

Florian Coulmas (ed.). 2007. *Language Regimes in Transformation. Future Prospects for German and Japanese in Science, Economy, and Politics* (Contributions to the Sociology of Language 93). Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter. xi, 216 p.

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Whether it is with fear, with optimism, or with resignation, people dealing with languages and public communication all over the world experience the rise and rise of English as a globalized and globalizing monolingual means of communication. Different language communities react in different ways to this development, from embracing English as a way out of the isolation from global communication with which small language communities feel burdened, to more or less organized, and more or less efficient, acts of defiance against what is being seen as Anglo-American linguistic imperialism.

While each non-English language community has its own diverse and multi-leveled discussion on the pros and cons of the increasing part English plays in many important domains of national and international public communication, some languages such as German and Japanese have a comparable status opposite English. Both German and Japanese are languages highly developed for complex communication in domains such as science and technology, education and commerce. Interesting conclusions might be drawn from a comparison of both language communities' reactions to the

growing international and even national dominance of English in many domains of communication.

The collection of papers edited by Florian Coulmas, compiled from contributions to a 2005 symposium on “Language Regimes in Transformation” in Tokyo, tries to provide such comparisons from a series of perspectives. It is much to the credit of the conference organizers and the book editor that these perspectives span the whole scope from highly theoretical considerations to practical demonstrations of the effect of English dominance in particular domains of communication, and that the authors come from a variety of academic backgrounds from linguistics to anthropology and law.

Takao Katsuragi’s chapter, “On language policy in the age of globalization with good governance”, discusses Wright’s (2004) concept of a world wide bilingualism of English as a *lingua franca* and the respective regional languages and at the same time a restructuring of (amongst others, linguistic) nationalism. In the Japanese context, Katsuragi proposes a “third-way” (i. e. neither nationalistic nor anti-nationalistic) language policy with the public endorsement of two different standards of Japanese, distinguished by their usage and according to two functions of language emphasized by the author, i. e. the (regional and national) identity and the (inter-regional and international) communicative functions.

In a more general and theoretical chapter (“Thrifty monolingualism and luxuriating plurilingualism”), Konrad Ehlich takes a closer look at the idea that monolingualism is economically preferable to plurilingualism. He argues that once the three functions of language that he distinguishes (teleological, gnoseological and communitarian functions) are taken into account, the seeming luxury of plurilingualism makes good economical sense. Fumio Inoue’s chapter on “Changing economic values of German and Japanese” revisits the topic with a specific focus on German and Japanese, offering a lot of detail. Unfortunately, the informative value of the Powerpoint charts contained in Inoue’s text might have been much greater in the coloured version in which they would most probably have been presented in the original talk. Pie charts and bar diagrams with a lot of different data such as figure 4 (p. 102) and figure 6 (p. 105) are as good as impossible to read in black and white patterns, particularly when the association of different patterns with different languages is neither clear in the graphics nor are those graphics well explained in the running text.

Nanette Gottlieb (“Challenges for language policy in today’s Japan”) describes the lack of a consistent national language policy in Japan and suggests some elements such a consistent policy might have. The aspect of the public debate about a particular side of this problem is dealt with in some detail by Patrick Heinrich (“The debate on English as an official language in Japan”).

After a discussion of the status of German and Japanese in comparison, Ulrich Ammon asks the question his chapter carries as a title: “Is the

promotion of languages such as German and Japanese still appropriate today?" As a solution to the many problems the promotion of languages such as German and Japanese brings with it, Ammon comes up with the suggestion of "language alliances" between countries with similar language promotion interests. He sees Germany and Japan as natural partners in such a "language alliance".

Tessa Carroll ("Japanese and German language education in the UK: problems, parallels, and prospects") describes a worrying tendency in higher education in the UK (which, by the way can be observed in rather similar form in other English speaking countries such as Australia): While the numbers of language students at British universities generally increase, language departments are closed down at a frightening speed, turning the tertiary study of languages into a pure acquisition of language skills ancillary or concurrent to non-language "core" studies.

John Maher ("Remains of the day: language orphans and the decline of German as a medical lingua franca in Japan") and Florian Coulmas ("The case for choice – language preferences in Japanese academic publishing") provide valuable insights into the use of English, Japanese and other languages in academic communication in Japan. These two chapters are welcome additions from a Japanese viewpoint to the study of ESL vs. national or regional languages in international academic communication which in German research has already been a hot topic for quite a while now (cf., for example, Ammon 2001 and Pörksen 2005).

Typically and almost unavoidably for a book that is to a large degree a conference proceedings volume – though the original papers have been substantially reworked according to the preface, cf. p. iii – the different chapters stand very much on their own and often lack the connection that chapters in a monograph would have. However, in refereed conference proceedings with a large number of contributions, the more exotic ones can either be left out altogether (by publishing select proceedings), or they disappear more or less in the crowd. In this volume of not much more than 200 pages, the compilation of only 11 chapters sometimes appears somewhat random. In particular, two of the chapters are not too obviously linked to the title and the preface. Although Kyoshi Hara's chapter on "Effects of globalization on minority languages in Europe – focusing on Celtic languages", the last one in the book, could still be seen as an outlook on languages other than German and Japanese, and Elmar Holenstein's contribution "Tokio or Tokyo? Dschudo or Judo? On writing foreign names" discusses English-based transcriptions of foreign names versus those derived from other languages, it is not immediately obvious that those two chapters form integral parts of the book.

While at least those two chapters seem less than essential for this volume, an introductory or closing chapter on the actual use of English or English varieties in continental Europe and in East Asia would have nicely

complemented the volume and could have drawn the diverse chapters thematically together. Patrick Heinrich's chapter mentioned above takes a little step in that direction. However, while it makes fascinating reading in its own right, it only covers a small segment of what an introductory or closing chapter as suggested would have to deal with.

Although English is not mentioned in the title of the volume, right from the preface on, its use within important domains of national and international public communication both in Japan and in the German speaking area of Europe, is the obvious central theme of the volume.¹ By neglecting to dedicate a chapter to the use of English in those regions itself, "global English" appears as an ill-defined threatening presence in the background throughout the book, and above all as a somewhat monolithic block. Seen from inside the English speaking world, however, the English language is not a monolithic structure at all. As a consequence of its worldwide use, English has developed tendencies to linguistic "glocalisation" (which Katsuragi, p. 8-11, refers to, albeit in a slightly different context). As a first language, English has split up into a large number of national or regional "World Englishes" (cf. Kirkpatrick 2007), some of which are competing with American English even in prestigious domains of global English such as higher education, science and technology, and commerce. On the other hand, regional standards of English as a second language are developing, of which ESL as a lingua franca in Europe has recently become a topic of sociolinguistic research (cf. Mollin 2006), while the fact that Asia is growing into the largest English speaking area worldwide is starting to boost research in Asian Englishes ("English in Asia" being the title of an international conference that took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2008).

Even lacking such a chapter focusing on the uses of English in Japan and in the German speaking area, the scope of the chapters in this book is so wide, most of the chapters so informative, and some of them so original that sociolinguists of German, Japanese and world Englishes will undoubtedly profit from reading this book.

¹ This is nicely illustrated by the fact that all of the contributions are in English. As a consequence of this and in view of the potential readership of the volume, this book review for a German journal of reviews in German linguistics (whose official languages are German and English) is also written in English. The intrinsic irony of this linguistic constellation did not escape my notice.

Literatur

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