Minority Language Media

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Minority Language Media

Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies

Edited by

Mike Cormack and Niamh Hourigan

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Introduction: Studying Minority Language Media

MIKE CORMACK

What is a minority language? The question is a more complex one than might at first be thought. Various related terms have been used to describe such languages – regional, lesser-used, non-state, subordinated, non-hegemonic. 'Indigenous' has also been used to cover a related but slightly different area. In this book 'minority language' is the preferred term. All the other terms have particular disadvantages. (For other discussions of this issue, see Grin, 2003: 20; Hourigan, 2003: 2). Despite its institutionalisation in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 'regional' is less than satisfactory since it makes no reference to what the problem for minority languages is – that they are dominated by a surrounding majority language. As François Grin notes, 'referring to a "region" stresses a geographical association, yet defuses a cultural, possibly more essentialist one' (Grin, 2003: 20) and is thus, in effect, a way of deflecting the argument away from linguistic rights. It is also unsatisfactory in that in many minority language communities, there are speakers – and indeed communities of speakers – of the language who live outside the traditional territories. Using 'regional' in relation to media, for example, might lead to media provision in specific areas, but not necessarily in cities containing speakers of the language who have moved away from the traditional areas. It clearly also does not apply to non-territorial languages such as Yiddish and Romany (as Grin notes) and the various varieties of sign language (as will be clear from Ladd's Chapter 13 in this book). Sometimes it has been a preferred term to avoid what are seen by some as the negative connotations of 'minority'.

'Lesser-used' makes no reference to the context of the language. Danish, an officially recognised language of the EU, has fewer speakers (6 million) than Catalan (10 million), but the former is the official language of a fully-fledged state, whereas the latter is not. The term has been institutionalised in the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL), but François Grin has argued that 'lesser-used' was adopted as a political compromise, 'chiefly in order to avoid the term "minority", which would have not been to the liking of member states that recognise no minorities, autochthonous

or otherwise, among their citizens' (Grin, 2003: 20). Even EBLUL's own website uses other terms when it refers to the remit of its Member State Committees as representing 'the interests of the various regional or minority communities within their state'.

Sometimes 'non-state languages' has been preferred. This is closer to the mark, but still fails to be explicit about what the problem actually is – that the language in question is dominated by a much larger language community. It can also lead to confusion. Languages that are official in one state might be a minority language in another (such as Russian in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, or Arabic in France). As with 'regional' and 'lesser-used', it is a term largely used to avoid reference to minority communities. 'Subordinated' (as used by Grillo in opposition to 'dominant' languages, see Grillo, 1989) and 'non-hegemonic' are closer to indicating the problem, but here again the precise nature of the relationship between the minority community and the majority one is not made clear. Only the term 'minority' makes explicit what these languages have in common – that they are dominated politically and economically by numerically larger communities within a particular state. It is this that puts Catalan in the same category as Scottish Gaelic (with 58,000 speakers). The political element is made explicit by Monica Heller when she writes: 'The concept of a linguistic minority only makes sense today within an ideological framework of nationalism in which language is central to the construction of the nation' (Heller, 1999: 7). She goes on to note that 'linguistic minorities are created by nationalisms which exclude them' (Heller, 1999: 7). In other words, the concept of a linguistic minority is essentially a political one. If a language group with a small number of speakers was given the same linguistic rights as a large language group, then its status as a minority would be unimportant, and it is the nationalism (whether explicit or not) of the larger group that denies these rights. It is the majority group that makes a 'problem' of the minority. This relates to the notion of 'minoritisation' as the process – political and ideological – by which one community is constructed by another as a minority.

Sometimes, of course, many of these languages are grouped under the heading of 'endangered' languages. Here, however, the element of subjective assessment is very apparent. While few would argue that languages with fewer than 100,000 speakers are endangered, it is a much more controversial term when applied to larger communities, and, of course, some – taking a long-term view of the dominance of English – would see many majority, official, state languages as ultimately endangered.

Another term that has been used in this context is 'indigenous'. As noted below, Donald Browne used this as the central category in his book

Electronic Media and Indigenous Peoples. He defended his use of the term pragmatically while noting its difficulties, and suggested a working definition: 'For my purposes, those who can establish that they have been in the area for the longest time, and continue to live there, would be the indigenous peoples of that area' (Browne, 1996: 4). This may make sense when looking at former colonial territories, such as Australia, Africa and the American continent, but in the European context, such a term is highly problematic. English, Spanish, French and Norwegian are just as indigenous as Irish, Basque, Breton and Sami. It makes little sense to get into arguments about which language was around before others in any particular area.

The Emergence of Minority Language Media Studies

The history of the media developments that have led to the emergence of this area of study are well covered by Browne's Chapter 7 in this book. Alongside these changes in the media has been a gradual increase in the official recognition and institutionalisation of minority languages. In the European context, 1982 saw the establishment by the European parliament of the EBLUL. Its website describes it as 'an independent democratically governed Non-Governmental Organisation working for languages and linguistic diversity'. In 1987 Mercator was established by the European Commission as a forum for the exchange of information and cooperation in relation to minority languages. Of its three parts, one is specifically devoted to media, and since 1995 has been publishing the *Mercator Media Forum* with the aim 'to promote discussion and the flow of information between those who work in the territorially-based non-state languages of the European Union in the field of media' (Thomas, 1995: 3). In 1996 the European Centre for Minority Issues was established. Such bodies have given invaluable support to minority language initiatives in Europe and have made sure that the question of minority languages remains firmly on the political agenda.

