

■ **Sonia Neela Das**
New York University
sd99@nyu.edu

La Francophonie and Beyond: Comparative Methods in Studies of Linguistic Minorities

Être huron, inuit, francophone, vietnamien ... Propos sur la langue et l'identité. Dorais, Louis-Jacques. Montreal: Liber, 2010. 1–299 pp.

Ideologies across Nations: The Construction of Linguistic Minorities at the United Nations. Duchêne, Alexandre. Berlin and New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 2008. xi + 282 pp.

Paths to Post-Nationalism: A Critical Ethnography of Language and Identity. Heller, Monica. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. viii + 223 pp.

Over the past few decades, most sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have contributed to discussions about the relationship between communicative practices and social identities by focusing on specific ethnic, national, racial, gender, sexual, and class groups to make their points. Whereas researchers would now agree that processes of identification are crucial to achieving the co-patterning of culture and language in social life, there remains significant disagreement over which analytic methods best characterize the subjective experiences of linguistic minorities without promoting essentialist views of language use and human agency. One solution has been to develop cross-cultural studies comparing the different temporal and spatial scales through which linguistic practices constitute social relations, and vice versa. This essay explores the value of such comparative approaches in studying the social identification of linguistic minorities, specifically those that share a practical or symbolic relationship with French.

My discussion centers on the review of three monographs recently written by sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists Monica Heller, Louis-Jacques Dorais, and Alexandre Duchêne, who each adopt different vantage points from within the interdisciplinary field of francophone studies to develop innovative frameworks for comparing multilingual societies and organizations where French plays a dominant role in instantiating colonial, post-colonial, and neoliberal politics and subjectivities. Whereas Duchêne (2008) and Heller (2011) associate their comparative methodology with the development of a “critical sociolinguistics” approach, Dorais (2010) instead characterizes his approach as a type of “sociohistorical analysis.” Also, both Heller and Dorais informally define “linguistic minorities” as users of languages without official or privileged status in state societies, whereas Duchêne formally defines “linguistic minorities” as discursive products of contested international negotiations over human rights. Despite their different methodological objectives and conceptual frameworks, these monographs all seek to identify how power is disguised in

hegemonic state polices and institutional practices that standardize, classify, or enumerate minority languages as endangered resources and speakers as disempowered actors. Reviewing these monographs thus reveals diverse possibilities and pitfalls in applying comparative methods to the archival, textual, and ethnographic study of linguistic minorities.

Contrary to most ethnological studies conducted in the 19th and early 20th centuries that constructed hierarchal typologies of human behavior and communicative practice from comparative analyses of ethnographic, material, and textual evidence, contemporary anthropological and sociolinguistic studies of linguistic minorities instead employ comparative methods to characterize interlocutors' shifting and varying subject positions and discredit universalist assumptions about the relationship between language structure, usage, and ideology across varying sociohistorical contexts. For example, comparative studies of linguistic communities situated in contexts of migration (see Gal 1987), nationalism (see Milroy 2000), colonialism (see Irvine 1995), or all three (see Eisenlohr 2006) have produced significant theoretical insights by examining how interlocutors' attitudes and ideologies contribute to language change. Similarly, scholars working from an applied or social justice perspective have used comparative methods to expose hidden values and ideas embedded in state-sponsored policies detrimental to ethnic and racial minorities (see Zentella 1997). Both research agendas follow in the legacy established by Franz Boas, and pursued by subsequent generations of students such as Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, who compared language grammars to combat racist stereotypes of Native Americans, African Americans, and Jews in early 20th century North America (Darnell 2006).

Linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have therefore long recognized the value of comparative methods in distinguishing between culturally contingent processes and more global mechanisms through which linguistic forms and practices mediate social relations. Even as comparative frameworks fell largely into disfavor during the post-World War II period among post-colonial and feminist scholars for essentializing or silencing subaltern voices (Abu-Lughod 1991 (2006), Clifford and Marcus 1986), ethnographically-minded researchers of language have persisted in carefully applying comparative techniques to study communicative practices across diverse groups of subaltern peoples. For one, understandings of culture's role in language acquisition and cognition have depended on comparative studies to discredit pseudo-scientific fallacies about human development (Lucy 1992, Ochs and Schieffelin 1984, Whorf 1941). Rather than essentializing subaltern peoples, this research has paved the way for further ethnographic and experimental inquiries into how processes of language socialization contribute to the diverse worldviews of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, which until then were assumed to be similar or deficient relative to a Euro-American, middle class standard.

Comparative studies focusing explicitly on linguistic minorities are less common because the nature of ethnographic monographs is to explore in detail thematic issues pertaining to a single group. Common themes pertaining to studies of linguistic minorities have dealt with experiences of language revitalization and endangerment, heritage language instruction, national integration or assimilation, and racialization. When analyzing how linguistic minorities' subject positions and intersubjective relations are interactively and incrementally constructed through discourses circulating locally as well as transnationally, however, some studies will also rely on comparative techniques to discern co-occurrence patterns across separately contextualized communicative events (Briggs and Bauman 1992). This approach is essentially genealogical in that researchers are attempting to compare present communicative events with past and projected ones to draw conclusions about lower and higher indexical order formations. Yet when patterns are induced across too vast temporal and spatial scales or deduced from very disparate sociohistorical processes, problems of essentialism may arise. Ethnographic studies generally avoid such critiques by analyzing only those language ideologies and social identities expressed within a circumscribed geographic locale and historical period.

