Introduction: Language, Migration and Anti-Cosmopolitanism

In the literature on language policy and language planning in modern nation-states, language is seen to be central both to the practical, instrumental processes of nation building (for example, in relation to citizenship) and to the symbolic, integrative processes of developing a national ‘culture’ (for example, in relation to national identity) (Wright 2004: 42). Standard languages, in particular, are seen as both a vehicle for articulating and achieving common political goals and a manifestation of a common purpose and singular identity. While these processes are sometimes cast as political and ideological issues respectively, I want to argue that discourses of citizenship are not separate from, but rather subsumed in, discourses of national identity, and that recent public debates and national policies on the relationship between language and citizenship in western European states are not merely issues of political ‘management’ but part of a larger ideological process and constitute a classic example of what Blommaert (1999) calls a language ideological debate.

---

1. Ingrid Piller (2001) argues along similar lines in her critique of naturalization language testing in a range of contexts (including, as in the present paper, Germany). For a recent critical analysis of debates on language testing régimes in relation to citizenship in Britain, see Blackledge (2004).
This process has, of course, to do with challenges to national sovereignty (in economic, political and cultural terms) in the context of social and political change in Europe and in particular in relation to perceived threats to national integrity posed by large-scale migration. The movement of people brings with it the movement of languages, and this arguably most salient item in the baggage of migrant individuals and groups confronts most immediately what Blommaert and Verschueren (1998: 194-5) call the ‘dogma of homogeneity’: ‘a view of society in which differences are seen as dangerous and centrifugal and in which the “best” society is suggested to be one without intergroup differences’. For, as the literature on language and nationalism has repeatedly shown, the fundamental paradox on which the dominant discourse in most European nation-states is still constructed is that these manifestly multilingual societies are conceived as essentially and irrevocably monolingual (see, for example, Billig 1995, Fishman 1989, May 2001; and cf Ingrid Gogolin’s discussion of the ‘monolingual habitus’ of multilingual states: Gogolin 1994). Until relatively recently, the ‘dominant ethnies’ (May 2001: 80-2) in these states have been able to maintain their dogma of linguistic homogeneity (whether or not they inscribe it in constitutional and other legal apparatus) through a combination of implicitly embedding the idea of a ‘national language’ in state institutions such as education and public employment and the recourse to notions of established tradition and ‘common sense’. Indigenous or long-standing ethnolinguistic minorities have been absorbed into this homogeneous political culture by granting limited linguistic rights on the one hand and promoting what Kymlicka (2001: 25) calls a ‘societal culture’ on the other: ‘all liberal democracies’, he argues, ‘have encouraged citizens to view their life-chances as tied up with participation in common societal institutions that operate in [the ‘national’ language]’. As May (2001: 81) points out, this assimilatory pressure places non-dominant groups in a double bind: ‘If they resist, their attempts at maintaining a distinct identity are often labelled as a parochial and anti-national form of communalism. […] If they acquiesce, and assimilate, minority groups may still face exclusion from the full benefits of a ‘national’ identity determined and delimited by the dominant ethnie.’

But post-1989 the processes of rapid social transformation and increasing population flows in Europe have reinforced a growing instability of beliefs in and understandings of ‘national’ integrity: for example, debates in the UK on regionalism, ‘Englishness’ (see, for example, Blunkett 2005) and the popular image of the ‘disunited kingdom’; the recent debates in Germany on multiculturalism, patriotism and the concept of the *Leitkultur*; and ruptures in the political culture in Austria over social and ethnic inclusion. Governments of radically different colours in Germany and Austria (as well as, for example, the Netherlands) have reacted simultaneously by introducing new legal instruments to control the flow of migrants, which include the statutory requirement to demonstrate proficiency in the ‘national’ language. It therefore no longer appears to me possible to

