

In Praise of the Beloved Language



Contributions to the Sociology of Language

76

Editor

Joshua A. Fishman

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In Praise of the Beloved Language

A Comparative View of
Positive Ethnolinguistic Consciousness

by

Joshua A. Fishman

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Just because the history of language is usually, in our times, kept so rigidly apart from conventional political, economic and social history, it has seemed to me desirable to bring it together with these. Hugh Seton-Watson. 1977. *Nations and States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. Boulder: Westview, p. 11.

It is difficult for a speaker of English, the property of nations, to grasp the volatility of a small ethnic group in situations which seem to threaten its language...[because] its language is both a refuge and an outlet for underlying tensions. Thomas F. Magner. 1988. Language and nationality in the Balkans: The case of Yugoslavia. *Geolinguistics*. 14, 108–124. Cited from p. 120.

צביה-רחלען,
זי זאל אי פֿאַרשטיין אי שאַצן
דאָס חשיבות פֿון „אומה ולשון“,
אי ביי אונדז, אי ביי די אומות-העולם.

Dear brothers, do not be misled by insincere voices that say that a language is only an outer form, a secondary consideration; that we must not forget about more important matters just because of language and nationhood. These are voices of false, hidden enemies of our nation. Freedom, no matter how great, means nothing without nationhood, because without nationhood freedom is freedom for others, for our oppressors and lords but not for us. Did English freedom help the Irish? Did Hungarian freedom help the Slovaks?...What good does it [freedom to use English] do the Blacks in the Southern states of the United States, this freest Union in the world?... Wherever your language and your nationhood are disregarded, you are oppressed, no matter how liberal the country may be...[W]here your language is excluded from schools and offices, freedom is taken away from you, from your nation, more than by police or by censorship.

Karel Havlicek Borovsky (1821–1856)

The thread of all three [classical holy languages], Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, is woven into the very makeup of the soul of the Hindi language. Naturally, the same spirit of self-sacrifice, the same spirit of service and the same spirit of cooperation vibrates in the innermost soul of Hindi... It is the cord, softer than air and stronger than steel, that has united the hearts of the common people for thousands of years. It has remained the support, the solace, the vital force, and the inspiration of the common man's life.

Bal Ganadhar Tolak (1856–1920)

To pass on to posterity one's own language, more highly developed, more refined, and more precise than it was before one wrote it, that is the highest possible achievement of the poet as poet.

T. S. Eliot (1888–1964)

The [main] problem is that there are nations whose historical rights are not disputed and, on the other hand, nations whose rights are disputed... This question does not concern only small nations, ... somewhere at the margin of European history, but appears on a worldwide scale ... [But] we are speaking here of the Macedonian nation, fully conscious of the conditionality of the term when this is projected into the past. However, such conditionality is present when we project into the past [other national names which]... cannot ... adequately cover all periods in the his-

tory of their nation, or frequently even their present area. [From the point of view of certain outside scholars and governmental spokesmen] the only right remaining to the Macedonian people ... is the use of a separate literary language, which is viewed as being without a popular basis,... as if there did not exist a national unit which speaks this language. Every nation has the right to object to ambushes of its past, even if the past consists only of the rewards and glory earned by those simple people who have plowed and planted the soil.

B. Koneski (1921–1993)

There is no achievement without effort. If we want to be lazy and easy-going and “happy-go-lucky” we can rest content with “everybody’s Swahili”, this easy language for simple minds, and prove to the Europeans that we are indeed inferior. So far, Swahili, the one that we have been using, has only been a lowly language, below the prestige of the European rulers’ English, a servant of the foreign rulers of our minds and of his language, to fulfill some menial tasks which English did not bother to do. If Swahili is to be our national language, it must be equal to English, a true language, on whose perfection countless generations have worked. Such a language must be learnt by hard effort. Let us sit down and do it!

Abdallah Khalid (dates unknown)

Foreword

Reading this manuscript by Joshua Fishman vividly reminded me of an incident that occurred at a congress, held in Spain in 1993, whose theme was *Nationalism in Europe: Past and Present*. Following two days of papers and discussions ostensibly concerned with the nature of nations and nationalism, a participant from a Balkan country, which at the time was the scene of large-scale ethno-nationally inspired carnage, poignantly voiced his disillusionment with what he had been hearing. He noted that he had hoped to gain additional insight into the forces motivating the national groups within his country, but that he had found nationalism, as described and analyzed at this conference, to be totally divorced from popular sentiments, inner convictions, and perceptions, which are so conspicuously bared at times of inter-group conflict. Nothing that he had heard helped to explain the passions that underlay ethnonational identity. This criticism, offered in an understandably emotional voice, caused a temporary discomfiture among participants. However, following a rejoinder—in which a leading writer on nationalism, after perfunctorily expressing sympathy, asserted that nationalism in Eastern Europe was vitally different from that found in Western Europe—the congress complacently proceeded along earlier lines.

In my opinion, the criticism so hastily disregarded was totally justified and, with equal justification, could be levied against the general literature on ethnonational identity. The literature reflects the views/analyses of outside observers. But the essence of national identity does not reveal itself through the microscope; it does so through the ethnic prism with which members of an ethnonational group view themselves and the world. Probing the nature of the national bond requires that we at least try to perceive the world through Armenian, Japanese, Russian and other ethnic eyes. Here, Plato's analogy of the shadows on the wall of a cave seems appropriate. The outside observer can view the essence of the nation only very indirectly, and therefore only dimly and imperfectly, in shadowy form. Probing the essence of a nation's identity requires not an appreciation of objective reality but of the group's perception of reality; its sense of unique origin, for example, is not rooted in chronological/factual history but in sentiment/felt history. And thus, the rational acceptance of the chronological/factual history of the English nation, which

chronicles its Angle, Saxon, Jute, Dane, and Norman admixture, weakens not a whit the intuitive conviction of the English that they are an unadulterated, ethnically pure people. Contrariwise, no arsenal of facts concerning their common ancestral background can convince either the Serbs or the Croats that they share a common national identity. Indeed, in the 1960's, long before the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, an attempt by the government to create a single Serbo-Croatian dictionary (to be printed in both Cyrillic and Latin scripts) floundered in the face of Croatian and Serbian insistence – all facts to the contrary notwithstanding – that the two languages were distinct. After all nineteen major cultural organizations within the Croatian region issued a declaration asserting the uniqueness of Croatian as a separate language, a group of Serbian intellectuals responded in kind, maintaining at least as fervently as their Croatian counterparts, the individuality of their own tongue. Confronted with this outburst of ethnonational emotion, the then effectively authoritarian regime of Tito was forced into a most unusual retreat and the plan for a single dictionary was dropped. Thus can ethnonational perceptions conquer facts.

