is engaging to both nonexperts and (socio)linguists. The book substantially benefits from an interweaving of personal anecdotes from the author’s private and professional life. These make the book even more relevant for me personally, as many of the narrated experiences correspond to my own as a language and sexuality researcher. The insights that this work yields will be of interest to experts in sociolinguistics, variationist linguistics, and discourse analysis more generally, and scholars working on topics such as language, gender and sexuality, slang, and historical language use more specifically.

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Language can play an important role in contributing to sociopolitical tension. Moreover, political conflicts are often characterized in linguistic terms. For example, the country of Cameroon, where both French and English are official languages, has recently seen significant internal conflict referred to as the Anglophone crisis (Pommerolle & De Marie Heungoup 2017), since it has primarily impacted the so-called Anglophone regions of the country. This label, however, is misleading: Cameroon is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, and the Anglophone/Francophone division is not, at heart, a linguistic one but, rather, is connected to the distinct colonial legacies from a time when its current territory was divided between British and French rule. Due to the salience of language in daily life, however, the linguistic emblems of the colonial period are used as a shorthand for a more complex kind of sociopolitical division.

Addressing this connection, William D. Davies and Stanley Dubinsky’s book *Language conflict and language rights: Ethnolinguistic perspectives on human conflict* fills an important gap that most linguists have probably not even noticed: it serves as a nonspecialist introduction—from the perspective of linguistics—to the role that language plays in political conflicts and how individuals do (or do not) acquire rights to use the languages of their choosing. Despite the centrality of language to modern political structures and, by extension, the sociopolitical lives of individuals, the examination of apparent instances of linguistic conflict is not especially prominent within the discipline. The subject has attracted the attention of political scientists (see e.g. Laitin 1992). However, interdisciplinary ties between linguistics and political science are relatively weak, and, as a result, work of this kind does not appear to be widely read within linguistics, which makes this book a significant new addition to this area of investigation. The book’s discussion is global in scope, and it presents detailed case studies of linguistic conflict impacting parts of Africa, East Asia, South Asia, Europe, and North America, while referencing additional examples from other parts of the world.
The book has features of both a textbook and a monograph. For instance, much of the material of Part I, ‘Language and the speaker’, contains content that would be covered in an introductory linguistics course. Part III, ‘A typology of language conflicts’, by contrast, characterizes a large number of political conflicts across the world where language differences are a major factor in the way that they manifest and is directly focused on the book’s main topic. On the one hand, this structure would allow it to serve as the sole textbook for a course focusing on language conflict where it is also important to teach some basic linguistic concepts. On the other hand, a linguist looking to gain a greater appreciation of the role of language in political conflict would obtain a broad introduction to the topic by focusing on specific chapters. For the purposes of this review, I consider, at different times, how this book could serve as a textbook (specifically at the undergraduate level) as well as its more general contribution to the field.

As just mentioned, Part I of the book covers topics that would typically be considered in an introductory linguistics course. Each of its chapters is relatively short and written to be engaging to nonspecialists. At times, specific issues are highlighted that are relevant to the topic of language conflict but would not normally be seen as core topics in the relevant areas. For example, a significant amount of space in the chapter on morphology is dedicated to lexical borrowing, due to the fact that whether a language does (or does not) borrow words from languages it is in contact with is very often conditioned by sociopolitical concerns. Similarly, in a chapter on language variation and change, detailed discussion is provided on the distinction between ‘languages’ and ‘dialects’, precisely because of how deeply intertwined it is with the kinds of political concerns that are a focus of later sections of the book. Instructors using this book for a linguistics course may want to supplement these chapters with additional readings from other textbooks, since the material that can be covered in the forty or so pages dedicated to introductory topics is necessarily selective.

Part II of the book, ‘Language and the world’, can also be viewed as providing background relevant to understanding later discussion, especially the discussion in Part III, which is where the book’s most novel contribution can be found. However, this background discussion is more targeted to the book’s subject and will likely be of value to both linguist and nonlinguist readers. Its chapters cover the relationship between language and personal, cultural, and national identity as well as the notion of language rights. In line with the book’s hybrid nature, these chapters contain a mix of original observations and summarization of the current conventional wisdom on certain topics, along with illustrative case studies.

