# The Theory and Practice of Language Ideologies in Modern Societies: A Case Study

Iryna Lenchuk

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts and Applied Sciences, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman

Amer Ahmed[*]

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts and Applied Sciences, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman

*Abstract*—One of the consequences of the neo-liberal ideology of language commodification, which emphasizes "economic logic, economic integration, professionalism, and effectiveness" (Budach et al., 2003, p. 610) is the changes imposed in the field of literacy and second language learning. From the cultural capital of an individual and community, language has become a commodifiable resource with its value on economic markets. In the process of language commodification, a higher value is assigned to the official language(s). This leads to devaluing the minority languages and to the unequal distribution of the languages that are used in public spaces of schools and other government institutions. The research reviewed for our case study demonstrates that language ideology of the state, which is based on language commodification and on monoglot "standard" (Silverstein, 1996) in defining the state's social and pedagogical practices, does not promote social cohesion. On the contrary, this ideology informs discriminatory practices that privilege and legitimize the standard variety of the language of the majority over the minority languages, and one type of literacy over the other.

*Index Terms*—neo-liberal ideology, language commodification, literacy, second language education, cultural capital

## I. INTRODUCTION

In his speech at Huron University College, Jason Kenney, the former Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, proposed his new vision of Multiculturalism Program that focuses on "the successful and rapid integration of newcomers to Canadian society" (Kenney, 2009, para. 17) in order to address the challenge of radicalization and ghettoization of particular ethno-cultural communities in Canada. The Minister emphasized the importance of the competency "in one of [the] two official languages as a pathway to economic and social integration" (para. 24). The new vision of Multiculturalism Program describes the proficiency in one of the two official languages as a necessary skill and a valuable resource that will provide new Canadians with access to the labour market, help "[combat] marginal forces of radicalization" (para. 29), and maintain *a sense of social cohesion, a common purpose and of national identity"* (para. 6). Thus, in this document, the proficiency in the two official languages was presented as a government nation-building strategy (see e.g., Anderson, 2006) and the official language ideology of the state that envisions Canada as one political community united by its two official languages, English and French (see e.g., Cardinal, 2005; Patten & Kymlicka, 2003).

This case study investigates some of *the dimensions* of the official language ideology of the neo-liberal state in North America (e.g., Canada) and in Europe (e.g., Belgium), and *the effect* it might have on its citizens who lack proficiency in one of the legitimate languages of the state.

The case study is organized in the following way. First, we introduce the concepts related to language ideology (e.g., the relationship between language and ideology, and multiaccentuality or indexicality of a linguistic sign) that provide theoretical foundations for our case study. Second, we present the case study of language ideology of a neo-liberal state that is realized through the ideology of language commodification. According to this ideology, the official language of the state has been recognized as a commodity of high value as compared to other languages and literacies that are considered to be of a low value. For our case study, we selected multiple contexts (e.g., call and community centers, schools, and court rooms) in order to demonstrate the dehumanizing effect of this language ideology of language commodification. In particular, our case study investigates how the language ideology that emphasizes the importance of proficiency in the official language(s) positions the minority languages and their speakers in today's multicultural societies. Does it actually promote pluralism, partnership between various communities of a multicultural state, diversity, social cohesion and individual freedom, as outlined in the neo-liberal model (Loughlin & Williams, 2007) of the modern state? And if the answer to this question is negative, are there any alternatives to the language ideology of

---

[*] Corresponding Author. E-mail: aahmed@du.edu.om

the neo-liberal state?

## II.  THE THEORY OF LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

As noted by a number of scholars (e.g., Blommaert, 2006), our modern understanding of language ideology has grown out of Marxist theory. For Marx, the word *ideology* had a negative connotation. Marx defined ideology as false consciousness, where "men and all their circumstances appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*" (1845-1846, 1969, p. 287). He explained the false nature of consciousness by its detachment from the material activity and the history of human beings. In his famous quote, he argued for the mediating link between material and ideological, where "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (p. 287). In addition, Marx claimed that the abstract nature of ideology insisted upon in the works of some of the philosophers of his time (e.g., Hegel) distracted the attention of human beings from the understanding of the real conditions of their lives. Thus, he argued for a more hands-on approach in relation to ideology and philosophy. His goal was to develop a type of philosophical thinking, whose purpose was not just to describe the world, but to change it, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways, the point is to change it" (1845, 1969, p. 283).