Joshua Fishman has long been cognizant of the need for imaginative research in order to move from outward observation to the view from within. More than a decade ago, I wrote that “Fishman has certainly begun excavating in this area [to discover techniques for] the effective probing of the subjective dimensions of the national bond,” and now we have the results of that imaginative research. He focuses on the emotive and symbolic significance of language as perceived by those who consider it their own. He taps these perceptions by compiling a remarkably broad sample of quotations concerning the native language, a sample transcending peoples and continents and extending over centuries. Where the outside observer perceives the language of a people as the means for intra-communication, these voices from within speak of it as the very embodiment of the nation: its soul and its spirit. To anyone who wishes to comprehend the passions underlying conflicts where language is an issue – Quebec, Latvia, Wales, etc. – this work by Fishman will provide essential preparation.

Fishman identifies a number of significant themes and subthemes and then examines the frequency with which they appear throughout his sample. The range in their relative universality is stark. Students of nationalism should be particularly impressed by the one-hundred percent association that people make between their language and ethnicity. Such universal and near-universal perceptions on the part of ethnonational peoples

without regard to place and time obviously challenge “exceptionalist” assertions, such as that postulating fundamental differences in ethnonational perceptions among the people of Western as contrasted with Eastern Europe.

The author’s humane attitude concerning endangered or oppressed nations and cultures permeates his comments throughout. This attitude must certainly be attributable in part to his attentiveness to the voices that he has so laboriously assembled and analyzed for us. What emerges most clearly from all of the citations is the immense worth that peoples everywhere place upon their ethnic identity and particular culture. It strikes me that in documenting the near universality with which people intensely value their unique group-characteristics, Fishman offers the strongest moral and ethical case yet for their protection and encouragement.

Following the thematic dissection of his sample, Fishman contrasts his approach and findings with those of several leading writers on ethnonationalism. Standing alone, this section can be recommended as an astute critique of the state-of-the-art of current scholarship on national identity. The common weakness of these outsiders’ theses is their stress on rational explanations to the exclusion of the emotional, passionate, non-rational dimensions of identity. This common inadequacy flows from their deafness to “the voices from within”. In *In Praise of the Beloved Language*, Joshua Fishman has informed us how this inadequacy can be overcome. The beneficial, long-term impact of this innovative work upon the study of national identity should be enormous.

Walker Connor, Reitmeyer Professor of Political Science, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut and McConnell Professor of Human Relations, Pomona College, Claremont, California

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Preface

I have been giving lectures and talks to academic and lay audiences and teaching courses called “Language and Ethnicity” for about a quarter century. These talks and lectures have been delivered on literally every continent and my courses have been given not only at my own university but at others to which I have been invited as a member of the Visiting Faculty (e. g., at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1973, and at Stanford University 1993 and 1996) as well as at the Linguistic Society of America’s prestigious “Summer Linguistic Institutes” (e. g., University of Hawaii 1975, University of New Mexico 1980, Stanford University 1984). At all of these institutions I have usually assigned my own texts to the students, doing so in order to focus on a perspective that I had initially formulated in 1963, when working on the final version of my *Language Loyalty in the United States* (1966). At that time it first became clear to me that ethnicity and nationalism were distinct but related phenomena, tied to each other sequentially (nationalism always being the later of the two, if it developed at all), but distinguished by degree of collective self-consciousness and problem-focused mobilization (nationalism clearly outdistancing ethnicity in both respects). Little by little, I developed both of these themes further, adding several important details, e. g., in my contributions to the Social Science Research Council’s watershed conference on “Language Problems of Developing Nations” (also the title of the volume that Charles Ferguson, Jyotirindra Das Gupta and I edited [1968], collecting most of the papers of that conference), until these distinctions and relationships became major components of my *Language and Nationalism* (1972, 1989), my *Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival* (1985) and my *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Ethnolinguistic Perspective* (1989).

The present book, however, is a byproduct of a certain dissatisfaction which, nevertheless, I began to feel, after several years of proceeding with American students and listeners along the above lines. It was not so much that my earlier efforts began to strike me as wrong in and of themselves, as much as that they began to strike me as looking-in from the outside and commenting upon a gripping human experience (a typical scholarly stance), rather than trying to understand it from the inside and to convey it from that perspective. Fortunately, I have also had several opportuni-

ties to try out this newer (at least for me and for this topic) “inside view”, before committing it fully to paper. These opportunities also convinced me that American lay audiences, as well as undergraduate and graduate students (and, perhaps, other primarily English mother-tongue audiences both within and without the university setting) needed to be approached in a way that they could “take” in connection with the inside view of language and ethnicity. Coming from environments, both familial and academic, in which ethnicity is seldom discussed in terms of reference related to their own identities, they frequently have biases, positive or negative, but really no first hand experience with the phenomena under discussion. As a result of much trial and error, as well as many discussions with helpful students and attentive colleagues, I have discovered an “order of priority” with respect to ethnolinguistic interest, understanding and involvement among the audiences that I have had most contact with and that I have had foremost in mind. Therefore, in this book, I have placed first (with very minor deviations) those things that are of most interest to most of such readers, and I have placed last, those things that are of least interest (or of interest to the smallest number). This may not always correspond to the most “logical order of presentation”, but in connection with considerations of ethnicity, psychology must apparently be invoked *before* logic, rather than afterwards. Perhaps this is not a bad idea in connection with other subjects as well.

