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The Logic of Language Models: Rationalist and Romantic Ideologies and their Avatars

1. Cultural models of language variation

If language is a social and cultural reality, what are the models that shape our conception of language? Specifically, what are the models that shape our thinking about language as a social phenomenon? What are the paradigms that we use to think about language, not primarily in terms of linguistic structure (Reddy 1979), but in terms of linguistic variation: models about the way in which language varieties are distributed over a language community and about the way in which such distribution should be evaluated?

Contemporary analyses of language debates tend to answer these questions very much in terms of linguistic and social identities, but identity questions far from exhaust the topics that enter into the debates. Let us therefore widen the scope beyond the identity question: Can we identify the full spectrum of underlying cultural models that shape linguistic debates? Can we determine their internal logic? And can we specify the logic of their mutual relationships?

In this paper (which is a revised version of the first part of Geeraerts 2003), I will argue that four basic ideologies may be identified: a *rationalist* and a *romantic* one, and a *nationalist* and a *postmodern* one. The two initial ideologies are underlying, antithetically related models. The two final ones are both synthetical models, in the sense that they try to transcend the initial antithesis. For each of the models, the same set of topics will be presented: the internal logic of the model, the rhetoric that accompanies it, and an example illustrating these features. For the two synthetical models, I will also point out that neither of both is a completely happy synthesis, to the extent that tensions remain within each of them.

There are two preliminary remarks that I should make in order to situate the present paper against a wider background. The first remark

places the paper in the context of my own research history. The second remark relates the paper against the tradition of ideology research.

1) The analysis is a marginal offshoot of a more central interest in empirical methods for studying linguistic variation and change. The work that I have been doing over the last ten years or so with my research group in Leuven has specifically focused on various aspects of lexical variation and change: diachronic semantics (Geeraerts 1997), the relationship between semantic and lexical variation (Geeraerts/Grondelaers/Bakema 1994), and lexical variation within pluricentric languages such as Dutch (Geeraerts/Grondelaers/Speelman 1999). Within the latter line of research, we have been particularly concerned with the development of quantitative techniques for measuring lexical variation and processes of lexical standardization.

There are two ways, then, in which the present more or less essayistic paper links up with the more rigorous descriptive and methodological work that is my basic field of interest. For one thing, an investigation into linguistic usage needs to be complemented by an investigation into the way in which the users of the language perceive the actual situation. The cultural models that I will be talking about define, in a sense, basic language attitudes – and an adequate interpretation of language variation should obviously take into account language attitudes along with language behavior.

At the same time, both perspectives (the behavioral and the attitudinal) have links with Cognitive Linguistics. On the one hand, the attitudinal approach draws inspiration from the Cognitive Linguistic analysis of cultural models and folk theories. In fact, in line with well-known trends in cultural theory (Burke/Crowley/Girvin 2000), Cognitive Linguistics has stressed the idea that we think about social reality in terms of models – *cultural models* or *folk theories*: from Holland/Quinn (1987) over Lakoff (1996) and Palmer (1996) to Dirven/Hawkins/Sandikcioglu (2001) and Dirven/Frank/Ilie (2001), Cognitive linguists have demonstrated how the technical apparatus of Cognitive Linguistics can be used to analyze how our conception of social reality is shaped by underlying patterns of thought.

On the other hand, the descriptive approach is a further development of the Cognitive Linguistic interest in lexical-semantic variation as represented by prototype theory. Underlying the publications mentioned above there is a logical line of development from semasiologi-

cal prototype theory (Geeraerts 1997) to a model of lexical variation encompassing onomasiological variation (Geeraerts/Grondelaers/ Bakema 1994), which then further broadens to the investigation of “external”, sociolectal and dialectal factors of variation (Geeraerts/Grondelaers/Speelman 1999).

2) Is there a difference between a *cultural model* and an ideology? It is a common idea in Cognitive Linguistics that the cultural models underlying reasoning and argumentation are to some extent idealized entities (see, for instance, the notion of ICM's or *Idealized Cognitive Models* as introduced in Lakoff 1987). Actually occurring phenomena and situations usually differ to a smaller or a greater extent from the models that act as cognitive reference points: the models themselves, then, are to some extent abstract, general, perhaps even simplistic, precisely because we use them to make sense of phenomena that are intrinsically more complicated.

With regard to social phenomena, this means that cultural models may turn out to be not just idealized entities, but also ideological ones. Cultural models may be ideologies in two different respects: either when their idealized character is forgotten (when the difference between the abstract model and the actual circumstances is neglected), or when they are used in a prescriptive and normative rather than a descriptive way (when they are used as models of how things should be rather than of how things are). In the latter case, an ideology is basically a guiding line for social action, a shared system of ideas for the interpretation of social reality, regardless of the researcher's evaluation of that perspective. In the former case, an ideology is always to some extent a cover-up, a semblance, a deliberate misrepresentation of the actual situation, and a description of such ideologies will of necessity have to be critical.

The distinction is of course well-known in ideology research, and there is an extensive linguistic literature probing the relationship between language and ideology. There are two basic (and to some extent overlapping) approaches here: on the one hand, all forms of critical discourse analysis, as represented by Van Dijk (1998), Wodak/Meyer (2001), or Blommaert/Bulcaen (1997); and on the other, the “ideologies of language” approach, as represented by Joseph/Taylor (1990), Woolard/Schieffelin/Kroskrity (1998), and Schiffman (1996). The former approach critically analyzes any text with regard to its position

in the social power play – with regard to the way, that is, in which it reproduces or counteracts existing social relations. The latter approach concentrates on how beliefs about language variation and specific linguistic varieties manifest themselves explicitly (as in language policies) or implicitly (as in educational practices), and how they interact with group identity, economic development, social mobility, political organization.

In the following pages, I will not take a critical approach, but rather start from a neutral and descriptive conception of linguistic cultural models. Rather than critically analyzing specific practices and policies as ideological, I will try to explore the underlying structure and the historical development of the competing cultural models that lie at the basis of such practices and policies as well as their critical analysis.

