CALL FOR PAPERS

Invited speakers

- François Gin, Université de Genève, Switzerland
- Reine Meylaerts, K. U. Leuven, Belgium
- Vanamala Viswanatha, Azim Premji University, India

In May 2016, the international interdisciplinary conference “For and Against Models of Official Multiculturalism and Multilingualism” will welcome experts from a broad range of disciplines (education, law, linguistics and language planning, (comparative) literary studies, political science, sociology, translation studies) to exchange views on official multilingualism in national, regional and municipal contexts.

While official multilingualism promotes and protects equal linguistic rights in legislation, often the constitution, for historic and symbolic reasons official languages do not always enjoy equal status in practice. Unequal cultural and linguistic power relations have been studied by numerous scholars (Bastarache, Brachandall, Cardinal, Casanova, Conrick, Cronin, Lamarre, Meylaerts, to name but a few) in various disciplines (e.g. the law, political science, sociology, translation studies) and are recognized as a major hurdle to achieving true equality.

In anticipation of Canada’s 150th birthday as an officially bilingual country founded in 1867, the McGill conference will invite scholars to present research findings on the challenges and successes of official multilingualism. Conference papers will be a 20-minute summary of the article submitted one month earlier to conference organizers. Scholars will be invited to take a dispassionate, cold and hard look at the socio-linguistic realities of official language groups in various countries and regions. Successful examples of equality will be presented as models to learn from. By contrast, cases where official language groups do not enjoy equal status will be presented in the aim of proposing multidisciplinary solutions to correct the power imbalance and enable the disfavoured language group(s) to move towards greater equality. Given that some scholars hold that, in a certain sense, tensions and conflicts are necessary for societies to survive (cf. de Certeau, Maffesoli, Harel), studies on ‘productive’ socio-linguistic imbalance in contexts of official multilingualism are also of interest. A broad variety of viewpoints is thus strongly encouraged.

The conference will provide a forum for the presentation of case studies and models of many of the world’s officially multilingual countries (Belgium, Belarus, Bolivia, Burundi, Cameroon, Finland, India, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Paraguay,
Rwanda, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, among others, and—last but not least—Canada.

PROPOSED THEMES:
- Aboriginal and/versus colonial languages
- Cultural policies and institutions
- Education
- Government policies and institutions
- Language planning and the status of non-official languages
- Language, information and technology
- Laws and jurisprudence
- Translation

Papers that compare and contrast another model with Canadian model(s) are particularly welcome.

The conference languages will be English and French.

Please send your 300-word proposal in English or French along with the completed attached form to the three conference organizers: Jane Koustas (jkoustas@brocku.ca), Gillian Lane-Mercier (Gillian.lane-mercier@mcgill.ca) and Denise Merkle (denise.merkle@umoncton.ca).

KEY DATES
- Deadline for sending out acceptance and rejection letters: June 2015.
- Deadline for submission of preliminary articles: 1 March 2016.
- Deadline for submission of definitive articles: 1 June 2016.

VENUE: McGill University (Montréal, Québec, Canada)

Academic committee
Linda Cardinal, University of Ottawa
Maeve Conrick, University College Dublin
Michael Cronin, City University Dublin
Valérie Dullion, Université de Genève
François Grin, Université de Genève
Ilse Feinauer, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
Jane Koustas, Brock University
Gillian Lane-Mercier, McGill University
Denise Merkle, Université de Moncton
Reine Meylaerts, K. U. Leuven
Vanamala Viswanatha, Azim Premji University

15 February 2015