Essentially, this book focuses on the inside view of the language and ethnicity connection, leaving a rather lengthy comparison between this view and the more “scholarly” (but also more commonly entertained) outsider view for last (or nearly last). The outside view, whether positive or negative, should be postponed, I have come to believe, until students know a little more of what the language and ethnicity linkage is all about within those ethnocultures and among those spokespersons who experience this linkage most keenly and comment upon it most vividly and poignantly. Few American students have any real idea of “why their languages seem to be so important to all those contentious peoples way out there” or about how widely (and for how long a time) that very “matter of great importance” is and has been talked about, worried about, advocated, defended, and treasured – including, in different historical periods, – in their own speech-community.

For years before I began teaching about language and ethnicity in this “insider” fashion, I began collecting bits of evidence (citations) revealing the positive things that people all over the world had said and were still saying about their own traditionally associated “beloved” languages.

Often I would read a citation about Language X to an advocate of Language Z and ask him or her to “Guess what language this is about”. In almost all cases they would guess it was about their own “beloved language” (although it never was) and that gave me the idea that the content of language praises might really be quite parsimoniously structured the world over. The true structure would have become much clearer, I’m sure, had I attracted a whole team of confederates and if we had collected much more data from many times as many languages. Perhaps that will still be done. Nevertheless, I have decided to follow the adage “It is not incumbent upon you to finish the work, but merely to point a new direction”. If I have, indeed, pointed to an interesting and revealing new direction in the study of language and ethnicity, that itself will be a tremendous gratification to me. If it is also, in some measure, accepted by my colleagues and students, then that will be an almost unsurpassable compliment.

Stanford University, July 1995.

(with particular thanks to the Interlibrary Loan and Reference Desks at the Green Graduate Library, to the Library itself, and to the Departments of Linguistics and Education, all of which have repeatedly been my “homes away from home [= Yeshiva University]” since the mid 60’s).

1. “Up front” about topic, methods and limitations

This book departs from more usual presentational approaches in at least two ways. Instead of integrating the statistical treatment with the text and placing methodological issues in an appendix, this text will place most statistical considerations in an appendix and start off with a consideration of its own methodological and topical limitations.

Even the lay reader, i. e. the non-sociolinguist, should be encouraged and assisted to realize fully what this book is and is not about and what the limitations are that pertain to the data and to the analyses upon which it is based. Findings cannot be any better than the data from which they are derived and a consideration of the adequacy of that data should not be either discouragingly recondite nor buried unobtrusively where few will peruse it.

On the other hand, a professional lifetime of doing research and of teaching research design and statistics (to social and behavioral scientists, on the one hand, and to humanities specialists, on the other hand), has left me with the sad conclusion that many readers simply skip over such matters out of a conviction – based on countless negative experiences – that they will never really understand them. Accordingly, I have decided to place the latter material in a quantitative appendix (Appendix B), where it can be consulted by those who are interested in and adept at these matters. The conclusions and implications that derive from the analyses reported in that appendix are, of course, woven into the main body of this book at various appropriate places throughout the presentation.

The main body of this book is devoted to the non-quantitative analysis and interpretation of the thematic content of statements of praise and commitment pertaining to a sample of vernacular languages from all over the world. Most of these statements were initially intended to be understood by ordinary laymen (in the hope that they could and would influence the feelings and behaviors of such laymen) and I, for my part, have also tried to make my analysis and discussion generally understandable, particularly to both the non-linguist, on the one hand, and to the non-statistically oriented reader, on the other.

If I have failed, insofar as level of presentation is concerned, I hope that my readers and reviewers will let me know so that I can try again.

Since the matters that are treated in this book pertain to the lives and goals of ordinary men and women wherever language issues are on the agenda, it seems no more than right to me that this book be understandable to them. However, since language issues are emotional and partisan, there will certainly be some readers who will disagree with my point of view or conclusions. That is only to be expected. Nevertheless, I would hope that any disagreement will, at least, be based upon an understanding, rather than upon a misunderstanding, of the material I have presented.

1.1. Delimiting the topic: what this book is and what it isn't about

This book is to the study of nationalism what medical anthropology is to the study of modern Western medicine. Medical anthropology emphasizes the patient's point of view with respect to the curative practices and health care experiences within a particular culture or sample of cultures. Modern Western medicine encompasses a particularly powerful subset of these practices and experiences, one that has spread throughout the world. Nevertheless, it is far from being either the totality of such practices and experiences, on the one hand, or from providing (or even considering) the patient's perspective on them, on the other hand.

Just as traditional folk medical practices can change (and be changed) over time until they may become indistinguishable from those of modern Western medicine, so ethnolinguistic consciousness can metamorphize into nationalism, a relatively modern, organized, politicized and activated transformation of ethnolinguistic consciousness. Unlike nationalism, ethnolinguistic consciousness per se may or may not be salient in people's lives. Its views are more commonly available *to* consciousness, i. e., they are retrievable as needed, rather than constantly being *in* consciousness.¹ An inquiry into ethnolinguistic consciousness reveals what a speech community believes and what attitudes it has concerning the vernacular(s) that the community identifies with itself, as its own. Nationalist movements have almost invariably utilized these views in mobilizing populations, i. e., nationalist movements utilize the vernaculars and the beliefs and sentiments that have become attached to them, in order to organize and unify populations, to render salient their consciousness of the practices, beliefs, values, commitments and other cultural traits that they may

be said to share, and to activate these populations on behalf of causes that are purportedly to their greater collective advantage.

The vernacular has frequently played a major role in nationalist movements, both as a *medium* for mobilization as well as a *desideratum*, i. e., as an object of value, on whose behalf mobilization is called for. This is an outgrowth of the obvious need of modern movements for mass media of communication, both print and non-print, and of the potentially *symbolic* role of any vernacular in "standing for" (i. e., in representing) an ethnocultural aggregate, both to insiders and to outsiders. Language is, after all, the supreme symbol system of the human species. As such, every vernacular also lends itself readily to becoming symbolic of the speech community that has consistently utilized it intergenerationally and for which it has become an obvious cultural boundary-maintenance mechanism. Finally, a major portion of every culture is *necessarily* linguistic (viz. prayers, laws, folklore, education and the daily rounds of constant verbal interaction — i. e., the culturally normative ways of asking, thanking, complimenting, scolding, etc., etc. — that make every society "tick"). At home, at work, in government, at prayer, in the shops and at play, language is part and parcel of the texture of human social life itself, thereby further fostering both the frequency and the intensity of the language and culture link. Once that link is pointed out and stressed or rendered salient by those who first arrive at ethnolinguistic consciousness (usually teachers, preachers, scribes and elites or proto-elites), such consciousness often becomes both more accessible and more long-lasting for the rank and file as well.

