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Language Ideologies and Language Criticism in European Perspective

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Abstract. In the languages addressed in this Handbook (i.e. German, English, French, Italian and Croatian), language ideological debates and discourses are linked to concepts of socio-cultural identity. The burning question for language philosophers as they reflect on metacommunication, as well as for language societies and for language institutions, has been and remains how this identity can be adequately represented through language. In this fifth Handbook, we link the concept of language ideologies to that of language criticism to allow us to identify the textual and discursive practices of language criticism and language reflection, along with the associated cognitive, mentality-related and attitudinal dimensions of socio-culturally influenced discourse and writing collectives. The thesis of this volume is that forms of language criticism are directly interconnected with language ideologies. In the comparative article, we examine commonalities and differences, with a particular focus on the following areas relevant to language ideology: the establishment of vernacular or national languages, which, *inter alia*, touches on the diversity of variants and its inherent issue of prestige, language preservation, linguistic purism, language philosophers, scholarly circles, language academies and other authoritative sources (dictionaries, grammar textbooks) as well as forms of social criticism.

Keywords

language ideologies, ideology, language-related knowledge, language awareness, language reflection, language criticism, the practice of subjective meta-linguistic reflection, vernacular language, national language, language preservation, linguistic purism, language philosopher, scholarly circles, language academies, social criticism

Reading Reference:

The article summarises and compares key points of the individual papers. To gain a deeper understanding, we recommend that the essays on the individual languages be read, in which a list of additional references is also provided. We further recommend that the foundational article be read,

as it outlines the concept of ideology upon which this Handbook is based, provides definitions of basic terms and examines the differing research traditions within the philologies.

One of the aims in selecting the languages presented was to explore precisely the types of language cultures that either allowed for distinct points of comparison or that, on the basis of an initial examination, stood in contrast to one another. Another aim was to ensure that all three of the major European language families were represented, i.e. Germanic languages (German, English), Romance languages (French, Italian) and Slavic languages (Croatian). English and French represent two major cultural and world languages. German and Italian represent two major national languages predominantly found in Europe. Of all the Slavic languages, ultimately, only Croatian was significantly influenced throughout its history by German (for over a millennium), Italian (since the late Middle Ages) and French (from the early 19th century into the 20th century). This permits an additional perspective within the European context.¹

Introduction and the Three Levels of Language Ideology

Debates and discourses surrounding language ideology are directly linked to concepts of socio-cultural identity and the ways in which this identity can be given expression in and through language. Attitudes towards language variants and deliberations over linguistic purity are thus derived from the question of which language and which type of language best represent the socio-cultural identity of the population of a given region. This has been, and remains, a burning question not only for language philosophers as they reflect on metacommunication, but also for language societies and for language institutions. As political entities emerge, implicit standards become explicitly regulated, with the rules set forth in codified grammar textbooks and dictionaries. Language ideologies, therefore, extend beyond pure linguistic knowledge: they formulate concepts that will guide behaviour. In this respect, they reflect social indexicality (in keeping with Silverstein 1979) on two levels – the directly

1 The reasoning behind the selection of the five languages is also explained in the Reading Reference of this volume.

executed level (e.g. regional phonetics) and the subjective level derived from this (e.g. Dante's writings deprecating the 14th-century Italian dialects; see also the article on the Italian language in this volume).

Language ideologies are formed at the macro, meso and micro levels of a language community. The macro-level involves the (generally implicitly or explicitly standardised) language of a socio-political or cultural region or, in the modern era, a state. The meso-level refers to the language or habitual language use of a socio-cultural group, on the basis of either geography (e.g. a city) or social ideology (e.g. left-wing). The micro-level refers to individual speakers with their linguistically identifying markers and regional or stylistic deixis of the first order as well as their options for language choice.