2. In German texts, the term *Landessprache* is now frequently used to avoid unpalatable connotations of the conventional term *Nationalsprache*. In its exclusivity, however, it is no less debatable.
regard the question of the relationship between language and citizenship exclusively as a matter of principle in liberal democracies. Rather we have to acknowledge the historicity of discourses on language and citizenship and analyse them in the context of the national histories of the states in which they occur. From this perspective, overtly political (nationist) activities promoted as pragmatic management measures may be revealed as tacitly ideological (nationalist) operations intended to salvage the integrity of the nation based on the myth of a stable monolingual norm that is increasingly at odds with, and under assault from, multilingual realities. For the denial of societal multilingualism underpins and reinforces discourses that reject the status of (particularly) Germany as an Einwanderungsland (country of immigration). For example, former President Richard von Weizsäcker’s categorical assertion: ‘By European standards we [i.e. Germany] are more or less a classic country of immigration’ (Nach europäischen Maßstäben sind wir nahezu ein klassisches Einwanderungsland) (Weizsäcker 2001) echoes the insistence of the Süssmuth Commission on Migration that

*It is a fact that Germany has been a country of immigration for a long time. … The assertion that ‘Germany is not a country of immigration’ used to be a defining political principle but has become untenable as the cornerstone of migration and integration policy. (Zuwanderung gestalten – Integration fördern 2001: 1)*

*Faktisch ist Deutschland seit langem eine Einwanderungsland. … Die in der Vergangenheit vertretene politische und normative Festlegung “Deutschland ist kein Einwanderungsland” ist als Maxime der Zuwanderungs- und Integrationspolitik unhaltbar geworden.*

Yet the counter-discourse, as represented, for example, by Jörg Schönbohm (Christian Democrat member of the Berlin Senate), has by no means been overcome:

*Ideological maxims – Germany is there for all! – are inflated into demands that are imbued with the irresistible appearance of humanist ideals. … One of these maxims is the oft repeated mantra that Germany is a country of immigration and that it should develop its policies accordingly. It is claimed that we are obliged to do this for historical reasons and because we live in a prosperous region. Since the numbers of foreigners coming to Germany have been high for decades, so the argument goes, Germany is de facto already a country of immigration. But this very argumentation is not only problematic but superficial and simply wrong. (Schönbohm 1998)*

*Ideologische Maximen – Deutschland ist für alle da! – werden zu Maximalforderungen erhoben, die sich mit dem unwiderstehlichen Schein humanistischer Ideale umgeben. … Eine dieser Maximen ist die gebetsmühlenartig wiederholte Behauptung, Deutschland sei ein Einwanderungsland und müsse seine Politik*

Even having reached an apparent consensus on the 2004 Immigration Act, members of the German parliament clearly disagreed in the closing debate on what they were giving their approval to. On the one hand, Volker Beck, a Green MP, declared categorically:

*Germany is a country of immigration (Einwanderungsland). With the passage of this Immigration Act (Zuwanderungsgesetz) this fact is now recognised and will be given the official seal of approval today in the Bundestag and next week in the Bundesrat.* (Deutscher Bundestag 2004: 10707)

*Deutschland ist ein Einwanderungsland. Mit der Verabschiedung des Zuwanderungsgesetz wird diese Tatsache anerkannt und heute vom Bundestag sowie in der nächsten Woche vom Bundesrat amtlich besiegelt.*

On the other hand, Peter Müller, a leading Christian Democrat who had worked on the final compromise, insisted:

*This act is an act for restricting immigration (Zuwanderungsbegrenzungsgesetz). It puts an end to the idea that Germany can be transformed into a multicultural immigration society.* (ibid: 10723)

*Dieses Gesetz ist ein Zuwanderungsbegrenzungsgesetz. Es macht Schluss mit der Vorstellung, Deutschland könne zu einer multikulturellen Einwanderungsgesellschaft umgestaltet werden.*

