including their very names, vary across individuals, time, and place;
- **‘multilingualism’** and **‘monolingualism’** are idealized modern abstractions that serve as umbrella terms for a wide range of individual and social phenomena;
- **theoretical constructs**, such as ‘official language policy,’ ‘minority languages,’ ‘linguistic imperialism,’ ‘linguistic tolerance,’ and ‘language rights,’ central in discussions of modern multilingualism, are an anachronistic lens on the past – historical language management and ideologies require their own theories and terminology;
- **the timelines** of the rise of linguistic nationalism need reconsideration and so does the assumption of a uniform march to or from multilingualism – social phenomena labeled ‘multilingualism’ unfold and fold on different timelines in different contexts;
- **language scholars** aren’t mere observers of linguistic powerplays – they are also actors who may assist in erasure of linguistic diversity (Wright and Gal, this volume) or experience the consequences of such erasure (Lane, this volume).

I am also fully aware that a single volume doesn’t suffice. What we need are new theories of language management and ideologies (see also Mullen, this volume), comparative analyses of multilingual institutions and societies (for an example, see Mairs, this volume) and, above all, studies that push beyond the laxity of trendy terms to ask uncomfortable questions:

- How do we reconcile the traditional view of linguistic nationalism as one nation=one language with historic evidence of polyglot nationalism?
- Where does ethnolinguistic unmixing fit in the theories of language and migration?
- Are our notions of ‘language equality’ shaped by the legacy of linguistic nationalism?
- How does a struggle for ‘language rights’ morph from the fight for equality into the demand for exclusivity, paving the road for oppression of new ‘linguistic minorities’?
- If multilingual institutions and ‘language accommodations’ equal social and political inclusion, why is it that Western democracies offer fewer such ‘accommodations’ than the former ‘prisons of the nations,’ like Cisleithania/Austria and the USSR?
- And if language conflicts are essentially about political and economic power, can language accommodations and access policies level the playing field?
- Is linguistic nationalism an idea we can ever un-practice and un-think?

I want to express deep gratitude to all contributors for their willingness to step over – or kick aside – the disciplinary boundaries to speak to a larger audience about what they do and how they do it and a fervent hope that the dialog between sociolinguists and historians will go on. I also hope that sociolinguists will be able to move beyond the empty cliché of “our world is more multilingual than ever before” and that future textbook authors and handbook editors will endow the field with a history of multilingual polities, overshadowed, at present, by the rise of ideologically monolingual nation-states. Until then, the big picture of multilingualism remains distorted, like the elephant, and, like Humpty Dumpty, cannot be reassembled with ease.

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