Questions about how the discursive construction of subject positions and inter-subjective relations varies transnationally and across historical periods thus remain underexplored. Most recently, cross-cultural studies of communicative behavior informed by a semiotic paradigm have allowed researchers to develop conceptual models for qualitatively distinguishing between small and large-scale signs of synchronic variation and diachronic change (Agha 2007, Silverstein 2003). Similar efforts to measure linguistic and social change quantitatively, however, have been met with lingering suspicions by anthropologists and historians who negatively associate positivist methods of enumeration with disciplinary practices of modern liberal regimes (Heller 2002, Urla 1993). In particular, statistical, cataloguing, and cartographic methods have been targeted for perpetuating the uneven distribution of political and economic resources among speakers of standard versus non-standard, and majority versus minority languages. Even though ethnic and racial minorities may appropriate these same techniques to assert their own autonomy or resist domination, most critics would concur that applying quantitative methods to studies of human populations always privileges scientific knowledge in the service of state governance and thus erases its hegemonic nature.

Social scientists working to deconstruct the naturalized authority of quantitative approaches, however, often make the mistake of assuming that all mathematical operations are statistically driven. In 1977, Dell Hymes explained that ethnographic methods partly developed from a "branch of formal scientific inquiry" that drew inspiration from "qualitative and discrete mathematics, not statistics or experimental measurement" (p. 166). Rigorously comparative, these ethnographic methods were originally designed to decipher patterns of functional contrast across linguistic elements by asking such questions as "which changes of form have consequences for meaning [and] what choices of meaning lead to changes of form" (p. 174). Hymes further noted that, in some cases, degrees of functional contrast are more meaningful to speakers than all-or-nothing contrasts. Because ethnographically sensitive linguists are trained to discern emergent qualities in speech styles and communicative practice by analyzing dimensions of degree, directionality, and duration in language shift, it has become common for researchers to rely on geometric metaphors such as vectors, flows, and scales to characterize different facets of multilingualism (Blommaert 2010, Heller 2011). The prevalence of these metaphors in both fields of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology suggests that discrete qualitative mathematics has and will continue to play a crucial role in elucidating the co-constitutive relationship of linguistic form and function through ethnographic and comparative means.

Researchers who rely on mathematical operations to measure contemporary sociolinguistic phenomena such as sound change (see Eckert 2011) and cultural change (see Urban 2010) sometimes apply these methods to processes of identity formation as well. One qualitative approach seeks to distinguish between momentary events of self-"positioning" and lengthier processes of discursive "thickening" to characterize how the duration of communicative activities between interlocutors impacts potentially reversible pathways of identification (Wortham 2004). Variationist sociolinguists instead seek to measure how the sequential unfolding of epistemic stances and the frequency of discursive markers signal different degrees of emergent subject types (Mendoza-Denton 2008). Together, these two approaches calibrate the duration of communicative events with the directionality of identification processes to identify varying degrees of linguistic change. They avoid making essentialist claims by focusing on small-scale shifts in communicative practice and drawing on additional ethnographic and archival evidence to explain the societal implications of changing linguistic forms or processes of identification.

The three monographs under review in this essay are more ambitious in that they also seek explanations of how larger scale linguistic and discursive shifts impacted by political, social, and economic processes vary across colonial, post-colonial, and neoliberal contexts. Their collective goal is to complicate dichotomies of synchronic variation and diachronic change by addressing methodological

problems of incommensurability when comparing different social groups, geopolitical regions, and historical periods. Usually tradition has it that experts working on a particular region, population, or time period will partner together to cross-culturally compare a single variable pertaining to language use. This parsimonious strategy helps to ensure more in-depth coverage of each variable and eliminate possibly confounding factors in correlating the causes, mechanisms, and consequences of language contact and shift. On the other hand, single-authored ethnological surveys comparing different social groups (see Dell Hymes' (1968) and Fredrik Barth's (1969) seminal works on linguistic and ethnic communities) will tend to elucidate general principles at the expense of more fine-grained measurements or characterizations of sociolinguistic variability. Along a similar vein, multi-sited ethnographic studies conducted across different institutional or geographic contexts will generally analyze how social groups sharing a common language, ethnicity, nationality, or institutional identity may nonetheless express different language ideologies or engage in alternative communicative practices (see Das 2008a). Finally, single-authored comparative studies examining the changing linguistic ideologies and practices of a social group over an extended period of time will either produce longitudinal accounts researched over several decades (see Woolard 2011), ethnographic accounts of generational cohorts focusing on their different life phases (see Fader 2009), or historical accounts comparing archival records with individual life histories and narratives (see Inoue 2006).

All three methods of comparative analysis are designed to distinguish between culturally contingent and universal mechanisms of social reproduction and change. From Hymes, we have learned that boundaries of national, linguistic, and ethnic communities need not and usually do not map neatly onto one another. From Barth, we have also learned that these boundaries are shaped by different genres of communicative practice, such as those requiring limited participation in special oratorical events or rather full-fledged participation in everyday speech events. Drawing from these general principles, scholars have variously theorized "identity" as a relational construct inflected by notions of alterity (Hastings and Manning 2004) and "identification" as a process of sociolinguistic differentiation (Bucholtz and Hall 2005) revealing both articulated and unarticulated desires (Cameron and Kulick 2005). Likewise, linguistic minorities are no longer seen as self-evident entities but as products of power struggles and institutional negotiations. Finally, multi-sited and historical studies have taught us that multilingualism is endemic to both small and large-scale societies, past and present (see Jackson 1974 and Hanks 2010), and language contact is ubiquitous, despite nationalist ideologies of linguistic purism purporting otherwise (Das 2008a).

Heller, Dorais, and Duchêne provide three distinct models illustrating how single-authored comparative studies can explicate one or several of these above-mentioned theoretical insights by looking into the communicative practices, social identities, and ontological status of different groups of linguistic minorities. What I hope to further demonstrate is that they do so by specifically attending to dimensions of degree, duration, and directionality in processes of sociolinguistic change. Heller thus characterizes how the diminishing power of a linguistic nationalist regime in francophone Canada has led to a growing disconnect between the *directionality* taken by francophone identification practices and political, social, and economic policies during the late 20th to early 21st centuries. Dorais synthesizes evidence from secondary sources, archival records, and oral histories pertaining to the identification and linguistic practices of Inuit, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, and Franco-American peoples to expose how feudal, colonial, and post-colonial residues of power *endure* in modern-day sentiments of belonging. Finally, Duchêne examines how the United Nations negotiates different *degrees* of consensus among member states to promote a statist rather than international vision of human rights by creating discursive instruments relying on quantitative data to legitimate the national assimilation of linguistic minorities. Below, I outline each monograph's

theoretical framework and argument, provide a brief synopsis of its ethnographic, textual, or archival evidence, and conclude by identifying unexplored areas for future comparative research.

