



New Speakers of Minority Languages: A Dialogue

Venue: Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh

Friday 30th – Saturday 31st March 2012

Confirmed Keynote Speakers

Professor Alexandra Jaffe

Professor Alan Davies

This is a one and half day event hosted by Heriot-Watt University and the University of Edinburgh. The aim of the Symposium is to bring together scholars working on “new speakers” of minority languages in different parts of the world. This is the second in a series of events on the theme funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Context

“New speakers” are defined here as individuals who use the language of a particular minority linguistic community in everyday life but are not native speakers. This profile of speaker has always existed in the context of immigration and colonization. It continues to exist in a contemporary context of the globalized new economy, where world languages, most notably English, are acquired by non-native speakers.

New speakers of indigenous minority languages are also emerging in situations where traditional linguistic practices are changing and new ones appearing. In many parts of the world, traditional communities of minority language speakers are being eroded as a consequence of increased urbanization and economic modernization. At the same time, new speakers are emerging as a result of revitalization efforts and more favourable language policies, prompting some individuals to become speakers of the minority language and to invest in its provision for the next generation.

The linguistic varieties being used by new speakers can often be significantly removed from the norm associated with traditional native speakers. Different factors may be at play here: new standardized forms may be used in educational and other formal contexts, new terminology may be developed to make the language functional in new domains, and new speakers’ language may show the influence of their first language (typically the dominant state language) in terms of syntax and pronunciation. New speakers often tend to be concentrated in urban areas that may be very different in social and socio-economic terms from the traditional rural communities.

Because of underlying linguistic, sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, socio-geographical and very often ideological differences between native and new speakers, these groups can sometimes perceive themselves as being socially and linguistically incompatible. This may lead to tensions between different minority language speakers which can sometimes have a negative effect on the process of linguistic revitalization.

Key Themes

In this Symposium we welcome contributions related to the “new speaker” theme either from a theoretical perspective or/and case studies of new speakers of specific linguistic minorities. These contributions will be included in the programme as individual papers or as part of round table or themed discussions relating to the questions outlined below:

- What is the role (if any) of new speakers of minority languages in the process of language revitalization? How is this role perceived? What are the discourses surrounding “new speakerness”? Do such discourses reproduce or challenge the traditional ethnocultural discourses which have often given native speakers a central position in the revitalization process?
- What does it mean to become a new speaker of a minority language? Are new speakers creating new meanings and in doing so, challenging traditional notions of language and identity linked to place and community in favour of

translocal practices and discourses?

- Who really counts as a new speaker? Do we need to think more about speaker types and typologies of speakers as opposed to the more limited native/new speaker dichotomy?
- How are new speakers affecting existing language models? Are hybrid forms emerging, and if so what is the effect of this?
- How can research on the 'native speaker' concept in the dominant world languages such as English be used to help us understand native and new speaker relations in the context of minority languages? How do the phenomena we are exploring connect with other non-native uses of language and the debates they have triggered in relation to youth culture, immigration and foreign language teaching?

Contributing to the Symposium

We welcome abstracts of not more than **300 words** in length, by no later than **31 January 2012**.

Abstracts should include the presenter's name and institutional affiliation, if any, a very brief biography (not more than a further 100 words), and a contact e-mail address. It is expected that information on acceptance of proposals will be communicated by 15 February.

Please email your abstracts to Bernadette O'Rourke at **b.m.a.o'rourke@hw.ac.uk**. Abstracts will be reviewed anonymously by our Scientific Committee and will be evaluated in terms of their relevance to the theme of the Symposium.

Registration fee: £50 (Concessions: £35)

Organisers

Dr Bernadette O'Rourke (Heriot-Watt University)

Dr Wilson McLeod (University of Edinburgh)

Scientific Committee

Dr Ane Ortega Etcheverry (Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao)

Professor Graham Turner, (Heriot-Watt University)

Dr Joan Pujolar (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

Professor Alan Davies (University of Edinburgh)

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Professor Rob Dunbar (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of Highlands and Islands)