Marxist theory highlights the main concepts that influenced our understanding of ideology; however, the theory did not discuss the relationship between language and ideology. This gap was addressed in the works of Bakhtin and Vološinov, who developed Marx's ideas on ideology and connected them with language. They started their influential work *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1930, 1973)[1] with the idea that any sign, including a linguistic sign, could become an ideological sign (e.g., bread and wine can become religious symbols in Christianity). They further argued that a linguistic sign is not neutral, and it represents "the ideological phenomenon par excellence" (Vološinov, 1930, 1973, p. 13) because it does not simply exist as a part of one reality – it reflects and refracts another reality. The sign can distort the reality; it may be true to it, or it may perceive it from a different perspective. Therefore, a linguistic sign can be viewed as an intersection of differently oriented interests of different social classes or groups. Different values and attitudes are realized through the social *multiaccentuality* [2] of the ideological sign.

In his later works (see e.g., 1986), Bakhtin developed the concept of multiaccentuality of a linguistic sign into the theory of dialogism. He stated that there is no such thing as an absolutely neutral utterance; every utterance constitutes a link in a highly organized chain of communication and is filled with overtones of other utterances. The words of others carry with them their evaluative tone, which are assimilated, reworked and re-accentuated by the speaker.

Bakhtin and Vološinov made an important contribution to the development of the study of language and ideology. They were among the first scholars who defined a linguistic sign as an ideological sign and wrote about the dialogic nature of language. Blommaert noted that according to Bakhtin and Vološinov, human communication is presented in the following way:

> Language usage displays a variety of orientations to social interests, derived from particular positions in society ('voices'). And interaction involves different voices evaluatively responding to each other's statements ('dialogue'). Thus, human communication through language displays meaningful metalevel inscriptions, adding a layer of sociopolitical, ideological meaning to the event. (Blommaert, 2006, p. 511)

Bakhtin and Vološinov changed our views on language as a stable, rule-governed system, and called for the study of spoken language (*parole*) with its heterogeneity and hybridity, as opposed to the stable and rule governed system of language (*langue*). Their call was addressed in the works of Silverstein (see e.g., 1996, 1997), who presented his own ethnohistorical perspective on communication in North America. He questioned the traditional view of a monoglot society, where communication has been studied within a stable and rule-governed *monolingual language community*. In contrast, he introduced the term *speech community* or *plurilingual speech community*. He demonstrated that historically, in North America, there was a long-standing plurilingual tradition, when the speaker of one speech community shared some of the repertoire of his/her speech community with the speaker of a different community. As a result, a process of language mixing and language contact between European and indigenous languages took place in North America starting from the 17th century. The analysis of the early speech communities in North America presented by Silverstein contradicts the official view of North America as a monolingual continent, where "unilingualism is being increasingly given emblematic status within the Andersonian nation-statist project" (Silverstein, 1997, p. 138) encouraged by some political movements. Silverstein noted an adverse effect of these political and ideological ideas on indigenous and immigrant language communities that "have been administratively and otherwise forced into the mold of stratified deethnicization" (Silverstein, 1997, p. 138).

This section provided an overview of some of the theoretical constructs that facilitated our understanding of language as "an ideological object, i.e. an object invested with social and cultural interests, not just a vehicle for (denotational, neutral meaning)" (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 199). The purpose of the next section is to describe some of the practices of the modern society informed by certain language ideologies. In particular, we focus on the ideology of language

---

[1] There is an issue of contested authorship of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* between Bakhtin and Vološinov. For the purpose of this case study, we assume dual authorship of Bakhtin and Vološinov. We base our assumption on the fact that both of them were members of Bakhtin's circle, a group of intellectuals that met together in an atmosphere of intellectual excitement in the 1920s in Russia, and therefore influenced each other's work.