Initially, both the overt and the symbolic interrelatedness between an ethnolanguage and its associated ethnoculture are merely latent and quiescent. Through exploring this interrelatedness, as we hope to do in this book, we discover both the most potentially activizable attitudes and beliefs as well as those that have already been cultivated by nationalist movements. These are the attitudes and beliefs that nationalisms may focus upon, embellish, and render dynamic (declaring them to imply moral and behavioral imperatives), as part of their more general mobilizational efforts. Without the mass media such mobilization is not possible on any larger scale, but without the ethnolanguages no deeply moving mass communication at all is possible. Accordingly, ethnolinguistic consciousness, stressed and elaborated, becomes a component, a channel and a goal of nationalism. Nevertheless, ethnolinguistic consciousness is neither equivalent to, nor inevitably linked to, nationalism.

Recent events in Central and Eastern Europe have paid both eloquent and disturbing testimony to the recurring and prominent role of language

in modern ethnonationalisms. From Slovenia to Kirgizia and from Estonia to Georgia, local languages have sprung forth either again or anew, after generations of apparent quiescence, as desiderata of new or reborn nationalist movements. Suppressed languages have been accorded recognition (sometimes arising out of hitherto quiescent ethnolinguistic consciousnesses which had lasted for many generations, if not centuries), to claim the honors now perceived as being due and long denied to them, just as suppressed peoples have arisen to honor their long suppressed languages, and thereby, to bolster their certainty that they themselves, the peoples, would not once again become suppressed. Both noble and horrible deeds sometimes flow from such mobilized consciousness, even as they sometimes do from other foci of consciousness, such as religion, patriotism, social class and ideologies related to gender, age and professionalism.

Having pointed out the possible "flow chart" between ethnolinguistic consciousness and nationalism, it must also be stressed that this book is *not* about nationalism per se. It also does not deal with the whens, whys or hows of the rise and development of nationalism. There are already many fine books about such matters,² and I myself have addressed my attention precisely to such questions in a book that attempted to present a general theory of the relationship between language and nationalism.³ Instead of dealing, once again, with nationalism as such, this book focuses on the positive content of language consciousness as revealed via a sample of the world's languages. It seeks to answer questions such as: What are the positive views about their vernaculars that have been expressed by peoples the world over? Are there any regularities to these views, across time and across space? Are there more common and less common themes and, if so, which are which? Are some themes more distinctly European (Europe having been the cradle not only of modern nationalism but of modern and mobilized ethnolinguistic consciousness as well) and others less distinctly European, or have some themes now become rather uncommon in Europe while they have become more common elsewhere? Are some themes older and others younger, even given a primary focus on the past few centuries? All in all, this book is an attempt to describe, classify, interpret and make a few quantitative comparisons in connection with *the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness*. This is a topic which has thus far been left untreated in the voluminous literature on ethnicity and nationalism.

But why study only the *positive* content of ethnolinguistic consciousness? Is there no negative content that also requires attention? Indeed

there is. However, the negative content (or even the ambivalent “how beautiful it is, but, unfortunately, how destined to die [or ‘regrettably already dead’]”) is frequently either explicitly or implicitly rejected by its positive counterparts (see, e.g., sections 4.2. and 5.1. in the status planning and corpus planning discussions, below, respectively), and, therefore, it is overcome by the advocates of more positive views. Where the negative content cannot be overcome in this manner, due to the preponderant power of a rival vernacular (i. e., the power of that vernacular’s supporters), the negative content ultimately leads to relinguification and re-ethnification, that is to say, negative ethnolinguistic consciousness, when it prevails, is self-liquidating. For both of the above reasons, negative language consciousness is neither an independent factor nor a generator of popular movements of its own in the course of ethnocultural development.⁴ If it deserves more attention than I have given it here, e.g., in conjunction with an examination of inter-ethnic (and, therefore, inter-linguistic) rivalries – although it appears to me that such rivalries often finally engender a preponderantly positive imagery of ethnolinguistic consciousness on each side – it may still be in order to postpone such attention until the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness is better understood. Furthermore, it should be stressed that there is nothing about positive ethnolinguistic consciousness per se which *necessarily* leads to a monolingual monopolization of the community’s communicative repertoire. Many speech communities exhibit such positive consciousness and yet they remain thoroughly bilingual and even full of admiration for one or more languages of wider communication. Their positive ethnolinguistic consciousness serves to provide them with a securely anchored “authentic” identity, rather than primarily a justification for expelling “foreign devils” or xenophobic monolingualism.

Finally, I am very conscious of the terrible excesses of certain nationalist movements at the very time that this book is being written and of the punitive language legislation that is being enacted in some of those connections. Do I not worry, I am often asked, that my book may contribute to such activities by dignifying them via endless citations and by attempting to present them in their own perspectively positive frame of reference? In all truth, although I do cringe when bloody headlines come to my attention, I draw a line – and I do not think it is an artificial line – between contributing to an understanding of positive ethnolinguistic consciousness and fostering an acceptance of nationalistic horrors. The difference between studying the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness and practicing the evils of nationalism⁵ is, to my mind, like

the difference between gender research and sexual harassment, between studying aging and engaging in institutionalized age-discrimination, between religious inquiry and religious bigotry, between investigations into the correlates of social class and preaching class conflict. In each instance, the latter term or phrase involves an aggressive and destructive miscarriage of the reflective activity designated by the former term or phrase. Furthermore, if ethnolinguistic consciousness is not the same as nationalism, as has already been pointed out above, then it certainly cannot be the same as or directly contributory to "the horrors of nationalism".

