

Preface

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Language and National Identity: Comparing France and Sweden

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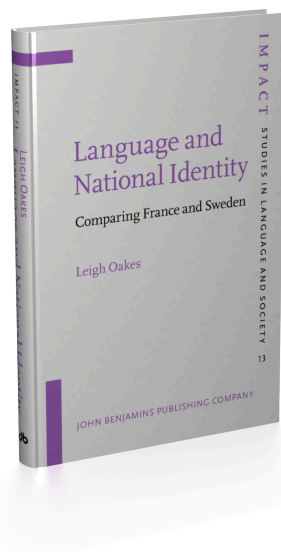
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Preface

The aim of this book is to re-examine the relationship between language and national identity. Unlike many previous studies, it employs a comparative approach for a more comprehensive understanding of this relationship. France and Sweden have been chosen as case studies both for their similarities (e.g. both are member states of the European Union) as well as their important differences (e.g. France, at least in principle, subscribes to a civic model of national identity, whereas the basis of Swedish identity is undeniably ethnic; language is so obviously a core value of French identity, but at first does not appear to be so for Swedish identity). It is precisely differences such as these which allow for a more complete understanding of the ethnolinguistic implications of some of the major challenges currently facing France, Sweden and other European countries: regionalism, immigration, European integration and globalisation.

The present volume also differs from others on the market because of the variety of methods of inquiry used. Most previous studies of language and national identity are not reinforced by an empirical component, which adds weight to the investigation. This is the aim of the survey, which is the focus of Chapter 8. The book also uses a multidisciplinary approach that brings together materials from a range of fields (e.g. the sociology of language, sociolinguistics, social psychology, political science, history, economics) for a comprehensive examination of the role of language in national identity. Finally, it is worth noting that much of the French and especially Swedish literature reviewed in this book has traditionally been neglected by English-speaking researchers because of language barriers. All translations from foreign-language sources are those of the author, unless otherwise specified.

The origins of this book lie in a Ph.D. dissertation completed at the University of Melbourne, Australia, in August 2000.