The consideration of language and personal identity focuses on personal names. While this is not usually seen as a core topic in the sociolinguistic investigation of language and identity, it works well here by virtue of the fact it will be relatively accessible to nonlinguist readers and because the social salience of names has made them subject to intense political regulation. The analysis does not provide a theoretical examination of the nature of naming (see e.g. Bodenhorn & vom Bruck 2006), but rather offers an informal overview of different patterns in naming conventions and the ways in which states have imposed restrictions on names. For example, it discusses the ways in which authorities in China distort Uyghur names to fit them into Chinese patterns.

The discussion of the relationship between language and culture is clearly written more for the benefit of nonlinguists than linguists, since a major topic is the validity of the notion of linguistic relativity. For a book on the topic of language conflict, it is important to dispel the kinds of facile connections that are often made between the features of a language and the culture of its users, and this is done effectively. Coverage is also provided of instances where language and culture are clearly intertwined, as is the case in languages with elaborate systems of pronouns whose usage is conditioned by fine-grained aspects of social status. One relevant topic not covered is how linguistic variation both shapes and reflects cultural differences, which would seem relevant given that the existence of language conflict presupposes that communities recognize certain linguistic varieties as sufficiently distinctive to become available as markers of sociopolitical identity. The omission of consideration of this topic may be connected to the fact that the book’s perspective is implicitly grounded in an assumption that each individual will have a single, easily determined ethnolinguistic identity.
Development of the notion of the nation-state is a key part of the book’s examination of how linguistic and political identities become linked. Around the eighteenth century, intellectual movements in Europe resulted in a strong ideological connection between languages and nations that has, at this point, become so pervasive in Western thought as to be nearly invisible (see Coulmas 1988). Based on my own experience, the centrality of the nation-state to contemporary political debates about language is not given enough emphasis in introductory classes on linguistics, and consideration of this topic is welcome in a book such as this one. The discussion of linguistic and political identity also includes case studies of the linguistic situation of three states whose histories are deeply intertwined with European colonialism: India, Indonesia, and South Africa. Each is characterized by societal multilingualism and has resolved the tension between the idea that a country should ‘have its language’ with its multilingual reality in different ways. Shortly after the end of World War II, in Indonesia, an official language was adopted that was a standardized version of Malay without a strong association with any specific ethnic group within the emerging country. By contrast, in India, a language clearly associated with a dominant group, Hindi, was chosen as an official language at the national level. The South African case study focuses on post-apartheid changes to language policy, which, from a contemporary perspective, are quite progressive. The country recognizes eleven official languages and promotes the development of others, though official support for all of these languages has not led to their being used equally in all possible domains.

An examination of language rights and their connection to other human rights completes Part II’s coverage of issues connected to language and identity. A summary is provided of the historical development of the notion of language rights, clarifying the different ways that they can be articulated, ranging from mere tolerance of the use of different languages within a community to actively promoting the use of languages that may have historically lacked sociopolitical power. One gap is consideration of the rights of Deaf individuals to make use of sign languages and the sociopolitical status of sign languages in general. The discussion also includes a case study of the role of English-only movements in the history of the United States. This could have benefited from greater historical contextualization, for example, by clarifying that distrust between English speakers and German speakers in the colonial period took place before the existence of the German state, while later conflict, around the time of World War I, was more clearly nationalist in orientation.

A chapter providing an introduction to writing systems is also found in Part II. An overview of the history of writing and different kinds of writing systems is provided, followed by a brief discussion of the ways in which writing systems become associated with political and other kinds of identities (e.g. religious ones). On my own reading, this chapter might have been better placed in Part I of the book and treated as linguistic background rather than being found in a part where language and identity is in focus.

Part III of the book represents its most distinctive contribution. It introduces an informal typology of language conflicts, which it then applies to a wide range of detailed case studies, alongside additional case studies presented in more summary form. The proposed typology is based around conflicts connected to: (i) indigenous minorities, (ii) geopolitical minorities, (iii) migrant minorities, (iv) dialect minorities, and (v) competition for linguistic dominance. From an expositional perspective, this is a useful way to group the discussion of different kinds of conflict, and it will be interesting to see if further research can reveal whether these categories might also have deeper theoretical significance. The case studies discussed in the chapters of Part III in some cases include language data to illustrate how similar or different the relevant languages in conflict are to each other.