[2] The social multiaccentuality of a linguistic sign is known in today's literature on language ideology as indexicality (see e.g., Blommaert, 2006).

commodification and its social consequences. In addition, we investigate the effect of the language ideology of the monoglot "standard" (Silverstein, 1996) on some of the social and pedagogical practices of the modern society.

### III. REALIZATION OF LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN MODERN SOCIETIES

*A. Ideology of Language Commodification*The issue of language commodification has been investigated by a number of researchers (see e.g., Block, 2008; Budach et al., 2003; Heller, 2003; Holborow, 2006; Ricento, 2005). Their work has been inspired by the ideas of Bourdieu (1977, 1991), who introduced the concepts of legitimate *language*, *relations of symbolic power*, *symbolic capital* that explain the process of language commodification. According to Bourdieu, linguistic competence can turn into linguistic capital, if those who possess it have more economic and cultural power and authority. If "a language is worth what those who speak it are worth" (1977, p. 652), then all other languages and dialects (e.g., class and regional dialects) are measured against the legitimate language of a more powerful class or group. The dominance of the language of a more powerful group "that imposes itself on the whole population as the only legitimate language" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 45) is perpetuated through a number of coercive instruments (e.g., schools) and language ideologies of the state.

Heller applied some of Bourdieu's concepts to the modern era of the globalized world. She claimed that the shift from the industry-based to service- and information-based economy resulted in the commodification of language, "whose value on the market can be calculated in the same way as that of other goods and services" (Heller, 2003, p. 604). In her ethnographic, sociolinguistic research, she studied the process of commodification of language in a call center located in a francophone town in southern Ontario and the commodification of identity (herein, authenticity) in a community located north of Toronto that presents itself as a site for francophone heritage tourism. She claimed that the commodification of language and identity creates a tension in the society between "state-based and corporate identities and language practices, between local, national and supra-national identities and language practices, between hybridity and uniformity" (Heller, 2003, p. 473).

Another example of such a tension was presented in a study by Budach et al. (2003) in the field of francophone minority adult literacy training in Ontario. In their ethnographic research, they investigated a conflict between two discourses. The first discourse is the *community discourse* that emphasizes literacy as an important resource for the reproduction of the francophone community in Ontario. The second one is the *commodity discourse* inspired by the political agenda of neo-liberalism that views literacy "as an economic resource and as a form of linguistic capital to be invested in the labour market" (Budach et al., 2003, p. 610). The researchers noted that the commodity discourse was reinforced in the government policies that fund the adult literacy training programs. It also had its impact on the pedagogical practices and on the design of the literacy programs that had to change their focus from the needs of the francophone community and become more concerned with the training of job-related language skills within a short period of time. According to the researchers, the centers were changing their roles from "being institutions for the cultural reproduction of a distinct francophone community to serving the interests of the dominant market" (Budach et al., 2003, p. 615).

Holborow also explored the ideology of neo-liberalism that tends to camouflage the increasing connection between the state and the corporate world, and to present neo-liberals as proponents of "freewheeling, unlimited market capitalism" (Holborow, 2006, p. 87). According to the researcher, the danger of this ideology lies in the fact that it tends to commodify almost every aspect of human activity (e.g., the English language and education), which is presented as a non-contestable common sense. Based on the analysis of the institutional discourses of higher education in the UK and Ireland, Holborow demonstrated the danger of degrading "human experience by reducing it to the cash nexus" (Holborow, 2006, p. 97) and identified the discourses (e.g., Z-net, the World Social Forum) that challenge this ideology of common sense.