2. The rationalist model

In this section and the next, I will present the two basic cultural models that I think need to be distinguished if we want to get a grip on the logic of standardization debates: the *rationalist* one and the *romantic* one. I will present them in mutual contrast, showing how they are to a large extent each other's counterpart, and how they are dialectically related. In sections 4 and 5, the comparison will be further expanded, leading to the identification of two historical transformations of the basic models, in the form of a *nationalist* and a *postmodern* model.

2.1 *The logic of the rationalist model*

What are the characteristics that are ideally (and perhaps ideologically) attributed to standard languages? The most conspicuous feature is probably the *generality* of standard languages. Standard languages, in contrast with dialects and other restricted languages, are general in three different ways.

They are *geographically* general, in the sense that they overarch the more restricted areas of application of dialects. Further, they are *socially* general because they constitute a common language that is not the property of a single social group but that is available to all. Finally, they are *thematically* universal in the sense that they are equipped to deal with any semantic domain or any linguistic function.

More advanced domains of experience in particular (like science or high culture) fall outside the range of local dialects.

Because of their generality, standard languages have two additional features. First, they are supposed to be a *neutral* medium, with a mediating function, in an almost philosophical sense of “mediation”. Standard languages, in fact, transcend social differences: they ensure that men and women from all walks of life and from all corners of the nation can communicate freely.

In that sense, they are a medium of *participation and emancipation*. Because of their neutrality and because of their functional generality, standard languages are a key to the world of learning and higher culture: functional domains par excellence for standard language use (or, reversing the perspective, functional domains that cannot be accessed on the basis of dialect knowledge alone). Perhaps even more importantly, standard languages are supposed to contribute to political participation. The possibility of free communication is a feature of a democratic political organization, in the sense of the ideal *herrschaftsfreie Kommunikation* as described by Jürgen Habermas. If then linguistic standardization contributes to mutual understanding and free communication, it is a factor of political emancipation – just as it is a factor of social emancipation when it contributes to the spreading of culture and education. By contrast, if you believe in the beneficial effects of standardization, dialects are mere relics of an obscurantist social and political system that opposes democracy and emancipation.

2.2 *An example of the rationalist model*

In a context of postmodern ideological debunking, the positive conception of standardization implicit in the rationalist model is definitely suspect, but it is crucial for my line of argumentation that at least in the context in which it originated (that of the 18th century Enlightenment), there was a genuine positive appraisal of standardization. To illustrate, let us have a look at some excerpts from reports presented to the revolutionary Convention in France. Barère ([1975] 1794) puts matters as follows.

- 1) Citoyens, la langue d’un peuple libre doit être une et la même pour tous ([1975] 1794: 297). [Citizens, the language of a free people has to be one and the same for all.]

- 2) Les lumières portées à grands frais aux extrémités de la France s'éteignent en y arrivant, puisque les lois n'y sont pas entendues ([1975] 1794: 295). [The *lumières*, when they are brought with great difficulty to the remote corners of France, die out when they arrive there, because the laws are not understood.]
- 3) Laisser les citoyens dans l'ignorance de la langue nationale, c'est trahir la patrie; c'est laisser le torrent des lumières empoisonné ou obstrué dans son cours; c'est méconnaître les bienfaits de l'imprimerie, car chaque imprimeur est un instituteur public de langue et de législation ([1975] 1794: 296s.). [To maintain the citizens in their ignorance of the national language is to betray the country. It permits the torrent of the *lumières* to be poisoned or obstructed in its course. It means disavowing the blessings of the printing press, because all publishers are public teachers of the language and the legislation.]
- 4) Citoyens, les tyrans coalisés ont dit: l'ignorance fut toujours notre auxiliaire le plus puissant; maintenons l'ignorance; elle fait les fanatiques, elle multiplie les contre-révolutionnaires; faisons rétrograder les Français vers la barbarie: servons-nous des peuples mal instruits ou de ceux qui parlent un idiome différent de celui de l'instruction publique ([1975] 1794: 291). [Citizens, the allied tyrants have said: ignorance has always been our most powerful helper. It creates fanatics, it breeds counter-revolutionaries. Let's make sure the French degrade into barbarity: let's take advantage of the badly educated peoples or of those that speak a language that is different from that of public education.]
- 5) Les habitants des campagnes n'entendent que le bas-breton; c'est avec cet instrument barbare de leurs pensées superstitieuses que les prêtres et les intrigants les tiennent sous leur empire, dirigent leurs consciences et empêchent les citoyens de connaître les lois et d'aimer la République. Vos travaux leur sont inconnus, vos efforts pour leur affranchissement sont ignorés ([1975] 1794: 292s.). [The inhabitants of the countryside speak only the Breton dialect. It is with that instrument of their superstitious way of thinking that the priests and the plotters keep them under their thumb, control their minds, and prevent the citizens from knowing the laws of the Republic. Your works are unknown to them, your efforts to bring them liberty are ignored.]

The characteristics that we have attributed to standard languages (generality and communicative neutrality, emancipatory and participatory effects, opposition to obscurantism) can be easily identified in these fragments. Fragment 1) expresses the generality and uniformity of the standard language. Fragments 2) and 3) stress the emancipatory function of knowledge of the standard: citizens who only know their dialect will not understand the laws of the Republic (the assumption being, of course, that these have a liberating effect), nor will they, more generally speaking, be able to profit from the benefits brought by the printed press. Fragments 4) and 5) associate dialects more directly with counter-revolutionary obscurantism: it is suggested that priests and “tyrants” deliberately maintain ignorance by preventing the common people from acquiring the standard language.

A similar pattern can be found in the following quotes from Grégoire ([1975] 1794), who actually presents an entire educational project to the Convention to “abolish the dialects and generalize the use of the French language”. (His notion of *dialect* actually includes not just the dialects of French, but also the different languages spoken in the territory of France, like German in the Alsace region, Flemish in the northern area, or Breton in Brittany.)