Alongside these, there is the recognition given by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of 1992. This has tried to build minority languages into the structure of the 'New Europe'. The development of this Charter (and its full text) is given in Grin, 2003. Most relevant for the media is Article 11 (Grin, 2003: 214–215). There a comprehensive list of media provision is recommended. A minimum standard is established of at least one radio station, one television channel and one newspaper in the relevant language, with governments asked to either 'ensure' or 'facilitate' their setting up. However an escape clause is added,

allowing a lower standard of just 'adequate provision' of programmes and the publication of newspaper articles, rather than a whole newspaper in the language. Not surprisingly for such a document, there is no attempt to define just exactly what all this means. If a newspaper is issued weekly is this adequate? Is there a minimum number of hours a day required to constitute a television channel? (For further discussion of these standards of provision, see Cormack, 2005: 112–113, and for discussion of the more general issue of media provision, see Moring's Chapter 2 in this book.) The Charter then goes on to protect cross-border broadcasting, important since many linguistic minorities have been split by state boundaries (this is most obvious in the cases of Basque and Catalan, both crossing the border between Spain and France). (For further discussion of the Charter, see Guyot's Chapter 3 in this book.) In 1996 the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (sometimes known as the Barcelona Declaration) reinforced this argument, deriving norms for media provision from the assertion of linguistic rights. More recently, the 2003 Conference on the Use of Minority Languages in the Broadcast Media resulted in a set of *Guidelines on the Use of Minority Languages in the Broadcast Media*, which gives much more detailed consideration to this issue (the Guidelines, along with other papers from the conference, were published in 2005 in *Mercator Media Forum 8*, in an issue devoted to the *Conference*).

Another impetus to the study of minority languages has been the steadily growing body of academic writing in this area, marked most clearly by the publication of Joshua Fishman's *Reversing Language Shift* in 1991 and his follow-up of a decade later, *Can Threatened Languages Be Saved?* (the latter being a collection of essays by various writers but including important opening and closing essays by Fishman himself). His influential account of the 'Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale' (GIDS) as a means of measuring the degree of language shift, put the emphasis for language maintenance firmly on the lived experience in the local community (Fishman, 1991: 87–109; Fishman, 2001: 451–483). Fishman's work has stimulated much other writing in what has become a significant academic growth area, and this leads towards the more specific territory of this book – minority language media studies (despite Fishman's own scepticism about the media's role in language maintenance). Several publications during the 1990s established the groundwork for this, alongside a steadily increasing number of studies of media in specific minority language communities.

Although there had been earlier writings dealing with specific languages, the first major step towards developing the study of minority language media was taken with the publication in 1992 of the collection

Ethnic Minority Media: An International Perspective (Riggins, 1992). Despite the fact that the title did not mention them, minority languages featured throughout this book, with essays ranging from media in Greenlandic to Aboriginal broadcasting in Australia, from Basque radio in France to Spanish language media in New York. Again and again in these essays, language emerges as a crucial factor in minority community media. However, perhaps the most significant contributions were the two generalising essays by the editor, Stephen H. Riggins, at the start ('The Media Imperative: Ethnic Minority Survival in the Age of Mass Communication') and at the end ('The Promise and Limits of Ethnic Minority Media'). In these he laid out some principles that began to identify the ground on which the study of minority language media could be built, even though this was not the declared aim of the book.

In the introduction he describes what he terms 'the media imperative': 'What better strategy could there be for ensuring minority survival than the development by minorities of their own media conveying their own point of view in their own language?' (Riggins, 1992: 3). But against this he notes that 'ethnic minority media may also unintentionally encourage the assimilation of their audiences to mainstream values', thus revealing the 'dual role' of ethnic media (Riggins, 1992: 4). He also describes five models of state support for ethnic minority media, which make clear the variety of reasons that a state may have for supporting a minority (and are useful to bear in mind when reading the historical account given in Browne's Chapter 7 in this book): the integrationist model (media designed to integrate the minority into the majority culture), the economic model (assimilating the minority by economic pressure), the divisive model (setting different minorities against each other), the pre-emptive model (preempting more radical media from within the minority community itself), and the proselytism model (assimilating the minority into the majority's values). These are important as a first attempt at a descriptive categorisation of minority media and work as well for minority languages as they do for other types of minority. They also show an awareness of the dangers of state support that European writers would do well to take to heart.

From Riggins' comments generally, five points can be extracted that indicate key elements in any study of minority language media, but that, at the same time, indicate key problems.

(1)   *The media imperative* – This is the need that minorities have to express their own values and culture in the media.
(2)   *The limits of media power* – 'It appears that the long-term effect of ethnic minority media is neither total assimilation nor total cultural

preservation but some moderate degree of preservation that represents a compromise between these two extremes' (Riggins, 1992: 276). Importantly, he goes on to note that 'the actual impact of the media on ethnic minority survival remains problematic' (Riggins, 1992: 277).