The researchers, whose work was presented above, investigated the issue of language commodity in relation to the official language(s) of the state. Ricento (2005) discusses a number of problems connected with the 'language-as-resource' discourse in the promotion of heritage languages in the USA. In his paper, he argues against commodification of heritage languages. Based on the analysis of some of the discourses of the heritage language movement (e.g., The Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages, p. 358), Ricento demonstrates that a particular "view of language as instrument (as opposed to language as identity marker)" displaces it from its "historical situatedness" (Ricento, 2005, p. 357) and serves the political and social interests of the English-speaking majority, particularly in the areas of national security, trade and law enforcement. He emphasizes that the focus on "the *instrumental values* of heritage languages" ignores "human beings, communities, and socio-political aspects of language acquisition, use and loss…" (Ricento, 2005, p. 362). He warns against the danger of discourses, where heritage cultures and languages presented as a commodifiable resource:

> The celebration of 'heritage' through its various manifestations – language, dress, music, literature, cuisine, and so on – is widespread and generally viewed as a means of both validating ethnic identities and marketing cultural 'products', including language, often in a way that exploits the minority culture for the greater benefit of the majority group. (Ricento, 2005, p. 358)

Contrary to the discourses of commodification, he calls for alternative discourses and educational programs, where the cultures and languages of 'others' would be positioned as an integral part of an American (not foreign) culture, and

would promote diversity and social change in the society.

*B.  Monolingual Social and Pedagogical Practices in Multilingual Societies*

One of the consequences of the neo-liberal ideology of language commodification, which emphasizes "economic logic, economic integration, professionalism, and effectiveness" (Budach et al., 2003, p. 610) is the changes imposed in the field of literacy and second language learning. From the cultural capital of an individual and community, language has become a commodifiable resource with its value on economic markets.

In the process of language commodification, a higher value is assigned to the official language(s). It leads to devaluing the minority languages and to the unequal distribution of the languages that are used in public spaces of schools and other government institutions. As stated by Blommaert, "the particular environment [may] organize a particular regime of language, a regime which *incapacitates individuals*" (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 198). Thus, when the minority languages are declared devalued assets, their speakers are perceived as illiterate, just because they do not possess literacy in any of the official language(s) and/or literacy according to the norms of a Western society.

Blommaert, Creve and Willaert (2005) argued that "literacy has become, in our cultural imagination, something that defines us as human beings, i.e., as normal members of our cultures" (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 35). This understanding of literacy, in particular the emphasis on the written text imposed by the Western understanding of literacy, is indexical. It limits the definition of literacy to the standard literacy in official language(s). For example, in a study conducted by Blommaert et al. (2005), standard Dutch (spoken and written) was considered by school teachers as the *only* valuable resource (in addition to English) that would offer educational opportunities for immigrant children. The data of their ethnographic study, which took place in three primary schools in Antwerp, Belgium, demonstrated that the teachers devalued their students' symbolic resources, despite the fact that many of their students were multilingual. In addition, the teachers qualified them as lacking any linguistic competence because their students did not possess standard literacy skills associated with Dutch orthography.

The teachers who participated in the study believed that languages could be classified as languages with 'poor vocabulary' and 'rich vocabulary', and that some learners are better equipped for learning Dutch and fitting into the Belgium school system because of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Their discriminatory practices were largely informed by the language ideology of the state that dictates that "unless one speaks standard Dutch, or unless one possesses the specific literacy skills associated with Dutch ortho-graphy,[3] one is language-less and illiterate, even if one is a proficient multilingual individual, and even if one is a sophisticated literate in a writing system different from that of Dutch" (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 53).

The researcher of another study (Allen, 2007) that was conducted in literacy training classrooms in Canada claimed that newcomers to Quebec (in this case, adolescent youths) are confronted with the two contradictory discourses, i.e. controlling and embracing diversity. For example, diversity is embraced through subsidizing schools and hospitals in both English and French, and diversity is controlled through the mandatory schooling in French for the children of immigrants. In her study of 18 participants in one of the linguistically and culturally diverse schools in Montreal, she investigated how the French language policy as the *only legitimate language* of the province has influenced the educational trajectories of the immigrant youth by labeling them as "language challenged" (Allen, 2007, p. 168) and isolating them from the mainstream education until the necessary linguistic proficiency in French has been achieved. Once in a mainstream education, the students are expected to function autonomously without any academic or language support.

