

***Michael Kelly, Hilary Footitt, Myriam Salama-Carr (eds.):  
The Palgrave Handbook of Languages and Conflict.***

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The power and impact of language and languages within armed conflicts can probably be best described by Karol Janicki's quote stating that "*language can lead to peace-building, neutrality and indifference, or to destruction, conflict building, and warmongering*" (Janicki 2017: 189). *The Palgrave Handbook of Languages and Conflict*, a book edited by Michael Kelly, Hilary Footitt and Myriam Salama-Carr, is a part of Palgrave's series *Language and War*, which includes more than 15 books dealing with the role of language in conflicts, occupation, peace-enforcement and humanitarian action in war zones.

All the editors have a strong academic background and hold senior researcher positions at leading universities in the United Kingdom. Michael Kelly is an Emeritus Professor of French at the University of Southampton. He is a specialist in modern French culture and society and is also the author of several books focused on languages in war and conflict, e.g. *Interpreting the Peace: Peace Operations, Conflict and Language in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (2013). Kelly also edited the volume *Languages after Brexit* (2018). The second editor, Hilary Footitt, serves as a research fellow at the University of Reading. Footitt is a co-editor of the Palgrave series *Language and War*, and co-wrote the volumes *Languages at War* (2012) and *Languages and the Military* (2012). Finally, Myriam Salama Carr is an Honorary Research Fellow in the Centre for Translation and Interpreting at the University of Manchester. She is also the editor of *Translating and Interpreting Conflict* (2007) and *The Translator on Science in Translation* (2011).

These editors collaborated with 16 other well-educated contributors with various academic and non-academic backgrounds from around the world, namely: Louise Askew, a translator working for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia; Catherine Baker, a Senior Lecturer in 20th-Century History at the University of Hull; Reem Bassiouney, a Professor of Linguistics at the American University in Cairo; Ellen Elias-Bursać, a translator of novels and non-fiction by Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian writers; María Manuela Fernández Sánchez, a Lecturer in Theories of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Granada; Linda Fitchett, a former president of the International Association of Conference Interpreters; Fabrizio Gallai, a Lecturer in Interpreting Studies at the University of Bologna; Zahera Harb, a Senior Lecturer in International Journalism at City University of London; Moira Inghilleri, an Associate Professor of Translation and Interpreting Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst; Laura Johnson, a UK-based independent researcher; Pekka Kujamäki, a Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Graz; Joseph Lo Bianco, a Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Melbourne; Yonatan Mendel, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Middle East Studies at Ben-Gurion University; Patrick Porter, a Professor of International Security and Strategy at the University of Birmingham; Françoise Ugochukwu, the author of the first standard Igbo-French dictionary with reversed

lexicon, and Roberto A. Valdeón, a Professor of English Studies at the University of Oviedo.

*The Palgrave Handbook of Languages and Conflict* is divided into five main parts with more than two dozen contributions that create a comprehensive, brilliant study counting 527 pages. The main goal of the book is “to map the contours of this new area of study through [...] different perspectives on the questions” (p. 18). *The Palgrave Handbook* is “setting out the range of conceptual and methodological approaches on which it typically draws, and examining contextualised case studies of the role of languages in specific wars, from medieval times through to engagements in the Middle East and Africa today.” (p. 2) Moreover, the “Introduction” includes the editors’ position on “how the sub-discipline of languages and conflict has emerged, where it is now located intellectually, and what specific ethical and technological issues it confronts” (p. 2). There the authors (i.e. the editors) go back to the historical roots of language and touch on Foucault’s *Surveiller et punir*. The authors also provide reflections on how research of language has been influenced by other approaches from linguists, critical discourse analysts, and sociolinguists, and how research of language has affected other related disciplines such a cultural studies, gender studies, war studies or transnational history. According to the editors, “the growing interdisciplinarity of research in the humanities and social sciences provides a particularly helpful context for scholars to engage with issues of language and conflict” (p. 6).

Part I, “Conceptual Spaces” (pp. 27–111), provides a very useful introduction to current conceptual approaches that have been developed to discuss languages and conflict. This part discusses current concepts based on findings from translational studies and language policy. On the other hand, the contributions written by Patrick Porter and Moira Inghilleri are particularly oriented toward the United States of America’s war on terror, focusing particularly on the Vietnam War. In his essay *Good Anthropology, Bad History: America’s Cultural Turn in the War on Terror*, Porter emphasizes the role of the anthropological approach, rather than the historical one, and gives five arguments “that are relevant to the way that western powers are conducting the war on terror” (pp. 30–32). In contrast to Porter, Inghilleri’s contribution, *Ethics in the Vietnam War*, describes a different type of war-related encounter that is “unmediated by interpreters and represented in fictional accounts written by American and Vietnamese veterans of the war in Vietnam” (p. 51). Here, Inghilleri focuses on “ethical and moral dilemmas and [their] examples taken from poetry, novels, and memoirs” (p. 51).