Critical Ethnography of Ethnolinguistic Identity

Paths to Post-Nationalism is a comparative study of francophone Canada from the perspectives of people living in Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime provinces over the past 30 or so years. Throughout her monograph, Heller articulates a vision of what she refers to as a “critical ethnographic sociolinguistics” by underlining the merits of both ethnographic and sociolinguistic methods to examine how “social action is tied to social structuration” (p. 10). She asserts that ethnographic methods are uniquely designed to reveal how “language works as situated social practice” and is “tied to social organization,” the material basis of which constrains how people make sense of things and events taking place in the world (p. 10). Given this framework, ethnographers are well equipped to investigate global issues of diversity, inequality, change, and mobility by examining how shifts in political and economic conditions impact the local reproduction of communicative practices and discursive flow of linguistic resources. On the other hand, Heller argues that sociolinguistic studies provide a valuable counterpoint to idealized models of homogenized speech communities by highlighting the interactional means through which social categories and human subjectivities emerge in social practice. Methods in critical ethnographic sociolinguistics thus capture multiple dimensions of language use and human agency as they figure in the reproduction of social hierarchies.

Heller also draws inspiration from Anthony Giddens’s critique of “macro” and “micro” dichotomies to propose a new empirical terrain of “discursive space” (p. 10). This concept refers to the webs of constraints and consequences intertwined in intersubjective practices of meaning making and political economic processes of resource distribution. When dealing with the new economy, Heller notes that researchers are increasingly being called upon to investigate webs of meaning and resource regulation that reach beyond the local to also encompass the global. In the past, multi-sited ethnographies of transnational processes have productively employed comparative methods to denaturalize the authority of globally hegemonic discourses, especially those conflating analytic units of language, nation, identity, and state, by revealing multiplicity in local experiences of identity. Heller argues that these earlier studies model how to best investigate sociolinguistic change by exposing how “discourse . . . develop[s] over time and across space in ways that are empirically observable” (p. 11). Her comparative framework similarly traces links between conversational trajectories, participant sites, and the resources regulated therein across modern francophone Canada.

As Heller explains it, francophone Canada is an ideal site for examining historical changes in local and global ideologies of ethnolinguistic identity due to the prominent role that language has taken in nationalist discourses and policies during the 20th and 21st centuries. Historically, French speakers have occupied marginal socioeconomic positions and territories in Canada by living on the fringes of English-dominant and industrialized cities such as Montreal, Cornwall, Welland, and Moncton. Rural regions in Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick, traditionally comprising the heartland of francophone Canada, are where generations of French speakers have worked in fisheries, lumber mills, mines, and other sites of primary resource extraction. After several hundred years of maintaining territorially segregated labor forces, the British-commissioned Durham Report of 1838 reconceptualized this entrenched system of socioeconomic inequality as evidence of two distinct linguistic communities—one corresponding to rural or working class francophone Canada and the other to industrialized and urban anglophone Canada (Das 2008b). This characterization, although initially opposed by Canadian settlers, later set the stage for nationalist and separatist parties to distinguish political constituencies according to

their ascribed ethnolinguistic identities and claim political sovereignty for Quebec on the basis of its majority francophone population. Thus, whereas in the early 20th century a “traditionalist” discourse endorsing the Romanticist view of nations embodying the collective spirit of a folk dominated in francophone Canada, after World War II a new “modernist” ideology endorsing the liberal discourse that nations are naturally sovereign states due to their shared territory, language, and identity instead took precedence (p. 12).

Heller traces these discursive shifts by comparing the oral histories and archival records of an elite, secret, Catholic male society, *L'Ordre de Jacques Cartier* (OJC). From 1926 to 1965, this organization promoted its own brand of nationalism conflating religion, race, and language (*la foi, la race, la langue*) by encouraging the patriarchal patronage of Catholic institutions in civic society and using its influence to facilitate the entry of francophone workers into positions of political and social leadership. Until World War II, OJC was the most politically active lay society in Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritime and Western provinces. Later, members faced increasing criticism from the general public for insisting on secrecy, excluding women, and mishandling regional interests and economic initiatives. When secular nationalist leaders elected in the 1960s and 1970s rejected the Catholic Church's authority in government matters and established a new *milieu associatif*, or “network of institutions and volunteer associations” (p. 114) to enable a capitalist market centered in francophone Quebec, these policies effectively cut off French-speakers living outside of Quebec from the province's linguistic nationalist movement and further fueled the diversification of secular organizations committed to protecting francophone rights throughout the rest of Canada.

Heller began her fieldwork at a beer factory in Montreal in the late 1970s soon after the government of Quebec nationalized large industries and introduced new language legislation to facilitate the upward mobility of French speakers by mandating the use of spoken and written French in most workplaces. For over 150 years this industrial brewery had relied solely on the English language to manufacture, bottle, and deliver beer throughout the province. Yet starting in 1977, a younger cohort of francophone men and women trained in natural sciences, engineering, and management, often among the first in their families to pursue post-secondary education and move to Montreal, replaced positions in technical fields, middle management, and human resources previously held by anglophones who preferred to retire or transfer out west rather than accommodate the new language laws. Lower-level positions in production and delivery continued to be predominated by bilingual francophone men and higher administrative positions by monolingual anglophone men. Although in the past, bilingual working class francophone men were the ones to negotiate multilingual interactions between managers, foremen, production line operators, human resource workers, and secretaries, after 1977 a new bilingual management cohort emerged to handle these communicative tasks while also promoting the use of French in upper company echelons. In particular, Heller points out how college-educated female administrative assistants would take on the role of helping other employees less conversant and literate in the more prestigious style of standard French to write and translate company documents.