Another type of inequality and discrimination caused by language ideology that privileges standard literacy in the official language(s) was discussed by Blommaert (2001) in his study of the legal cases of asylum seekers in Belgium. This inequality was manifested through the treatment of narratives told by asylum seekers that are considered by the legal system as an important evidence, on the grounds of which asylum can be granted or denied. Blommaert analyzed 40 narratives of asylum seekers of African origin. He demonstrated that the narratives themselves and the ways they are evaluated and interpreted in Belgium courtrooms represent the site of struggle of different social interests. On the one hand, there is an ideology of the state, which relies heavily on the written modality of the language and certain discursive practices of what constitutes as a truthful and coherent narrative. On the other hand, there are asylum seekers, who possess a very limited access to linguistic, pragmatic and metapragmatic competences required by the state. Blommaert noted that "the state is assumed to represent everyone and to render service to everyone in the same way; at the same time, administrative procedures of the state privilege elite literacies and narrativities and so shape and perpetuate deep social inequalities" (Blommaert, 2001, p. 445). There is no doubt that these procedures had a very negative effect on social identities of the asylum seekers and their future lives (e.g., there were a number of cases when the asylum seekers' narratives were labeled as incoherent and therefore untruthful. As a result, they were denied asylum and sent back to their countries to encounter possible death). This study demonstrated that the society's reliance on *standard* linguistic and communicative resources and its belief that they are equally shared between the members of the egalitarian and democratic society is a myth.

The research mentioned above and reviewed for my case study demonstrates that language ideology of the state,

---

[3] In the context of this study, *ortho-graphic* literacy is understood as the ability to write according to the standard writing norms and is contrasted with *hetero-graphic* literacy, which is not associated with the prescribed norms (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 34).

which is based on language commodification and on monoglot standard (Silverstein, 1996) in defining the state's social and pedagogical practices, does not promote social cohesion. On the contrary, this ideology informs discriminatory practices that privilege and legitimize the standard variety of the language of the majority over the minority languages, and one type of literacy over the other.

## IV. THE ALTERNATIVE MODELS: POST-MODERNISM AND NEW PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

### A. The Post-Modern View of Nation and Language as an Alternative to the Ideology of Language Commodification

This section provides an overview of some alternative theories and practices. It starts with a description of the post-modern approach toward language and nation. Post-modern discourse "challenges the view of the modern world as consisting of homogeneous nations each with a single, homogenizing literacy" (Street, 1996, p. 371). In addition, the validity of the post-modern approach lies in the fact that it challenges the common sense framework that is used in political, social and educational discourses of the modern neo-liberal state. For example, the reality of today's nation as a heterogeneous and fragmented construct is reflected in bhabha's (1994) metaphors of scattering and gathering of people who live on the margins of foreign cultures and foreign tongues. Thus, nation in general, and a homogeneous nation in particular, is an imagined construct. According to bhabha, nation is an apparatus of symbolic power that pretends to ignore the differences its produces, such as sexuality, class affiliation, territorial and cultural differences. Therefore, in the modern discourse, nation presents itself as a space for silencing the marginalized voices under the rhetoric of 'many as one'; an example of this marginalization can be found in a variety of contexts described above (e.g., schools, call and community centers, and court rooms). By contrast, in a post-modern discourse, nation is a space for the emergence of marginalized people (e.g., the colonized and women).

In the modern discourse people are presented as pedagogical subject, whose history is linear, and whose time and space are fixed and stable. The nations' identity is constituted by historical sedimentation (French identity, Canadian identity, etc.) and diversity is considered a problem. In contrast, in post-modern discourses, people are presented as performative subjects living in a very dynamic time and space. Instead of identity that is fixed and historically shared, they experience loss of identity or profound cultural undecidability, which "antagonizes the implicit power to generalize, to produce the sociological solidity" (bhabha, 1994, p. 150). bhabha is using a very powerful metaphor of nation as scattered people (migrants and refugees) looking for a gathering place.