But, I am sometimes further asked, cannot the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness be put to negative uses? My answer is that it certainly can, but so can word processors, education, motherhood, cherry pie and early spring. Indeed, there is no limit to the number of things – or ideas – that can be put to negative uses, somewhere, at some time or by some one. But that is quite different than claiming that the objects or ideas that are put to bad uses are, therefore, automatically bad in and of themselves. When linguists work to put together dictionaries, hardly anyone criticizes them nowadays for all of the bad things that can be said and done by people who use, or might use, some of those "bad words" that even (or precisely) the most serious dictionaries inevitably include. This book is in part a compendium, and in part, an analysis of positive ethnolinguistic consciousness. As with the words in a dictionary, much of the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness is often put to no use at all, or is put to various positive uses too, such as bolstering the self-concept of the weak and disadvantaged, fostering mother tongue education and adult literacy, facilitating greater involvement in democratic processes, etc., etc. The conclusion to which I have come from all of the above is that listing the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness, every bit as much as that consciousness itself, is neither intrinsically good nor bad per se. I cannot predict what uses will be made of this content (or of the knowledge of such content that this book will make readily available). My only claim is that those who would like to know more about what various peoples currently believe and have believed in the relatively recent past about their vernaculars – whether because of their interest in languages, in ethnomovements, in education, in literacy, etc., etc. – will now have a source (at the moment, probably the only focused and cross-linguistic source) that should help them explore this interest further. Although this may still be an inadequate source, my hope is that it will become both an aid and a prod for the preparation of better sources on this topic in the future.

1.2. Sampling problems, solutions and implications

There is usually a difference between the way social research *should and could* be done in the best of all possible worlds and the way it *is* done (and often has to be done) in the real world. Why is there such a difference? Because researchers are limited in time, funds, ideas and ability; nevertheless, they must do the best they can with what they have. They cannot wait until the best of all possible worlds comes to pass (for it never will), so they try to *conduct their studies as best they can*.

In the best of all possible worlds, a study such as this would analyze a randomly selected sample of statements (each being an expression of the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness) taken from a random sample of all of the languages of the world. However, neither the universe of languages nor the universe of statements has ever been completely enumerated and neither of them ever will be. Accordingly, no one has a random sample of data of the kind I am interested in, from a random sample of the languages of the world, and, what is more, no one ever will. The best I have been able to do is to pick my languages in such a way that European and non-European languages would be about equally represented. I have spent a professional lifetime “networking” with language scholars all over the world, but my contacts are relatively better in Europe and in the Asia/Pacific area than elsewhere, and they are particularly meager in Africa. This means that my data certainly cannot be appropriately interpreted via contrasting the themes encountered on one continent with those encountered on another (particularly where Africa or the Americas are singled out for contrastive purposes), let alone contrasting one language with another, because they have not all been sufficiently well (let alone randomly) sampled.

The themes that have been identified in my data present a related set of methodological problems. Not only do the languages studied not constitute a random sample of the world’s languages but the themes encountered were not selected from a random sample of all statements expressing the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness even for the languages included in the study. The statements of positive ethnolinguistic consciousness that have been studied were obtained in two ways. Either I encountered them in books dealing with those languages with which I have professional familiarity or, much more commonly, specialists whom I contacted encountered them in books (or other printed sources) dealing with the languages with which they have professional familiarity. In the latter cases, the specialists responded to my request

that they each send me two or three "characteristic statements", primarily from the last century or two, that "sing the praises of" the language of their specialization. Quite probably another specialist would have selected other "characteristic statements" and perhaps their respective themes would have differed, from somewhat to greatly. I do not know. Although this method of selecting *languages* is far from random, it was simply the best that I could do on the one hand, and on the other hand (and more importantly), it could not represent any conscious or unconscious wishes to select languages in some thematically pertinent way, since the thematic categories were first discovered from the data and were, therefore, entirely unknown when the languages themselves were selected.

Furthermore, since neither I nor the specialists involved knew what themes would finally be discerned when the data was analyzed, the *citations* themselves could not have been selected, consciously or unconsciously, in such a way as to maximize or minimize the themes that were subsequently discovered. Thus, although the method of sampling statements expressing positive ethnolinguistic consciousness was also far from random, it was, once again, the best that I (or any one else, I do believe) could do, on the one hand, and (more importantly) it could not have consciously skewed the findings in any particular thematic direction, on the other hand.

All of the statements expressing positive ethnolinguistic consciousness were initially written out on slips. I then classified (or "content analyzed") these slips into themes twice, one classificatory attempt being at a remove of three months or more from the other. The levels of agreement were quite high (between 85% and 98%, depending on the category), indicating that my classificatory system was, at the very least, fairly clear to me. Whenever the same slip was classified differently on these two occasions it was then finally reclassified on yet a third reading and the category boundaries were thereupon also better defined and demarcated. At this point, after I was sure of my own classifications of the data, a random sample of all statements was presented to an independent reader for classification in accord with my written classificatory framework. This time the level of initial agreement was even higher (90% to 100%), all of the categories having been by then quite well defined, and the few cases of disagreement were amicably adjudicated.

Since my major research goals are rather broad-gauged (e.g., to determine whether European and non-European expressions of positive ethnolinguistic consciousness are basically similar or dissimilar) it seems to me that my necessary departure from any kind of random sampling (stra-

tified, quota, or other) is not a very terrible or damaging departure from the best of all possible worlds. In some ways the methodology followed is as acceptable as that used in finding out which of two parties, the Republicans or the Democrats, is ahead in a nationwide race, without being able to predict thereby the results state by state, let alone election district by election district. Quota sampling is used in such polls, to make sure that all major parts of the country are adequately represented in the study sample. In my case, the two parties are "Europe" and "non-Europe" and I do believe that these two entities are adequately represented, and that their constituents were selected in a non-purposive fashion (i. e., not in any obviously biased fashion calculated to produce any particular foreseeable set of results). Thus, I believe I am justified in proceeding with my analyses, even though, admittedly, no truly proportional sample of languages could be selected continent by continent. Under the circumstances of one investigator working alone, without outside budgetary support of any kind (not an unusual part of the definition of the real world of language-related research in the USA in the mid-nineties), it was, I believe, the best that could be done, and overall not at all a bad initial approach to answering the types of questions that interest me in connection with the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness. As a result of this study, the preliminary demarcation of major themes and sub-themes within positive ethnolinguistic consciousness and the even more preliminary recognition of the differential prevalence of some of these themes (at least insofar as "Europe" vs "non-Europe" is concerned) will both be better appreciated than was hitherto the case. And when the time comes, as it soon hopefully will, when exhaustive studies of the positive ethnolinguistic consciousness of *individual* national communities and sub-national speech communities can be undertaken, the data presented in this volume will permit the ample contrastive and contextual comparisons that are required in order that individual clinical cases too can be better understood.