In his recent paper on aspects of ‘public language awareness’ (*öffentliches Sprachbewusstsein*) in Germany, Wolf Peter Klein (2001) explores the alleged lack of ‘language loyalty’ amongst many German-speakers. In Klein’s terms, language loyalty requires an active commitment to the idea of a *Sprachkultur* that is implicitly monolingual: it entails declaring loyalty to a particular language, and this may be manifested in a wide variety of practices (from writing letters to newspapers on ‘good’ and ‘bad’ usage to founding ‘language preservation societies’). Language disloyalty, therefore, is said to be apparent in the neglect of a particular language, whether through a lack of concern for the ‘condition’ of the language (‘sloppy’ grammar, use of inappropriate register, flood of anglicisms etc) or through the relegation of the language itself to a secondary status within its ‘native constituency’: for example, through the growing practice of accepting English as having quasi-official status as the language of the boardroom in multinational businesses – even when, like Siemens for example, they are based in Germany – and as the language of instruction in degree programmes. On the political level, then, authorita-
tive institutions such as national or regional governments can demonstrate language loyalty by, for example, establishing curricular requirements for the teaching of a ‘national’ language or implementing orthographical reforms. Language loyalty becomes an overtly ideological issue, however, when particular statements are made about the relationship between the knowledge of a particular language and the right to belong to a particular social grouping or community.

In this paper, I would like to explore this contention in relation to the new policies on migration and integration in Germany and Austria, focusing on two principal questions: first, why is proficiency in a single ‘national’, ‘legitimate’ language invoked as the touchstone of social cohesion and integration in these societies, and secondly, what do the language requirements enshrined in these policies represent? I shall begin by outlining briefly the main relevant features of the two policies, and then discuss the ideological effects of these measures in terms of the respective official discourses of migration in the two states.

Regulating Migration Through Language: the German Zuwanderungsgesetz and the Austrian Integrationsvereinbarung

The new Immigration Act in Germany – passed by the parliament in July 2004 and due to come into effect on 1 January 2005 – was preceded in 2000 by the reform of the law on citizenship rights (Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz), which introduced a qualified version of the *jus soli* (principle based on place of birth) in addition to the more restrictive *jus sanguinis* (principle based on descent). According to the new law, children of foreign parents born in Germany after 1 January 2000 automatically qualify for German citizenship as long as at least one of their parents has been living legally in the country for eight years or more. Adults are now entitled to apply for citizenship after eight years’ residence in Germany, instead of after 15 years as had previously been the case, but they must have an ‘adequate knowledge of German’ and declare their allegiance to the German constitution. Following debates at the drafting stage on the possibility of dual citizenship, a compromise formula was established, according to which anyone holding citizenship of another state in addition to German citizenship must choose one or the other by their 23rd birthday. The liberalisation of the law was intended not to facilitate, let alone encourage, further immigration, but rather – in the words of the Interior Minister Otto Schily – as ‘a contribution to internal peace in Germany’ (einen Beitrag zum inneren Frieden), since ‘for us, it is above all about integration’ (uns geht es vor allem um die Integration) (quoted in Fietz 1999). What is meant by integration, though, is not always clear and I shall come back to this: it has become a key but hotly contested concept in discourses of migration and citizenship in Germany and Austria in recent years4.

4. However, giving substance to the concept of integration has now been identified as a key objective of the newly founded Ministry for Migration and Refugees (see http://www.bamf.de/template/index_integration.htm).
There were repeated calls at the time from the conservative opposition parties not to relax the conditions for entry into Germany but rather, on the contrary, to restrict further immigration and at the same time to develop a clear integration policy for those foreigners already in the country. Jürgen Rüttgers (Christian Democrat), for example, insisted in an article in *Die Welt*:

*We must ensure that those who live here speak German. We must make sure that there are no classes in schools in which more than 50% of the children are foreigners. We must see to it that young foreigners in Germany receive training. We must make sure that there are no ghettos in our cities, which lead to social conflicts*. (Fietz 1998)

