

## **In the Face of National Crises**

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Scholars of language policy have long recognised the processual dynamism of the object of their study (e.g. Cooper, 1990). Despite attributing this processual dynamism to factors delineated as individual, social and political, there is insufficient attention drawn to the confluence of these factors in observable expressions of language policy, and a lack of theorising with respect to the political in particular. With the conflation of language problems and political problems being the point of departure, the present panel draws together recent research into the relationship between language and the state as well as language and the nation. The panellists investigate changes to language vis-à-vis development in politics with a common focus upon national crises. As events which call into question the very *raison d'être* of political order, national crises are conceptualised as occasions when sociolinguistic transformation emerges, and when language policy comes into being. Across different nation-state configurations, the panellists explore the contestation between state and non-state actors in language policy, paying close attention to the transformative effects of language policy's own discursive dimensions (cf. Williams, 1996). Thus discursively examining language policy together with nationhood and statehood, the panellists have in effect recast language-political problems as inter-national problems played out across national borders and within geopolitical processes. The panel reveals the myriad of ways in which language forms, language ideologies and language practices are thus challenged in relation to the resettlement of earthquake victims in Mainland China, the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, the 2019 anti-extradition protests of Hong Kong, the protect-ethnic reservation movement in Nepal, and multilingualism in political advertising in post-apartheid South Africa.

Cooper, R. L. (1990). *Language Planning and Social Change*. Cambridge: CUP.

Williams, G. (1996). Language planning as discourse. In R. Singh (Ed.), *Towards a Critical Sociolinguistics* (pp. 281-304). Amsterdam: John Benjamins

**Keywords:** language change; language ideology; language policy; national crisis; the nation-state

## 1. The language of state policy in time and space

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The notion that natural disasters, and the crises they precipitate, require an official response is almost axiomatic. Equally evident are threats to the state's very own existence as a result of mismanaged natural disasters. Nonetheless, available studies of natural disasters and ensuing crises have largely bypassed the close examination of policy as official responses to natural disasters. This article presents one such examination of the language of policy launched in response to natural disasters in southwestern China since 2000. Instruments of authority pertaining to post-disaster reconstruction were analysed for the discursive treatment of pre-existing crises, potential crises as well as disaster-induced crises. Specifically, the analyses centred on aspects of reconstruction with implications for the resettlement of population and reconstitution of local communities in the same or different locations. Variations in policy treatment within and between disasters were situated within an ideological matrix, a theoretical extension of Karatani's (2004/2012) temporal concept of "discursive space". Different ways of construing belonging and citizenship within this matrix were interpreted with reference to the spatial modelling of statehood by theorists such as Lefebvre (2009), Jessop (2003), and Brenner (2004). At some of these theoretical junctures, the findings appeared to add to recent work concerning the co-evolution of discourse and disaster in the literature (e.g. Rycker and Zuridah, 2013). The article ends with theoretical reflections upon the multiple manifestations of statehood in policy and the discursive shaping of nationhood therein.

Brenner, N. (2004). *New State Spaces* Oxford: OUP.  
Jessop, B. (2003). *The Future of Capitalist State* Cambridge: Polity Press.  
Karatani, K., & Lippit, S. M. (2004/2012). *History and Repetition* New York: Columbia University Press.  
Lefebvre, H. (2009). *The Production of Space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.) Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell.  
Rycker, A. D., & Zuridah, M. D. (Eds.). (2013). *Discourse and Crisis* (Vol. 52). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

**Keywords:** *citizenship; disaster management; discourse theory; national crisis; state theory*

## 2. National language challenged

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*Discursive approaches have influenced research in language policy and planning. Agency in language policy process can be understood by examining the reproduction or challenge of the hegemonic discourse by agentive roles. In our study, we examine how vigilantes in Hong Kong policed the use of written Chinese after the Umbrella Movement in 2014. We combined poststructuralist discourse theory and the socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse studies to identify hegemonic forms of social antagonism and collectively shared social categories from 1,296 news articles, comments, and postings during 2015-18. The Findings suggest that the antagonism between Hong Kong and mainland China and associated social categories were reproduced by language vigilantes in 29 policing incidents, which had both discursive and material consequences. While language vigilantes focused on the linguistic rights of the 'locals', they denied the linguistic needs of tourists and immigrants from the mainland. As a result, simplified Chinese characters were prevented from appearing in public places.*

**Keywords:** *critical incidents; discursive agency; language policy; language ideology*

### 3. Constitutional rights or national unity?

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Language as a symbolic system and as a form of discourse is used to “impose an apprehension of established order as natural” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 169) by which the certain groups impose and perpetuate the oppressive forms of social systems irrespective of the political ideologies they are affiliated to. Various indigenous ethnic groups in Nepal contributed to the abolishment of Monarchy and establishment of new Federal Democratic Republic system in which constitutional arrangements are made to provide small portion of quotas to members of indigenous ethnic groups in the civil service employment. However, the new federal government controlled by Nepal communist party, which advocated for ethnic quotas for members of indigenous ethnic groups in civil service employments previously, abolished such ethnic reservation in its recent advertisement for a large size of civil service employment triggering a massive protest by members of various indigenous ethnic groups.

This paper examines the discourses constructed in the process of “protect ethnic reservation” movement in Nepal. Drawing on the data from interviews with actors involved, online news portals, and multimodal displays in the protest zones, we analyse how representatives from different ethnic/racial groups tend to legitimize or rationalize their discourses in relation to the issue of ethnic reservation. Analysis of the data reveals that representatives from various indigenous groups constantly refer to legal taxonomies for their protests, while the members of ruling groups (the dominant ethnic/racial group) tend to avoid referring to such legal taxonomies, but instead resort to elitist metaphors, notions of national unity, and functioning rights of constitutional bodies to justify the abolishment of ethnic quotas in the civil service employment. Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Translated by Gino Raymond and Mathew Adamson. Harvard University Press.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). Legitimation in discourse and communication. *Discourse and Communication*, 1 (1): 91-112.

**Keywords:** *ethnic reservation; political ideology; national unity*

#### 4. Crisis in the 'rainbow' nation?

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The post-apartheid South African constitution (1996), touted as one of the more progressive in the world, recognises eleven official languages (Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu) in its commitment to foster a new (multicultural) nation. However, despite these 'lofty ideals' and the existence of supportive institutions such as the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), English has consolidated its position as the de facto lingua franca of government, education, business and the media (Mesthrie, 2006). In this context, the paper examines multilingualism in political advertising of the three major parliamentary parties in South Africa during the watershed 2016 municipal and 2019 national elections, which saw mounting concerns over the country's levels of corruption and crime. The examined political advertising by the governing African National Congress (ANC) and the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) was disseminated in the form of manifestos, posters and other election paraphernalia. The paper focuses on strategic uses of linguistic varieties in this material, which foreground certain beliefs, attitudes and identities, underscoring language ideologies and hierarchies (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Weber & Horner, 2012). Consequently, the paper assesses the top-down language policy, linguistic diversity and shifts in status of indigenous and colonial languages as mirrored in political advertising.

Irvine J. T., Gal S. (2000) Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In: Kroskrity, P. V. (ed.) *Regimes of language: Ideologies, politics and identities*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Mesthrie R. (2006). Language, transformation and development: A sociolinguistic appraisal of post-apartheid South African language policy and practice. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 24(2): 151-163.

Weber J., Horner K. (2012). Language and identities. In: Weber J., Horner K. (eds.) *Introducing multilingualism: A social approach*. Canada: Routledge, 82-92.

**Keywords:** *language ideology; language policy; multilingualism; political discourse; South Africa*