At around the same time that French was being established as the unmarked language of most workplaces in Quebec in the 1970s, contradictions began to emerge between the idea of language as a marketable skill and language as an emblematic badge of identity. These contradictions first became apparent in the aftermath of different language policies promoting the francization of immigrant youth attending public schools in Quebec and those protecting the cultural identities of francophones attending public schools in Ontario. At a French-medium high school in Toronto where Heller conducted thirteen years of research in the late 1980s and 1990s, she identifies a growing disjuncture between school-endorsed discourses of linguistic purism and ideologies of ethnolinguistic identity on the one hand, and everyday multilingual practices and attitudes of students on the other. Over time, as more

students grew to recognize the economic value of bilingualism, the school's composition further diversified to include more students of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds less closely aligned with the identification practices and nationalist policies supported by francophone Canadians.

Heller also traces the ideological impact of neoliberal policies introduced in the late 1990s leading to the demise of the primary resource-based economy in rural Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick. For one, neoliberal restructuring forced many French-speaking rural laborers to acquire new skills to meet the demands of emergent niche markets such as the heritage tourism industry. This industry also commodifies expertise in French by recognizing "authentic" performances of cultural and linguistic heritage as added value and disregarding the value of all other expressions of communal identity and francophone rights. Furthermore in the early 2000s, call-centers requiring francophone employees in Welland, Moncton, Toronto, and Ottawa businesses to take French remedial classes to learn how to speak in a purist register of standard French with elite (often Montreal-based) customers draw attention to emergent class divisions challenging the reproduction of a communal francophone Canadian identity. Heller concludes that francophones throughout Canada are now displaying an ironic stance toward policies of linguistic nationalism and instead embracing alternative ideals of diversity, human rights, and environmentalism to express their "post-nationalist sensibilit[ies]" (p. 183), despite federal and provincial governments' ongoing commitment to French revitalization.

Having observed, participated, and lived through major political, social, and economic transformations impacting francophone Canada over the past few decades, Heller occupies a privileged position from which to analyze the causes, mechanisms, and consequences of language shift there. Starting from the point of view that "nothing about what francophone Canada is or might be is normalized" (p. 12), her explicit goal is to present a multifaceted image of francophone Canada as a "discursive space" in addition to being a geopolitical entity. She examines "assemblages of interconnected sites" (p. 11) through which linguistic resources and communicative practices are institutionally regulated via community associations, workplaces, schools, NGOs, and government agencies and then compares these sites of discourse production across a broad geographic terrain, ranging from Quebec to Ontario to New Brunswick in Canada and finally to Western Europe, where regional politics and neoliberal policies work together to shape local linguistic practices and subjectivities.

Heller's monograph thus represents a hybridization of multi-sited and longitudinal approaches by employing comparative methods to decouple notions of ethnolinguistic identity and deconstruct hegemonic narratives of linguistic nationalism. She provides historical accounts of the rising and diminishing power of different nationalist regimes in francophone Canada, some of which gradually diverged from one another after Québécois politicians first rejected the Catholic Church's authority to pursue secular statehood. Other regimes changed directions with the advent of the new economy. As a consequence, more francophone Canadians now conceptualize their social, economic, and political prospects in terms of individuals competing within a global market, rather than as a community with a shared vision of nationhood, than ever before. Even in ethnically homogenous towns in rural Canada, residents show signs of rejecting the notion of a communal francophone identity due to new class distinctions emerging between elite (i.e. urban) and non-elite (i.e. rural) speakers of standard French. These and other post-nationalist sensibilities point to how the identification practices of French speakers in Canada are not always moving in the same direction as government policies.

Missing from this account, however, are the experiences and attitudes of French-speakers and descendants living in the western Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Also, with the exception of fieldwork conducted at a multiethnic French-medium school in Toronto, we learn little of constraints placed on French-speaking ethnic and racial minorities who might choose to claim francophone Canadian identities if given the chance to do so. Without these additional

perspectives, it is difficult to conclude with any certainty whether the diverse subjectivities of francophone Canadians are currently converging toward a path of post-nationalism. (One would also have to consider the impact of the recent election of the *Parti Québécois* as a minority government in Quebec in September 2012 to assess the resurgence in nationalist fervor). Also requiring greater clarification is to what degree and in what ways francophones living in rural and urban Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and western Canada express these post-nationalist sensibilities. Heller begins this work of characterizing the diversity of francophone Canada by decentering the role of Quebec in her analysis of the mutual structuration of socio-political organizations, economic policies, and communication practices in francophone Canada. Future comparative research coordinating efforts among different research teams could additionally reveal varying degrees of nationalist sentiment across the rest of Canada and therefore highlight the exact mechanisms through which the circulation and legitimation of linguistic resources creates community across even more broadly conceived “discursive spaces.”

Sociohistorical Analysis of Language Politics

Être huron, inuit, francophone, vietnamien is a sociohistorical analysis detailing the language politics and identification practices of Inuit, Wendake-Hurons, Vietnamese, Hawaiians, and Franco-Americans over extended periods of time. In several respects, this monograph represents a counterpoint to Heller’s sociolinguistic study of francophone Canada by focusing on lesser known or underrepresented French-speaking populations dispersed throughout North America, including communities in Manitoba, Missouri, Maine, Louisiana, Quebec City, Nunavut, and Nunavik. At the same time, Dorais ventures beyond North America to consider the historical legacy of French colonialism in Southeast Asia. Finally, even though both Dorais and Heller analyze archives, secondary sources, and oral histories to describe long-term patterns of identification and language shift, only Dorais reconstructs pre-colonial language practices in Southeast Asia to assess how the articulation of identity among its contemporary ethnic and racial minority groups depends on their degree of incorporation into state societies. This comparative study, produced after Dorais had conducted both intensive and extensive fieldwork on language and identity over an entire career, allows him to take a bird’s eye view of cross-cultural patterns of human social behavior. Recently retired from the Department of Anthropology at Université Laval, Dorais is perhaps among the few ethnographers today who can undertake this type of survey without producing an overly essentialist account.

