

MULTILINGUALISM FROM BELOW

University of Antwerp, September 14-16, 2009

<http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=.MIDP>

In standard accounts of language policy and language planning, language users are too often viewed as the ‘passive receivers’ of linguistic decisions taken at the highest levels of state organization. In defiance of this tendency, the present and 2nd International MIDP [Multilingual Information Development Programme] Symposium wants to accentuate that subalternity involves, rather than excludes, agency.

Through their everyday language practices and their discursive perceptions and interpretations of linguistic realities, those who are supposed to ‘live’ the language policies never submissively ‘implement’ them, but, appropriating them, steer them in novel, unforeseen directions. It is these dialectic processes of interaction between what is designed from above and how it is responded to from below which give shape to societies’ overall patterns of multilingualism.

The Symposium organisers invite papers which aim at shedding light on these dialectical processes, or on component aspects of it, from a large variety of perspectives and without restrictions as to areal scope. Some key questions related to the theme, Multilingualism from Below, include:

How are language policies experienced by language users?

How are they responded and reacted to?

How and why do certain language policies 'work' whilst others don't?

How do top-down language policy processes measure up to changing sociolinguistic realities?

How 'useful' are language policies in empowering people and improving their lives?

How do language users' actions produce and reproduce, from the bottom up, larger sociolinguistic structures and patterns of multilingualism, both in time and in space?

Keynote speakers are Durk Gorter, Sinfree Makoni and Elana Shohamy.

Abstracts should arrive at mfb at ua ac be by 27 February 2009. They should be in MS Word format (use PDF only if absolutely necessary for font rendition) and not exceed 250 words. The choice of language for each presentation is free. Unfortunately, given budgetary restrictions, there will be no provision for interpreting services.

A select number of papers are to be taken up in the conference proceedings that will be published in the MIDP colloquia series, Studies in Language Policy in South Africa, by Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria (RSA).

The Symposium organisers are:

Pol Cuvelier, Convenor (University of Antwerp)

Reinhild Vandekerckhove (University of Antwerp)

Michael Meeuwis (University of Ghent)

Lut Teck (Institute for Higher Education in the Sciences and the Arts, Brussels)

Theodorus du Plessis (University of the Free State, Bloemfontein)

Victor Webb (University of Pretoria, Pretoria)