(3) *The political context* – 'The crucial importance of the political context of ethnic minority media is evident in all the case studies presented here' (Riggins, 1992: 276). This point has been argued elsewhere for minority languages in general (May, 2001) and minority language media in particular (Cormack, 1998), and is noted in several of the chapters in this book, notably Chapter 3 by Guyot.

(4) *Minority empowerment* – This stresses differences, and, of course, while acknowledgement of difference may be what the minority community seeks, it may also be profoundly unsettling for the majority community, upsetting the myth of the homogeneous nature of the nation-state (this is most apparent in France, although it is also evident in reactions to developments in the 20th century in Spain and in the UK).

(5) *Minority control of the media for the benefit of the community* – Riggins notes that 'it is essential for minorities to have full control over the financing and administration of their own media' (Riggins, 1992: 285) and that 'minority media should be designed in response to the informational needs and preferences of the community' (Riggins, 1992: 286). These might seem very obvious points but they indicate an essential problem – if finance is coming from the majority community (inevitable given the cost of television in particular), how is overall power and control to be disentangled from this, while appropriate accountability is retained?

From all of this it will be clear that Riggins takes an unashamedly pragmatic view of minority media. He is not so much concerned with theoretical issues as with the practicalities of media production. In taking this approach, he is not alone. Minority language media studies are energised by two sources – on the one hand the practicalities of how the media can be used to support languages under threat, and on the other hand, the rather more academic view of minority language media as an intriguing example of the media's role in society. It is probably fair to say that the former is the underlying concern of most of those involved in minority language media studies, but the latter provides the link with more mainstream media studies.

After Riggins, the next significant step came in 1996 in another book whose title did not focus explicitly on language issues: Donald Browne's

Electronic Media and Indigenous Peoples: A Voice of Our Own? Once again language issues permeated the book, although here, unlike *Ethnic Minority Media*, there was a chapter specifically on minority language broadcasting. Again, some important points were developed that were to feed into later writings. Like Riggins, Browne emphasises the limitations of the media: 'The preservation or restoration of a language, and a culture in a larger sense, is not the task of the media alone' (Browne, 1996: 7). Browne based his book on cultural dependency theory, and in particular on two issues: (1) the point that 'receivers of imported material may not be aware of their dependency' (Browne, 1996: 11) and may regard the importation of broadcast programming to be quite natural; (2) the question of how 'majority culture (colonial or otherwise) models of professional conduct by broadcast staff [have] influenced indigenous staff members' (Browne, 1996: 11). Both remain highly relevant issues for minority language media, and have not been given the saliency that they deserve. Browne goes on to note (1996: 59) seven purposes for indigenous media: (1) to rescue the language; (2) to increase self-esteem; (3) to combat negative images; (4) to work for greater cohesiveness and, through this, for political influence; (5) to provide a visible and audible symbol of indigenous society; (6) to provide an outlet for creative production; (7) to provide a source of employment. These still stand as appropriate aims for minority language media, as much as for indigenous media generally.

The section in Browne's book specifically on language issues starts with an important point: 'There is virtually no "hard" (scientific) evidence to indicate that the initiation of an indigenous language media service helps to restore or revive its usage, but all stations broadcasting substantial amounts of such languages certainly have that hope and expectation' (1996: 169). (Some of the implications of this are discussed in Cormack's Chapter 4 in this book.) Browne then separates out the three aims of reviving languages, preserving languages, and extending languages, and notes five potential problems for minority language media: (1) the use of dialects (such languages seldom have an accepted standardised form); (2) the reshaping of language use by media practitioners; (3) the use of visual languages; (4) the use of languages to establish a separate identity; (5) the use of languages to maintain subordination. He concludes this chapter by writing that 'the chief lesson so far appears to be that whatever is done along those lines will be almost certain to upset or antagonize someone, and sometimes a very influential someone' (Browne, 1996: 189), and it is not just those in the majority language community who may be unsettled by minority language media.

In the final chapter of his book Browne notes seven important elements if indigenous media are to emerge and flourish (Browne, 1996: 233): (1) 'the ability to gather enough committed individuals together'; (2) 'the support of at least one group or organization in majority society'; (3) 'the backing of at least a few influential individuals and organizations from within indigenous society'; (4) 'reasonably favourable publicity through majority culture media on an indigenous group's attempts to develop electronic media outlets'; (5) 'support in the form of advice, training and use of equipment by majority culture electronic media organizations'; (6) 'events that call the attention of society as a whole to the magnitude of injustice, inequality, and other evidences of the discriminatory treatment of indigenous groups within society'; (7) 'a reasonably sound national economy at the time the campaign for indigenous media is in progress'. These emphasise the difficulties of such campaigns and make clear the obstacles in their way (for further discussion on minority language media campaigns, see Hourigan, 2003).

Overall, then, Browne's work is based on the concept of cultural dependency and much of his concern is how to combat this. However his book has been very important in emphasising the limits of minority media, the importance of programming issues (in his third chapter), and the importance of internal problems, such as differences of language use and cultural tradition. The main problem is that the term 'indigenous' does not work in many situations as a contrast between minority and majority linguistic minorities, such as those in Europe, and can confuse by hiding important distinctions.

