



Philipp Krämer*, Ulrike Vogl and Leena Kolehmainen What is “Language Making”?

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2021-0016>

Received January 18, 2021; accepted December 16, 2021

Abstract: This article introduces a new concept called “Language Making”. The term covers all kinds of processes in which speakers or non-speakers collectively conceptualize linguistic entities. Such processes are usually perpetual, they operate based on language ideologies and attitudes, and they bring about functional and structural norms which determine the boundaries of linguistic entities such as languages, dialects or varieties. The article discusses the significance of standardization, language policy and planning, and of stakeholders and agency for processes of Language Making. Raising the question as to why a new concept is needed in the first place, the article concludes with a demarcation of Language Making from opposite processes which may be called “un-Making” of Languages.

Keywords: agency; language attitudes and ideologies; language policy and planning; linguistic norms and rules; standardization

1 Introduction

One of the guiding principles in linguistics which has been gaining traction these last years is the so-called “Bender rule”: always name the language you are working on (Bender 2011: 18). This principle is a reaction to the fact that research publications and particularly their titles frequently refer to a general notion of “language” while they in fact describe observations exclusively based on English data (or other well-documented languages). It is undoubtedly misleading to assume that English may be considered as a generalizable “default language” in linguistic research and following the Bender rule helps make this transparent. However, the rule also implies that the data or example a linguist draws on can always be attributed to a named language or variety, either with an established label or an ad hoc one. As a consequence, the application of the rule may obscure the fact that labelling a language presupposes a process of reflection and

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conceptualization which precedes the mention of a variety's name: the name itself always refers to an abstract, socio-historically and ideologically constructed and imagined entity which we may call, for example, "English", "Brazilian Portuguese" or "Camfranglais".¹ By accepting this presupposition, linguists engage in a process which also a great number of non-linguists take part in. We call this process "Language Making".

In this article, our goal is to introduce the concept of Language Making, to give a definition for it and to explain its components. This new concept aims to provide a unified framework for processes in situations which largely operate independently of each other but which all contribute to the same effect, to the creation of imagined linguistic units with clear-cut boundaries perceived as "a language". In previous research, the different situations, which contribute to the establishment of languages as entities, have largely been treated separately. In this introductory article, we aim to show that the same process, which we label as "Language Making", is an inherent part in these diverging situations. We highlight the intersections between situations such as historical processes of standardization, the recognition and establishment of new standard varieties among pluricentric languages, the differentiation and marking of new non-standard varieties from dominant standard languages, the promotion and revitalization of both "traditional" and "new" minority languages, or the exclusion of one variety from another formal, recognized variety. We argue that it is a significant advantage to cover these same processes by the unified framework of Language Making.

In the literature, the term "Language Making" has been used on occasion, often as an ad hoc expression without any detailed embedding or definition. For instance, Makoni and Pennycook (2005: 145) speak of the "making of language" when they refer to a growing awareness of the constitutive role of language in social difference in European history. This is also the case for Harris' (1980) "language-makers", to whom dictionaries, monolingual dictionaries in particular, served as very effective instruments for language cultivation in general. Newman and Holzman (2014: 91–92, 110–112) speak of "Language-Making" in connection with Lev Vygotsky's work on the psychological development of children as they acquire a sense of meaning and thereby become active and creative users of language or "Language-Makers" themselves. Similarly, Pennycook and Otsuji (2015: 16) speak of urban multilingualism as "a creative space of Language Making where rules and boundaries are crossed and changed". While this phrasing suggests a

¹ Kouega (2003: 23) defines Camfranglais, spoken in Cameroon, as "a composite language consciously developed by secondary school pupils who have in common a number of linguistic codes, namely French, English, Pidgin and a few widespread indigenous languages".

certain proximity to our idea of Language Making, the text does not go into detail as far as the term and its meaning are concerned.

In this introductory article, we will draw on examples from previous research in order to illustrate the new notion of Language Making, to make it more transparent and available for a broader use in linguistics, especially in sociolinguistics. The other articles in this special issue will present some more detailed case studies to discuss individual aspects of the concept of Language Making and to show its relevance and use in specific subfields of language studies, related to specific stakeholders and/or to particular scenarios.

2 Language Making: a definition

In the title of a short introduction to a special issue of the journal *Quo Vadis, Romania?* the editors raised a simple yet important question: “Do languages emerge, or are they made?” (Doppelbauer and Kremnitz 2015). In our view, the second alternative is clearly more frequently, if not universally true.