Each chapter is organized as a genealogical analysis of a particular ethnic group’s language politics and practices over several decades or centuries. As a common theme of the first three chapters, Dorais identifies which social, political, and economic factors contribute to how spoken and written languages are recognized and legitimated as elite standards or degraded vernaculars. Chapter one begins by tracing the evolution of the language ideology of diglossia in Vietnam, starting from the period of the Bronze Age through Han occupation and French colonial rule and culminating in the present-day system of socioeconomic stratification between monolingual peasants and bilingual elites. Chapter two similarly addresses the consequences of diglossia between Creole and Cajun languages in 17th to 20th century Louisiana, while chapter three looks at triglossia between English, Hawaiian, and Creole in 19th to 20th century Hawaii. Altogether, these chapters reveal cross-cultural commonalities in how state-endorsed policies of language standardization have devalued the knowledge and languages of indigenous peoples and ethno-racial minorities around the world.

In the remaining chapters of his book, Dorais surveys language policies in North America and Europe to reveal how the formation of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities among indigenous peoples, minorities, and immigrants living there is influenced by national sovereignty and self-determination movements. Reflecting on

various case studies, Dorais concludes that a crucial distinction exists between what we refer to as culture, or the everyday activities of social life, and ethnicity, or the politicized subject positions that are ascribed or attributed to social groups. For example, Inuit living in Greenland, Canada, and Alaska can claim different ethnicities despite sharing a common culture, language, and habitual way of life. Dorais also distinguishes between the concepts of ethnic and linguistic identity to explain why members of the Wendake-Huron nation living near Quebec City have never self-identified as francophones even after adopting French as their primary language more than a century ago. Finally, Dorais clarifies that the concept of “minority” has entirely different quantitative and qualitative senses. He illustrates this distinction by pointing to the disparity between the majority numerical status of francophones living in Quebec City since the late 18th century and the minority sociopolitical status of the French language spoken there until the late 20th century.

Due to Dorais’ linguistic and ethnographic expertise on Inuit languages and peoples, I would argue that those chapters focusing on Inuit identity reveal the dimensional nuances of multilingualism in greatest detail. Historically, the Inuit have distinguished themselves as fully human in comparison to other sentient yet non-human beings, such as animals, Dene and European peoples, and spirits who all possess thought yet lack in language, clothing, subsistence, and other aspects of culture. Dorais argues that this dichotomy between human and non-human agents is common to small-scale societies. Only after indigenous societies are incorporated into state societies do notions of cultural distinctiveness become less pronounced and claims of ethnic and linguistic distinctiveness become linked to strategies for acquiring limited economic, political, and social resources. Drawing inspiration from Barth’s study of the ethnic fragmentation of tribal identities in Pakistan, Dorais explains that social, political, and economic relationships between states and Inuit peoples living in Canada, Alaska, and Greenland have similarly led to the fragmentation of a pan-Inuit ethnic identity. Longstanding fieldwork in Nunavik and Nunavut and brief stints of research in Alaska, western Canada, and Greenland have allowed Dorais to record a wide range of attitudes showcasing how local people use and define the Inuit language differently. In Barrow, Alaska, most people under fifty do not speak Inupiatun except with elders or young children, yet all of them speak English with Inupiatun-inflected phonology. Similarly, although the Inuit languages of Siglit, Uummarmiutun, and Inuttut are rarely spoken in the western Arctic and Labrador regions of Canada, they have undergone a modest recent revival due to the Canadian government’s decision to invest in schools teaching ancestral languages and recognize the limited political sovereignty of Inuit regions and territories.

Language revitalization movements, however, are not always ideologically aligned with political movements of national sovereignty or self-determination. In the autonomous territory of Nunavut in Canada, residents there have had less success in revitalizing Inuktitut than in neighboring Nunavik, a region still administered by the provincial government of Quebec. Language shift in Nunavut is reinforced by popular beliefs among youth that English represents a language of modernity and Inuktitut a language of tradition, while in Nunavik Inuktitut is associated with past Anglican and recent Pentecostal missionaries and literacy movements that index both religious modernity and cultural tradition. Also, less polarizing views exist between Inuktitut and English in Nunavik because residents there also speak and write in French. Comparing the case of Inuktitut in Canada with Kalaallisut in Greenland, a state almost completely sovereign from Denmark, demonstrates even greater contrasts. For more than fifty years, citizens of Greenland have conducted daily social, business, and political affairs in both spoken and written Kalaallisut, as well as English and Danish. Although they claim to take the future of Kalaallisut for granted, citizens do not feel as secure about the status of Greenland’s independence from Denmark. For this reason, the Kalaaleq of Greenland profess a distinct ethnonational

identity from other Danish citizens as well as Inuks living in Canada, whereas Inuktitut speakers in Nunavik and Nunavut, and Inuit and Inuvialuit speakers in the Northwest Territory claim different ethnolinguistic identities from one another on the basis of speaking what they believe to be grammatically distinct languages.

