

## BOOK REVIEW

Máiréad Moriarty. (2015) *Globalizing Language Policy and Planning: An Irish Language Perspective*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN 978-1-137-00560-1, £ 109.99. hardcover

Reviewed by Kristof Savski (Prince of Songkla University)

The history of language policy as a field of academic activity has been defined by a consistent broadening of scope, both when considering the ways in which the object under investigation has been defined and in terms of the methodological perspectives used to approach it. This is perhaps unsurprising given how broadly one might reasonably describe the nature of language policy, which while often starting as a clearly defined top-down attempt at intervening in the language practices of a given community may in fact ~~have~~ spread far beyond the borders of what has traditionally be defined as 'policy'. As a result, much contemporary language policy research has tended to relativize the value of state-centric cyclical models of policy and has instead embraced a broad understanding of this phenomenon, one which acknowledges that both top-down and bottom-up forces must be examined (McCarty, 2010).

In this monograph, which represents a synthesis of the author's research at both the doctoral and postdoctoral levels, Moriarty adopts such a broad approach. Her examination of the language policy processes surrounding the Irish language (Gaeilge) in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland thus zooms in on a number of different contexts, or scales (Hult, 2010). The author first examines the position of Irish in mass media, with the main focus being its use on TG4, a TV channel established specifically to offer programming in that language. The chapter reviews the content on offer by TG4, **foreground** in particular its inclusivity to different types of audiences (e.g. both children and adults, and both L1 and L2 users of Irish). A highlight is its examination of how TG4 fosters audience engagement on Twitter, a potentially crucial domain for contemporary language revitalization efforts. Moriarty's next two chapters continue to focus on popular culture by examining two other novel domains associated with language revitalization, comedy and hip-hop. The first of these focusses on Irish-American comedian Des Bishop, whose stand-up routine, while traditionally focussed on social issues, has over the last decade also addressed the role of the Irish language. The chapter examines Bishop's live shows and TV programmes during this time and focusses in particular on his subversion of the traditional discourse surrounding Irish, where the difficulty of learning the language is often stressed. A further chapter

examines the use of Irish in hip-hop, once again highlighting the emergence of new domains in language revitalization. In her final empirical chapter in the book, Moriarty examines how Irish language resources have been deployed as a means of commodification in the field of tourism in different areas across Ireland.

These four empirical chapters represent the core of the book and are presented in a clear and detailed manner, with abundant framing provided to compensate for the differences between the contexts they describe. Aside from the focusses on Irish and on language policy, the thread which connects these diverse analyses into a coherent volume is globalization, to which Moriarty returns continuously. This concept is particularly key to understanding the significance of how Irish has been incorporated in stand-up comedy, hip-hop and tourism, as these are oft cited examples of globalized culture. The author highlights how the use of Irish in these domains, which are deeply embedded in the complex processes of information exchange and human mobility that characterise globalization (Appadurai, 1990), allows speakers of the language to become agents in those processes. Moriarty provides convincing arguments that while globalization can be seen to present a threat to local languages and cultures, it may also provide new kinds of opportunities for revitalization. This is of particular value in contexts such as Ireland, where traditional 'modernist' instruments of revitalization (such as the educational system) can be seen to have failed to dramatically alter the balance of sociolinguistic forces.

Moriarty's book also contributes to current scholarly debates in language policy. In her recent review of two newly published books, King (2019) suggests that the field stands at a crossroads between a descriptive, ethnographic orientation seeking to examine the roles specific actors play in policy processes, and a normative view which seeks to evaluate policies against theoretically constructed philosophical models. It is well worth pointing out, however, that the choice between a descriptive-empirical and normative-theoretical perspective is not the only one facing language policy scholars. Another similarly key decision concerns how the role of the state should be addressed in language policy research, since it remains the cornerstone of some analyses while being largely eschewed by others. Moriarty's work is of the latter type, and indeed her book illustrates the extent to which the borders of language policy as a field of research may be stretched beyond the traditional confines of 'the state'. Her work also avoids a potential weakness of this approach, which is that it can lead to an excessive broadening of 'policy', which when being detached from 'the state' may also implicitly cease to be conceptualized as an instrument associated with organizational authority. As Moriarty demonstrates, however, this can be avoided by treating actors like stand-up comedians as participants in a broader discourse which also includes more traditional language policies. A lack of explicit theorising on the dialogical

relationship between state and non-state voices in policy discourse is perhaps the only weakness one may point out in Moriarty's work, though it should also be remarked that this is an area deserving of more conceptual effort in general in language policy.

## References

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## Reviewer's address

Kristof Savski  
Department of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts  
Prince of Songkla University  
15 Karnjanavanich Rd  
Hat Yai, Songkla, 90110  
Thailand

kristof.s@psu.ac.th

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5561-6695>

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