- 6) Mais au moins on peut uniformer le langage d’une grande nation, de manière que tous les citoyens qui la composent puissent sans obstacle se communiquer leurs pensées. Cette entreprise, qui ne fut pleinement exécutée chez aucun peuple, est digne du peuple français, qui centralise toutes les branches de l’organisation sociale et qui doit être jaloux de consacrer au plutôt, dans une République une et indivisible, l’usage unique et invariable de la langue et de la liberté ([1975] 1794: 302). [But at least one can standardize the language of a great nation, to the extent that all its citizens can mutually communicate their thoughts unhindered. Such an enterprise, which no people has fully achieved as yet, is worthy of the French nation, which centralizes all aspects of the social organization and which must endeavour to endorse as soon as possible, in a Republic that is one and indivisible, the sole and invariable use of language and freedom.]
- 7) “Il y a dans notre langue”, disait un royaliste, “une hiérarchie de style, parce que les mots sont classés comme les sujets dans une

monarchie”. Cet aveu est un trait de lumière pour quiconque réfléchit. En appliquant l’inégalité des styles à celle des conditions, on peut tirer des conséquences qui prouvent l’importance de mon projet dans une démocratie ([1975] 1794: 316). [“There is in our language”, a certain royalist said, “a hierarchy of styles, because the words are classified just like the citizens in a monarchy”. This confession constitutes a ray of insight for any thinking person. If we apply the inequality of the styles to the inequality of the conditions under which people live, we may come to conclusions that prove the importance of my project (*of linguistic standardization through an educational language policy*) in a democracy.]

- 8) Tous les membres du souverain sont admissibles à toutes les places; il est à désirer que tous puissent successivement les remplir, et retourner à leurs professions agricoles ou mécaniques. Cet état de choses nous présente l’alternative suivante: si ces places sont occupées par des hommes incapables de s’annoncer, d’écrire dans la langue nationale, les droits des citoyens seront-ils bien garantis par des actes dont la rédaction présentera l’impropriété des termes, l’imprécision des idées, en un mot tous les symptômes de l’ignorance? Si au contraire cette ignorance exclut des places, bientôt renaîtra cette aristocratie qui jadis employait le patois pour montrer son affabilité protectrice à ceux qu’on appelait insolentement les petites gens. [...] Ainsi l’ignorance de la langue compromettrait le bonheur social ou détruirait l’égalité ([1975] 1794: 303). [All members of the sovereign people are eligible for all positions. It is desirable that all may successively fill these positions, and afterwards return to their agricultural or industrial professions. This state of affairs yields the following alternative. If the positions are taken up by men incapable of expressing themselves or of writing in the national language, will the rights of the citizens be safeguarded by laws that are characterized by improper choice of words, by imprecise ideas, in short by all symptoms of ignorance? If on the contrary this ignorance prevents people from taking up office, then soon enough we will witness the rebirth of that aristocracy that once used the dialects to demonstrate its affability with regard to those that it insolently named “the small people”. [...] Thus, ignorance of the language either compromises social happiness or destroys equality.]

Fragment 6) points to the communicative generality of the standard language: having a unitary language not only symbolizes the unity of the nation, but it also ensures that the citizens can freely communicate their thoughts. Fragment 7) symbolically links the absence of standardization to the pre-revolutionary situation: the existence of hierarchically ordered varieties within the language mirrors the hierarchical organization of society. Fragment 8) aptly describes the politically emancipatory function of standardization. The egalitarian ideal implies that any citizen can take part in the government of the nation; in fact, the ideal would be that all citizens successively fulfill political functions and then return to their professional environment. However, in order to be able to fulfill these functions, a thorough knowledge of the common language is necessary. People should not be prevented from taking up office by their ignorance of the language. Hence, an educational effort to ensure standardization is necessary: Grégoire is an ardent defender of the *Ecole publique* as a standardizing force.

3. The romantic model

In sections 4 and 5, I will describe the transformations that the rationalist, Enlightenment ideal of standardization goes through in the course of the last two centuries. Even in its transformed shape, however, the positive evaluation of standardization refers to one or another of the features mentioned here: a neutrally mediating communicative function, and an emancipatory and participatory effect, both of these supported by an educational system geared towards the spreading of the standard language. Such a positive evaluation contrasts markedly with the negative evaluation of standard languages in the romantic antithesis of the rationalist model.

3.1 *The logic of the romantic model*

The romantic conception of standardization may be easily defined in contrast with the two dominating features of the rationalist model. First, as against the emancipatory and participatory goals of the enlightened view, a romantic view will tend to point out that standard languages are themselves instruments of oppression and exclusion. At this point, of course, the analysis of standardization takes the form of an ideological criticism: it will argue that the enlightened ideals are

not often realized, and that, in fact, processes of standardization typically achieve the reverse of what they pretend to aim at. Although the term is not often used, this type of critical discourse boils down to a demonstration that linguistic standardization exemplifies what Horkheimer/Adorno (1947) called the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – the (negative) dialectic of Enlightenment. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that rationalist positions have a tendency to lead to their own dialectical counterpart (in the sense, for instance, in which a growing technical mastery of man over nature may lead to the destruction of the natural world).

Now, if we look back at the three types of generality that standard languages are supposed to characterize, it is easy to see that the actual realization of the ideal may tend to contradict the ideal – which is then a case in point of the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

First, standard languages are supposed to be geographically neutral, but in actual practice, processes of standardization often have their starting-point in a specific region that is economically, culturally, and/or politically dominant. For people in the other, outer provinces, then, the standard language is not an impartial medium, but it rather affirms the dominance of the leading province. Standard French, for instance, is not just an unbiased language coming out of the blue; it is the language of the upper and the middle classes of Paris and the Ile-de-France, and it is associated with the role that the central province has played since the medieval era.

Second, standard languages are supposed to be functionally general, but in actual practice, they are typically used in cultural, educational, scientific, administrative, and political contexts – at least in those circumstances in which a language community is not entirely standardized. Non-standard varieties may then naturally acquire additional, contrastive overtones. For one thing, if the standard language is the language of public life, the non-standard varieties will be appreciated as the language associated with intimacy, familiarity, the personal rather than the public sphere. For another, if the standard language functions in typically intellectual contexts (education and science), non-standard varieties will be invested with emotional values. For speakers of a dialect, the dialect is often the language of the emotions, of spontaneity, of naturalness, in contrast with the official and educational language. Ironically, the functional generality of standard lan-

guages engenders a functional specialization, separating the public sphere from the personal, and the emotional sphere from the intellectual.