In his book bhabha states that "the narrative of national cohesion can no longer be signified" (bhabha, 1994, p. 156). It means that the connection between the signifier (word) and the signified (concept) is not stable and fixed as claimed by Saussure. According to bhabha, there is a new signified for a signifier 'nation'. Nation becomes "a liminal signifying space that is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense location of cultural difference" (bhabha, 1994, p. 148). Thus, it is important to give voice to these marginalized communities and to apply a bottom up rather than a top down approach while developing language and literacy programs. On a practical level, this bottom up approach can be realized through rethinking some of the pedagogical monolingual practices that are used in today's multilingual classrooms.

### B. Alternative Pedagogical Practices in Multilingual Classrooms

This section provides a description of the pedagogical practices that legitimize the use of minority languages in second language learning classrooms. These practices are based on the assumption that "local languages and literacies have a positive and constructive contribution to make to world development and change" (Street, 1996, p. 374) and that the students in an ESL classroom (children and adults) already possess some form of reading and writing. Thus, in the education programs, the emphasis should be made "on what people already have rather than assuming they start as empty vessels" (Street, 1996, p. 375).

Practitioners and researchers have begun to develop some of the practices that are less ethnocentric and top down. For example, Cummins (2006, 2007) calls for the reconceptualization of monolingual practices in multilingual classrooms. He argues against the erroneous assumptions that inform today's pedagogical practices. The first of these assumptions is based on the fact that the use of the first language (L1) should be prohibited in a second language (L2) classroom. (In this case study, this pedagogical practice was presented based on a study that took place in Belgium literacy classes (Blommaert et al., 2006)). According to the second assumption, there is no place for translation between L1 and L2 in an L2 classroom. The proponents of the third assumption insist that in immersion and bilingual programs, the two languages should be kept rigidly separate.

Cummins claims that these three assumptions reflect the monoglot 'standard' ideology and the attempt to legitimize the official language(s), and devalue the minority languages of the learners. He demonstrated that L1 can be used in multilingual classrooms as "a cognitive and linguistic resource" (Cummins, 2007, p. 238). The researcher claimed that there is no empirical evidence to suggest that the-only-second-language (L2) instruction approach is effective. In fact, it is inconsistent with our modern understanding of the functioning of bilingual/ multilingual mind. His review of the empirical studies, where L1 has been used to facilitate the L2 acquisition (e.g., effectiveness of bilingual over monolingual dictionaries in the acquisition of the L2 vocabulary; the use of translation for literacy development and maximal students' engagement) demonstrated that the monolingual perspective, which needs to be reconceptualized, does not engage students from socially marginalized groups with literacy and academic work in both languages, and

may be "rooted in a particular ideological perspective which serves to reinforce inequalities in the broader society" (Cummins, 2007, p. 226).

A number of other researchers (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 2002) provide empirical evidence that the use of L1 can help L2 learners to develop their competence and metalinguistic awareness in the target language. In her recent work, Swain introduced the concept of languaging (2006) that is framed within the sociocultural theory of mind (Vygotsky, 1987) and is defined as the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language that organizes and mediates mental processes during the performance of cognitively complex tasks (Swain, 2006). Therefore, according to this definition, the prohibition of the first language in an ESL classroom has a negative effect on learners' self-esteem and identity; in addition, it is also detrimental to learners' cognitive development and their understanding of the outside world that is, to a large extent, shaped and mediated through language. The fact that many educators are still reluctant to allow the use of minority languages in the classroom, despite all the empirical evidence, supports the idea that the use of L1 is an ideological, rather than pedagogical and/ or methodological issue.

