

Language, Multifaithism and One-World Identity

Dr Christian Munch: Language and identity in Latino churches in NYC

Professor Tope Omoniyi: Faith, diversity and the English Language Express in sub-Saharan Africa

**Dr Brooks Bolander, 'Linguistic and religious pluralism among Ismaili Muslims'.
University of Zurich, Switzerland**

ABSTRACT

The spread of religions around the world and the spread of languages have followed similar trajectories; at least for the metropolitan languages and religions the evidences abound. Scholarship has mostly focused on the latter. However, change, maintenance and revivalism among other processes are intricately linked to the notion of mobility (Pennycook 2012) and the resultant category of the minority and marginal groups thus opening up new vistas of analysis for us in the sociology of language and religion (SLR).

While much attention has been paid to the multilingual and multicultural nature of religious communities in general, the main focus has still been put on members of the major religions, namely the great monotheistic religions Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and to some extent also Buddhism and Hinduism. Yet, the religious fabric of the contemporary world is much more complex and difficult to examine. Multifaithism which exists in multi-religious environments as a formal policy or ideology pursued by the state or its institutions (Omoniyi 2006), offers a context for the investigation and discussion of language revival, linguistic diversity, competition and identity in the sociology of language and religion. It is more visible in liberal democracies or secular nations which proclaim all kinds of freedoms and actively embrace diversity as a defining characteristic of their polity.

This panel presents a number of SLR case studies that look at language competition and identity in the domain of religion, metropolitan languages and religions co-existing with provincial less known counterparts, and the interactions in which the resources of metropolitan faith are deployed for the purpose of reviving endangered indigenous languages. These case studies highlight aspects of multilingualism and multi-religious practices far removed from the mainstream and thus take SLR scholarship one crucial step forward.