At the macro-level, beliefs about one's own ethnogenesis (beliefs that may be constructed of individual elements), combined with socio-cultural, political and (especially in the past) religious ideologies have a significant influence on language ideologies. These beliefs and ideologies are inherent in the discourses surrounding standardisation and national language, which are implicitly or explicitly present in the codification texts and are directly relevant in the fields of education and government. These discourses are led and moderated by authorities (e.g. language academies, most prominently in France by the *Académie française*; see the article on the French language in this volume). These and other actors on the macro-level determine the codification processes and their implementation in public communication, education and in the government. Whenever codification texts are created, issues surrounding the diversity of variants and the choice of the standard must always be confronted. Each of these aspects plays a role in the creation of both dictionaries and grammar textbooks.

At the middle level, referred to as the meso-level, we find attribution and negotiation processes, which are, at times, instigated by (language) ideologies. This can happen, for example, when the official standard language diverges from a sociolect or the local dialect or if there is a shift in the ideological evaluation of a standard or its components; the relationship between spoken language and written language often plays a key role in these debates. Language societies and scholarly circles, which were established for the purpose of preserving and promoting the language, have been and remain among the most notable actors on the meso-level.

Presently, the mass media also has tremendous influence over spoken language use: social and ideological groups can use this to propagate their forms of language use in a public space.

At the forefront of the micro-level are individual actors, e.g. in blogs on language use (often even published anonymously), in language columns or in metalinguistic commentary in literary works. Even the choice and alternation of language in conversations can be influenced by aspects of language ideology. It is important to note that language behaviour at the micro-level takes into account the frame of reference (in which rejection is also a form of taking into account) that has been established by the macro- and meso-levels.

Political unrest on the macro-level can exert a direct influence on the prevailing language ideology. Within the histories of the languages discussed in this volume, there is perhaps no more obvious example of this than the political unrest under the Nazi regime during the Second World War. Even the differing designations *the language of National Socialism* and *the language under National Socialism* indicate that the (scholarly) examination of language and language ideologies is itself ideological. The first designation primarily refers to the language used by the Nazi apparatus, while the second strives for the inclusion of all relevant actors during the period between 1933 and 1945. If we look at the language used by the members of the Nazi regime during the National Socialist era in Germany (that is, those people “who pulled the political strings and determined the discourse” (Dang-Anh/Meer/Wyss 2022: 10; translation by C.D.)²), a core aspect of the dominating language ideology was exclusion – specifically, racial exclusion. This is the backdrop against which the post-1945 re-education programme can be interpreted, when the allies in the western occupied zones sought to subject the inhabitants of Germany and Austria to a re-education that was not only ideological but linguistic in nature. The post-war period in which Germany was divided also revealed a wide gulf in language ideology between officially regulated and non-official language usage.

During the period of National Socialism in Germany, a politically motivated linguistic re-orientation including linguistic remediation was taking

2 Dang-Anh/Meer/Wyss (2022: 10): “die politischen Leitlinien gezogen und die Diskurse bestimmt haben”.

place in the former Independent State of Croatia (a German satellite state). This re-orientation involved a return to the older Croatian, from the time before Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia became part of the socialist state of Yugoslavia in the early 20th century. Within Yugoslavia, Croats were not granted equality and the Croatian language was subordinated to Serbian. In the Independent State of Croatia, linguistic rules were established based on those of the late 19th century, with the goal of ideologically embedding an independent Croatian identity. After the Nazi era came to an end, Croatian was re-standardised in communist Yugoslavia and was once again subordinated to the Serbian language, both politically and linguistically. This led to resistance on the meso-level, which resulted in the implementation of codifications processes that would reinforce the independence of the Croatian language. As these processes reached the macro-level, they precipitated the collapse of Yugoslavia (see the article on the Croatian language in this volume).

Language Ideologies and Language Criticism

As elucidated in the foundational article, the concept of language ideologies is well-suited for linking language-related knowledge with specific actors and socio-cultural structures. It is particularly well-suited for relating socio-historical conditions to language-related discourses and, through its identity-endowing functions, illuminating the diversity of different language ideologies across space and time, particularly within a European comparison. In this volume of the Handbook, we link the concept of language ideologies to that of language criticism to address the interrelationship between language-critical or language-reflective textual and conversational practices and the cognitive, mentality-related and attitudinal dimensions of socio-culturally influenced speech and/or writing collectives. For the purposes of European comparison, we define language criticism as the practice of subjective metalinguistic reflection. Modes of language criticism engender language ideologies, while, conversely, language ideologies form the basis for certain modes of language criticism (see the foundational article in this volume). On the basis of the individual language articles, we explore commonalities and differences, with a focus on the above-mentioned areas relevant to language ideology.