The examination of indigenous minorities focuses on the cases of the Sámi in Norway, the Ainu in Japan, and American Indians in the United States. The trajectory of Norwegian-Sámi conflict is one where the Norwegian majority encroached upon Sámi territory and established policies that put Sámi at a strong sociopolitical disadvantage, followed by a shift in attitudes in the second half of the twentieth century that provided greater legal protections for the use of
Sámi. The Ainu case bears high-level similarities to the Sámi case, though with greater conflict and a longer-lasting period of repression, resulting in a more extreme reduction in the use of Ainu before changes in attitudes of the Japanese majority, with the result that the language is now moribund. The case study of the American Indians summarizes major aspects of the violent policies of the United States government toward American Indian groups and their languages from the Civil War period through much of the twentieth century, which led to a loss of transmission of these languages across generations. This case study is somewhat different from the others since it covers hundreds of languages and diverse Native American cultures. For a book focusing on language rights, a noteworthy omission from the discussion is reference to the Native American Languages Act of 1990, which markedly changed the official policy of the federal government of the United States to one supporting use of Native American languages rather than one aimed at eradicating them (Arnold 2001, Hinton 2001).

Indigenous minorities contrast with what the authors term ‘geopolitical’ minorities to refer to cases where a group becomes a minority within a country due to changes in political boundaries, even if it may be a majority group in some other country. The main case studies are Hungarian speakers in Slovakia, Spanish speakers in the southwestern United States, and the Kurds in Turkey. The minority status of Hungarian in Slovakia began after World War I within what was then Czechoslovakia. The extent of the restrictions on the use of Hungarian has waxed and waned over the last hundred or so years, and in the 1990s severe restrictions were placed on the use of languages other than Slovak in Slovakia. These persist despite the fact that Slovakia is now part of the European Union, which, at least officially, offers strong protections to language minorities. The historical presence of Spanish in the United States is due both to annexation of territory that had formerly been under the control of Spanish-dominated political entities and to patterns of migration. The case study considering Spanish speakers in the United States as a geopolitical minority focuses on the former, with a detailed consideration of the history of language policies in California. In the earliest period of California statehood, shortly after its territory was ceded to the United States from Mexico, Spanish was given some degree of official protection. However, as English speakers came to demographically dominate the state, official language policies shifted toward, in effect, being English-only. The Kurdish case is somewhat different in that, while there is a large Kurdish ‘nation’, there is no state where the Kurds dominate, making them minorities in every country where they live. Kurdish speakers have been subject to especially strong language-suppression policies in Turkey, with legal restrictions even on using Kurdish in private domains. A common thread in each of these cases is the way in which the monolingual ideal associated with the modern nation-state provides a justification for patterns of minority language suppression, even if the underlying motivations may involve more concrete assertion of power.

The third category of linguistic minorities examined in Part III are those who are present within a given country due to patterns of migration, with the main case studies being the Roma in Europe, Koreans in Japan, and Puerto Rican Spanish speakers in the mainland United States. The Roma (often still referred to under the derogatory name Gypsy in English) are found throughout Europe (and beyond) and have had a kind of ‘outsider’ status since their arrival centuries ago, due not only to their linguistic distinctiveness but also to broader cultural differences from other groups in Europe. A complication involved in supporting general Roma language rights is that their distribution as a minority community across a large area has led to significant linguistic diversification. This makes it difficult to identify a single Roma ‘language’ to which language rights could be applied. With respect to the case of Koreans in Japan, there was a significant amount of Korean migration into Japan during the first half of the twentieth century when Korea was under Japanese rule, and there is still an associated legally distinct group of individuals of Korean descent within Japan. However, the Japanese government has not historically offered any support to the maintenance of their language and culture. While Puerto Rico does not have the status of a state of the United States, its residents are legally United States citizens. However, Spanish dominates Puerto Rico, and Puerto Ricans have not been linguistically accommodated when they move to the mainland United States and, in effect, are not treated as equal citizens. In
each of these three cases, the general pattern is that these migrant groups are not accorded the same linguistic privileges as those speaking the majority language, even when their presence in a given country is long-lasting.

