Anthropology and Language in Europe
Setting the Context

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Within the field of anthropology, there is a comprehensive linguistic sub-discipline which deals with issues from semiotics and linguistics to identity and intangible cultural heritage. This special volume of *AJEC* emerged from our desire to explore that sub-discipline in a European context. From our perspective, it appears that many anthropologists in and of Europe engage with a variety of questions within the sub-discipline. However, these anthropologists are not necessarily located in anthropology departments. Furthermore, their expertise is not necessarily profiled in anthropological journals. This is in sharp contrast with the U.S.A. where the significance of language in the field of anthropology is more clearly defined and profiled.

Exploring the history of the sub-discipline in the U.S., Allesandro Duranti (2003) has identified three key historically related paradigms. The first of these (anthropological linguistics) focused primarily on linguistics rather than anthropology and was spearheaded by characters such as Boas (1911), Whorf (1956), Sapir (1949) and others. The decline of American Indian languages was the catalyst for much of this exploration, which was devoted to the documentation of endangered languages as well as their structure. The secondary phase shifted the focus more from linguistics to anthropology. Hymes, Gumperz, Ferguson and others published widely on the ethnography of community (see Ferguson and Gumperz 1960; Gumperz and Hymes 1972; Hymes 1971, 1972) and there was a strong focus on the context in which the 'speech event' occurred. The concept of 'discourse' also came to the fore at this stage and the notion of culture as text emerged in several publications, including Geertz's influential article 'Thick description' (1973). At this stage many European influences were evident as American anthropologists drew on the writings of Derrida, Gadamer, Ricoeur and others.

Concepts of identity, narrative and language ideology came to the fore in the first phase as anthropologists engaged with identity formation, globalisation and ethnicity and the contribution they make to our understanding of language in society. 'Sociological anthropology'

is the label given by Duranti (2003: 332) to this phase. Sociocultural anthropologists raided theoretical perspectives across disciplinary boundaries and drew on thinkers such as Bourdieu, Bakhtin, Vološinov and Foucault.

To what extent these three historical paradigms are reflected in a European context is not a matter for this brief introduction and it would be impossible within the confines of a single article to draw attention to the full extent of anthropological research on languages in Europe. Elsewhere, we have endeavoured to conduct a scoping exercise in this regard (see Nic Craith 2012a). With the intention of further profiling European research in the field, we issued a call for contributions to a special thematic issue of *AJEC* on the theme of language and anthropology. Contributors were invited to explore a range of issues, from disciplinary boundaries to fieldwork case studies, from European regions to the commodification of language, as well as language and the senses. We received an unexpectedly large number of responses.

The articles we received covered a wide array of expertise ranging from ones with a strongly linguistic focus to others which fell closer to what can be considered the anthropology of language. Topics proposed included bilingualism, language documentation, literacy, conflict, identity, speechmaking, cognition and gender. Therefore, from a discipline which started out as a means of providing the tools for documentation of endangered languages mainly in North America, it has as Duranti (2004: xv) suggests 'become an intellectual shelter and a cultural amplifier for the richness of human communication in social life' both in Europe and in the U.S.A. This richness, as Duranti points out, is however often unknown in other communication-oriented fields. Moreover, in the case of the European anthropological tradition, this richness is not fully recognised and anthropological research on language appears on the margins of humanities and social sciences in many universities. The articles included in this special issue are an attempt to counteract this by providing some insights into language use as a cultural activity in the European context.

In part, the lack of a coherent profile for European anthropological research on language derives from its frequent location under the umbrella of sociolinguistics, the sociology of language and related strands in European universities. Adopting different approaches within the broader fields of anthropology and sociology, many academics are asking the same questions about language and its role in society. Scholars working within the European tradition are concerned with the same underlying questions as anthropologists in the U.S.

These overlapping concerns can be seen in dialogical exchanges that take place at international meetings such as the strand of linguistic anthropology within the American Anthropological Association. Indeed this dialogical exchange has been going on for some time through ongoing and long-term fieldwork carried out by American linguistic anthropologists at specific European sites. Woolard's work on the Catalan context is one example of this, as is the work of Urla on Basque, Jaffe on Corsican and Dorian on Scottish Gaelic (see Dorian 1981; Jaffe 1999; Urla 2012; Woolard 1989).

The authors of the six articles included in this special issue engage with these questions through their analyses of language and anthropology in different European settings. Their discussions range from a broad sweep on theories and concepts, to case studies and examples of fieldwork sites across different European sites. As will become apparent from a reading of individual articles, while each has a different focus, they share a set of common themes and underlying questions.

