

# Discourses of Endangerment: Ideology and Interest in the Defence of Languages



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Current academic discussions and public debates about language frequently focus on the importance of defending languages against various kinds of dangers. Many of these current debates attach great importance to linguistic diversity. The debates focus on defending institutionalized languages against multilingualism, or conversely defending minority languages against the incursion of larger ones, especially the spread of English. In both cases, languages are constructed as autonomous wholes, held to need defending against attack. This book challenges such a view of language, to argue that the discussions in question are not in fact about language itself. The internationally renowned contributors claim that we are witnessing ideological struggles which are taking place on the terrain of language. *Discourses of Endangerment* addresses such questions as: \* What does language represent in discussions of multilingualism? \* Why is it constituted as an organic whole?\* In whose interest does it lie to construct language in this way?\* Who has an interest in taking various positions for or against official languages?\* In what way is the linguistic order tied to the social order? The book addresses these issues through a set of case studies which locate the terms of the discussion in broad discourses of language, identity and power. Covering a wide-range of languages including Catalan, Swedish, Corsican, Ukrainian and French, from different sociolinguistic perspectives, this book is essential reading for students and academics interested in language endangerment and sociolinguistics.