## V.  CONCLUSION: WE MUST KEEP OUR TONGUES UNITED

In this case study, we discussed some of the theoretical and empirical studies that investigate the issue of language ideology. We outlined some of the theoretical concepts developed by Bakhtin and Vološinov in relation to a linguistic sign as an ideological construct, and their argument to study language not as a stable and rule-governed system, but as a dialogic construct. Their ideas were later developed by modern scholars mentioned in this case study, who investigated the practical realization of language ideologies and their implications for social practices of modern societies. For example, Silverstein (1996, 1997) demonstrated that the representation of some of the geographical spaces as purely monolingual is in contradiction to the historical evidence and is informed by certain political and ideological agendas of the state. In those ideological agendas, the official standard language(s) are usually assigned more value and are encouraged to be acquired because of the material benefits that are promised to those who invest in its (their) learning. As stated by Block (2008), "now languages not only are signs of authentic national identities, they are also seen as commodities, the possession of which is a valued skill in the job market" (Block, 2008, p. 35). According to the ideology of language commodification, bilingual or multilingual speakers can be qualified as speakers without any language, just because they do not possess the proficiency in any of the official (standard) languages spoken in modern societies that claim to be cosmopolitan and multilingual. As noted by Blommaert et al. (2005) "multilingualism is not what individuals have or lack, but what the environment, as structured determination and interactional emergence, enables and disables them to deploy. Thus, eminently multilingual individuals…can be declared to have 'no language' in particular environments" (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 213).

The research presented above as part of this case study challenged the legitimacy of the language ideology of commodification and standard "monoglot" (Silverstein, 1996) that informs the social practices in Canada and Belgium and demonstrated its dehumanizing effect. Therefore, contrary to the official neo-liberal discourses, this language ideology has to be recognized and identified as an ideology that leads to further marginalization and social tension in the societies concerned, and informs the practices of political, economic and cultural domination. We conclude our case study with a quote that emphasizes the necessity to resist the political discourses of neo-liberals informed by the language ideology of commodification and normativity:

> We have the individual and collective responsibility to do everything we can to keep cultural dialogues open and to allow for the identities of groups and individuals to be polyphonic, that is, to contain a (diverse and heterogeneous) plurality of voices. We must keep our tongues united. (Medina, 2005, p. 184)

## REFERENCES

[1]   Allen, D. (2007). Just who do you think I am? The name-calling and name-claiming of newcomer youth? *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *10*(2), 165-175.
[2]   Anderson, B. (2006). Old languages, new models. In B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (pp. 67-82). London: Verso.
[3]   bhabha, h. (1994). Dissemination: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation. In h. bhabha, *The location of culture* (pp. 139-179). London: Routledge.
[4]   Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Eds., V. W. McGee, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
[5]   Block, D. (2008). Language education and globalization. In N. H. Hornberger (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 31-43). Springer US.
[6]   Blommaert, J. (2001). Investigating narrative inequality: African asylum seekers' stories in Belgium. *Discourse and Society*, *12*(4), 413-449.
[7]   Blommaert, J. (2006). Language ideology. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (2nd ed.) (pp. 510-522). Retrieved             June                 15,                 2010,                 from http://www.sciencedirect.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/science/referenceworks/9780080448541
[8]   Blommaert, J., Collins, J., & Slembrouck, S. (2005). Spaces of multilingualism. *Language and Communication*, *25*, 197-216.
[9]   Blommaert, J., Creve, L., Willaert, E. (2006). On being declared illiterate: Language-ideological disqualification in Dutch classes for immigrants in Belgium. *Language and Communication*, *26*, 34-54.

[10] Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of linguistic exchanges. *Social Science Information*, *16*(6), 645-668.

[11] Bourdieu, P. (1991). The production and reproduction of legitimate language. In P. Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic power.* (Trans. by G. Raymond and M. Adamson, from *Ce que parler veut dire*), (pp. 43-65). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[12] Budach, G., Roy, S., & Heller, M. (2003). Community and commodity in French Ontario. *Language in Society*, *32*, 603-627.

[13] Cardinal, L. (2005). The ideological limits of linguistic diversity in Canada. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *26*(6), 481-495.