In these books by Riggins and Browne two strands can be seen. On the one hand, there is an attempt to provide guidance to minority media practitioners. On the other hand, the authors are attempting to make sense of what is happening in this area by applying analytical categories to it. This relates to the two sources of interest in minority language media noted earlier – language activism and academic understanding.

Although the books of Riggins and Browne were the most relevant for the development of minority language media studies, another book, published in 1995, is worth noting: Frachon and Vargaftig's *European Television: Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities.* Frachon and Vargaftig were concerned with issues of immigration and racial policy. The emphasis was on minority ethnic groups getting access to and fair treatment from dominant media, but (implicitly) in the language of the dominant culture. In one essay, on the guidelines of the Council of Europe, 1972–1992, language is referred to when discussing official guidelines, particularly five points in a report of 1979 (by B. Ducoli and A. Martinow-Remiche) that the writer

of the essay has 'encountered time and time again' (Frachon & Vargaftig, 1995: 77). These five points are: (1) 'to help immigrants understand and adapt to the host society'; (2) 'to provide immigrants with information resources in their own language about their country of origin and to enable them to find out more about their own culture'; (3) 'to give immigrants and minorities access to the media'; (4) 'to give society as a whole a better understanding of immigrant communities by familiarizing people with immigration as part of their own history'; (5) 'to encourage understanding in what is now a multicultural and multi-ethnic society'. In the rest of the book, language issues are never emphasised, but yet the book's survey of European television does allow some sense of the region's linguistic diversity to appear. As such it uncovers and gathers useful information in relation to the linguistic variety on European television, including references not just to Arabic, Hindi and Turkish, but also to Romany (Frachon & Vargaftig, 1995: 223), a language even more hidden than other European minorities. Most importantly, this book implicitly raises an issue that has so far been neglected in minority language media studies – the comparison between indigenous minority languages and immigrant minority languages.

With these books as forebears, Cormack (1998) attempted to lay the grounds for minority language media study as such, although in this case, explicitly limited to the Western European examples. His concern was with setting up a basis for comparative study: 'The overall aim is to set up a framework of debate within which specific examples can be investigated and assessed' (Cormack, 1998: 34). He suggested a number of features necessary for minority language media to emerge, and then discussed how the notion of the public sphere applied to such media, and the role of intellectuals. Thus the twin themes of applying analytical categories to the field, along with a more pragmatic involvement with how minority language media might function most successfully were continued. Cormack concluded by putting forward four points: (1) 'that in any discussion of minority language media careful attention needs to be given to the specific context'; (2) 'that central to any discussion of these media must be consideration of the political environment'; (3) 'that not just the cultural and entertainment needs but also the political needs of minority communities…must be considered if minority language media are to be assessed and compared'; (4) 'that an essential part of the study of any minority language media is the role of intellectuals and cultural producers' (Cormack, 1998: 48–49). However, perhaps the most significant aspect of this essay was not the specific suggestions made, but the general attempt to treat minority language media as a category of its own, with

distinctive problems and issues, while keeping it within the more general field of comparative media studies.

From these various writings in the 1990s, it is possible to see the beginnings of, if not a theory of minority language media, at least the development of a framework within which such media might be considered. The field is delineated by the politics of language and the media's relation to that. It is driven by the attempt to understand the role of minority languages in contemporary society, thereby intending to contribute to their survival. Along with language survival, a key aim for such media (and therefore a key topic for research) is cultural and political self-representation, thus linking these issues into identity politics. Such work can feed into policy development, at both the organisational and production levels, giving this field of study a very direct practical application.

Minority Language Media as a Field of Study

If so much is clear, the conceptual constituents of the field are less so. It differs from both language study and media studies in important ways, but also makes use of contributions from other disciplines, such as sociology, politics and economics. It differs from language study (such as sociolinguistics) in its engagement with the problematics of media studies – debates concerning media impact, media economics, media organisation, and media analysis. However it also differs from conventional media studies in its reliance on the concepts and, indeed, the insights, of language study, particularly in the area of language planning.

Looking through writing on this subject, the key concepts become clear: community, the public sphere, linguistic normalisation, cultural identity, globalisation, new social movements. Each of these suggests a different context, a different way of looking at media in minority language communities, and a different way of assessing such media. 'Community' is a much debated term within sociology. One current dictionary of sociological terms makes clear both the attraction of the term and its problems. On the one hand 'the concept of community concerns a particularly constituted set of social relationships based on something which the participants have in common – usually a common sense of identity'; on the other hand, 'there is no clear and widely accepted definition of just what characteristic features of social interaction constitute the solidaristic relations typical of so-called communities' (Marshall, 1998: 97). Using the term in relation to linguistic groups at least makes clear the basis for the group's identity – the language itself. However that in itself can cause problems. Many minority languages are based not just in the traditional areas where

the language has a long history, but are also represented in large, industrialised urban areas, and may also have a diaspora. The emergence of the term 'virtual community' in relation to the Internet adds to an already confusing concept.