Third, standard languages are supposed to be socially neutral, but in actual practice, they are typically the language of an elite. The link between an economical, cultural, or political elite and the standard language is in fact an inevitable side-effect of the functional generality of standard languages. If standard languages are typically used in cultural, educational, scientific, administrative, and political contexts, then those speakers of the language that act in these contexts will more easily learn the standard language or adopt it as their first language than speakers who remain foreign to these functions. The outsiders may then perceive the greater linguistic proficiency of the elite as a factor contributing to social exclusion. In Grégoire's view, knowledge of the standard language contributes to social mobility, but conversely, the real social distribution of standard language functions may turn the standard language into an instrument of discrimination.

We can see, in other words, how the alleged generality of standard languages actually takes the form of a series of specializations. The process of standardization takes its starting-point in the language of specific regions, specific groups of speakers, specific domains and functions, and this largely inevitable fact may subvert the very ideal that standardization was supposed to serve. When that happens, the original ideal may be critically unmasked as an ideological pretence.

Needless to say, this dialectical reversal may also affect the educational system. If the standard language is recognized as an instrument of oppression, discrimination, social exclusion, the educational system will likewise be rejected as contributing to such processes of social exclusion. Rather than seeing the school as an institution that spreads knowledge of the common language (and knowledge in general), creating possibilities for social mobility, it will then be pointed out that the educational system, relying on perhaps more than contributing to the knowledge of the language, favors those language users whose background makes them more familiar with the standard language, and thus reproduces rather than neutralizes social inequality.

But why call this critical reversal of the appreciation of the standard language a *romantic* model? Why not simply call it a *realistic* or a *critical* or an *anti-ideological* one? The reason is that this critical

stance is often (though not necessarily always) accompanied by a second feature, that may be contrasted with the second characteristic of the rationalist model. That is to say, we have just seen how a critical approach questions the emancipatory, participatory conception of the Enlightenment model. But what about the second feature? What about the communicative aspects of the rationalist model?

We get a truly *romantic* model of language variation when the critical attitude towards official standards is coupled with a view of language as *expression* rather than *communication*. According to the Enlightenment perspective, languages are means of communication, and a standard language is a superior communicative tool because it is functionally general and socially neutral.

According to a romantic perspective, languages are primarily expressive rather than communicative. They express an identity, and they do so because they embody a particular conception of the world, a world view or *Weltanschauung* in the sense of Herder. The link between this well-known romantic conception of the relationship between language and thought and the standardization debate will be clear. If languages or language varieties embody a specific identity, then a preference for one language or language variety rather than another implies that the specific identity of a specific group of people is neglected or denied. Not recognizing the language is not recognizing the language users. If some language varieties are relegated to second rate status through the existence of a standard variety, then the speakers of those language varieties are denied a fundamental right: the right to express themselves in their own language – the only language, in fact, that could do justice to their individual identity, according to the romantic conception of the relationship between language and identity.

A correlate of this position is the positive evaluation of variety. Whereas the rationalist approach cherished linguistic uniformity as the symbolic expression of a free and open community in which all citizens have equal rights to speech, the romantic approach values diversity as a recognition of a fundamental respect for different identities.

In short, a fully romantic view of language variation and linguistic standardization opposes the Enlightenment view of language as communication with a view of language as the expression of an individual identity. It opposes the emancipatory and participatory rationalist ideal

with a critical view of standardization as a tool of discrimination and exclusion, and it opposes the positive appreciation of education as an instrument for the dissemination of linguistic knowledge with a fundamental distrust of schools as part of a system reproducing social inequality.

3.2 An example of the romantic model

In order to illustrate the romantic model, I will not (as I did in the case of the rationalist model) use an historical example, but I would like to have a brief look at the current debate about linguistic genocide and the international position of English. In that interlinguistic form of variation, English replaces the standard language of intralinguistic variation, and minority languages threatened with disappearance replace the non-standard varieties. All the objections that a romantic approach would level against a dominating standard variety could then be applied against the international domination of English. Consider, as an example, the following excerpts from an abstract of Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) (The abstract, by the author herself, may be found on the author's homepage).

- 9) Indigenous peoples and minorities are the main bearers of linguistic and cultural diversity in the world – over 80% of the world's languages exist in one country only and the median language has no more than 5,000 speakers. Some of the direct main agents of linguistic (and cultural) genocide today are parts of what we call the consciousness industry: formal educational systems and the mass media. [...] The book shows that the education of most minorities and indigenous peoples in the world is organized in ways which both counteract sound scientific principles and lead to the disappearance of linguistic and cultural diversity. [...] Schools are every day committing linguistic genocide. [...] They also do it by forcibly moving children from one group (indigenous or minority) to another group (the dominant group) through linguistic and cultural forced assimilation in schools. [...] This inevitably includes a consideration of power relations. The book shows how the formal educational systems participate in maintaining and reproducing unequal power relations, here especially between linguistic minorities and others, but also more generally, and how the

ways of doing this have changed and are constantly changing, and how control and domination are resisted and alternatives are constantly created and negotiated, managed and controlled, and recreated. The deficiency-based models that are used in most minority education invalidate the linguistic and cultural capital of minority children and their parents and communities. They make the resources of dominated groups seem handicaps or deficiencies, instead of valued and validated non-material resources, or they render them invisible and therefore not possible to convert into material resources and positions of structural power. This happens just as much in global international relations and the Mcdonaldization of the world as it happens in ESL classrooms.

Regardless of whether Skutnabb-Kangas is right or not, the components of the romantic approach are conspicuously present in her statement. First, the disappearance of languages and the disappearance of cultures are equated. The very notion of *linguistic genocide* in fact invokes the extermination of an entire people (or at least culture) together with its language. As opposed to this process of forced assimilation and disappearance, different cultures have to be accepted as fundamentally equal, and diversity should be treasured as an end in itself. Second, the international dissemination of English does not lead to emancipation and participation, but rather serves purposes of international oppression, notably by multinational companies. And third, the text has explicit misgivings about the role schools play in this linguistic and cultural power play.