By “Language Making”, we mean conscious or unconscious human processes in which imagined linguistic units are constructed and perceived as a language, a dialect or a variety. These units are perceived by speakers or non-speakers as having clear-cut boundaries; often they will be assigned labels or names. The delimitation and use of these units follows neatly defined norms which can be of a structural nature (for example, normative grammars, spelling etc.) and/or of a functional nature (implicit or explicit conventions of use, status or prestige). The norms are based on hierarchies which select and/or exclude particular features or practices. This selection is made based on language ideologies, and differing levels of language awareness can contribute to the conscious or unconscious character of the Language Making process. It involves various types of agents or stakeholders (bottom-up or top-down) with different degrees of agency.

Two principal aspects of what constitutes Language Making have to be considered at all times. First, Language Making is a process and as such, it is never completed. The entity which is constituted via Language Making is constantly evolving or emerging, it can be reshaped or it is reaffirmed in its established form so that it remains unchallenged and unquestioned. Consequently, the entity formed in Language Making is not a result or product of a process but rather its effect. While we may be able to observe historical stages in which the linguistic entity takes a particularly prominent form, it will nevertheless have fuzzy boundaries or even contradictory components at any time.

Second, the Language Making process is simultaneously located at several levels or instances, i.e., we can construe it as co-occurring developments in

interdependent dimensions. On the one hand, it operates on a cognitive level when the concept of ‘a language’ is established, confirmed or readjusted. At this level, language attitudes and ideologies play a crucial role. On the other hand, the Language Making process is located in an interactional dimension as the linguistic entity is subject to negotiations on a social, sometimes political or economic and also intralinguistic level. Therefore, we have to perceive processes of Language Making on both an individual and a societal scale. To sum up, we can conclude that Language Making is a compound of interrelated processes on a discursive, intralinguistic, socio-pragmatic and cognitive level.

3 Contexts, patterns and agents of Language Making

3.1 Norms and rules

The effect of Language Making is the emergence or deliberate fixation of intra- and extralinguistic norms. These norms have to be differentiated from linguistic rules, i.e., from the conventionalized regularities of grammar and phonology, lexicon and pragmatics which exist and will be applied even without the explicit conscious ascertainment by the speakers. Linguistic norms, in contrast, can be explicit or implicit. Firstly, they regulate the attribution of specific features to the named language or variety while others are excluded and not accepted as part of what is to be considered Spanish, Swahili or Vietnamese. We refer to such intralinguistic norms as structural as they fix the use of particular features of the linguistic system. The publication of typical products of codification such as dictionaries, prescriptive grammars or guidebooks are an obvious case in point. In many established standard languages, the emergence of a literary tradition which serves as a guiding practice for subsequent formal and written language use also played an important part in fixing structural norms. In numerous cases, additionally or instead, bible translations had an impact on the selection of written norms (see, for example, Ridruejo [2019] for the history of standardization and codification of Spanish, Willemys [2013] for Dutch, Nordlund [2007] and Saari [2012] for Finnish, and Vandenbussche [2007] for various Germanic languages).

Secondly, the norms also regulate the use of the language at hand and are, therefore, extralinguistic. In this case, we speak of “functional” norms. In which context and under which conditions a linguistic practice may be called the specific name of the language or – the other way round – in which context and under which conditions the specific named language may or may not be used depends on the

norms that a linguistic community observes. Both the extra- and intralinguistic norms may be explicitly formulated and may sometimes even be legally binding: this is, for example, the case in Belgium where language laws prescribe the use of Dutch in Flanders in a number of public domains and proscribe all other languages (for example between employer and employee, cf. Vlaamse Overheid n.d.). Additionally, Flanders very actively promotes the use of Standard Dutch as opposed to regional varieties (so called *tussentaal* ‘intermediate language’) in the classroom and in the media (print, television and radio broadcast) (cf. Vogl and Hüning 2010: 239; De Caluwe 2012).