The use of Habermas's notion of the public sphere, as a domain for public discussion on public issues, has now a long history in media studies (see, for example, Dahlgren, 1995). In the current volume it is fundamental to Guyot's analysis in Chapter 3. There are however limitations associated with this term (see Hourigan's criticisms in Hourigan, 2003). The problems associated with using this term in relation to minority languages are simply the problems of the term in general, but writ large, given the centrality of language to the idea of the public sphere. The concept sets up an ideal of public communication, and public participation in communication, which is impossibly high, particularly in these days of commercially driven media. However alongside this is its usefulness as a critical term, a basis from which to assess actual media provision.

Although not yet, perhaps, a familiar term in many countries, the notion of 'linguistic normalisation' has proved to be a useful term, particularly in the Catalan and Basque contexts (see the chapters by Arana, Azpillaga and Narbaiza (Chapter 9) and Corominas Piulats (Chapter 10) in this book). As a way of generalising about language planning, it puts the emphasis on the processes by which minority languages are not merely rescued and maintained, but are incorporated into everyday life. The media's ability to construct our sense of everyday life is thereby put into the foreground and the debate then centres on how both media outlets and media content contribute best to this. Clearly, this is closely linked to the public sphere.

Notions of culture and cultural identity have been central in many discussions of minority languages and their media. This does however show up a specific problem – what is the nature of the relationship between culture and language? (See May, 2001: 132–137 for a useful discussion of this.) With media being language-dependent and both contributors to, and bearers of, culture (by most definitions of that notoriously complex term), this issue is of central importance for minority language media. It is difficult to get far in discussions of either minority language media content or arguments in favour of such media without notions of culture being invoked.

Globalisation sets the international context for minority language media and constructs this as both threat and opportunity (see Hourigan's conclusion to this book (Chapter 14)). The threat is that of cultural imperialism and dependency. Despite the criticisms that have been made of the notion of cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 2000), the phenomena which

that term attempts to conceptualise are very familiar to minority language groups. The opportunity is the ease by which contemporary electronic media – both the Internet and digital broadcasting – can be used. There are media spaces there for minorities of all kinds, although the technology which allows the use of new media by minority languages also allows the availability of majority languages to increase.

With the analytical approach of new social movements (Hourigan, 2003), the postmodern context of contemporary minority languages is made explicit. This gives a context in which minority languages are seen not as some dubious throwback to a pre-modern age, but rather as part of the new identity politics. It also helps to explain why claims for minority language media began to be more widely recognised and even partially satisfied at a particular historical moment.

In addition to these approaches, the economic approach associated with the work of François Grin deserves mention (Grin, 2003; Grin & Moring, 2003; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1999). Although not reflected directly in any of the chapters in this book, Grin's work provides an important counterpoint to other approaches, and one that is rooted firmly in empirical detail.

As this field of study develops, however, other analytical concepts will be introduced and play their part. This will be clear from the remainder of this book. It will also be clear that, despite the common interests of many working in this field, there is no single dominant approach. The one factor that might be said to unite this work is a concern for, and belief in, the importance of minority languages, allied with a conviction of the importance of the media for such languages. Arguments in favour of these languages, whether based in human rights or in theories of cultural diversity, inevitably imply an important role for the media (Cormack, 2005).

The Rest of the Book

The essays in this book are designed to demonstrate current work in this field in various ways, as indicated by the subtitle: concepts, critiques and case studies. The essays sum up current writing on minority language media and set the stage for future research. The core of the book developed out of the First Mercator International Symposium on Minority Languages and Research, held at the University of Wales Aberystwyth in April 2003. The book's European origins will be clear – most of the chapters are based on the experiences of the European minority languages. Future research will determine how generally applicable this experience is.

The first part of the book consists of essays on general topics in the field of minority language media. It begins with Tom Moring who uses the

concepts of 'institutional completeness' (a full range of media) and 'functional completeness' (the audience being fully satisfied by the media on offer) to examine the media needs of minority language communities. He demonstrates how a full range of media provision is necessary in a minority language if the (usually bilingual) audience is not to move to the richer (in all senses) media of the majority. This has major implications for the rather tokenistic practices of many European media providers in relation to minorities. Jacques Guyot then focuses on political factors, looking first at the legal situation of minority languages and their media, and then at the idea of the public sphere and how this relates to multiculturalism and linguistic diversity, ending with the outline of a multimedia strategy for minority languages. Put together these points emphasise the importance of minority language access to the public sphere of debate and comment. Following this Mike Cormack focuses of the specific issue of the media's role in language maintenance, raising questions about how this can be understood, and emphasising our current lack of knowledge in this field. He goes on to suggest a way of researching this based on the notion of an ecology of language. Campaigns for minority language media have frequently been considered as if they were isolated phenomena. However Niamh Hourigan in her chapter looks at how some of these campaigns have learnt from each other. She examines the three Celtic campaigns for minority language television – in Wales, Ireland and Scotland – and shows how networking operated across the three campaigns. This chapter points to the way that minority language groups – at least in Europe – have become increasingly aware of each other in recent years. Glyn Williams then looks at the 'knowledge economy' of digital multimedia. He discusses the transformations required in media work organisation, with the introduction of Digital Asset Management Systems, and emphasises the implications this has for minority languages. The threats and opportunities that the digital revolution pose for minority languages appear in every aspect of the media from production through distribution to consumption. Williams makes us aware that this will involve fundamental changes in the media workplace. Following this Donald R. Browne gives the first published history of minority language broadcasting, drawing on a wide range of examples from around the world, and showing the range of factors involved in this development. His work gives a worldwide context for the other chapters, as well as, in various ways, emphasising the importance of politics in the development of such media.