4. The nationalist model

In the previous pages, I have not only sketched the rationalist and the romantic model of standardization, but I have also indicated that they exhibit a specific and narrow relationship. Not only is one the counterpart of the other, but also, there is a dialectical relationship between the two, in the sense that actual processes of standardization seem to be caught in a negative *dialectic of Enlightenment* in the course of which the positive rationalist ideals tend to be subverted, thus giving way to a romantic, critical appreciation of the standardization process. This dialectical relationship, which is summarized in table 1, does not

however exhaust the links that exist between the two basic conceptions.

One way of deepening the picture painted so far would be to have a look at the theoretical linguistic background of the basic models: is there a specific conception of language that goes hand in hand with either of the perspectives? It can actually be argued that 18th century theories about the origins of language complement the picture as it stands (Geeraerts 2003), but that is not the approach to be followed here.

Table 1: The rationalist and the romantic models of standardization

	the rationalist model	the romantic model
linguistic-philosophical basis	language as a medium of communication	language as a medium of expression
conception of standardization	a democratic ideal: standard language as a neutral medium of social participation	anti-ideological criticism: standard language as a medium of social exclusion
conception of language variation	language variation as an impediment to emancipation	language variation as expressing different identities

Rather, the present section and the next will have a look at two distinctive moments in the development of the competing rationalist and romantic models, in particular charting the transformations that they go through in the 19th and the 20th centuries. First, I will argue that the nationalist model of standardization that rose to prominence in the 19th century constitutes a specific blend of the rationalist and the romantic model. Further, I will have a look at the way in which our contemporary postmodern awareness influences the competition between the rationalist and the romantic model. It is an interesting question, by the way, whether the models ever occur in their purest form. Even in the examples from the French revolutionary period, a link with patriotic nationalism is present. If this is indeed the case, the models presented in the previous section are to be seen as analytic reference points, as *idealized cognitive models* in the sense of Cognitive Linguistics.

4.1 The logic of the nationalist model

Both the rationalist and the romantic model have a problem with the level at which they should be situated. If the rationalist model is carried to its extreme, it implies the necessity of a universal, international language. If the driving force behind standardization is maximizing mutual communication, then a universal language that transcends all existing language variation is to be recommended: the neutralization of interlinguistic variation complements the neutralization of intralinguistic standardization. And of course, the ideal of a universal, ideal language (Esperanto, Volapük and the like) is precisely the historical realization of this consequent interpretation of the rationalist approach.

In actual practice, however, Esperantist movements and the like remained marginal. The real level at which standardization processes took place, lay at a lower level – that of the nation. Starting from the Enlightenment model, there is a simple logic to this (which can, in fact, be identified in the quotations from Barère and Grégoire that we discussed): if standardization aims at democratic, political participation, then obviously the nation, as the ideal form of political organization, becomes the locus of standardization processes and the educational efforts supporting them. In itself, then, a link between nationalism and the rationalist view of standardization cannot come as a surprise. Linguistic standardization is primarily standardization within a nation, because it is within the nation that the processes of political decision making take place that linguistic standardization is supposed to contribute to. A terminological clarification may be useful at this point. *Nationalism* is the political ideology in which a state, as a political organization, derives its political legitimacy from its people, rather than from tradition, divine right, or the like. A state that lives up to this requirement is a nation. Nationalism, in other words, claims that any state should be a nation. The nationalist relationship between the people and the state may be conceived of in two different ways: according to a distinction that is customary in the literature on nationalism, we may make a distinction between civic nationalism and identity nationalism. On the one hand, *civic nationalism* is the conception of nationalism in which the nation derives its legitimacy from the active participation of its citizens, through a system of political represen-

tation. This is the liberal, rationalist conception of nationalism. On the other hand, *identity nationalism* is the conception of nationalism in which the nation derives its political legitimacy from the cultural identity of the people. This is the romantic conception of nationalism.

Nationalism also refers to the claim and the efforts of a particular group to become a nation. Existing states are not necessarily nations according to the nationalist view: either because they do not achieve democratic legitimacy (the liberal point of view), or because they do not recognize the cultural identity of certain groups (the romantic point of view). Historically speaking, then, *nationalist movements* may be either movements trying to establish a liberal democracy, or movements claiming independence for a specific group or region. (In contemporary usage, though, the focus tends to lie more on the latter type.)

The link between nationalism and language that we described above clearly involves the liberal, rationalist version of nationalism: if the nation derives its legitimacy from the active participation of its citizens, then maximizing mutual communication through standardization is an instrument of participation. But if we turn to identity nationalism, nationalism has a similar, and maybe even stronger link with a romantic conception of language. Whereas the rationalist perspective contains a tendency towards universality, the romantic perspective has a tendency towards individuality. If carried to its extreme, the romantic conception of language variation implies that each person may have his or her own language. Just like the rationalist perspective tends to maximize communicability, the romantic perspective tends to maximize individual variation. Again, in actual practice, this is an extreme position that can hardly be realized as such. Except perhaps in the romantic admiration for the *individual voice of the poet* and the like, the romantic conception deals with the language of groups rather than with the language of individuals. The identity that is expressed by the language is the identity of a community, and the community is a nation when it acquires political autonomy. Hence the well-known romantic link between nationalism and language: see, among many others, Deprez/Vos (1998). On the one hand, language correlates with identity according to the romantic model, and on the other, nations may derive their legitimacy from the cultural identity of the people (which is not to say that all nationalism is linguistic nationalism: as is

well known, the sense of identity may come from many other sources, like religion or ethnicity).

From two different angles, then, nationalism links up with language, and this recognition may be linked to the distinction between two basic types of nationalism that is often made in political theory. On the one hand, *civic nationalism* is the conception of nationalism in which the nation derives its legitimacy from the active participation of its citizens, through a system of political representation. In such a liberal, rationalist conception, the common language is the medium of participation. On the other hand, *identity nationalism* is the conception of nationalism in which the nation derives its political legitimacy from the cultural identity of the people, and language is one of the factors establishing such identity.