Part II, entitled “Source, Documentation and Voices” (pp. 111–181), opens with a discussion between Hilary Footitt and Pekka Kujamäkki about the uneasy border between Translation Studies and Military History. Footitt focuses this contribution of her work on directing attention to the difficulty of finding relevant archival sources and documents. Afterwards, Catherine Baker, in her study *Interviewing for Research on Languages and War*, describes and recommends interviewing as “the only method for getting as close as possible to [...] memories” (p. 159). During her post-doctoral research, Baker conducted more than 50 interviews with ex-peacekeepers who served in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) during the 1992–1995 civil wars. Besides her brilliant methodological erudition when she focuses on the possible methodological problem of the making of an interview, Baker analyses the relationship between the military/civilian identities during the conflict in BiH.

Part III, “Institutions and Actors” (pp. 181–353) and their roles within conflicts and wars. This part contains seven different contributions. The topics dealt with include testing the boundaries of neutrality; the analysing of BBC monitoring; the covering of regional conflicts by Arab News; the depiction of the role of language within conflicts in the deep south of Thailand; and analysing the role of translators and interpreters during

the war tribunals in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Lebanon and former Yugoslavia. Moreover, there is also the contribution by Louise Askew analysing the language support for NATO operations. This contribution represents a very original issue in the current debate about NATO's role within the international environment (e.g. Böller 2018, Shea 2015). Askew's study, *Providing Language Support for NATO Operations: Challenges and Solutions*, brings a valuable view of NATO's (lack of) ability to provide high-standard translation services during its founding and development, mainly after the end of the Cold War. Askew's approach is focused on all missions in which NATO participated. She analyses all the problems that were detected by the translator and other linguistics staff in the peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (IFOR), Kosovo (KFOR) and Afghanistan (ISAF). According to Askew, from all three missions "*NATO learned [...] and was captured in its doctrine for linguistic support for operations. If NATO ever launches a fourth such operation the doctrine provides a good on which to establish effective language support*" (p. 248).

Part IV, entitled Languages at War in History (pp. 353–479), shows how languages have been significant in ways that have not always been noticed by historians or commentators. This part of the *Handbook* provides the reader with reflections on post-colonial conflict and imperial rivalries in the Americas through the British language practices during the Second World War and also reflects on the cohabitation of the Nigerian and English language in Biafra, Nigeria. María Fernández Sánchez, in her study *Understanding Interpreting and Diplomacy: Reflections on the Early Cold War (1945–1963)*, brings a very useful contribution about how "*Cold War diplomacy from the interpreter's viewpoint can provide valuable insights into this period*" (p. 397). Fernández Sánchez expands on her previous research and analyses the US and Soviet interpreters' meetings and how they managed their agency in making foreign policies, and depicts "*how diplomacy was shaped by interpreting practices and vice versa*" (Ibid.). Furthermore, another significant chapter in this part is the very current contribution that deals with language during the recent revolution in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya written by Reem Bassoney. In his contribution, Bassoney stresses that "*the role of standard Arabic, colloquial varieties of Arabic, and even Bedouin varieties in Libya, as well as foreign languages such as English and French, were utilized to cast doubt on the sincerity of revolutionaries and to attempt to fight back the wave of protests*" (p. 442).

Finally, the last chapter, entitled "Going Forward: Conclusion and Reflections" (pp. 479–519), provides valuable thoughts from the editors about how the role of languages is likely to be in the future. Michael Kelly depicts the role of languages in constantly changing warfare where new techniques (e.g. attacks by drones) and a new battlefield (cyber space) have a growing impact. Kelly states that "*language questions are becoming increasingly important in both the strategic and operational issues they raise*" (p. 482). A stronger kind of battle – the so-called "soft war" or "unarmed conflict" – is giving a heightened role to language and culture, and is likely to preoccupy academics and practitioners from a growing number of academic and professional backgrounds in the future (p. 500).

To sum up, the *Palgrave Handbook* offers an interdisciplinary approach drawing on applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, translation studies, intercultural communication, history, politics, international relations and cultural studies. Due to this fact, this book represents another great addition not only for academics but also for students and members of the wider public concerned about and interested in language and its relations to armed conflicts and civil wars. It is complementary to and follows other similar books published by Palgrave in recent times (e.g. Kershaw 2019; Laugesen – Gehrmann 2020; Laugesen – Fisher 2020). On one hand, the authors could be more ambitious in displays of their analysis results. However, I can imagine that some tables or photos could be disruptive in

the monolithic text. On the other hand, I suppose that this piece will not be the authors' last one, considering that there are further related topics which also deserve serious attention.

I suppose that in these unstable times when language is crooked, and in the era of fake news dramatically spreading in cyber space, the main thoughts in this book show how language could be a useful friend or an unfavourable opponent. Nowadays, it is a more relevant time than any other to (re)think what power languages and words hide.

### Literature

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