

Minority languages, digital technology and emerging hierarchies of knowledge

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In recent years, as the context for the study of language ideological debates and language policing has inevitably shifted from traditional to online spaces and texts, social media have provided invaluable corpora for all of those interested in understanding minority language ideologies. Despite this increased focus by linguists, it is questionable as to whether our tools, methods, and research questions for studying these online debates have taken sufficient account of technological features and enablers and if we are in a position to address the new and urgent focus that is being put on technology in relation to spreading differentiating and discriminating ideologies. Using the example of a recent Twitter thread about Irish-English and Irish terminology, I explore how our study of online language ideologies might be enhanced by a greater focus on the role of digital technology and the political economy of social media as well as engagement with wider debates about cyber-racism and -nationalism. Based on this, I propose a model of what I am calling 'cyber linguistic authority', based on authenticity, anonymity, alignment, expertise, validation and influence in an attempt to explain how new hierarchies of knowledge about language, and in this case small and minority languages, are created.