4.2 *An example of the nationalist model*

The actual alliance between both forms of reasoning may be briefly illustrated by the following quotes from Verlooy (1788). A Dutch-speaking lawyer in Brussels, which was then under Austrian rule, Verlooy argues against the growing use of French in public life and in favor of the use of the native Dutch tongue. In 1789, Verlooy played a role in the *Brabantse Omwenteling*, an (ineffective) insurrection against the Austrians. His pamphlet of 1788 may be read as the intellectual basis of his nationalist stance of the next year. But what is the role attributed to language in Verlooy's nationalism?

- 10) Het is zonder twyffel een goed voor eenigelyk wel ter tael en ter spraek te zyn, en zyne redens vaerdig en onbelemmert te voeren. Doch hier toe is een' zekere frankheyd noodig. Maer, gelyk by ons gezien en geplogen is, wanneer zullen wy frank zyn in die vremde tael? ([1979] 1788: 58). [Without any doubt, it is good for any person to be able to speak fluently, and to engage in conversation freely. But to achieve this a certain candour is necessary. However, as can be observed in our case, when will we obtain such candour in this foreign language?]
- 11) Door ons frans schynen wy van die middelbare geleertheyd en burgerlyke wysheyd af geheel het gemeyn, onze bestgemoedde en weetgirige borgers, ambachtslieden, akkermans, en onze vrouwen: die 't frans teenemael niet, of ten minsten zoo verre niet en weten,

dat-ze 't met vermaek of zonder moyelykheid kunnen lezen: die daer door als als gedoemt schynen tot een' gezogte onwetendheyd ([1979] 1788: 49). [By speaking French, we separate from this common knowledge and this civic wisdom all the common people, our well-humoured and inquisitive townsmen, craftsmen, farmers, and our women: who do not know French, or at least not well enough to read it easily and efficiently, and who therefore seem to be condemned to ignorance.]

- 12) Voor het vaderlanderschap eener natie is zeer dienstig zoo veel eygen en bijzonder te hebben als mogelyk is [...] en zelfs hoe meer een' zaek uytwendigs heeft, gelyk de tael, dragten, toneelen, godsdienst, zeker plechten; hoe meer zy de gemoederen van 't volk zal aantrekken. [...] Waerom werken wy dan om zoo bek-wamen band van vaderlanderschap, de moederlyke tael, te bannen? ([1979] 1788: 59s.). [For a feeling of national identity within a nation, it is useful to have as many common and specific features as possible, and these features will more readily attract the hearts of the people to the extent that they can be externally observed, like the language, the attire, the theater and the public entertainments, the religion. Why then do we endeavour to discard our mother tongue, which constitutes such a strong tie of patriotism?]

Quotation 10) emphasizes the individual and emancipatory perspective: it is important for people to be able to express themselves freely, and this can only be guaranteed in their mother tongue. In the same vein, quotation 11) stresses the importance of a common language for an open communication within a given society and for the dissemination of knowledge: the further use of French would engender an undesirable rupture between the middle classes and the lower classes. By contrast, quotation 12) stresses the importance of a common identity for nation-building. Both rationalist and romantic themes, in other words, may appear in the discourse of proponents of nationalist movements.

4.3 Tensions within the nationalist model

If the rationalist and the romantic model have a tendency to convergence on a nationalist level, this does not imply that the nationalist

model is a straightforward happy synthesis of the two. It is rather the case that various tensions exist within the nationalist approach.

One obvious tension derives from the fact that the level on which nations should be constituted is not given a priori. The civic nationalism of nation states and the identity nationalism of specific ethnic or religious groups within that nation state may clash – as witnessed over and over again in the political history of the past two centuries.

Further, the tensions that exist within the original models are likely to reappear in their nationalist guise. For one thing, the rationalist model is subject to the danger of a discriminatory dialectic, and the romantic assumption of internal homogeneity may have similar oppressive side-effects. With the development of the national movements in the 19th century, in fact, the nationalist emphasis tended to fall more and more on the romantic notion of national identity. Minorities aspiring towards independence naively assume or explicitly construct an identity, and nation states may blatantly enforce a common identity, linguistic or otherwise. These processes are well known from the nationalism literature (in the line of Hobsbawm, Anderson, Gellner, Smith). For our present linguistic purposes, the crucial point is to see that this romantic nationalism reveals the paradoxes of the romantic cultural model that we identified above. The transition from the romantic model as described earlier to the nationalist model constitutes so to speak a *Dialektik der Romantik* that parallels the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, i.e. an almost natural process through which the original romantic model becomes subverted and contradicts at least some of its own starting-points.

The paradox of the romantically inspired nationalist model, in fact, is this. On the one hand, it claims recognition of diversity, equal rights, political independence for one (linguistic) group with regard to other groups. On the other, it has to assume an internal homogeneity within that group, for the simple reason that within the romantic logic, it is the identity of the group that legitimatizes the claim for recognition. And so, the identity may have to be imposed or constructed, and dissident voices within the group may have to be stifled.

The romantic model, then, is no less prone to contradictory developments than the rationalist one. In the linguistic debate, the specific form of the romantically nationalist position is a concern for the *purity* of the language. Defending the common language against foreign

influences (loan words, basically) is at the same time a defense of the cultural identity of the people. In the nationalist subversion of the initial romantic model identities are not only expressed, but they are also made permanent. Again, the link between purism and nationalism is well-known, and there is an extended literature on purism. What I would like to stress, in this respect, is less the phenomenon as such, but rather how it fits into the overall pattern that defines the paradoxical logic of the rationalist and the romantic model of language variation.

This paradoxical logic, to sum up, resides in the following points. First, although the basic models are opposites, they find a common ground in the notion of nationalism. Because the rationalist model cannot easily realize its extreme universalist claims, and because the romantic model cannot easily realize its radical individualist claims, both models meet on a middle ground where groups of people claim political identity and independence. Second, this coalescence of the models does not annihilate the tensions that exist between them: the history of the past two centuries brims with examples of conflicts between a more rationalist *Staatsnationalismus* (civic nationalism at the level of the nation-state) and a more romantic *Volksnationalismus* (ethnic or cultural identity nationalism). Third, in addition to the tensions between the models, we have to take into account tensions within each model: the rationalist model is subject to the danger of a discriminatory *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, and the romantic assumption of internal homogeneity may likewise have oppressive side-effects.