The second part of the book looks at more specific issues. Daniel Cunliffe considers new media and tackles head on a topic that is becoming

increasingly important in relation to minority languages (see, for example, some of the contributions to issues 5, 6 and 7 of the *Mercator Media Forum*): the role of the Internet. He notes how the Internet offers minority cultures the opportunity to be producers of media content, and indeed to form communities of media producers, rather than being merely consumers of majority mass media, but he also argues that it is not clear how a minority culture can make best use of the technologies available, and which of these technologies are the most effective in maintaining and revitalising minority cultures.

After this three geographically based chapters assess aspects of the media in the three areas in Western Europe that are often seen as the most successful as far as minority language broadcasting is concerned, all having established television channels in the local language in the early 1980s – the Basque Country, Catalonia and Wales. First Edorta Arana, Patxi Azpillaga and Beatriz Narbaiza look at the role played by the media in the Basque Country, with particular emphasis on the role of local television. They show that although television can be of great importance in supporting a minority language at the level of the local community, there are dangers when such local media become commercialised and succumb to economic pressures to abandon the minority language in favour of the more lucrative majority audience. Next Maria Corominas Piulats looks at media policy and linguistic policy in Catalonia, with particular concern for the balance between Catalan and Spanish in the media. Not only has Catalonia the most highly developed media system in any minority language in Europe, but it also represents the most sustained attempt by a government to develop a linguistic policy of normalisation, that is, making the language a part of normal everyday life in all social contexts. The media's role in this has been crucial. Corominas Piulats' chapter shows how this process has worked, but also contains some words of warning, particularly in relation to the Internet. Then Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones examines the representativeness of television programming in Welsh. With a limited amount of programming, the question of how minority language broadcasters represent the community as a whole becomes important. Indeed one of the arguments in favour of minority language television is that it can be used to give the minority community some power over the way in which it is represented. Jones uses the locations shown within programmes as a guide to representativeness and looks at Welsh language broadcast fiction over a four-year period, and then at programming in general over much shorter periods. Her results are encouraging in that she finds that, by this measure at least, Welsh television can truly claim to be representing the whole community of Welsh speakers.

The next two chapters shift the emphasis from area studies to more general topics. Eithne O'Connell discusses issues of translation, so often important in minority language media, noting that the act of translation is never neutral, with the result that translation practice needs to be critically investigated. Choices concerned with dubbing, subtitling and indeed even whether material imported from other languages and cultures should be used at all in a minority language all deserve more attention than they have so far had in the study of minority language media. More generally she argues cogently for the seeming paradox that the study of minority language media has so far not paid enough attention to specifically linguistic issues. Paddy Ladd then puts sign language firmly on the minority language media agenda. His account of the battle for sign language on British television will strike many familiar notes to those with experience of other minority languages – the struggle for media visibility, the paternalism of the national broadcasters, the desire for self-representation in television drama, arguments within the minority community as to the quality of the language used on television, the centrality of children's programming, particularly in earlier years, the importance of television as a career option, the prestige and self-confidence that television can bring, and the current aim of a digital channel devoted to sign language.

Finally, Niamh Hourigan's conclusion draws together a number of threads and looks towards future research. She discusses four areas on which minority language media research can fruitfully be focused: (1) the comparison between 'indigenous' minority language media and those for 'new' or 'immigrant' languages; (2) the relationship with global languages; (3) the digital divide and how it impacts upon minority language communities; (4) the broad issue of globalisation. Her comments build upon the rest of the book, all of which makes clear that minority language media studies can now be seen as an established field of study, one with its own research agenda, and one that is energised by the awareness of the fragility of the situations of many minority languages.

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Chapter 2

Functional Completeness in Minority Language Media

TOM MORING

It is often said that the media are important, but precisely how they are important is not so clear. The cultural effects of the media *in general* are notoriously difficult to distinguish from effects originating from other aspects of social life. The quest into the cultural pertinence of daily mass media becomes even more challenging when we talk about media in minority languages. However, from the view of a researcher – or a policy-maker – this question is of the greatest importance. Why and how should society distribute scarce resources to this field? What do we know about the specific effects of specific media in specific situations? The fact is that we do not know very much. We lack the important tools that are required to make the reliable predictions that are needed to support with credibility claims for improvements in the media landscape that may mean develop-ment or depravation – if not life or death – to language communities.

This chapter presents an effort to provide a structure that can be of help when addressing such matters. The chapter first addresses shortcomings of media research so far in this field. It then considers what media provi-sion is necessary if the minority audience is not to move to majority language media (the need for institutional completeness, which can allow the audience to have functional completeness). It does this by discussing the individual significance of different media, and the need for different kinds of content (genre completeness). Finally it looks at what influences the viewing preferences of bilingual viewers.