[14] Cummins, J. (2006). Identity texts: The imaginative construction of self through multiliteracies pedagogy. In O. Garcia, T. Skutnabb-Kangas, and M. E. Torres-Guzmán (Eds.), *Imagining multilingual schools: Languages in education and glocalization.* Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

[15] Cummins, J. (2007). Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *10*(2), 221- 240.

[16] Heller, M. (2003). Globalization, the new economy, and the commodification of language and identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *7*(4), 473-492.

[17] Holborow, M. (2006). Ideology and language: Interconnection between Neo-liberalism and English. In J. Edge (Ed.), *(Re-) Locating TESOL in an age of empire* (pp. 84-103). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

[18] Kenney, J. (2009). *Good citizenship: The duty to integrate.* Retrieved June 12, 2010, from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/DEPARTMENT/media/multimedia/video/speech/2009-03-18.asp

[19] Loughlin, J., & Williams, C. H. (2007). Governance and language: The intellectual foundations. In C. H. Williams (Ed.), *Language and governance.* Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

[20] Marx, K. (1845-1846, 1969). Ideology in general, German ideology in particular. In P. L. Gardiner, (Ed.), *Nineteenth century philosophy* (pp. 284-288). New York: The Free Press.

[21] Marx, K. (1845, 1969). Theses on Feuerbach. In P. L. Gardiner, (Ed.), *Nineteenth century philosophy* (pp. 281-283). New York: The Free Press.

[22] Medina, J. (2005). *Language: Key concepts in philosophy.* London: Continuum.

[23] Patten, A., & Kymlicka, W. (2003). Introduction: Language rights and political theory: Context, issues and approaches. In W. Kymlicka and A. Patten (Eds.), *Language rights and political theory* (pp. 1-51). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[24] Ricento, T. (2005). Problems with the 'language-as-resource' discourse in the promotion of heritage languages in the USA. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *9*(3), 348-368.

[25] Silverstein, M. (1996). Monoglot "standard" in America: Standardization and metaphors of linguistic hegemony. In D. Brenneis & R. K.S. Macaulay, *The matrix of language: contemporary linguistic anthropology.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

[26] Silverstein, M. (1997). Encountering language and languages of encounter in North American Ethnohistory. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *6*(2), 126-144.

[27] Street, B. V. (1996). Local literacies and vernacular literacies: Implications for national literacy policy. In N. H. Hornberger (Ed.), *Indigenous literacies in the Americas: Language planning from the bottom up* (pp. 369-385). Hawthorne, NY: Mouton de Gruyter.

[28] Swain, M. (2006). Languaging, agency, and collaboration in advanced second language proficiency. In H. Byrnes, (Ed.), *Advanced language learning: The contribution of Halliday and Vygotsky* (pp. 95-108). London: Continuum.

[29] Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2002). Talking it through: Two French immersion learners' response to reformulation. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *37*, 285-304.

[30] Vološinov, V. N. (1973). *Marxism and the philosophy of language* (L. Matejka, & I. R.Titunik, Trans.). New York: Seminar Press.

[31] Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). Thought and word. In R. W. Reiber & A. S. Carton (Eds.), *The collected works by L. S. Vygotsky*, *Vol. 1* (pp. 243- 285). New York: Plenum Press.

**Iryna Lenchuk** holds a PhD in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from York University, Toronto, Canada. Before joining Dhofar University, she taught ESL in federally-funded programs, colleges and private institutions, and taught ESL/TESL and courses in linguistics in colleges and universities in Toronto, Canada. Currently, she holds the position of Associate Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature, Dhofar University, Oman. She has been published in a number of internationally refereed journals.

**Amer M Th Ahmed** holds a PhD in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from York University, Toronto, Canada. Before joining Dhofar University, he taught ESL in federally-funded programs and private institutions, and taught courses in linguistics in universities in Toronto, Canada. Currently, he holds the position of Associate Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature, Dhofar University, Oman. He has been published in a number of internationally refereed journals.