2. Sanctity: Where language and religion meet

There are Holy Languages and holy languages, although the boundary between them is a permeable one, particularly when viewed in historical perspective. The Holy Languages are those in which God's Word, or the word of the earliest and saintliest disciples, prophets, preachers and advocates was (or still is) received. The holy languages are those in which God's (or God's disciples, prophets, etc.) Word was (or still is) spread. The languages take on and symbolize the sanctity of the Word itself, thereby becoming Holy Languages. Accordingly, the sanctity of Biblical Hebrew and Koranic Arabic, of Sanskrit and Pali, of Classical Mandarin and Javanese, and even of Syriac, Latin and Greek, of Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Old Church Slavonic and several additional scriptural languages of Eastern Orthodox Churches, (some of which have bridged the gap between Holy and holy) is by direct and presumably unmediated transmission or something very close thereto. Their sanctity is established, reaching far into the past and into the endless future, even though their understandability to ordinary believers and practitioners may often be dubious and problematic. Such lack of understandability may even be interpreted favorably, in terms of the mysterious nature of sanctity as a whole, being above and beyond mere human understanding and, indeed, as reflecting, underscoring and even adding to the very aura and mystery of sanctity per se. God's very own Word is widely considered to be Holy even when it is not entirely clear to mere mortals and, precisely because it is God's word mere mortals cannot fully fathom it. Little wonder then, that the language consciousness of those who are attached to Holy Languages, none of which have been vernaculars for well over a millennium (and probably none of which were ever vernaculars precisely in their currently sanctified forms), is suffused with a conviction of sanctity and accompanied by the experience of sanctity.

Much of the world, however, is particularly under-represented in conjunction with Holy-language links to locally validated religio-linguistic consciousness — a variety whose detailed exploration is also beyond the scope of our current more *ethnically*-focused inquiry — and it remains to be seen whether any such under-representation is discernible either in terms of the prevalence or the content of the expressions of positive *ethnolinguistic* consciousness that we *are* examining.

The transition from Holy language to holy language comes about as a result of a conviction that contrasts markedly with those mentioned above, namely, a conviction that more people will be reached, or reached more fully and convincingly, if God's word can be brought to them in their very own vernacular, rather than in a Holy non-vernacular. This view is basically justified as maximizing and democratizing the unmediated accessibility of Holy Writ, or of other important texts that are ancillary to Holy Writ and, indeed, that such greater accessibility is God's own will⁶. Over time, therefore, much of the sanctity which originally resided in the Holy has, in some religious traditions, become associated with those vernaculars that have come to be markedly associated with the holy. In the West, we tend to identify this progression of Holy to holy primarily with Protestantism (although, of late, Catholicism has joined in this approach, to some degree, as have, perhaps even more ambivalently, other religious bodies as well), but it is far from unknown in those parts of the world where Protestantism is generally absent. Indeed, the association of language with holiness, i. e., with Holiness-once-removed, is probably a more prevalent phenomenon worldwide than is the phenomenon of Holy Languages and, in addition, it is more fully within our purview, since it pertains to ethnically specific vernaculars and, therefore, to ethnolinguistic consciousness per se, rather than only to religio-linguistic consciousness which, more often than not, is supra-ethnic in scope. It is through the association of one's own vernacular with holiness that ethnolinguistic consciousness draws upon the power of supreme, widely unquestioned and fully canonized traditional verities and transfers some of the aura of this association to ethnolinguistic movements and to their programs of problem solution as well. These movements themselves are often characterized by a fervor, a messianic zeal, that has led to their being dubbed "secular religions" "quasi-religions" and "the religions of modern secular sociocultural mobilization". On the other hand, the basic secularism of most modern ethnolinguistic movements (there have been very few mass movements in modern times associated with reviving religious classics in their classical form) is probably responsible for the fact that traditional religious imagery, powerful though it may be, makes a relatively modest contribution to modern ethnolinguistic imagery as a whole. Religion is often mined by some of these movements, but, with the exception of the recently reborn fundamentalisms, it is generally not enthroned by them. Nevertheless, although positive ethnolinguistic consciousness may place its major emphases elsewhere, it still attaches itself to sanctity and, even more often, attaches sanctity to itself to an impor-

tant degree and, as we will soon see, various versions of (and allusions to) “holy people-holy language” imagery are not hard to find. All in all, moral texts and principles are often explicitly associated with ethnomoral (and, therefore, ethnolinguistic) traditions, whether ab initio or by virtue of subsequent circumstances. Even if and when these texts are no longer taken literally, there often remains an attachment to their associated language which easily calls notions of sanctity into play.

2.1. *Spirit and soul*⁷

The most common ethnolinguistic theme within the religious realm is the one that refers to the vernacular as the spirit or the soul of the ethnonational collectivity, of its individual members, or of their traditional faith. Not infrequently, the language itself is recognized as having a spirit or soul of its own. This is not necessarily an explicitly religious theme, and, indeed, it may not even be invoked in any precisely religious way. In fact, this very plasticity, a usage that is sometimes religious and sometimes not, may even explain its relative popularity. However, whether taken as a metaphor or not, it originally derives from the religious realm and, therefore, I will begin this discussion of language and sanctity with it, precisely because of its popularity. Although the metaphor, if that is what it is, is still in very current usage, its origins probably trace back to Johann Gustav Herder’s 18th century writings and provide ample testimony to the continuing evocativeness of this formulation for much modern ethnolinguistic thought and sentiment.