Dorais' ethnological survey of the circumpolar north enables him to tease apart the different social, political, and economic factors contributing to contemporary self-determination and language revitalization movements among the Inuit. Taking his cue from sociologist Joseph-Yvon Thériault's schemata of the "*rose des vents*" (p. 275), Dorais asserts a positive correlation between the direction that processes of national and linguistic, diasporic and ethnic, and ethnic and minority identity formation take, and a negative correlation between the strength of ethnic identification and language vitality. In places where language vitality is strong, Dorais expects to find communal identity expressed in national terms. Conversely in places where language vitality is threatened, communal identity should be expressed in ethnic terms. Feeling a strong sense of belonging to a diasporic or racial minority community would also sharpen the desire for ethnic differentiation. From these hypotheses Dorais categorizes Inuit people into four groups: 1) colonized Inuks, 2) Inuks whose traditional culture is endangered, 3) modern Inuks, and 4) Inuks creating new collective identities. Among the latter group he would likely footnote the Inuit Circumpolar Council's recent attempts to forge a pan-Inuit transnational identity emphasizing the mutual intelligibility of spoken Inuit languages and promoting the use of a single written script across Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Russia (Daveluy and Ferguson 2009). Altogether, these categories illustrate Dorais' perception of the global mechanisms of fission and fusion inherent in local processes of identification.

By analyzing sociohistorical processes of both short and long duration, Dorais is able to situate his study of language contact and shift within local and global dynamics of varying temporal scales. What emerges from this ethnological survey is a picture of small-scale societies caught up in processes of state integration that force inhabitants to deal with problems of fragmentation and socioeconomic stratification and face possibilities for self-determination through the strategic mobilization of ethnic identities. Whether these ethnic identities are also aligned with national or linguistic identities depends more on the history of a particular region than the actual communicative practices of a people. By combing through primary and secondary sources written about pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial societies, Dorais concludes that, despite key differences in language use, residues of feudal and imperial power continue to endure in modern-day sentiments of belonging expressed around the world.

Yet because Dorais does not analyze evidence of how actors reflexively negotiate their language choices and identification practices through everyday social interactions (with the exception of chapter six focusing on francophone Americans), this monograph presents a rather limited view of human agency. Compared to Heller's analysis of conversations and social interactions taking place in an industrial brewery and call center, where different cohorts of bilingual speakers express increasing or decreasing levels of nationalist sentiment depending on their view of critical events in Canadian history, Dorais ignores whether individuals exhibit compliant or oppositional stances toward state policies and instead tests broad hypotheses about correlations between ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity formation. Even though this comparative analysis leads to the insight that language standardization is not just a modern process but also the byproduct of small-scale societies being incorporated into state societies, Dorais does not fully convince the reader of a one-to-one correlation between measures of language vitality and the directionality that sovereignty movements and ethnic identity formation will take. By investigating regions where language vitality is not strong but communal identity is expressed in national terms (e.g. Ireland), or where language vitality is both strong and expressed in ethnic terms (e.g. present-day Indian provinces), future comparative surveys can better account for this unpredictability in processes of language and social change.

Discursive Analysis of Linguistic Minorities

Weaving together a critical sociolinguistics and Foucaultian post-structuralist approach in *Ideologies across Nations*, Duchêne develops a comparative methodology to investigate how linguistic minorities are conceptualized as discursive artifacts across different institutional contexts and historical periods in the post-WWII era of international collaboration. Reiterating Heller's claim that critical sociolinguistics identifies social networks and institutional sites constraining the local and global circulation and valuation of linguistic resources and further positing that post-structuralist studies identify institutional practices and ideologies shaping the discursive production of knowledge, Duchêne argues that together these approaches can reveal how linguistic resources insert themselves into social practices geared toward different interactional and institutional objectives (p. 11). In contrast to Dorais' socio-historical approach, Duchêne's focus on "historicity" (p. 24) rejects the possibility of any definite correlations existing between the directionality of identification processes and the duration of sociolinguistic change. He also breaks away from the "classical perception—in linguistics—of the analytical units" (p. 29) that reify linguistic minorities as fixed objects of inquiry, preferring to instead regard them as a "discursive production situated and envisaged in the perspective of power relations, connected to ideological and political stakes" (pp. 5–6). Based primarily on the analysis of documents, his research is nonetheless informed by ethnographic observations that grasp "the organizational thread of the documents, the relations between them and the historical aspects of their appearance" (p. 37). With its comparative thrust both genealogical and multi-sited, this study is more focused on elucidating general principles of social theory concerning the dialectic relationship of linguistic form and function than showcasing the communicative and social practices of any particular group of linguistic minorities.

Working at the forefront of international efforts to create a standardized definition of linguistic and other minorities are the different organs of the United Nations. Since its establishment in 1945 as the successor to the League of Nations, the UN's main mission has been to reconcile conflicting interpretations of human rights among its member states. Duchêne explains how shifting dialogic relations between newer and older members have periodically altered baseline criteria for defining the "minorization" of languages and peoples (p.17). He discusses these power struggles by examining the form, content, and organization of documents commissioned, debated, ratified, and archived at the UN headquarters in Geneva. Focusing specifically on documents written by the Human Rights Commission, Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, and Working Group on Minorities from 1946 to 2003, Duchêne analyzes these in chronological order to identify thematic areas of overlap or disjuncture in their intertextual relations. He discovers that non-legally binding international instruments on human rights primarily stand for the good intentions, rather than feasible actions, taken by member states to protect minority language speakers. Despite its internationalist objective, therefore, the UN operates within a discursive framework that privileges national jurisdictions of "good governance" with regard to linguistic minorities.

Duchêne's main insight is that international instruments belaboring fine-grained distinctions in the qualitative definition and quantitative measure of linguistic minorities alternatively highlight or minimize degrees of sociolinguistic distinction depending on their expressed political objectives. In most UN resolutions, Duchêne notices that verb forms and tenses entail an overall temporal structure that implies consensus, even though specific discourse markers reveal underlying voices of dissension between writers and speakers. This discrepancy suggests repressed conflict in the production of archival reports. In chapter three, Duchêne further examines different phases in the production of archival reports to assess whether constraints placed on participant roles, genre conventions, and multilingual practices in oral Sub-Commission meetings are reproduced in these written summaries.