Very often, however, norms remain implicit and conventionalized so that they can only be sanctioned in social interaction. The case of another Dutch-speaking country – Suriname – illustrates this: while Dutch is the official language, there are no regulations regarding its use in the work sphere. However, using languages other than Dutch (for example, the Surinamese lingua franca Sranan Tongo) in written office communication is commonly not accepted (Rys et al. 2019: 274). Another example for implicit functional norms in the Surinamese context is provided by Diepeveen and Hüning (2016) who state that Sranan Tongo would not be acceptable (let alone successful) as a language for men to flirt with women. Basically, the potential of sanctions marks the difference between linguistic practices which are “normal” in the sense of “common”, “frequently used” or “habitual”, and those which are considered “normative”, i.e., accepted as complying with explicit or implicit norms of appropriate use (Gloy 2012: 23; Lucchesi 2002: 64). The choice of forms considered to be “normative”, however, always interacts with what the community perceives as normal, either by reconfirming and accepting these forms or by rejecting them. Again, the case of Flanders provides a good illustration: the importance of using proper, i.e., Standard Dutch is deeply entrenched in the Dutch-speaking community in Belgium (Rys et al. 2019: 190) and the necessity of the strict language laws has been reconfirmed by the media and various social actors in the past decades (Vogl and Hüning 2010). As a consequence, we can note that normativity is connected to the speaker’s perception or awareness of their linguistic surroundings. Language Making has a strong cognitive component: what is accepted as (part of) “the language” depends on the speakers’ representation of the entity’s delimitations (in the case of structural norms) (Seiler 2012: 97) or its accepted use (in the case of functional norms). With other words, as Gloy (2012: 21) puts it, norms are “institutions in the realm of thought”: the norms which constitute the contours of a linguistic entity can be effectively institutionalized or they remain purely on the level of representations.

The representation as such can be a compound of any set of implicit or explicit norms and it need not be that of a standard language. As a matter of fact, we have to

keep in mind that the emergence of norms in the process of Language Making is not identical with standardization. The relationship between these processes will be explained in more detail further down.

3.2 Glossonyms: labels as norms

On the surface of Language Making, we can observe that a set of linguistic practices will be referred to with a particular label, i.e., the name of the language or dialect at hand. Labels are based on norms as well. Whether or not a set of linguistic practices which is conceptualized as “a language” or any other type of delimited entity is called by a particular glossonym depends on conventions. For most established standard languages, the use of such labels as Finnish, German, or Swahili is rarely questioned. New labels emerge when a community establishes the norm of referring to such an entity with a newly coined term – either because there is widespread recognition of an entity which until then was not considered as separate, or because a long-standing variety receives a new designation. In practice, new labels can be coined both within the language community itself or from outside. The naming process may receive widespread acceptance based on tacit consent, or it can be highly controversial and laden with subjacent conflict. In both cases, however, the naming process itself is part of Language Making under widely differing circumstances.

Halonen (2012) highlights that naming is one of the core functions of language. Naming helps to recognize the phenomenon and to shift the focus to it. Nevertheless, it always entails a categorization and classification of the phenomenon, and it is thus necessarily an ideological act. When a language or a variety is named, the labels contribute to the making of “the language” or “the variety” and prepare their existence. Labelling a phenomenon creates a structure or an order – and a hierarchy between the phenomena. In other words, it has not only an ideological foundation, but also ideological consequences.

Several recent cases illustrate such processes. For a long time, the vernacular spoken in Luxemburg was seen as a dialect of German without a commonly established label. From World War II onwards, in order to mark a clear distance from Germany, speakers increasingly referred to their local speech as *Lëtzebuergesch* ‘Luxembourgish’. This underpinned a process of growing social and political acceptance which finally also led to the official recognition of Luxembourgish as a national language distinct from German (and French) with a name based on the toponym of the state it was connected with (Fehlen 2015). The norm of calling this set of linguistic practices “Luxembourgish”, then, was not only widely accepted but also mirrored in legal codification.

Frequently, when Language Making occurs as part of a nation building process, labels based on demonyms or toponyms (usually the name of the nation state) come into use. This is the case for many Creole languages in countries which acceded to independence in the 20th century. Names such as *Seselwa* ‘Seychellois’, *Morisien* ‘Mauritian’ or *Kabuverdianu* ‘Cape Verdian’ appeared and they attained a differing degree of acceptance in the respective speech communities. In a similar vein, the *Real Academia Española* decided, in the early 20th century, to refer to the Spanish language henceforth as *español* rather than *castellano*. In the multiple Spanish-speaking communities of the world, the two terms still co-exist with differing degrees of acceptance and use. Since the transformations at the end of the 20th century, the classification and labelling of many languages in Central and Eastern Europe has been a matter of debate and conflict (see the contributions in Sériot [2019] for a number of case studies, as well as Ciscel [2012] on the case of Moldovan and Macedonian). Alongside references to nation-states, we can also find labels which are rooted in more regional or even local contexts. *Rinkebysvenska* or *Förortssvenska* ‘suburban Swedish’ and *straattaal* ‘street language’, in turn, are names for new varieties named after places and spaces where these varieties, also labelled as multiethnolects, are (supposedly or demonstrably) spoken (Appel 1999). Naming practices like these also reflect the spatial scope of validity of the language’s or variety’s norms, whether this validity is only claimed by some or universally accepted.