Our data reveals an Alsatian 1 reference to the “dialect” as “the soul of the people” and as the “delicious dialect ... which I ... carry in my spirit”.⁸ Berber 2 adds the observation that de-ethnization is “a genocide of souls” and Byelorussian 2 informs us that it is the “foundation of spiritual life”, “the soul of the nation”, indeed, its “supreme manifestation”.⁹ Black English 2 opines that it is “the language of soul” and that blessed are those who “have had bestowed upon them at birth the lifetime gift of soul”. Filipino 1 is convinced that “a national soul cannot exist where there is not a common language” and Finnish 2 takes the position that “attempts to influence the people will be in vain unless the spirit of their language is understood seriously and in depth”. French in Quebec 1 claims that “its language is its soul” whereas our Frisian 1 text stipulates that “the Creator created his [the Frisian’s] soul according to that language and that language according to his soul” because “just as the

soul and the people is one, so there must be one [and the same] language for the soul and for the people". Indeed, the same text goes on to claim that "we did not get two languages from God [rejecting in this elliptic fashion the co-sanctity of Netherlandish, the larger surrounding language which all Frisians must know, while their knowledge of Frisian per se is far more problematic], one for this part and another for another part of our soul". Finally, we are informed that Frisian is the language "in which we speak about the salvation of the soul".

As might be expected, given the ubiquity of this Herderian theme, it is particularly strongly represented in our German citations. German 2 claims that the language reflects "the accomplishments and the individuality of the German spirit" as well as that it lets us "see the spirit of the Nordic people in a special way" and, furthermore, to glimpse the "spirit of the German people of the future". All in all, German 2 is viewed as "a reflection of the German spirit in its uniqueness". Hebrew 1 claims that it "emerges from the same fiery furnace in which the very soul of the people emerges" and that it is the unifying "spirit ... of a people scattered".¹⁰ Hindi 2 states that "the soul of our country ... is permeated by and expressed in the speech forms of the people". Furthermore, "the thread of all three [classical holy languages], Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, is woven into the very makeup of the soul of the Hindi language. Naturally, the same spirit of self-sacrifice, the same spirit of service and the same spirit of cooperation vibrates in the innermost soul of Hindi". Indonesian 1 is lauded for the "new spirit you will impart [to the people]" and for being the "flame of my [the cited author's] spirit" and "the companion of my ... soul". All three of our Japanese citations refer to spirit/soul. Japanese 1 deals with the script and views it as having "a close connection with the ... people's spirit" whereas Japanese 2 [focusing on the language as a whole, including its script] comments on its "eternally inspired ... unique spirit, its *kotodama*", while Japanese 3, in turn, concludes that the language "comprises everything which is intrinsic to the soul of ... [the] nation". Korean 1 is prescriptive in that it considers "mending our use of the national language ... [as] precisely the way to find ... [i. e., to return to or revive] the spirit of our nation". Latvian 1 refers to the language's role in fostering understanding of "what they [the ancestors] understood of their spirit" as well as providing "insights of their living spirits ... the living spirits within them" and pleads with the modern generation not to "forget the bridge which you have to cross to reach the nation's heart, soul and spirit". Clearly then, the "living spirit" which Latvian 1 recognizes as residing "[with]in Latvian words" also yields "spiritual insights" as well.

Macedonian 1 is also replete with references of this kind. “Through the sounds and words of our native language ... we receive our first spiritual nourishment” and “become their [our parent’s] spiritual descendants, as we are in the physical sense their bodily continuations”. Any rejection of the language is also a rejection of parental “spiritual care and upbringing” in so far as the individual is concerned, and “a radical spiritual transformation” insofar as the people as a whole is concerned ... since “faith and language, these are the soul of a nation”. Maori 1 looks forward to the time when a widespread relearning of the language will “loosen” (i. e., liberate) the spiritual power that is within the language. For Papiamentu 2 the language is “spiritual strength ... flowing through your veins” and for Polish 3 “the history of the spirit of the nation”. All of our Slovene sources also mention this particular theme. Slovene 1 considers the language “good food for the souls ... [to] gladden ... hearts and ... lighten spirits”. In Slovene 2 it “echoes from soul to soul” and in Slovene 3 “the commotion of the soul” is considered indicative of “the height which our language will reach in the near future”. Sumatran 1 recognizes the language as “an extension of our spirit” Swahili 2 agrees with the view that the language is “the voice of the soul of the people” and, therefore, that it is a “perfect means of expressing the [people’s] soul ..., culture and ... perceiving their world”. This, therefore, fully justifies “the rigid discipline which the spirit of this language requires of those whose minds and souls it takes possession”. Our Uzbek 1 citation refers to the “language ... [as] the spirit of a people, its soul”.

Obviously, both “spirit” and “soul” are plentifully associated with the vernaculars and through them, in turn, the vernaculars are associated with religion (faith), both explicitly and implicitly, with other sanctified desiderata such as the ethnic ancestors and with the people’s glorious future yet to come and, above all, with a perceived dynamic ethnocultural capacity to appreciate its own link to the divine, to be sensitive to moral values, to remain loyal to verities, to be both creative and authentic simultaneously. Spirit and soul are part of the affective, cognitive and overt behavioral link between religion, language and ethnicity, a power-laden “tri-unity”, the power of which the modern world has often underestimated to its own detriment. Indeed, what we now refer to as “national consciousness” was itself often referred to as “the spirit of the people” in the earliest decades of this century, not to mention during the century before, when Herderian rhetoric was still very prevalent in all educated as well as popular sources.¹¹ Linking the beloved language to the Su-

preme Being and “Ultimate Cause”, a link which is sometimes explicitly and sometimes metaphorically made, is a way of saying that the language is of supreme value and that it is perceived as the source from which all other ethnonational virtues flow.

2.2. *Materia Sancta*

“Spirit” and “soul” are terms taken from religious discourse and metaphor, to be sure, but they are both rather vague terms, because they do not themselves clearly denote any of the uniquely sacred objects, persons, beliefs, texts or transcendental forces of specific religions. Every religion has its own pantheon of Holies. These pantheons are populated by very specific and very direct reflections of, pathways to or designees of the Ultimate and Supreme Holiness, or, indeed, that very Holiness per se, i. e., they consist of much more definite *materia sancta* than those implied by such amorphous references as “spirit” and “soul”. The beloved language itself is often one of these holies, sometimes quite independently so, but, more frequently, its holiness is by association with other holies which language denotes, records and heightens.