This forms the structure for the article that follows. The structure of the article is therefore thematic rather than chronological. In addition, certain points that lend themselves well for comparison will be emphasised. Not every aspect addressed in the individual language articles will be reiterated in this comparative article. Conversely, for contrastive purposes, the comparative article will occasionally address points that extend beyond what is presented in the individual articles.

The Establishment of Vernaculars

Language policy efforts to establish a separate supra-regional vernacular are linked indexically in each of the languages examined here to enable socio-political attitudes to be defined. In each of these languages, differentiation of the prestige variants within the intra-linguistic spaces is inherent in the language ideological effort to distinguish these variants from the other dominating cultural languages. In Germany, this can be observed from the Middle Ages into the 19th century. The language of education and government evolved into a prestige variant, increasingly divorced from the earlier influences of Latin and French (see the article on the German language in this volume).

The English language, in turn, has a longer tradition: The Chaucerian language from the end of the 14th century formed the basis for the further development of the written language. From 1611 on, this was the King James Bible. The 16th century marked the beginning of written grammar guides in English. The intent was not only to establish rules for usage in English as a vernacular language – similar to those in Latin – but also to place spoken English at the centre of focus. This was the genesis of the ‘standardisation’ of the English language, which continued into the 17th and 18th centuries and is illustrated, for example, in Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language*. With the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie in the 17th and 18th centuries, a prestige variant of English also emerged, which was associated with the educated class and indexically linked to the upper middle (and upper) classes of English society. *Received pronunciation* was modelled after the pronunciation and language usage of the English court (see the article on the English language in this volume) which was comparable to the contemporaneous French standard.

In the French language, the term *bon usage* is also linked to language ideological pursuits, as it unmistakably conveys the idea that there is a 'good (proper) use of language' (*bon usage*) and a 'bad (improper) use of language' (*mauvais usage*). According to Vaugelas (1647; cf. Ayres-Bennett 1987), the Parisian court decreed the language rules authors were to follow; when questions arose, the grammarians were consulted. The pressure exerted by *bon usage* has persisted throughout subsequent development of the language and is presently supported by the *Académie française* (see the article on the French language in this volume).

In the history of the Italian language on the other hand, the strongest influences on its development were Dante's 14th-century deliberations on the appropriateness and value of the Italian dialects and, later, the *questione della lingua*, a hotly disputed issue during the first half of the 16th century. Within this linguistic dispute, which would not be resolved until the 19th century, when it culminated with the implementation of Alessandro Manzoni's language model, three competing models vied for establishment as the standard language: the *fiorentino arcaizzante*, the *fiorentino contemporaneo* and the language of court, the *lingua cortigiana*. During this phase, the retrospective standardisation concept based on the 14th-century written language conventions of the *Tre Corone*, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio was to prevail (see the article on the Italian language in this volume).

During the second half of the 16th century, influenced by the developments taking place in Italy, similar discourses occasionally emerged on Croatia's Dalmatian coast. The early development of Croatian was heavily influenced by Renaissance and late Baroque writers, most of whom belonged to the nobility or religious orders, but whose language ideology was in service of the common people. In this regard, the development of Croatian varied from that of English, French, or, to a certain extent, Italian. Since the time of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, influence from Rome has resulted in an increasing call for the most widely used dialect, the new Shtokavian, to be used for religious and humanistic-literary purposes. This language form became established in the 17th and 18th centuries in Dubrovnik, the leading centre of culture, which – for reasons of cultural heritage as well – led, in the 19th century, to the selection of this variant for codification as the standard language (see the article on the Croatian language in this volume).

