Foreword

In this volume we present the articles published in the first two issues of the online periodical Mikroglossika – An International Journal of Minority Language Philologies (www.mikroglossika.com). It came about in 2007 with the purpose of providing philologies of minority languages with a platform of discussion about a wide variety of topics.

The concept ‘minority language’ needs some explanation. It refers to languages spoken by a small community within a certain geographical domain. Thus, we can not speak about German as a minority language if we refer to the standard German spoken in Germany, but we can if we refer to the variety spoken in the Brazilian colony Rolândia, where it is spoken by a minority. The status ‘minority’, then, refers not to the number of speakers but to the proportion of them on a particular territory.

The range of topics that will concern us is likewise varied. They may have to do with the linguistic or philological description of a minority language in relation to any linguistic parameter (phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon etc., the discussion being synchronic or diachronic), or they may imply the sociolinguistic description of a particular situation in which one or several minority languages are involved.

The articles of the present volume epitomize this heterogeneity both of languages and of topics. The first one, by Mikel Martínez Areta, makes up a section in itself and is a discussion about the phonological reconstruction of the prehistorical phases of Basque, a minority language even in many areas of the Basque Country. It focuses on the most controversial elements of this discussion: the consonant system and the accent.

The second article, which corresponds to the section of German and is written by Daniel Veith, is a description of the sociological situation, as well as of the basic linguistic features, of German as a minority language in Rolândia, a colony founded by German settlers in the south of Brazil in 1932.

The following four articles form the third section, which has to do with Leonese, spoken by a dialectal community of about 50,000 speakers mainly in the Spanish provinces of León, the west of Zamora and the north-west of Salamanca. The two first of these are written by Abel Pardo Fernández. The first one is a discussion about how new technologies like the Internet may work out not as an enemy, as one might theoretically expect, but as an ally, in the diffusion of minority languages. The second one is a contrastive analysis between the vowel systems of Leonese and Italian. The third article of this section, written by Fernando Sánchez, is an advance of the forthcoming dictionary of the Leonese variety of Las Arribes, a region in the north-west of Salamanca. The article that finishes off this section, written by Raúl Sánchez Prieto, broaches some topics which have to do with standardization processes in minority
languages, and offers a contrastive approach of the Leonese and the Northern Frisian cases.

Section four is devoted to Luxembourgian, a West Germanic minority language spoken in Luxembourg and in small parts of Belgium, France and Germany. The first one, again by Raúl Sánchez Prieto, deals with word formation in Luxembourgian and the need of minority languages in diglossic situations to create new words. The second one, by François Schanen, is a synchronic didactic explanation of nominal plural formations in the same language.

The volume ends with a description of the multilingual situation in Ukraine, the sociolinguistic problems and the political policies derived from the clash between a majority of native Ukrainian speakers and a minority of Russian speakers. The Russian language is being minorized in Ukraine but is more powerful worldwide.

The consultant editors of Mikroglottika – Minority Language Studies, Prof. Dr. Raúl Sánchez Prieto, Dr. Daniel Veith (both of them from the University of Salamanca) and Dr. Mikel Martínez Areta (from the University of the Basque Country), hope that the reader will enjoy the mixture of topics, and shall be greatly satisfied if this publication sparks further discussion on any of the topics.

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The Editors

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