*Wir müssen dafür sorgen, dass diejenigen, die hier leben, die deutsche Sprache sprechen. Wir müssen verhindern, dass es in den Schulen Klassen gibt, in der mehr als 50 Prozent Ausländerkinder sind. Wir müssen dafür sorgen, dass ausländische Jugendliche in Deutschland eine Lehre machen. Wir müssen verhindern, dass es in unseren Städten Ghettos gibt, die zu sozialen Konflikten führen.*

and a similar argument is advanced in another article, by Michael Glos of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU):

*The aim of integration is to achieve binding convictions. Therefore, anyone who wants to live here permanently must first of all learn German. This is the most important pre-requisite for mutual understanding and successful co-existence. Integrating into our society also involves accepting and observing our constitutional principles. Integration is determined by mutual give and take. Integration must be promoted but also required*. (Glos 2000)


5. Note the collocation of arguments, and especially their sequence, here – how linguistic proficiency heads the list that leads to social conflict via inadequate education and insufficient training posts.

6. Note that despite the insistence on the need for ‘give and take’ it is not clear where the reciprocity would lie here, and there is no mention of an educational policy that might support and promote the learning of migrants’ languages. Note also the rhetorical use of ‘therefore’ (*deshalb*) in the second sentence to invest a string of assertions with axiomatic force, and the sequence of the propositions in the last sentence, which emphasises required over promoted.
A report on the position of families of foreign origin, prepared by an independent commission and delivered to the government in October 2000, stressed the same themes but emphasised what its authors saw as the positive contributions of the families to the process of integration. The government’s commentary on the report concludes with the following declaration:

*The Federal Government considers the targeted support of language learning an important means of achieving integration. It is planning for all immigrants who hope to attain the right to stay here a programme of language learning that is suited to their needs. … Integration is a long-term task and its success also depends on whether the German population helps foreign families to identify with the country and to find a new homeland (Heimat) here.* (Bundesregierung 2002d)

*Die Bundesregierung sieht in der gezielten Sprachförderung ein wichtiges Mittel zur Integration der Zugewanderten. Sie plant für alle Zuwanderinnen und Zuwanderer mit Aussicht auf dauerhaftes Bleiberecht eine bedarfsgerechte Sprachförderung. … Integration ist eine dauerhafte Aufgabe und das Gelingen hängt auch davon ab, ob die deutsche Bevölkerung ausländischen Familien hilft, sich mit dem Land zu identifizieren und hier eine neue Heimat zu finden.*

In later statements relating to the planning of the new immigration law, the principal objective of improving integration continues to be stressed and language proficiency identified as a major issue. For example, the Minister responsible for *Aussiedler* (ethnic Germans migrating to Germany from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union), Jochen Welt, identified the key problems affecting the integration of *Aussiedler* as:

- Insufficient or no knowledge of German amongst accompanying family members (in the case of more than 75% of new arrivals)
- cultural distance from the indigenous population
- the difficult job market situation

(Bundesregierung 2002a)

- unzureichende oder keine Deutschkenntnise der mitreisenden Familienangehörigen (bei mehr als 75 Prozent der Neuankömmlinge)
- kultureller Abstand zur einheimischen Bevölkerung
- die schwierige Arbeitsmarktlage.

7. No definition is offered of what is meant in this context by ‘insufficient’.
and set out a 4-point plan to tackle the causes of these problems, the first of which was the provision of substantial financial support for language learning (859 million DM in 2001). However, the new policy included a stick as well as a carrot: the new immigration law was to specify a language test for the families of Aussiedler, and Welt made it clear that he anticipated this would act not only as a means of improving integration for those already in Germany, but also as a deterrent for those who might be contemplating applying for entry to the country (see also Bundesregierung 2002b). Language proficiency was therefore to be at the heart of the twin-track policy: ‘Whoever demands better integration of Aussiedler must say yes to immigration control and to the support of integration’ (Wer eine bessere Integration der Aussiedler fördert, der muss ja zur Zuwanderungssteuerung und Integrationsförderung sagen) (Bundesregierung 2002a).