The discussion of linguistic minorities concludes with consideration of ‘dialectal’ minorities, focusing on Ryukyuan speakers in Japan and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers in the United States. The Ryukyuan varieties of the Ryukyu Islands of southwest Japan are treated as a set of separate languages in scholarly classifications, though they are closely related to Japanese. The Japanese state treated Ryukyuan varieties as ‘dialects’ of Japanese as part of a process to bring Standard Japanese into general use on the islands. This was additionally associated with the common ideological position that the ‘dialects’ represented inferior kinds of speech in comparison to the ‘standard’ variety. A similar positioning also holds for AAVE in comparison with English varieties associated with White American populations, though, unlike Ryukyuan, AAVE is uncontroversially considered a variety of English rather than a separate language. In some ways, this makes it an unusual case study for this book. However, the fact that it is intended to be usable as a textbook motivates inclusion of dedicated discussion of AAVE, given the importance of this topic for linguistics courses offered to undergraduates in the United States.

The final chapter of Part III, ‘Competition for linguistic dominance’, shifts focus from linguistic minorities toward cases where two language groups are found within a single country and without one linguistic group having uncontested subordinate status, with case studies of Belgium, Sri Lanka, and Canada. Belgium is an example of a European country that is quite distant from the monolingual ideal of the nation-state, with two dominant languages, Flemish (classified as a variety of Dutch) and French, each of which is associated with a distinct geographic area, apart from the officially bilingual city of Brussels. This linguistic division has been, and continues to be, associated with significant political tension. In Canada, English speakers numerically predominate, but French dominates the province of Quebec. At present, the political situation around the use of English and French is relatively stable in comparison to other countries with similar linguistic divisions. The case of Sri Lanka is less positive. Sinhalese speakers predominate numerically, and, at present, politically, though Tamil speakers held more political power in the colonial period. Between 1983 and 2009, a civil war was fought in Sri Lanka involving Tamil speakers who sought the creation of an independent Tamil state. The case studies in this section present some of the clearest instances of language ‘conflict’ in the political arena in the sense that the relevant groups are operating on relatively equal terms, unlike the cases of linguistic minorities discussed above where the conflict is largely one sided.

An important question in the case studies in Part III that is underexplored is the extent to which these conflicts are specifically driven by linguistic differences. In the case of the Roma, for instance, while they are associated with a distinct set of closely related languages, the conflict seems to be centered on their lifestyle, with language playing an incidental role. The situation of the Kurds in Turkey stands in contrast to this. The development of a new standard variety of Turkish played an important role in the creation of the modern Turkish state (see e.g. Lewis 2002), and the suppression of the use of the Kurdish language can be understood as an extension of this process. The extent to which language is directly or incidentally implicated in a given conflict is clearly an interesting one from the perspective of the study of language politics, and it seems difficult to imagine it being answered fully by political scientists, which makes the contributions of the tools of linguistics to such concerns essential. The discussion in Part III could have been strengthened if this issue had been addressed in a more systematic way.

Part IV, the final and shortest part of the book, considers language endangerment and revival. This part of the book will be helpful to provide some general background on endangerment and revitalization in the context of a course where this book serves as a textbook since, clearly, language endangerment (and loss) is one important outcome of linguistic conflict. However, for those specifically interested in the topic, it would make more sense for them to refer to books dedicated to this (such as, for example, Austin & Sallabank 2011).

As mentioned above, I think it is helpful to evaluate this book from two different perspectives: as a textbook for an undergraduate course for students with little or no background in linguistics
and as an introductory reference on the topic of language conflict and language rights. As a textbook, either this book could be used as the main text for a course dedicated to the topic of language conflict or specific sections could be used as supplementary readings in a course on a different topic. The quality of the images reproduced in the book is not ideal, which may hinder its usability for some students. It would be most suitable for courses taught in the United States, given that many of the topics have a focus on American sociopolitical history. One area of concern is that the presentation appears to implicitly adopt a White American perspective at times. For instance, in one case study, late nineteenth-century China is characterized as ‘slipping irretrievably into the losers’ column of the colonialist-colonized equation’ (288). While surely no offense is intended by this characterization, I wonder how students of Chinese descent would react to this description of Chinese history. Similarly, the summary of the linguistic history of the United States in the context of consideration of English-only movements discusses only settler languages, without any reference to Native American ones. Even though Native American languages are discussed prominently elsewhere in the book, this sort of historical erasure could lead to some students feeling excluded and results in a missed opportunity for others to have their perspectives usefully broadened.