Halonen’s (2012) study, which entails a classification of naming patterns of traditional and new names of languages and varieties as used by linguists, goes into the ideology of the naming process. She shows that in addition to the above-mentioned names that refer to the area where the language is used or where it comes into use, there are other naming patterns. The label may, for example, highlight the origin of the speakers (Turkish Dutch), the reason of migration (*Gastarbeiterdeutsch*), their perceived legal status (*Illegaals*, cf. Jaspers and Mercelis [2014]) and even food and taste may serve as sources of “inspiration” in naming (*Kebabnorsk*, Moroccan flavoured Norwegian). Glossonyms frequently reflect the cognitive dimension of Language Making when they emerge from metaphorical or metonymical relations between speakers and places or stereotyped characteristics.

For political, social or historical reasons, suggested labels can be rejected by speakers or non-speakers. In these cases, the Language Making process may encounter difficulty as the norm of calling a variety by a particular name does not catch on. In a heated debate, numerous speakers of German refused to accept the label *Kiezdeutsch* for multi-ethnic German youth language or even its classification as a dialect when such suggestions were put forward by linguists and from within the speech community (Wiese 2015; see Section 3.7). In her study on the multi-

ethnic youth language in Eastern Helsinki, Lehtonen (2015), in turn, refused to name the variety at all. According to her, labels such as *Rinkebysvenska* or the above mentioned *Kiezdeutsch* presume a variety with clear structural boundaries. For her, naming the variety is an ideological and a political act that simplifies the linguistic and social realities, replicates negative stereotypes, and exoticizes the speakers of the variety. She refers to Cornips et al. (2014) who show that labels regarded by linguists as neutral are spread in public discourse.

3.3 Standardization

Processes of standardization can be one out of many surface forms of Language Making. They may count as the most visible and obvious ones, which makes it necessary to consider in more detail the exact relationship between Language Making and standardization.

When a standard variety emerges or when it is created, certain linguistic rules are accepted and fixed as structural norms. Usually, the standard variety comes to represent “the language” as such in the mind of the speakers. As a reinforcing factor of Language Making, codification efforts provide a material basis for the conceptualization of a language as consisting of its standard forms. When a set of linguistic rules such as spelling conventions, grammatical structures or a standardized lexicon are written down and accessible in a visible or even tactile form, these resources provide an anchor of the Language Making process.

At first glance, the pluricentric character of many “world languages” seems to contradict the idea of Language Making since it challenges the idea of a clearly delimited entity with defined norms. After all, pluricentricity as such presupposes variation within the standard. However, it is frequently the case that the different norm varieties of pluricentric languages come to be perceived as entities in their own right. Bagno (2002) and Lucchesi (2015) describe how, in a process stretching over several centuries, Brazilian Portuguese came to develop its own norms which distinguish it from European Portuguese both in the communicative practice and in the speakers’ perceptions. In this process, the norms were constantly readjusted, sometimes following the ongoing transformations of European Portuguese, sometimes deliberately opposing them. At the same time, not all forms occurring in local Brazilian speech came to be accepted as part of the prestigious norm: complex internal differentiations along social and regional patterns of variation decided about the inclusion or exclusion of particular features or practices in what came to be called *norma-padrão brasileira* ‘Brazilian Standard Norm’ rather than being labelled as, for example, a regional or local dialect. Severo and Makoni (2020) point out that the reification of languages was paramount to hierarchizing

speakers and maintaining colonial power relations in Brazil. Examples like Austrian German, Surinamese Dutch, Belgian French or Canadian English are but a few of many cases which further illustrate this type of Language Making processes in settings of pluricentricity (Dollinger 2019; Hambye and Francard 2004; Hüning and Krämer 2018; Lenz and Glauning 2015).