A basic point underpinning the entire reasoning in the chapter is that media carry language. They also operate through language. And further-more, they develop language. Specific types of media display different features in this aspect. To language minorities this makes an under-standing of the more complex nature of this field all the more important. Although these points are evident in those milieus where a minority language is spoken, media research and language sociology have not taken this issue on board with the weight it deserves.

Edward Sapir noted that 'anthropologists have been in the habit of studying man under the three rubrics of race, language and culture'

(Sapir, 1963: 207). In international media research the focus was for many decades on ethnicity, race and class. In more recent times, popular culture has risen into a major position in international research. However, the question of language has had a less prominent position and it has often been set aside altogether, particularly in the very influential research that has been carried out in the English-speaking part of the world. Also the speakers of other major languages have been rather uninterested in the language dimension. It seems as if the predominance of the monolingualism of Anglo-American, French or German culture too often has led mainstream research to leave out language as a variable (Moring, 2000a: 206–207; Patten & Kymlicka, 2003: 1, 6–7).

This essay is not the first one to point to the lack of analysis regarding minority language media and its impact. For example Mike Cormack (1998: 34) and Brigitta Busch (1999: 3; 2004: 13) have specifically pointed to the problem of a lack in theorising research on media, minority language and collective identity. They have also made commendable efforts to take the analysis to a new level. And there are indeed studies that help us to understand how the media landscape contributes – negatively and positively – to the development of the particular type of cultural identity that relates to minority languages.

Sociologists and historians who take language seriously tend to claim that language is at the core of identity formation in Europe (Allardt & Starck, 1981: 22; Schöpflin, 2000: 116–127). But the central question remains: how does speaking a language (in this case a minority language) in the media interact with the survival and development of the language itself? This chapter accepts the general assumption that the availability of media to support a language matters greatly. The particular aim of the chapter is to develop the discussion about the conditions under which minority language media will exist and be used.

A Functional Perspective on Media Use

The point of departure of this chapter is that any language community – and minority languages are no exception – would strive to develop a state of *functional completeness* (or *normalisation*, see Chapter 1 of this volume, also Grin, 2003: 201–203) regarding the use of the language. This means that speakers of the language, if they so choose, can live their life in and through the language without having to resort to other languages, at least within the confines of everyday matters in their community. A necessary but not sufficient condition for such a functional completeness is the *institutional completeness* (Breton, 1964; Kymlicka, 1995, 2004) of different

providers of services and functions in a language, that is, that there are media platforms available in the minority language for each type of media.

As we shall see, regarding media use there is a complex relationship between the institutional aspects and the functional aspects of completeness. Depending on the status of the language, the level of bilingualism among the speakers, and also on the territorial distribution of the speakers of a language, even high levels of institutional completeness may not lead to functional completeness. It is, however, evident that low levels of institutional completeness will always tend to foster patterns of incomplete media use in the language, and a movement among the speakers of this language towards media offered in the majority language and languages in global use.

Even some state languages today are afraid of not fulfilling all aspects of functional completeness (see, for example, the declaration on a Nordic language policy, *Deklaration om nordisk språkpolitik*, 2005). Only a few minority languages can credibly claim a high functional level in the media sector. Such examples of relatively good media landscapes are Catalan and Basque in parts of Spain, German in South Tyrol and Swedish in Finland. In all these communities there are at least one television channel, one radio station and one newspaper functioning in the regional or minority language. Other communities, such as Welsh in UK and Frisian in the Netherlands, are well served by broadcasting (mainly as part of a public service remit) but less well served by printed media such as newspapers. Furthermore, it appears as if in all situations where there exists a good supply in the broadcast media, the media services on the web will also be rather well developed.

Such media systems can be called more or less institutionally complete. A further prerequisite for institutional completeness is, however, that each of these platforms can provide at least one distinguishable full service alternative in the minority language of a quality that is at the level of the services available in the majority language. As a consequence of the fast development of commercial television and radio since the late 1980s, attention has increasingly been raised also towards the availability of a variety of genres of content in the minority language as a prerequisite of institutional completeness.

The dynamics of the media field in this sense have been well known in media research for a long time. Harold Innis has pointed to the divisions between community-building media of an old and traditional form that were oral or hand-written and modern mass media. According to Innis (1973), modern mass media would favour commercialism and imperialism.

This is a finding well in line with what has been observed by researchers who have studied the use of minority language media (cf. Busch, 2001, Jackson & Rosenberg, 2004). The overall effect of media tends rather to undermine than support minority identity in the sense that mainstream media accelerate language shift and assimilation of minority communities. In most cases, minority language media serve as a defensive tool, balancing the impact of the language(s) that dominate the media landscape.

Policy-makers have expressed an understanding of the restitutionary character of media policies when they have created the legal instruments in this field. Most clearly this is expressed in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) (Council of Europe, European Treaty Series (ETS) 148 – hence referred to as the Charter). Its explanatory report (paragraph 10) makes explicit the point that where regional or minority languages have suffered from unfavourable conditions in the past, they should be compensated. State support to media in minority languages can thus be seen as an effort to counterbalance the damage made to language-based cultures by modern mass media.