The common feature in all of these developments is that models and/or authorities on the macro-level provided direction. The acceptance of a linguistic norm that would subsequently be standardised implies an external demarcation, which, in the languages discussed here, was primarily away from Latin, though in German and English also away from French, and an internal demarcation from the dialects or diatopic variants of the language. In the historical development of the Italian language, a clear debate over dialects can be observed. At the same time, the standard Italian used today has its roots in the Tuscan variant of the 13th/14th centuries. In Croatian, the phase during which the vernacular was established can be distinguished from the subsequent phase of standardisation. During the establishment phase, the dialects were considered important cornerstones of the vernacular, while in the standardisation phase, emphasis was placed on the most culturally significant (and most widespread) variant, to the exclusion of all other variants. It can be assumed that comparable phase-related differences also exist in the other languages described.

Language Preservation and Linguistic Purism Among Language Philosophers, in Scholarly Circles and Language Institutions

Since the early days of the modern era, language-related knowledge has generally been formed and established within scholarly circles. As discussed in the fourth volume of this Handbook (cf. HESO 4/2019), the languages differ in the manner in which they were collectively formed. In French, Italian and Croatian, scholarly circles and writers' societies evolved into established academies, the majority of which later became official state-recognised institutions whose language ideologies would advance the development of the national or standard language. In the English language, particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries, efforts were made to form an English language academy, but these never came to fruition in the establishment of an institution comparable to the Italian *Accademia della Crusca* or the French *Académie française*. In the development of the German language, individual scholars and language philosophers can be identified, who made mutual reference to each other in their writings (including grammar textbooks and dictionaries). In the Italian language, in the year of the publication of the first edition of the *Vocabolario*

degli Accademici della Crusca (1612), Paolo Beni also published his dialogue *L'Anticrusca* [...], in which he criticised the adherence to the old Florentine model and the exclusion of certain authors. It was not until the 17th and 18th centuries that language societies began to be established that would produce language ideological knowledge. In Croatia, towards the end of the 16th century, a tradition of creating lexicons emerged, all of which were directly or indirectly based on the *Dictionarium quinque nobilissimarum Europae linguarum Latinae, Italicae, Germanicae, Dalmatiae et Ungaricae* by Fausto Veranzio/Faust Vrančić (Venice 1595). In the Dalmatian regions of Croatia, language academies began to be established in the 16th century, becoming more widespread in the 17th and 18th centuries. They are organised according to the Italian model and, in terms of content, are closely linked with efforts related to central European language development (see the article on the Croatian language in this volume).

Along with the development of standards, the prescriptivism, in the form of linguistic purism, evidenced in all of the languages examined here must also be mentioned (cf. Beal/Lukač/Straaijer 2023). Even during the Renaissance, where the focus of interest was on the individual vernacular (often referred to as the *mother tongue*), concepts of linguistic purism began to emerge, leading to efforts to restrict the influence of Latin, dialects, and regional and/or minority variants. These forms of linguistic purism were particularly aimed against lexical borrowings, lower-register elements and dialectical linguistic components.

In German, linguistic purism is a core feature of language ideology. Purism has long exerted a strong influence on the language. Well into the 16th century, this was manifested as opposition to Latin, then, beginning in the 17th century, against French, and after World War II, as opposition to Anglicisms. German dialects were generally disparaged – however, over the course of the 18th century, some language experts in the southern German regions spoke out for the preservation of the dialects, due to their indexical function with respect to originality (see the article on German in this volume). In English, linguistic purism emerged in the form of opposition to Romance-language elements, especially during the 16th century (cf. Busse/Möhlig-Falke/Vit 2018). As the language developed, foreign, dialectical and class-connotated elements that had been integrated into the vocabulary, phonetics and grammatical structure were largely eliminated. The French language is characterised by an

especially wide-ranging purism that excludes any register diverging from the (socially more elevated) Parisian norm or adapting dialectical and foreign language elements to the prevailing standard (see the article on the French language in this volume). Italian purism primarily focuses on the area of lexica (see the article on the Italian language in this volume). In Croatian, linguistic purism commentary opposing foreign words can be observed as far back as in the first literary texts (see the article on the Croatian language in this volume); since standardisation, linguistic purism commentary has been directed at all levels of the language.