The Immigration Law was passed by the Bundestag and ratified by the second chamber, the Bundesrat, in March 2002. It was due to come into effect on 1 January 2003, but on 18 December 2002 the Constitutional Court declared it null and void due to incorrect voting procedures in the Bundesrat. It was only after protracted negotiations in the Mediation Committee (Vermittlungsausschuß) of the Bundestag that a revised version was finally agreed and re-presented to parliament. The original version was not an entirely new law, but rather a radical rewriting of existing law, introduced according to government statements to address three main aims (Bundesregierung 2002b):

- to control and restrict immigration in relation to the integration capacity of the federal republic;
- to meet Germany’s economic and job market interests but also to meet our humanitarian commitments and our obligations under international law;
- to recruit highly qualified personnel for jobs that in spite of high domestic unemployment cannot be filled at the moment; this will create new jobs and increase the competitiveness of the German economy and German science.

The decisive factors guiding the new policy were the concept of the ‘capacity for integration’ (Integrationsfähigkeit) on the one hand, and Germany’s economic interests and the demands of the labour market on the other. The overall aims were to reduce the
absolute number of immigrants while giving priority to highly skilled personnel required to plug the skills gap in the German job market. Language is again identified as one of the key issues in the current circumstances; among the problems the law was expected to address were these (Bundesregierung 2002b):

- young foreigners up to the age of 16 join their family members in Germany without linguistic knowledge or useable training;
- many foreigners have little or no knowledge of German;
- supporting measures for integration, such as language learning, are neither sought nor adequately provided.

The Immigration Law that was finally agreed was Interior Minister Schily’s ‘flagship project’, which he hailed as representing ‘the most modern immigration law in Europe’ (das modernste Zuwanderungsrecht Europas) (Bundesregierung 2002e) and which he declared to be ‘a historic turning point’ (eine historische Wende) because ‘we recognise that we have, and will continue to have, immigration’ (weil wir anerkennen, dass wir Zuwanderung haben und weiter haben werden) (Schily 2004). It contains statutory provisions for language instruction and so-called orientation courses, the costs of which are to be borne by the government. Basic and advanced language courses will last approximately 300 hours each and in each case the course is to be completed within one year. The orientation courses, covering aspects of Germany’s legal system, culture and history, will last 30 hours and will be taught in German following completion of the advanced language course. All foreigners who intend to take up permanent residence in Germany have an entitlement to participate in these courses. However, they will be obligatory for all those who do not know German, and ‘sufficient’ knowledge of German and of the legal and social system will be a condition for the granting of the right of permanent residence. As the government statement puts it: ‘Failure to participate will have consequences for the right to stay in the country’ (Der Verstoß gegen die Teilnahmepflicht hat aufenthaltsrechtliche Auswirkungen) (Bundesministerium des Innern 2002).

8. Note that he uses the term Zuwanderung, now preferred in official migration discourses, rather than the older term Einwanderung; as Robert Gould (forthcoming) argues, Zuwanderung implies (temporary) migration while Einwanderung is taken to mean (permanent) immigration. The terms are therefore indexical of radically divergent discourses and political positions.
One of the most contentious issues in the negotiations over the redrafting of the new law concerned questions of national security in the wake of the Iraq War and terrorist attacks in Spain and elsewhere in the early months of 2004. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Government came under increasing pressure from the opposition parties to impose tighter constraints on migration into and through Germany. Although in this context the question of language proficiency may seem marginal, its potential as an instrument of social control brought it back to prominence in the negotiations. One clear consequence of this, for example, is the extension of the requirement to take the language and orientation courses to migrants who have been living in Germany for some time already (so-called Bestandsausländer) if they are deemed to be ‘in particular need of integration’ (besonders integrationsbedürftig).

