CONCLUSION

Languaging and Ethnifying

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In naming language and ethnicity as a verb instead of a noun, I bring to focus that it is people—individuals and groups—who use discursive and ethnic practices to signify what it is they want to be. The ability "to language" and "to ethnify" is precisely then the most important signifying role of human beings—that which gives life meaning. It is through languaging and ethnifying that people perform their identifying.

Language does not merely exist as an autonomous and a stable skill, and neither is ethnicity a static characteristic. Languaging refers to the discursive practices of people (Shohamy 2006; Yngve 1996). And ethnifying points to the act of signifying and calling attention to an identity by pointing to certain ethnic practices, including languaging. Thus, languaging and ethnifying are practices that are in dialogic relationship with one another. It is through their dialogicity that they signify what the individual and/or the Community wants to engage in interactions considered important (Fishman, this volume, 2010).

The dialogic relationship of languaging and ethnifying is important because as Joshua A. Fishman has repeatedly stated, it illuminates processes of cultural change and continuity. Thus, the contributors to this volume have used language and ethnicity *practices* as the lens to study important processes of how individuals and groups have transformed themselves or remained the same by making languaging practices the focal center of our acts of identity. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) discuss how these acts of identity are the ways in which individuals project their concepts of language and ethnic identity (and I would say their practices of languaging and ethnifying) on others and thus constitute groups.

In appealing to the concept of languaging, I agree with Makoni and Pennycook (2007) who argue that our present conception of "language" was originally constructed by states that wanted to consolidate political power. To do so, states and

their representatives established language academies; encouraged the preparation of grammars, dictionaries, and treatises to strengthen and standardize languages; and encouraged the enumeration of languages in ways that masked their differences or similarities. Errington (2001) has shown how in colonial contexts it was missionaries and colonial officers who imposed these "invented" monolithic languages onto specific territories. Alexander (this volume) quotes Vail (1991: 12) who says, "thus firm, non-porous and relatively inelastic ethnic boundaries, many of which were highly arbitrary, came to be constructed and were then strengthened by the growth of stereotypes of 'the other.'"

Scholars who work in multilingual communities have also criticized the notion of "a language." Mühlhäusler (2000: 358) has said that the "notion of 'a language' makes little sense in most traditional societies where people engage in multiple discursive practices among themselves." This is also the position held by Suzanne Romaine in speaking about Papua New Guinea. Romaine (1994: 12) says, "the very concept of discrete languages is probably a European cultural artifact fostered by procedures such as literacy and standardization. Any attempt to count distinct languages will be an artifact of classificatory procedures rather than a reflection of communicative practices." Our traditional conception of language is thus socially constructed, and yet, it is a most important way of signifying.

Language, as a social construction, is not only an instrument for communication but also a semiotic and symbolic tool. Bakhtin (1986: 67–68) says that "language arises from man's need to express himself, to objectify himself. . . . And if language also serves as a means of communication, this is a secondary function that has nothing to do with its essence." Fishman (1989: 32) puts forward that "language is even more than symbolic of the ethnic message, it is a prime ethnic value in and of itself." That language and ethnicity have something to do with each other is indexed by the fact that they often share the same designation—French for the French, Italian for the Italians, and English for the English. But as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 4) suggest, "languages may not only be 'markers of identity' but also sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity or discrimination."

By putting alongside each other's contributions on this topic by authors with different disciplinary, methodological, and regional perspectives, this Handbook illuminates how it is that language, ethnicity, and identity are indeed perspectival and contextual and depend on circumstances that modify them, create them, or recreate them. It is through the dialogicity (Bakhtin 1981) of these voices and interactions with languaging and ethnifying practices that we begin to understand what Joshua A. Fishman says in the introduction—that language, ethnicity, and identity are complexly attitudinal and attitudinal complex and that they are performed through their interaction with other meanings and voices, thus conditioning and altering each other.

This chapter, which serves as conclusion, starts by synthesizing how language and ethnic identity have been conceptualized throughout history and using different lenses. These very different positions on language and ethnic identity are all represented in this volume. Although it is presented here in a historical context, it is important to remember that space is as important as time. Thus, different social and national groups have different wishes and aspirations, as we see in the

contributions to this Handbook, resulting in views about language and ethnic identity that are highly diverse.

The chapter ends by addressing three main threads that are intertwined in the many voices in this text:

1. Languaging and ethnifying are manipulable, performed and imagined, and yet important.
2. Languaging and ethnifying are impacted by globalization and also by the local.
3. Languaging and ethnifying can be disrupted or supported by education.

We first turn to the many different positions on language and ethnic identity that are represented in this volume.

Positioning Language and Ethnic Identity

By Ofelia García and Zeena Zakharia

Our conceptions of language and ethnic identity and the links between them have had different meanings throughout history.[1] In premodern pan-Mediterranean and European thought, language and ethnicity were viewed as naturally linked. However, it was not until the eighteenth century that attention was paid to the nature of this link. The German Romantics, and in particular Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), defined ethnic identity as natural and immovable and closely connected to the language people spoke. For Herder, language was the surest way to safeguard or recover the authenticity that people had inherited from their ancestors, as well as to pass it on to the young and future generations. He writes, "without its own language, a *Volk* is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms" (Herder as cited in Fishman 1972: 48).

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) also espoused a strong link between language and ethnic identity. In his *Reden an die Deutsche Nation* (1808), he associates language, nation, and state and says, "Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself. . . . They understand each other and have the power to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole" (quoted in Kedourie 1993: 64).

Frank Boas (1858–1942) was the first who offered a nuanced critique of the primordialist positioning of the German Romantics, pointing out that historical, social, and geographic experiences create differences and that human beliefs and activities have to be understood in terms of their own cultures. Around the same time, Max Weber (1864–1920) indicated that belonging to an ethnic group was a belief in a common origin and descent and depends on "consciousness of kind" (Weber 1978: 378).

In thinking about the relationship between language and cognition, Edward Sapir (1884–1939) and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941), developed another lens to consider the possible links between language and ethnic identity. Sapir asserts that "a particular language tends to become the fitting expression of a