In addition to such quantifying and qualifying conditions regarding the media field as a whole, there is also a need to look at specific types of media more closely. In the footsteps of Innis, Marshall McLuhan developed an argument about how different media differ in character. The specific discourse presented by McLuhan (1967, and elsewhere) on the characteristics of different media is not the most relevant aspect here, but the more wide-ranging insight implied by this reasoning is essential: media have fundamentally different characteristics that affect us in distinct ways and serve different senses and different cultural functions. For institutional completeness, minority language audiences would have to have access to them all in their own language.

The Dangers of Substitutive Strategies

Minority languages are frequently forced to accept a situation where the media offerings are all but complete. As resources are limited, those who work with enhancing the languages face difficult choices. Representatives of minority language speakers are frequently faced with questions about whether to offer their own services on separate radio stations or television channels with very meagre resources, or rather to resign the broadcasting of programmes in their languages to slots (often called 'windows') on a service offered in the majority language. The latter situation prevails, for example, for radio and television in minority languages in Germany, Hungary, Slovenia (except for Italian language)

and Croatia, and for television broadcasting in Scottish Gaelic in UK or in the Sami languages in the Nordic countries. Minority language speakers are also often confronted with a demand to be modest in their desire for a presence in competitive and more expensive platforms (such as nation-wide television) and instead use their scarce resources on local radio or on the Internet. The Internet is also often suggested as an alternative to print media, because of lower production and distribution costs. Such substitutive practices are not, however, at all ideal, as the different media fulfil different and distinct functions.

Starting with radio, a quite common state of affairs in smaller minority language communities is the existence of a radio station and some television programmes on a regional station, in addition to a weekly or monthly community newspaper. Under such circumstances radio has proven to be an indispensable tool for developing, for example, a common oral language standard. Such effects have been reported by studies made in Ireland (Grin & Moring, 2003), and witness of the same effect is born in communications to the Committee of Experts of the Charter (for example regarding Scottish Gaelic). Whereas this is not always welcomed by speakers of local varieties of languages, it has indisputably positive effects with regard to the status of the language itself. Radio is also a good conveyor of news in the minority language, and it is an excellent contact medium connecting members in the community itself. The shortcomings of radio have to do with its transient character and its inaccessibility for speakers of other languages. Radio broadcasts evaporate fast, leaving less trace than print media, and the broadcasts are not easy to follow for speakers of other languages who may live in the same household.

Television also has a particular role when it comes to organising the minority around a common experience. It also is unbeatable as a medium that gives prestige and visibility to the minority language and its culture in the eyes of the majority. Purely due to its technical quality (where subtitling is used), it allows for shared experiences in bilingual families where part of the family is capable of understanding the minority language. This is due to the simultaneous use of the elements of visuality and language, which Busch (2004: 51–55, 281–282) calls multimodality. Television also supports image construction and popularisation, which is required if a community is to develop its own representations, for example in the field of popular culture.

The printed press is essential for daily stimulation in a reading culture. Where a local or regional press exists, the newspaper is also in a key role with respect to organising the community. Maintaining a presence that is physical in a different sense from the radio or the television programme

(and also normally in comparison with a news page on the web), it is essential for the community's short-term memory. In this sense, the newspaper today appears to fill some of the time-binding functions that Harold Innis linked to oral tradition and hand-written media.

Considering the Internet, the opportunities and flexibility in geographical terms may be without limits, while other constraints (generational, educational, time-use etc.) come into play (see also Cunliffe's Chapter 8 in this book). There are indications, for example in audience research carried out among Finnish speakers in Sweden, that some minorities are more active Internet users than the rest of the population. This feature has been discussed also with respect to immigrant communities with a kin-state that carries extensive services in their language.

If we compare the media supply to traditional linguistic minorities with the supply to speakers of immigrant languages, an interesting difference becomes apparent. In many cases immigrant language communities are served by satellite television from the original homeland of the language, complemented by material on the Internet, which also is predominantly produced abroad. Media that connect to the local community in the new homeland are scarce and produced at low cost: often community radio and some local websites, only seldom community TV (Christiansen, 2003; Moring & Malmgren, 2004: 21; Sreberny, 2000). This type of media supply is likely to affect the processes of identity formation within the immigrant community, keeping it culturally distinct. In situations where the immigrants are not fluent in the language of the state that they have moved to, the Internet in combination with satellite television may lessen the contacts between cultures and even isolate the immigrants within cultural *sphericules* instead of fostering a common public sphere (Downing & Husband, 2005: 211). This would be expected to occur particularly if the minority was subjected to social segregation. In the case of national minorities with (predominantly) good understanding of the majority language and a habit of using media in the minority language and the majority language side by side, this type of problem does not, however, occur. In addition the policy of public service media usually runs counter to such developments.

The Internet was at the start considered by some to be the death stroke to other media, particularly the press. Media research has, however, demonstrated that technological development usually does not mean that old media die; they seek ways to adjust (Pool, 1983: 5–7). This finding has proven to be true (at least so far) also for the Internet. Irrespective of media convergence and the appearance of the new web platform, press, radio and television are still very much alive as different entities with different