Looked at as a general reference text on the topic of language conflict, those chapters of the book that directly focus on this are likely to be valuable to many linguist readers—especially those with little or no background in language policy and language planning—as an introduction to this area. A strength of the book is the way it condenses many complex sociopolitical situations where language is implicated into readable case studies that cover a wide spectrum of kinds of conflicts and issues of linguistic rights. At the same time, perhaps reflecting the fact that the book approaches its topic primarily from a state-based, political perspective, there are gaps in its consideration of topics from sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics. Language shift, for instance, receives little explicit attention, and individual-level multilingualism (or multilectalism) is also not the subject of serious discussion. Language ideologies are not directly examined either, even though notions like ‘language conflict’ and ‘language rights’ can be more clearly understood if considered in light of the ideological lenses through which individuals and communities conceptualize linguistic difference (see e.g. Irvine & Gal 2000). In a related vein, some consideration of the role of linguists themselves in shaping colonial and postcolonial understandings of the role of language in sociopolitical life would have been helpful as well (see e.g. Errington 2008).

That being said, this book is a first attempt to treat its topic in a comprehensive fashion for a linguistic audience, and the authors have already incorporated extensive material from both linguistic and nonlinguistic sources as part of their work. In that regard, this book should provide not only a useful text for courses on this topic but also a foundation for future investigation on the interplay between language, sociopolitical conflict, and human rights from a linguistic perspective. It is a welcome addition to available resources on this topic.

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The immensely rich crosslinguistic empirical landscape of wh-questions has motivated many theoretical innovations in syntax/semantics throughout the history of generative linguistics. Hadas Kotek’s recent book Composing questions presents the latest examples of such innovation. Based on new data gathered from both off-line and on-line judgments and careful examination of existing analyses, K offers an elegant analysis of the complex interplay of the structure and interpretation of simplex and multiple-wh-questions across multiple languages.

The central question K tackles is how wh-phrases are semantically interpreted within a formally explicit theory of the syntax-semantics interface. Since the earliest era of formal semantics, two competing analyses of the semantic contribution of wh-phrases have been put forth in the literature. According to Hamblin (1973), wh-phrases denote a set of alternatives that undergo in-situ semantic composition—point-wise functional application—projecting a set of propositions as the denotation of the whole sentence. By contrast, Karttunen (1977) suggests that wh-phrases denote existential quantifiers that will give rise to the proposition-set denotation when they are scoped above the question operator residing in the complementizer position. The Hamblin-style analysis has been further developed within alternative semantics (Rooth 1985, 1992, Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002, Beck 2006, Beck & Kim 2006, Shimoyama 2006; cf. inquisitive semantics, Ciardelli et al. 2019), while the Karttunen-style analysis has been a basis for many subsequent influential analyses of questions (e.g. Engdahl 1986, Chierchia 1993, Dayal 1996, 2016).

An important tension between these two lines of analysis concerns the status of phonologically in-situ wh-phrases in the logical form (LF) of multiple-wh-questions like 1.

(1) Which student read which book?

According to the Karttunen-style analysis, a phonologically in-situ wh-phrase like which book in 1 must be scoped above the question operator for the sentence to receive an appropriate interpretation. Many researchers have used the device of covert movement at LF to represent this wide scope for the in-situ operator, an approach that is supported by a range of crosslinguistic evidence (Huang 1982, Rudin 1988, Richards 1997, 2001, Bošković 2002, É. Kiss 2002). In contrast, according to the Hamblin-style analysis, there is no semantic motivation for the wh-phrases to undergo movement, since they can be interpreted in situ. Thus, if there is any movement of a wh-phrase overtly or covertly, it must be for entirely syntactic reasons. It is within this tension that the current book is situated.

In the book, K proposes a hybrid view, where the grammar is equipped with both the mechanism for in-situ semantic composition of wh-phrases à la Hamblin and the mechanism for the scoping for wh-phrases via covert movement à la Karttunen. In this sense, K follows in the foot-