Integration is also the key concept in the official discourse of migration in Austria, where the so-called ‘Integration Agreement’ (Integrationsvereinbarung) came into force on 1 January 2003. Here too the professed aim is ‘to build a bridge between all people who live in Austria in order to enable them to live together in peace and understanding’ (ein Brückenbau zwischen allen in Österreich lebenden Menschen, um ein friedliches und verständnisvolles Zusammenleben zu ermöglichen) (Austrian Government statement cited in Migration Online Austria 2002) and it is confidently asserted that:

Through the creation of an integration agreement the provision of language learning opportunities in the educational sector will be reinforced, cultural and social cohesion will be promote, fear and anxiety in the indigenous population will be reduced, social abuses will be contained, and opportunities for occupational development will be improved. (ibid.)

Mit der Schaffung einer Integrationsvereinbarung werden die Angebote zum Sprachwerb im Bildungsbereich verstärkt, das kulturelle und soziale Zusammenleben gefördert, Ängste und Sorgen der heimischen Bevölkerung abgebaut, sozialer Missbrauch eingedämmt und Chancen für eine Weiterentwicklung im beruflichen Bereich verbessert.

These remarkable effects are promised on the basis of a 100-hour language course, that will cover the following areas:

- simple, basic knowledge of the German language for the purposes of communication and reading simple texts;
- everyday topics, bureaucratic procedures, knowledge about the country and citizenship, and
- basic values of the European value community.
(Bundesministerium für Inneres 2002)

- einfache Grundkenntnisse der deutschen Sprache zur Kommunikation und zum Lesen einfacher Texte
• Themen des Alltags, Vewaltungsabläufe, Landes- und Staatsbürgerschaftskunde sowie
• Grundwerte der europäischen Wertegemeinschaft.

The course is obligatory for all new migrants (unless they can prove adequate knowledge of German), who will have to pay 50% of the costs themselves (the other 50% will be paid by the state or, in the case of so-called ‘key workers’, by employers). Furthermore, as in Germany, the requirement is backdated, so that it applies to all migrants seeking extension of their residence permits who have been legally in Austria since 1 January 1998. Again, as in Germany, the acquisition by foreign migrants of (a limited degree of) linguistic proficiency in German is regarded as critical for the achievement of social integration, and the emphasis of the new measures is clearly determined by economic and labour market requirements. The right to temporary residence, for one year, is granted only ‘if a quota place is available and in response to demand in the regional job market’ (im Falle eines vorhandenen Quotenplazes und eines regionalen Bedarfs des Arbeitsmarktes) (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2002); and key employees of international organisations, amongst others, are exempted from the language course requirement (see: http://www.bmi.gv.at/downloadarea/fremdenwesen/Ausnahmen_Integrationsguide.pdf).

However, apart from the much shorter duration of the language course (100 hours, as opposed to 300 or 600 hours in Germany), there has from the outset been a significantly greater emphasis on enforcement in the Austrian policy, as sanctions apply if the courses are not completed within a strict schedule. Migrants who are required to take the course must do so within one year of receiving their temporary residence permit. If they fail to complete it successfully in this time, their permit will be extended, but if they do not complete the course within the next 6 months the state’s contribution to the costs will be reduced from 50% to 25%. State support will be completely withdrawn if the condition has not been met by the end of the second year, and if the course has not been started by this stage a fine of 100 Euro will be imposed. This fine will be increased to 200 Euro if the course has not been completed after 3 years, and if it has not been started the residence permit will not be renewed. The final deadline is the end of the fourth year, when the permit will not be renewed unless the course has been completed (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2002; see also Smit 2002).