In the opening article, Godlewski explores the origins and development of the Anthropology of the Word (AW), an approach which originated at the University of Warsaw in the early 1990s and which today has become, in Godlewski's words, a 'stepsister' of the more well-known and longer established field of linguistic anthropology. In contrast with linguistic anthropology, however, whose origins are more closely rooted in the broader field of anthropology, AW emerged as a sub-discipline within the philological study of language and literature, moving beyond pure philological endeavour to one which incorporated cultural dimensions. While adopting many of the characteristics of linguistic anthropology, as Godlewski explains, it places considerably more emphasis on historical forms of linguistic practices and recognises literature and other verbal art forms as linguistic practices which are subject to anthropological study.

Groth's article also explores disciplinary boundaries but with reference to German *Volkskunde* (folklore studies). Although linguistic specificities of local cultures and language in everyday life have been integral parts of *Volkskunde* for much of the first part of the twentieth century, the discipline moved away from a philological to a more social science focus after the Second World War. Since then a linguistic dimension in an analysis of everyday culture has been pushed to the margins of scholarly activities. Beginning with a historic perspective on the role of language within the discipline, the author discusses the declining interest in linguistic perspectives in recent years and argues

for a much greater focus on language and the linguistic dimensions of everyday culture within *Volkskunde*.

Fieldwork is the focus of Nic Craith and Hill's contribution, which explores changes in ethnographic practice over recent decades brought about by globalisation, transnationalism and increased mobility. The authors explore new understandings of the field in light of this new social order which have prompted contemporary anthropologists to move away from the classic single-sited fieldwork towards multi-sited or multi-local fieldwork. The authors contend that both the field and fieldwork itself are more fluid, an idea which in many ways builds on existing ambiguity in the anthropologist's identification and bounding of the field. They argue that anthropologists are no longer restricted to being physically present in the field but can often engage with communities through virtual forms of communication in cyberspace. However, they are careful to point out that the challenges facing the anthropologist have not in fact changed. In the context of language use, anthropologists continue to ask the same questions as they did half a century ago.

Building on her previous work in the field (O'Rourke 2011; O'Rourke and Ramallo 2013; O'Rourke and Walsh 2015), O'Rourke's article explores the historicisation of the native speaker and ideologies of authenticity and anonymity in Europe's language revitalisation movements. She focuses specifically on the case of Irish in the Republic of Ireland and examines how the native speaker ideology and the opposing ideological constructs of authenticity and anonymity filter down to the belief systems and are discursively produced by social actors on the ground. In many ways O'Rourke's article resonates with some of the key issues raised by Nic Craith and Hill, in particular in her discussion of language and shifting boundaries across time and space. O'Rourke explores the re-defining of particular space in the context of globalisation and increased mobility. This redefining has characterised many of Europe's so-called minority languages, which as a result of revitalisation agendas and language policy initiatives are being used in new spaces and by new types of speakers.

In their article, Leonie Cornips and Vincent de Rooij look at questions of belonging through what they term 'language-cultural' practices. They present case studies of language and cultural practices which are linked to carnival in the Dutch province of Limburg. They consider carnival as a political force field in which opposing language and cultural practices are involved in the production of belonging, on the one hand, as an official and public-oriented membership and, on

the other hand, as a personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a place. In their two case studies, they draw on the idea put forward by American linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein, that ideology, linguistic form and the situated use of language are dialectically related. They use this approach to go beyond the disciplinary boundaries between anthropology and (socio-)linguistics in Europe.

Focusing on discourse, French traces the ideological constructions of communication that enable powerful actors in society to determine what counts as silences, lies and surpluses in narratives about violence. She draws on these ideological constructions to elucidate occlusions regarding legacies of the Civil War in the Irish Free State. She does this through a carefully crafted triangulation of numerous competing and overlapping narratives from unpublished fieldnotes, interviews, published ethnographies and other first-person accounts. Highlighting social memories of the Irish Civil War that have come to be at best distorted or misunderstood and at worst ignored all together, her contribution forwards an interesting example of discourse analysis.

Unfortunately, some topics that featured in our original call for articles could not be included in this volume. Of particular interest to us, for example, would have been the relationship between anthropology and literature, and the extent to which documents such as language memoirs can be considered as primary resources for anthropology (see Nic Craith 2012b). We also regret the lack of an article exploring the contestation of language and the relationship between language and dialect (see Nic Craith 2000). Given that we are both located in a department with a strong research focus on Sign Language, we would have been interested in a thematic contribution on language and embodiment. For these reasons, we would argue that the current volume is but a very small indicator of the range of research on language and anthropology across Europe and we look forward to many more opportunities to extend and profile this range.

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