

Liburu aipamenak

Reseñas de libros

Comptes rendus de livres

Book reviews

Language, Policy and Territory

A Festschrift for COLIN H. Williams

Edited by Wilson MACLEOD, Robert DUNBAR, Kathryn JONES, and John WALSH

Palgrave-Macmillan

Springer Nature Switzerland AG

Published in 2022, 433 pages

ISBN: 978-3-030-94345-5

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94346-2>

URRUTIA BADIOLA, Andres M.

Euskaltzainburua

aurretia@euskaltzaindia.eus

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2139-7137>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59866/eia.v2026i71.338>



Linguistic policy is a key field of research, especially in the territories where several languages coexist. In these questions, Professor Williams' interdisciplinary expertise is crucial to connecting this book's three themes: language, policy, and territory. This collection of essays is an academic tribute to him from his scholarly peers. The essays, grouped into four main themes on language policy, conclude with an Afterword by Prof. Williams.

At first glance, such questions relate closely to the Basque language and its territory. Williams has shown a strong interest in Basque, though he is best known for his work on Wales, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, and Catalonia. These places shape Professor Williams' academic path.

The essays in the volume —eighteen in total— are grouped into four main parts or sections, each exploring a key aspect of language policy.

Part one (I) is devoted to the theorising of language policy and regulation.

The open essay of Huw Lewis and Elin Royles shows the ties between political factors and linguistic policy. Analysing the Welsh language situation within a neo-institutionalist framework, they emphasise the importance of the United Kingdom's legal and constitutional position as an institutional factor in Welsh language policy.

The author of the next essay is Emyr Lewis, who considers the concept of linguistic human rights and the “right to chat” included in Part 6 of the Welsh Language Measures 2011, arguing that the right to chat could benefit not only speakers of indigenous minority languages but also speakers of all languages.

Bernardette O'Rourke's arguments are situated within disciplines such as human geography, sociology, and political science, which have marginalized questions of linguistic diversity and failed to recognize links between language identity and ethnicity. Far away from the geographical motto “one language, one nation”, there is an established tie between the geographical dimensions and the new speakers in a multilingual Europe.

In the last essay in this Part, François Grin, a well-known researcher in this field about language and economic value, writes about the concept of language as a public good, advancing beyond the rejection of the relation between language and economics. The status is different in this case for the minority language because of the disproportionate number of resources required even to maintain their current position. The clarification of concepts is essential for language policymakers to deliver more effective interventions in favour of minority languages.

In Part two (II), the five papers focus on language policy challenges and possibilities about William's native Wales and the Welsh language.

Meirion Prys Jones analyses the Welsh Language Board (1994-2012) and the key role it played following the enactment of the Welsh Language Act 1993, promoting initiatives such as Twf (transmission within families), Mentrau Iaith (community language initiatives, and Area Development plans in key areas of Wales). The author defends that language planning must involve the speakers and the communities in which they live, with encouragement from local, regional, and national authorities.

Robert Dunbar insists on the concept of “legislative turn” used by Prof. Williams to examine the recent pieces of the linguistic legislation on the Welsh language. It emphasizes that linguistic policy-making in areas not obviously related to language, such as economic development, transport, communications, health and social care, housing, and spatial land-use planning, may have a significant impact on a language’s vitality. They show a broader communal interest in the language that policymakers need to consider.

Rhys Jones, following the course of Williams and Smith’s precedents, highlights the way in which a homogeneous and uniform linguistic territory can be complicated by drawing on more networked understandings of social and spatial relations, signalling as he does so the significance of such alternative conceptions of the Welsh linguistic territory for language policy in Wales.

After that, Kathryn Jones draws on her experience at IAITH (Welsh Centre for Language Planning) to discuss links between land-use and language planning. She emphasizes using land-planning tools to assess impacts and maximise benefits.

Eleri Hedd James examines Welsh language policies on placenames, maps, and signage to ensure Welsh use in Onomastics and toponymic items. She highlights growing issues of anglicisation in private property, business, and topographical names that are not covered by current legislation.

The last essay in this Part is Steve Morris’s text on how adults acquire a minority language in areas where it is not widely used. A bottom-up, rather

than a top-down, approach may encourage Welsh speakers to use the language confidently.

Part three (III) is dedicated to the perspective on language policy challenges of Canada (both in French and English) and serves as another reference for Prof. Williams.

In the first essay, Linda Cardinal and Anastasia Llewellyn examine the impact on Colin H. Williams' work of the question of language in the provision of public services and the territorial application of measures to ensure service delivery through minority languages.

Immediately, Graham Fraser explores the pioneering impact of F. R. Scott (1899-1985) on the development of language policy in Canada and in his native province of Quebec. After this, his opposition to 1970s legislation to make Quebec a unilingual French province brought a breach with francophone writers and poets, despite the continued influence of his thinking after his death.

Charles Castonguay next traces the vulnerability of the French language, in and out of Quebec. He argues that if Canada's English-French linguistic duality is to be cherished, the federal government must radically change its policy, which so far has focused more on countering Quebec nationalism than truly supporting French.

Richard Y. Bourhis focuses on the linguistic vitality of the province of Quebec. He manages three variables: demographics, levels of institutional support, and status, as well as subjective vitality. He notes the increasing proportion of bilingualism in French and English owed to the English school system in Quebec.

The last Part (IV) focuses on linguistic policy challenges in Ireland, Scotland and Catalonia.

John Walsh underlines the traditional scope of the geographical and territorial reality of minority languages like Irish. In fact, a new network has been established around the Irish Language Network and Gaeltacht Service Town, which appears more fluid and dynamic than the previous schemes.

Janet Muller explores the Irish language policy in Northern Ireland. The conclusion is too harsh: the proposals are deeply flawed, as they increase the Irish language voluntary sector's dependence on government structures and have failed to deliver fundamental change.

Wilson McLeod, from the other side, shows the influence of Wales on Scotland's Gaelic policy development: the challenges that face Gaelic policymakers must be understood in the context of Gaelic in Scotland and therefore require particularised, specifically tailored approaches.

Finally, Maite Puigdedwall cites the organisation *Voluntariat per la Llengua* as the best practice for supporting minoritised linguistic groups, offering participants more profound knowledge of Catalan culture and access to employment, training, and education resources.

Closing the volume, it is the afterword of Prof. Williams himself who shows his compromise with the minority languages:

While we would never play down the advantages of knowing and using two or three languages simultaneously, we must acknowledge the degree of tension and the energy drain this creates for the sustenance of the weaker of these languages in our repertoire [...]. Promoting threatened languages requires advocacy and intelligence. Living in and through a threatened language is far more than an earnest endeavour, a duty-bound set of behaviours. It also involves creativity, spontaneity, and joy, capturing the myriad senses, sensations, and nuanced realities of our complex existence (417).

The volume is completed with a Welsh poem and the lists of contributors, figures and tables, closing with an index of voices, very useful for the reader and researcher. A book plenty of references and ideas, especially for Basques, who are members of a bilingual society into their territory with the Basque language characterized by a minority language situation.

Basic theoretical principles and day-to-day realities of a true linguistic policy are offered in the book, putting on the table a veritable reference in a theme fully interesting for the Basque Country and Basque language.