The Integration Agreement proposed by the centre- and far-right coalition government aroused widespread protest, not only on the part of the opposition in parliament but also amongst academic experts in language learning and many groups fighting discrimination and racism (see, for example, “Integrationsvertrag”? Nicht mit uns!” 2002; Boeckmann et al 2003; verbal 2002). And Eva Linsinger, in an article with the Foreigner Talk headline ‘Du müssen integrieren’ published in Der Standard (9 February 2002), argues:
True to the tradition established by SPÖ [Socialist] interior ministers, ‘integration’ is defined only in terms of limitations for migrants, not also as a duty for Austria. Of course: linguistic knowledge is an important pre-requisite for integration, inadequate German is a serious barrier to integration. But it’s not the only one. … The ÖVP [the conservative Austrian People’s Party] and the FPÖ [the far right Freedom Party] have failed to dismantle barriers to integration [e.g. lack of voting rights, restricted access to welfare rights and social housing] which the state had erected – and require foreigners to overcome the barrier of language.


The Ideological Effects of Language Policies

Both the similarities and the contrasts between the German and Austrian laws are striking. Their motivation and principal purpose appears to be (the perceived need) to redefine the scope and scale of immigration. However, my interest here is not to evaluate the relative merits and demerits of the two policies, but rather to explore what seems to me to be a common underlying theme, which might be referred to as the ‘post-nationalist’ ideology of national languages (again, see also Piller 2001).

The issue I am concerned with, then, is not the importance of having access to the linguistic resources that are necessary for participation in political processes and engagement with social institutions: this I take to be axiomatic in any liberal democracy. What I want to focus on is the naturalisation in political discourse of ideas about what constitutes legitimate forms of communication and expression. In this case, what this involves is the exposing of the established, ‘common-sense’ position that social integration depends on a unilateral effort of the incoming minority to learn the ‘national’ language of the state, as – in Gal and Woolard’s term (2001: 4) - a particular ‘régime of representation’. This is, as they argue, especially important when ‘the establishment of a “natural” phenomenon … authorizes political programmes’ [scare quotes added].

Recall here the repeated emphasis on achieving integration, above all through the acquisition by incoming migrants of a certain degree of linguistic proficiency in German. Whatever else may be understood by integration, therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that it is taken to mean ‘the integration of migrants into the “host” community’ and not the ‘integration of migrants and the indigenous population’, for the burden of action is placed solely on individual migrants – and little, if anything, is said about rights that may accrue to the individual, only the obligations imposed on them. Furthermore,
if a particular degree of linguistic proficiency is essential for integration, why does this apply only to some migrants and not to others? Either it is, as official discourses appear to insist, a fundamental principle or it is not.

There is an alternative interpretation of these policies, however, that may account for their apparent contradictions. According to this view, reducing the observable evidence of otherness (as an irritant or affront to the singularity of the dominant monolingual majority) and re-asserting the authority of the majority through the sole legitimacy of ‘its’ language are more important than enabling or empowering the multilingual minority and fostering social integration based on reciprocal accommodation of indigenous and immigrant populations: in other words, Otto Schily’s apparent faux pas in an interview with the Süddeutsche Zeitung (Prantl 2002) – ‘the best form of integration is assimilation’ (die beste Form der Integration ist die Assimilierung) - may actually have revealed the real intention (and the appeal of this objective to large parts of the German – not to mention Austrian – electorate probably helps to explain the rapid and vehement rebuttals from his SPD colleagues and Green Party members). This reading seems to me to be supported by at least three arguments.

First, in official statements relating to migration policy, such as those already referred to above, there seems to be a link – not explicit but implied through the collocation of comments on linguistic proficiency and other requirements for citizenship – between public commitment to German monolingualism and what Milroy (2001: 242), with some irony, calls ‘democratic ideals and generally proper and civilised behaviour’: multilingualism is then not so much a hindrance to the social welfare of minority populations as a threat to the prevailing monolingual order. Secondly, the limited nature (especially in Austria) of the required language programmes has been attacked by teaching professionals and others as inadequate and unrealistic (see verbal 2002), but it could be argued that a minimal proficiency is sufficient to meet the implicit aim of the policy: to embed in law and in the public consciousness the principle that knowledge of German is a necessary condition for citizenship – the ability of migrants to use German in order to exercise their rights as citizens (or even merely as residents) is of secondary importance. Even if the level of support for language learning in Germany is more realistic than in Austria, the recent emphasis on using linguistic proficiency as a tool for policing migration seems to lend weight to this view. Thirdly, the requirement to ‘learn German’ is specified in such a way as to emphasise the (written) standard variety. This reinforces the ‘dogma of homogeneity’ rather than promoting the purported objective of assisting integration into the practices of everyday life. At the same time, the migrants themselves are homogenised as a one-dimensional social category (‘non-German-speakers’), which disregards their highly disparate linguistic starting points (for example, different degrees of literacy in their first language, different writing systems), and of course the new rules do not apply to EU citizens. Furthermore, while the legislation is silent on migrants’ needs and desires to maintain their other languages there is an implication by omission that this kind of language loyalty is of no importance and maybe even suspect.
Conclusions