Still, Language Making does not presuppose standardization. If the norms remain implicit, speakers may still conceive of their own linguistic practices as separate and coherent. They “do”, viz. pronounce, name, or express many different things the same way – what Taylor refers to as “external regularities” (1990: 138). De Wilde (2019), in her study on language awareness of Dutch language teachers outside the Dutch language area, reports on teachers’ perception of what constitutes “good” Dutch (which does not necessarily coincide with either Belgian Dutch or Dutch Dutch) and describes how they argue for the use of specific forms in class context. In general, language teachers play an important role in Language Making: this applies even more to their role in Early Modern Europe, before the rise of standard languages and standard language ideology. Authors of multilingual textbooks in dialogue form which were widely used throughout the 16th and 17th centuries to acquire foreign languages, had a significant impact on both the languages and varieties which were promoted as worth learning and the concrete lexical and grammatical forms that students were expected to memorize (Vogl and Kött forthcoming). With his first edition of the *Colloquia, et dictionarium* (the bilingual Dutch and French *Vocabulare* [1530], cf. Bouzouita and Vogl [2020]), the Antwerp school teacher Noël de Berlaimont contributed significantly to the selection of forms of Dutch and French to be learned by future generations of merchants across Europe.

The same is true for Language Making processes initiated from outside the community. As a matter of fact, standardization-free Language Making may even occur in cases where the speakers themselves do not consider their own practices as separable from those of communities they interact with. Typically, when anthropologists or linguists “discover” indigenous languages previously unknown to an outside public or the academic community, they will most likely label it (with or without involvement of the community itself), attribute it a particular status, for example, from a typological perspective and start documenting it. This in itself can count as a straightforward case of Language Making in which standardization is not necessarily an objective of either the researchers or the community itself.

3.4 Language policy and language planning

Frequently, active efforts of Language Making involve political or legislative processes which result in the official establishment or recognition of norms. In

classical terms, depending on the question whether the norms are structural or functional, we can observe projects of corpus or status planning. Under some circumstances, systematic official projects of Language Making can be powerful political instruments. Nation building processes are a typical case in point. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the newly (re-)founded nations took political measures to visibly distinguish the language of the young nation from the neighbouring varieties, for example, with the help of changes in the writing systems or by preferring glossonyms which immediately mirrored the nation-state's name (Greenberg 2008). Similar efforts accompanied the political developments in the vein of independence and decolonization after the end of the colonial period in the mid-20th century. Again, Seychelles can be considered a typical example: from the 1970s onwards, the introduction of Seychelles Creole in education, politics or the media, accompanied by officially recognized and state-funded projects of codification and standardization, were supposed to underscore the country's newly gained independence for which the ongoing use of French and English didn't provide sufficient symbolic potential (Bollée 2007). Similarly, in post-colonial Mozambique, local languages, rather than Portuguese, gained political and ideological support, thus redefining their role in the society and drastically realigning the Language Making effects in the country (Chimbutane 2018).

With the help of language policy and planning, Language Making processes can gain visibility so that speakers are made aware of them. As long as the political measures are taken within a democratic framework, language policy and planning can also contribute to legitimizing the Language Making process. This does not mean, however, that the effects will automatically be beneficial to every member of the speech community.

3.5 Hierarchies and dominance

Processes of Language Making are intimately linked to power relations. As far as the making of standard or national languages is concerned, the socially dominant have the resources and claim legitimacy for the decision about the inclusion of particular linguistic practices into the norm. Conversely, non-dominant speakers and their practices are largely excluded from the power to contribute to such Language Making processes. Decisions about structural and functional norms are always simultaneously decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of speakers who may or may not be seen as legitimate representatives of the language at hand.

However, social hierarchies open up spaces for subaltern Language Making. Non-dominant groups of society may very well engage in the making of their own in-group styles or varieties which they conceive of as a separate linguistic entity.

Language making from below is an efficient tool to attach social indexicality, in-group solidarity and covert prestige to non-standard forms of speech. The emergence of Nouchi in Ivory Coast as a linguistic practice of socially marginalized youth illustrates this fact (Pfurtscheller 2015: 83–84).

Frequently, linguistic entities attached to non-dominant communities will be denied the label “language” altogether since it is usually reserved to the dominant standard language. The socially dominant may then even engage in a competing process of Language Making, striving to mark the “lower” linguistic practices as non-languages. Instead, labels like “dialect” or “slang” are used to mark a clear distance between entities with overt and covert prestige. Nevertheless, such efforts to delegitimize particular linguistic practices in order to limit social influence remain a part of Language Making processes targeting the same entities (see (Breda and Krämer 2021) for a discussion of Basque as a case in point). It is common that the labels and associations attached to these entities by the socially dominant are internalized by the speakers of the non-dominant variety, leading to linguistic insecurity.