Thus, in a definitely sanctified association, Byelorussian 1 is praised for possessing “the first translation of the Bible into a modern Eastern Slavic vernacular” while English in England 1 recognizes basic similarities between itself and Christianity (both reject eloquence and prefer the naked truth). Estonian 2 is extolled for the “spiritual riches” that reside within it and Irish 3 for being the “bearer of an outlook on life [that is] deeply Christian”. French in France 3 claims that “French culture has something in common with religion ... [in that] the French language is its sacred speech, somewhat as classical Arabic is the language of Islamic religion”. Latvian 1 proclaims itself a language of “faith ... [and] a sacred bequest from our ancestors”, and for Macedonian 1 it is boldly asserted that “He who attacks our language is as much an enemy as he who attacks our faith. Faith and language, these are the soul of a nation”. Nynorsk 1 views itself as something that “our ancestors ... entrusted to us as a sacred inheritance”. Polish 2 is also viewed as “a sacred heritage” while Serbian 1 is associated with “hidden intimations ... [of mystic] secrets”. Slovene 2 calls out “do not sever your bonds with God! ... Only those who knew how to preserve what God has given them [“prayer in your language”] will gain God’s justice and goodness”. Yiddish 2 is viewed as having been hallowed by the inscrutable Holocaust itself, just as formerly it had been hallowed (Yiddish 3) by “the truly righteous and

the veritable saints of every generation ... [who, in “previous holy generations”] would mix Yiddish exclamations into their [Hebrew-Aramaic] prayers ... and always formulate their innovative [halachic¹²] interpretations and expressions only in Yiddish and Loshn-koydesh [Hebrew-Aramaic] together” to such an extent that no other vernacular “has ... absorbed so much sanctity of Torah and of the process of learning the Talmud” as has Yiddish.

As for non-European settings in this vein, we encounter Afrikaans 1 as the language of “our parents’ worship” and of their “dying prayers” and, precisely as such, “sacred to us”. How much *more* sacred is it in light of the fact that “the Dear Lord placed us in Africa and gave us the Afrikaans language (again Afrikaans 1), just as “for every nation He has decided its language”. Arabic 2 is the language associated with “our religious traditions”, while in the case of Black English 1 we note that the language itself “began to be formed” by the Black Church. For French in Quebec 1 the view is advanced that “our language is intimately linked to our faith ... to all that is dear to us, to all that is sacred” ... [because, continues French in Quebec 1] “it was in this language that our missionaries, our bishops, our martyrs prayed”. But it is not the language *per se*, but rather the immersion of the language in sanctity that is the heart of the matter (for French in Quebec 1). “If it kept its language and lost its faith, it (Francophone Canada) would become what the French [in France] have become – a people fallen from ancient grandeur, a people without influence, without prestige”. Clearly, the two together complement each other crucially. French Creole 1 also protests “against the religion of the French language” but, on the other hand, compares the decline of Creole to “the kneeling of a cathedral”. Persian 2 exhorts its supporters to “continue ... the holy struggle for expanding and preserving this language” and Tamil 1 is viewed as suffused with mysteries as profound as “the origin of the world”.

The ultimate in holiness, of course, is reached when the language is associated with the Godhead itself, and claims along those very lines are not at all rare. Afrikaans 1 is associated with “the sacred name of our dear Lord Jesus”. French in Quebec 1 is particularly rich in “godly” references. French-Canadians are enjoined that in order “to remain what providence ordained” – both Catholic and French – [they] “must keep [both] faith and language in all their purity ... A people’s language [is] ... in the hands of the Creator. God has given us the French language. Through it He accomplished great things in our midst ..., great men ... battles ... defeats ... sorrows ... joys ... triumphs, all that is dear and sacred.” Frisian 1 is similarly focused on sanctity of the very highest

order. The very soul of the people was created by the Creator “according to that language and the language according to [its] ... soul; the powers that God gave [to the Frisian people] will attain their fullest and most developed blossoming ... [only] in [Frisian] ... It is our duty not to despise that which is God-given, but to honor Him therein”. Demanding official recognition for Frisian is a “God-given” right. for “we did not get two languages from God ... but only one ..., the [one] in which we praise the Lord, ... in which we call the Saviour”.

Godhead associations are also not unusual in non-European contexts. Hebrew 2 obviously refers to itself as “the Holy Tongue” a tongue given to the Jews by (according to Hebrew 1) “the master of all nations”. Our Maya Kaqchikel 1 citation dwells on the view that “God gave each people its own language, without one being superior to the other. Maya Kaqchikel is the language that God gave us and through this medium we communicate with Him ... Our language is one of God’s blessings ... God gave us talent through Kaqchikel.” Konkani 1 makes a more general or ecumenical point: [Konkani] is the language “in which we pray to God ... Christ taught the fishermen in their own language. The Buddha delivered his sermons in the language of the people.” Quechua 1 invokes the self-designation of the “tongue of the [God-] sun” and, as “blessed Quechua” it proceeds to intone the benediction “May the Gods always help the learned of humankind [who study Quechua everywhere].”

The above citations illustrate that there is an appreciable and recurring association between various vernaculars and specific designations of sanctity. As we will note, below, this association also has further topical repercussions within the general pale of sanctity. It should also be mentioned, perhaps, before we proceed to examine these additional sanctity-related themes, that while there is a slight tendency for European languages to be over-represented in connection with *materia sancta* references, i. e., represented above and beyond their representation in our sample of languages as a whole, this tendency falls somewhat short of being great enough that we could not justifiably conclude that it was a mere chance finding.¹³ That being the case, we will not undertake to speculate about possible reasons for the moderate over-representation we have encountered.

2.3. *Language as a moral issue*

Wherever fidelity is well-defined, there apostasy is likely to be well defined as well. Where language maintenance is viewed as moral rectitude,