5. The postmodern model

Living as we do in the aftermath of the nationalist era, we should complete our overview of the historical transformations of the cultural models of language variation by charting what changes are brought to the debate by our post-nationalist environment.

5.1 *The logic of the postmodern model*

The cultural situation of the late 20th and early 21st century can best be characterized by two overlapping developments: the rise of globalization and the growth of a postmodernist awareness. Globalization is economic and political (to the extent that the growing importance of

international organisations diminishes the older importance of the nation state). But it is also linguistic: the international spread of English almost realizes the old rationalist's dream of a universal language.

The postmodern awareness, on the other hand, resides in two features. First, the so-called *disappearance of the Great Narratives* signals a weakening of the older patterns of interpretation. There is a great deal of suspicion with regard to the rationalist model of a smooth, emancipatory progress as well as (and perhaps more dominantly so) with regard to the nationalist model. Postmodern thinking is the self-consciousness of the late 20th century: progress is not automatic, and nationalism is dangerous. This critical attitude entails a second feature: if the old models are no longer self-evident, a dehierarchization and informalization occurs. If, for instance, the original hierarchical ordering of high culture and low culture is rejected as part of the old models of interpretation, then popular culture may claim equal rights with regard to high culture. These two features imply that postmodernism is at least to some extent a renewed form of the original romantic attitude: it renews the critical, "countercultural" attitude with regard to the official stories, and it revives the claims for diversity.

The interesting question from our point of view is whether these changes lead to a fundamental transformation of the cultural models that are used to discuss language variation. With regard to the first feature, globalization, there is a growing emphasis on the international relationship between languages rather than the national relationship between language varieties. The initial models of standardization are essentially models of standard languages in comparison with dialects or other varieties of the same language. In the nationalist era, the debate sometimes involves national languages as opposed to minority languages, but it is only in our days that the debate concentrates on the international relationship between different languages, viz. the relationship between English as a world language in comparison with local, possibly endangered languages.

Now, to the extent that the position of global English is at stake, the old opposition between rationalist and romantic attitudes receives a new impetus. I have shown above how Skutnabb-Kangas's argumentation about the treatment of minority languages is largely situated within what I would call a *romantic* frame. At the same time, it is not

difficult to see which form the basic pattern of a rationalist reply with regard to the position taken by Skutnabb-Kangas would probably take.

First, against the identification of language and culture, the rationalist could point to cases where the same language is unproblematically shared by different cultures, or conversely, where the same culture unites people with different languages.

Second, against the allegation that the international dissemination of English is discriminatory, the rationalist might want to stress the actual emancipatory effects of a knowledge of English. If English is indeed the key to international communication (and if, indeed, acquiring English is possible for all), then it can only be welcomed that more and more people are able to participate in that kind of communication.

At the same time, though (and this is the change that relates more directly to the rise of the postmodern awareness), the contemporary discussions seem to lead to the development of a model based on a functional differentiation between the varieties involved – an “and/and”-model rather than an “either/or”-model, so to speak. In the discussion about the international situation in particular, there is a growing recognition that *multilingualism* is a natural situation. Interestingly, the shift towards multilingualism as a (so to speak) dialectic synthesis of the opposite forces may be derived from the rationalist as well as from the romantic model. In the previous section, we saw that the shift towards nationalism fitted into the logic of both basic models, if account was taken of the “problem of levels”. At this point, we can see in a similar way that a new focus on multilingualism fits in with both models.

On the one hand, a multilingual solution seems to presuppose some form of functional distribution: one language is used for a specific set of circumstances, and the other for another set of circumstances. Such a diglossic or polyglossic situational specialization is not incompatible with the original rationalist model. After all, the rationalist model is motivated by a desire to assure maximal democratic participation in what are sometimes called *secondary domains* of social life: specific, public domains of experience, to begin with higher education and political life. For the *primary domains*, beginning with the more private aspects of life, the existence of less uniform, more local language varieties does not fundamentally contradict the ideological basis of the model.

On the other hand, the postmodern twist of the romantic model entails a new attitude towards the question of personal identity. It is often said, in fact, that one of the hallmarks of the postmodern mentality is the fragmentation, or at least the pluralization of identity. People no longer experience a single personal identity, but they exhibit a number of different, possibly shifting identities, of a professional, social, ethnic, cultural nature. Different languages or language varieties may then, following the original “expressive” logic of the romantic attitude, express this fragmentation or multiplication of identities.

5.2 *An example of the postmodern model*

For an example of a text exhibiting the postmodern model, we turn to the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* issued by the *Council of Europe* in 2003. The document defines and defends individual plurilingualism as an educational goal within Europe. Plurilingualism is introduced as in quotation 13).

13) Plurilingualism should be understood as:

- the intrinsic capacity of all speakers to use and learn, alone or through teaching, more than one language. The ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes is defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (p. 168) as the ability “to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural action, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures”. This ability is concretised in a repertoire of languages a speaker can use. The goal of teaching is to develop this competence (hence the expression: *plurilingualism as a competence*).
- an educational value that is the basis of linguistic tolerance: speakers’ awareness of their plurilingualism may lead them to give equal value to each of the varieties they themselves and other speakers use, even if they do not have the same functions (private, professional or official communication, language of affiliation, etc). But this awareness should be assisted and structured by schools since it is in no sense automatic (hence the expression: *plurilingualism as a value*).

Plurilingualism should be understood in this dual sense: it constitutes a conception of the speaker as fundamentally plural and a value in that it is the basis of linguistic tolerance, an essential element of intercultural education.

The two forms of the postmodern model are conspicuously present in the text. The romantic interpretation of postmodernism stresses the heterogeneity of identities, even for one individual: speakers are “fundamentally plural”, and this plurality of identities is recognized as a value that needs to be recognized. The rationalist strand in the postmodern model reveals itself in the emphasis on the functional differentiation that may exist between languages or language varieties. We find, in other words, a double logic of multiplicity: from the romantic angle, the choice is not for one identity rather than the other, but for both (or more); and from the rationalist angle, the choice is not for one language or language variety rather than the other, but for both (or more). The rhetoric that goes with these two types of logic is one of shifting, fragmentary, flexible identities on the one hand, and one of functional differentiation on the other.