Purist positioning is exemplified in, among other things, figurative language. This is manifested most prominently in German. For example, from the 16th century until into the 19th century, metaphors, such as that of the plant, were used to formulate the intentions of linguistic purists (see the article on the German language in this volume). In French, we also see evidence of this in the prefaces to individual grammar textbooks, such as in the anonymously published *Grammaire françoise. Avec quelques remarques sur cette langue, selon l'usage de ce temps* (Anonymus 1657; translation by C.D.)³: "We can only flatter ourselves to hope that it [our language] will not be brought down from this flourishing state." In addition, reference works established on the basis of language ideology were and continue to be conveyors of efforts related to language ideology (see the article on the French language in this volume). In the Italian language, the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* is an example of a reference work unquestionably designed to advance literary purism.

Socio-Critical Language Ideologies from the 20th Century On

Within academic discourse in Romance studies in Italian, two complementary trends are cited with regard to language evaluation (cf. Krefeld 1988 and the article on the Italian language in this volume). On the one hand, a trend towards monolinguisim: In Italian, the literary-aesthetic line of argument was initially emphasised, subsequently giving way to the ideological-political line of argument, which became particularly virulent

³ Anonymus (1657): "Nous pouuons flatter nostre esperance d'opinion qu'elle [nostre langue] ne descendra point de ce florissant estat."

during fascism. The second trend is oriented towards pluralism. This academic categorisation of language ideological discourses can also be employed for the other languages with respect to the language ideological discussions already presented. Not only in Italian, but in all the languages addressed, an internal (dialectally characterised) pluricentricity in the interior of the country and in variants beyond the national borders can be observed. Additionally, social pluralism has also taken on a role in recent decades. In German, language ideological discourse fluctuates between monolingual and pluricentric positionings that are inherent in a pluralistic language ideology, whereby, as described above, until the 20th century, the pluralistic position was virtually non-existent in the discourse. The pluricentricity of the German standard language did not enter the discussion until the 1990s, especially with respect to its diversification into different standard variants (e.g. in Germany, Austria and Switzerland). The debates around pidginisation, xenolects or styles of speech connotated with migrants reveal a language ideology imbued with pluralistic connotations, which only began to be discussed in connection with German at the end of the 20th century, and then, primarily in academia (see the article on the German language in this volume). Until the 19th century, monolingualism remained the linguistic ideological ideal for the languages discussed here, with the exception of Croatian, which from its beginnings displayed bilingualism with the Italian and German variants, but nonetheless strove for a strict separation of these languages. In all five languages discussed, a through-line from a literary-aesthetic to an ideological-political line of argumentation can be observed; in Croatian, however, the line of argumentation was ideological-political from the very beginning (see the article on the Croatian language in this volume).

With the growing reinforcement of the pluralistic line of argument, but especially from the 1970s on, the language ideology of inclusive speech has found a place on the agenda of language criticism discourses in each of the languages discussed here. Since then, public discourse has taken on an increased sensitivity to language, which is usually subsumed by its critics under the term *political correctness*.⁴ In German, as well as in

4 For a discussion of the term *political correctness*, see the article on the German language in this volume.

other languages, this is linked both to the debate on gender issues and to other discourses surrounding discrimination. Here, the concept of *wokeness* plays a key role. The discourses address all forms of discrimination. In French, the language ideological debate surrounding the feminisation of the language and *écriture inclusive* ('inclusive written language') has even led to the involvement of the French language academy (a critical participant in this debate) and publishers of dictionaries (e.g. *Le Petit Robert* has recently included the genus-neutral pronoun *iel*) (see the article on the French language in this volume). In Italian as well, a similar debate originated in the discourse surrounding gender-equitable writing but has now expanded to include all forms of gender equality (see the article on the Italian language in this volume). In Croatian, French and Italian, gender is morphologically differentiated and is normally expressed; this does not make the discourse surrounding gender equality any easier, since these debates are essentially not about linguistic factors but socio-cultural issues. In general, it can be said that in such discourses, language serves as a proxy for socio-political debate.

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