Postulating a necessary relationship between a ‘national’ language and citizenship seems anachronistic at a time characterised by moves away from the fixity of categories of nationhood and so forth. However, strong undercurrents of national forms of identification have not abated even in a time dominated by economic, political and cultural globalisation – or rather, perhaps, precisely for that reason. This contemporary manifestation of linguistic nationalism operates at a more covert level than earlier forms: the converse of the 19th century project of constructing or legitimating nations, this seems to be a defensive reaction to the 21st century emergence of transnational and cosmopolitan communities.

In this context, of course, the discourse of English as the global language plays a key role. But English may be accepted as an instrument of policy in non-English-speaking countries (for example in university programmes or in multinational companies – see above) to the extent that it is not perceived as a threat to national cohesion, because English is deemed to have been deracinated from any territorial Heimat and released from any national or cultural ties (see Brutt-Griffler 2002). The incursion of other languages, however, is resisted precisely because they are inextricably associated with other national, ethnic or cultural traditions. What seems to be happening here, therefore, is the application of the subsidiarity principle to language: the claiming by national governments of the right to impose (a particular quality of) proficiency in a ‘national’ language as a form of resistance to the loss of national sovereignty. In the context of the turbulence and flux of contemporary social and political relations in Europe, it represents an attempt to preserve (rather than construct) a public (Gal & Woolard 2001b) that will remain strong and intact only so long as it is conceived as inherently monoglot.

Discourses of language and nation have then not been abandoned but rather recontextualised and reformulated in terms of the relationship between language and citizenship. The requirement to demonstrate competence in the ‘legitimate’ language of the majority population is represented in official discourses as a question of ‘good faith’ on the one hand (a sign of non-native speakers’ willingness to relinquish or at least diminish their otherness and acknowledge the legitimacy of the majority), and of ‘good governance’ on the other (democratic practice requires equal ability to participate in processes of public discussion and debate). However, I have tried to outline an argument which claims that the underlying purpose of these representations is to re-assert an idea of the integrity of the nation still based on a stable monolingual norm that is increasingly contradicted by dynamic multilingual realities, and that they are more likely to hinder social inclusion than to promote it.
References


Coupland, Nikolaus, Srikant Sarangi & Christopher Candlin (eds)(2001) Sociolinguistics and Social Theory (Harlow: Longman).


Fishman, Joshua (1989) Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters)


Gal, Susan & Kathryn Woolard (eds) (2001a) Languages and Publics (Manchester: St Jerome).


Linguistik online 9, 21 [http://viadrina.euv-frankfurt-o.de/~wjournal/9_01/Klein.html]


Zuwanderung gestalten – Integration fördern (2001) Bericht der Unabhängigen Kommission Zuwanderung (Berlin: Bundesministerium des Innern)


Bundesregierung (2002c) Bundeskabinett beschließt Integrationskurse im Rahmen des Zuwanderungsgesetzes http://www.bundesregierung.de

Bundesregierung (2002d) Familien ausländischer Herkunft in Deutschland http://www.bundesregierung.de


Migration Online Austria (2002) http://www.illegalisiert.at/MUND/integrationsvertrag.htm