During Sub-Commission meetings, interpreters generally sit in an upper-level glass booth where they can see and hear what is being said below in the main hall. There, specific rules are observed about the order of discussion, time allocated, and physical movement of NGO and state representatives, writers, secretaries, and journalists to and from central or peripheral areas of the hall. Participants address the hall in one of six official UN languages—Chinese, Russian, Spanish, English, French, and Arabic—and interpreters sitting above instantaneously translate these speeches into the other official languages. Writers sitting in the back of the hall take notes of oral proceedings that are later transcribed and translated by other UN officials into the working languages of French and English. For this task audiotapes are only rarely consulted to ensure standards of accuracy. Rather than insisting on transcribing speech verbatim, the institutional view adopted by the UN is that individual “discernment” (p. 106) best guides stylistic standards of transparency and conciseness in documentation.

Among those written summary reports that Duchêne examines most closely is a speech originally delivered in French by a Sub-Commission expert before it was transcribed into French and translated into English, along with a speech originally delivered in English by an NGO representative before being transcribed and translated into French and then English. These analyses reveal a variety of discursive techniques, including paragraph segmentation, omission of whole sections of text, selection of non-persuasive or non-emotional verbs, and other lexical omissions and textual contractions, neutralizing the distinct voices of individual speakers and writers by purging “the text . . . of the messiness that would destroy its clarity” (p. 104). It would be interesting to compare both entextualization processes—the first moving in the direction from spoken French to written French to written English, and the second from spoken English to written French to written English—to determine whether the original choice of language by speakers, who may be of different occupational ranks, ultimately produces a more or less consensual report. This analysis would further Duchêne’s discussion of the UN’s hegemonic discourses by revealing whether social hierarchies map onto ideological distinctions in the categorization of spoken and written, working and official languages.

In chapter five, Duchêne indirectly tackles this issue by asking how quantitative methods used to classify linguistic minorities are strategically favorable to the UN’s overall political agenda. He begins by arguing that the organization relies on exhaustive research and documentation practices based on statistical operations to compensate for a lack of decision-making power among lower-ranking committee members enlisted to write reports that can only recommend but never enforce international policies. Despite increasing lamentations about the rising financial costs of archival production, copious documentation backed by statistical research is still deemed necessary by top UN officials who champion so-called standards of objectivity in counting and cataloguing minority groups. Duchêne critiques any such initiatives that would establish minimal numerical or proportional values in defining “minorities” and rejects the UN’s claims that quantitative measures are designed to ensure that “special treatment would” not “place a disproportionate burden upon the resources of the State” (p.175). Instead, he insists that cataloguing techniques “prevent[s] the possibility of thinking differently about these people and groups” (p. 263) and cautions readers to not uncritically accept “quantitative approaches to linguistic vitality” (p. 7) that function as disciplinary measures contributing to the involuntary assimilation of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples into nation-states. In this sense, Duchêne is reiterating Dorais’ main argument about how state integration fuels the ethnic identification and hierarchical stratification of small-scale societies. He further reveals that this process is not just political but also discursive, pointing out how statistical measures of language vitality and population size that are naturalized by objective-seeming written reports and ratified in an international arena are solely designed to legitimate state governance.

As a final note of caution, Duchêne explains that even the UN's reliance on a "biodiversity" paradigm of language preservation promotes essentialism by portraying all minority languages as dying and minority speakers as disappearing. That UN documents make no mention of disagreements arising over whether minority languages should stand as defining features of "ethnic minorities" suggests that most officials regard language as a self-evident concept requiring little elaboration. Duchêne further suggests that UN officials, given difficulties in counting and cataloguing minority peoples who often intermarry with other ethnic groups, migrate to foreign lands, and participate in global forms of exchange, decided that it would be more parsimonious and less political to count minority languages and then infer from these statistics the cultural and demographic characteristics of speakers. This method of first categorizing minority languages as endangered resources ignores the reality that speakers of some threatened languages may enjoy elevated sociopolitical status in certain contexts. Also ignored is the fact that ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples are often multilingual. Conflating linguistic diversity with biodiversity thus perpetuates a teleological view of sociolinguistic change that presumes a global trend of greater cultural homogeneity and linguistic impoverishment.

Overall, Duchêne's primary objective in analyzing UN documentation practices is to demonstrate how "language . . . does not allow itself to be catalogued, classed, and ordered in the same way as geometric forms, and does not obey the same rules as the formulae of logic and algebra," being as it is "fragile, fluid, fundamentally heterogeneous" (pp. 10–11). Although the UN continues to endorse a standardized definition of "linguistic minorities," Duchêne explains that maintaining this view is proving more difficult in light of new member states introducing culturally specific problems about minority languages that obviate rehearsed or universal type solutions. Using quantitative methods to impose arbitrary numerical thresholds on "linguistic minorities" based on the hierarchical categorization of living versus endangered languages is also becoming difficult to sustain, just as stereotypes depicting minority languages as local languages and majority languages as world languages, or indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities as monolingual speakers and the rest of the world as multilingual speakers, are being challenged by a diversifying UN workforce and state membership. By revealing dissenting voices in the form, content, and organization of archival documents legitimating these human rights discourses, Duchêne challenges the UN's authority to decisively shape the ontological and sociopolitical status of linguistic minorities.