5.3 Tensions within the postmodern model

Although multilingualism would thus appear to provide a possible synthesis of the initial models, the multilingual solution does not, however, completely remove the tensions. Just like the nationalist convergence of the models in the 19th century engendered a tension between nation states and minorities, the multilingual convergence entails tensions about the exact functional and situational distribution of the language varieties. In both cases, the tension takes the form of a demarcation problem: in the nationalist model, with regard to the identitarian group that should be the basis for nation-building, and in the postmodern model, with regard to the exact functional domains that have to be distinguished and the way in which languages or language varieties are distributed over them. Even if we accept that there is a plurality of languages and language varieties, there is no natural and undisputed way of determining the territory of each of them.

A simple case in point is the current reform of higher education in Europe. The imposition of a uniform Bachelor/Master system is intended, among other things, to stimulate student mobility, and this in

turn increases the pressure to introduce English as a language of instruction at least at the Master level. But many, of course, are reluctant to accept such a functional restriction on the original national language.

Likewise, if we start from the romantic rather than the rationalist version of the postmodern awareness, the champions of linguistic diversity may readily overlook the fact that the people they purport to defend often prefer the educational and professional opportunities provided by the non-native language (as appears to be the case, for instance, in most African countries that are ex-colonies of Britain). Also, romantically arguing for plurilingualism as a recognition of different identities should take into account the fact that the opportunity to acquire a plurilinguistic repertoire is not the same for all. As soon as this recognition prevails, the romantic attitude will have to be complemented by such a rationalist concept as a deliberate educational policy (for instance, as recommended in the *Guidelines of the Council of Europe*). Without such a conscious attempt to ensure equal plurilinguistic opportunities, the plurilinguistic stance may lead to the further discrimination of the monolingual speaker rather than to the recognition of his or her identity.

All in all, then, we may sum up the present situation in a way that largely parallels the summary at the end of section 4. On the one hand, just like nationalism allowed for a coalescence between the rationalist and the romantic model, multilingualism may constitute a point of convergence for the post-nationalist manifestations of the models. On the other, just like nationalism did not abolish the basic tensions between the models nor the internal tensions within the models, a multilingual model does not cancel out the tension between, for instance, rationalistically seeing global English as a communicative and educational opportunity and romantically seeing it as a threat to diversity and local identity. At the same time, though, we should keep in mind that the multilingual model is only beginning to emerge, and that the positions in the current debate have not yet crystallized as much as they have in the older nationalism debate.

6. Overview and conclusions

We can now identify the pattern that emerges from the discussion in the previous pages. Referring to the philosophical and cultural climate of the 18th century, we have distinguished between a rationalist and a romantic basic model of linguistic standardization. Starting from a communicative conception of language, the former stresses the emancipatory function of a common language as an instrument of political and educational participation. Starting, on the other hand, from an expressive conception of language, the romantic model stresses how the imposition of a standard language may discriminate specific cultural identities. There is, then, a tension between the models to the extent that they are each other's counterpart. That tension is enhanced by the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, the mechanism through which the implementation of the rationalist ideals may generate its own opposite.

In the successive transformations that the models undergo in the 19th and the 20th centuries, we have not only identified variants of the two models as such, but we have also indicated how the tension that exists between them reappears in different forms. Table 2 charts the various positions.

Table 2: Cultural models of standardization and their historical transformations

	18th century: the archetypal models	19th century: the nationalist transformation	late 20th century: the postmodern transformation
the rationalist position	the common language as an instrument of political, cultural and educational participation	the nation as the basis of a liberal democracy	diversity and multilingualism as functional specialization
the romantic position	language as an expression of individual identity; the imposed standard language as a discrimination of specific identities	the nation as a focus of cultural or ethnic identity	diversity and multilingualism as the expression of fragmented and flexible identities
the tension between both positions	opposition between the models, enhanced by the <i>Dialektik der Aufklärung</i>	demarcation of relevant group: conflict between nation states and ethnic/cultural groups	demarcation of relevant functions: what is the exact shape of the functional specialization?

The late 20th century is characterized by a process of political and economic globalization that has its attitudinal counterpart in a postmodern view of the world, and that has its linguistic counterpart in the global spread of English. The debate accordingly shifts towards the position of English *vis à vis* local, possibly endangered languages. Although the process has not perhaps reached its culmination yet, the debate seems to find a new focus in the concept of individual or societal multilingualism as a way of reconciling the different positions. In the same way in which the nationalist focus of the 19th century followed logically from the initial models (through the problem of levels), the focus on multilingualism can be equally motivated on the basis of both models. For the rationalist model, multilingualism involves an acceptable functional specialization of different languages: if language is an instrument of communication, different communica-

tive situations may require different languages. For the romantic model, multilingualism correlates with the fragmented and pluriform identity of the postmodern individual: if people may so to speak have different identities, they may use different languages to express those identities. However, the shift towards multilingualism does not eliminate the tension: the exact functional specialization of the languages involved remains a cause for conflict.

Each of these points may obviously be further developed. The identification of the models may be expanded towards a systematic map of standardization discussions, charting recurrent patterns of statements and replies. The historical sketch might be developed into a synthetic historical overview of standardization processes, standardization debates, and their relationship with linguistic theorizing. And the suggested link between models and language attitudes could lead to empirical attitudinal research. All of these possible developments, though, should contribute to a common goal: a better understanding of the underlying logic of standardization debates.

Crucial elements in such an understanding should be the following set of observations. First, dominant conceptions of language diversity form a logical pattern with both antithetical and synthetical tendencies. Second, restricting the linguistic analysis to just one or a few of the models would be an impoverishment; a discourse analysis of language debates needs to take into account the full spectrum of possible positions. Third, all models are ideological to the extent that they harbour but hide underlying tensions. Therefore, exposing one type of discourse as ideological should not imply falling prey to a different ideology: identifying the models does not equal solving the tensions.

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