As an area of future comparative research, analyzing how dissenting voices are being expressed or repressed to different degrees in oral proceedings, not just written documentation, may expose other semiotic mechanisms through which UN discourses legitimate the hierarchical classification of linguistic minorities. One fruitful line of research would investigate how the designation of official and working languages in the UN corresponds to the designation of majority and minority languages around the world. Duchêne alludes to how movements elevating the status of UN languages may draw inspiration from world events when discussing the UN's recognition of Arabic as an official language in 1973. At the time lobbyists had convincingly emphasized Arabic's importance based on the 700 million Muslims who read and write it and the 120 million people who speak it. Also said was that literary Arabic encapsulates the highest political ideals of African unity and cultural universality. One could conclude that this latter argument resonated especially well with members of the General Assembly because their own institutional practices privilege written language and universal principles. Duchêne also notes that during a post-graduate seminar on human rights conducted in French and organized by a NGO with UN accreditation, participants from francophone countries in Africa and Asia complained that the seminar's content was "unsatisfactory" and "hollow" (p. 32) for focusing on bureaucratic issues. This critique suggests that oral interactions between formerly colonized and colonial peoples of *la francophonie* may figure prominently in establishing UN political agendas. Although it is not Duchêne's agenda in this monograph to

compare ethnographic and textual evidence pertaining to the use of spoken and written languages at the UN, one could argue that future research along this vein would capture other dimensions of this “institution’s processes of legitimization” (p. 30).

Conclusion: *La Francophonie and Beyond*

The unifying premise of this review essay discussing the contributions of three different anthropological and sociolinguistic studies of linguistic minorities is their mutual engagement with French-speaking populations or francophone institutions. Because these scholars publish regularly in French (in addition to English), making their scholarship accessible to a wide francophone readership, and have been trained as scholars or have themselves trained other scholars within the context of French-medium institutions, they also belong to a francophone world. Perhaps francophone researchers of francophone societies and institutions are especially attentive to questions of sociolinguistic change due to their intimate and daily encounters with the shifting composition of *la francophonie*. Heller and Dorais are most upfront about how their heritage and background growing up in Quebec have impacted the direction of their research, both evoking personal reasons for choosing to focus on marginal regions within francophone Canada or the broader francophone world. Duchêne, on the other hand, less explicitly identifies with the field of francophone studies in his monograph. Nonetheless, by working with documents primarily written in French or English by members of an organization where French is also a dominant spoken language, Duchêne provides a critical perspective into the enduring power of *la francophonie* in the post-colonial world. In these various ways, all three scholars have moved the field of francophone studies in new directions.

For Heller, her goal to decenter the privileged position of Quebec in defining francophone Canada is accomplished by highlighting the social interactions and language ideologies of French-speaking citizens living in other provinces. She also challenges presumptions about a monolithic and unidirectional nationalist movement in Canada by describing how recently implemented neoliberal policies there have resulted in French language skills being perceived as commodities, not just as emblems of identity. Dorais’ contribution is to trace the impact of French imperialism on the vitality of other languages spoken by ethnic and racial minorities and indigenous peoples living in former French colonies, such as Vietnam, and settler colonies, such as Canada and the U.S, and comparing these indices with non-francophone societies, such as Hawaii, where similar discursive categories of sociolinguistic inequality can be found. He also demonstrates how a sociohistorical study can be designed to extend beyond an area studies paradigm to simultaneously examine culturally contingent and universal mechanisms of sociolinguistic change.

Heller and Dorais’ analyses of the consequences of migration and globalization also make apparent that *la francophonie* is no longer centered in any one territory, leading Heller and Duchêne to conclude that francophone societies and institutions must instead function as “discursive spaces” shaped by intertwined intersubjective practices and political economic processes. This dynamic is most obvious when examining the social practices and political interventions of *L’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), an international organization with 56 member states, 2 associate members, and 16 observers that share a commitment to highlighting the global status of French, promoting knowledge of diverse francophone cultures, and espousing liberal values such as equality of education and open access to literary and digital knowledge in both national and French languages. Although membership is not dictated by numerical prerequisites, nation-states must demonstrate the enduring presence of the French language in their country’s history by documenting its increasing or decreasing presence in schools, media, government, and the Internet and by using categories like (full) “francophones” and “partial francophones” to qualify such measures in terms of degrees (Francophonie 2007:16). In 2005, the OIF

employed this data to join forces with other francophone NGOs in soliciting UNESCO's ratification of the "Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions." This document claims that, since all cultural expressions require language to survive, language preservation and revitalization movements should be henceforth placed at the center of every international discussion on human rights (UNESCO 2005).

Whether or not such lobbying efforts have impacted the UN's definition of linguistic minorities is unclear since Duchêne does not address the presence of the OIF or any other francophone NGOs in his monograph. His analysis does, however, lay an empirical framework for comparing interactions between francophone organizations and other lobbyist groups who may compete to elevate the status of select majority or minority languages into working and official UN languages. Since UN documents are almost always translated into French, it is plausible that lobbyists are already working behind the scenes to ensure that French remains the golden standard of objective, transparent, and scientific communication in this international arena. Whether other organizations devoted to their own linguistic causes are similarly vying for political influence at the UN is also important to investigate. Not only would this inquiry confirm the value of comparative methods in studying discourse production and ideology formation at the international scale, it would also reveal which conceptual units are most widely used by social and political actors to measure and control sociolinguistic change.

Finally, I have organized this book review around the different possibilities and pitfalls of using comparative methods to investigate shifts in practices, attitudes, and the ontological status of linguistic minorities. First, I have argued that paying attention to qualitative dimensions of directionality, duration, and degree across vast spatial and temporal scales can help to distinguish between culturally contingent and more global mechanisms of sociolinguistic change. Without ignoring important anthropological critiques detailing the essentialist tendencies of comparative and positivist methods, I have reminded readers that the roots of ethnographic methods partly lie in a scholarly tradition of using qualitative discrete mathematics to advance the study of the dialectic relationship of linguistic form and function. Keeping in line with this approach, each monograph has adopted one or more comparative techniques to investigate how human agency resists oppressive regimes, communicative practices resist essentialization, and voices of dissent resist silencing through textual production. Relying on geometric metaphors to analyze flows of resources, vectors of power, and political scales or to otherwise draw attention to the fossilization of linguistic minorities, these scholars succeed in capturing different facets of the dynamic patterning of language and culture by comparing "discursive spaces" and societies within and beyond *la francophonie*.

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