3.6 Language attitudes, ideologies and awareness

Social hierarchies and their reflexes in Language Making interact closely with language attitudes and ideology (Irvine and Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2007; Silverstein 1979; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). The cognitive linguistic entity which we call a named language, dialect or variety is a composite of associations and ideas shaped by individual attitudes. However, these cognitive representations are shared inter-individually to such an extent that a larger community can agree more or less on their conception of the entity which they commonly refer to by the language’s name. This does not exclude, however, that some or even many of the ideas attached to this cognitive entity differ; frequently they may even be contradictory. For instance, debates about languages and practices with a highly perceivable contact background such as multi-ethnolects or Creole languages show competing efforts to legitimize or delegitimize the use of the language at hand and the participation of its speakers in society (Krämer 2017). Yet, all these efforts are part of a (fiercely contested) Language Making process in which the practices are imagined as a delimited linguistic entity linked to, for example, a specific historical background, stereotyped speakers, or a restricted set of appropriate domains of use.

The way different social groups conceptualize “a language” is underpinned by large-scale linguistic ideologies. For instance, in many cases where “new speakers” adopt a minority language, “boundaries between speaker groups do continue to exist and are not based simply on linguistic competence but also on a variety of

metalinguistic factors including the social distance between the new and more traditional speakers” (Ó hIfearnáin 2018: 160). This is not only true for boundaries between speaker groups but also for (perceived or constructed) boundaries between linguistic practices. With other words, the speaker’s ideologies determine who is included or excluded from the speech community and which ways of speaking the language fall inside or outside the frame of the constructed linguistic entity.

Overall, the dominant view on what is a legitimate language and who is a legitimate (viz. “native”) speaker of a language has deep historical roots. Burke (2004) points to Early Modern times as a crucial period in history regarding changes in the conception of “language”. van der Horst (2008) even refers to our present-day common-sense view of language as a “Renaissance view on language”. He asserts that

Veel van wat wij nu vanzelfsprekend vinden als het om taal gaat, was vóór de veertiende-zeestiende eeuw helemaal niet vanzelfsprekend, maar ongehoord.

[A lot of what we now take for granted with regard to language, was not self-evident at all before the fourteenth-sixteenth century; on the contrary, it was unheard of].

(van der Horst 2008: 17)

Moreover, as Gal (2009:14) points out:

‘[L]anguage’ was invented in Europe. Speaking is a universal feature of our species, but ‘language’ as first used in Europe and now throughout the world is not equivalent to the capacity to speak, but presumes a very particular set of features.

(Gal 2009: 14)

Gal (2009) names as one feature of languages (in this European sense) that they are assumed to be nameable: today we speak of “Dutch” or “the Dutch language”. Language is also supposed to be countable property: a state can have one or more official languages and a person can know, use or learn one or more languages. Moreover a language is assumed to be bounded and clearly discernible from any other language – this holds for example true for present-day Dutch as clearly distinguishable from present-day German. This “European view on speaking” is a concept that actually did reach far beyond Europe, through different forms of (linguistic) colonization. However, in some regions, most noticeably with regard to Austronesian languages, speakers appear not to have a concept of language as a bounded entity but rather a concept of speaking (as concluded among others by (Grace 1990); cited after Milroy [2001: 540]).

While the foundation for our common-sense view on language was probably laid in the 16th and 17th centuries, it was only in the 19th century instrumentalized for political and social goals. We can speak of a general “politicization of language” in the 19th century, viz. “its increasingly close association with nations and

nationalism” (Burke 2004: 7): a recurring claim was that linguistic and political borders ought to co-occur. This instrumentalization of language for identity purposes coincided with a gradual democratization of society and the claim that a common language is a precondition for a functioning democracy (Vogl 2012: 16–18). Moore (2011: 14) refers to this way of instrumentalizing language for political goals as the “post-Enlightenment project of governmentality through logocracy”. Additionally, in the course of the 19th century, the introduction of compulsory education made proficiency in one common language relevant for a broader section of the population across Europe.

In sum, the 19th century can be regarded as the cradle of standard languages and, most importantly, of the spread of the so-called standard language ideology, i.e. the deeply-rooted belief that there is *the* one best variety, superior to all other, non-standard, varieties (for example, dialects, sociolects) (“ideology of hierarchisation of languages”, cf. Milroy 2001), which is a prerequisite for social participation and a symbol for loyalty to a nation (one-nation-one-language ideology, cf. Weber and Horner 2012: 18). It is safe to assume that all over Europe, the existence of (at least) one standard language is seen as worth defending or as worth striving for.

Closely related to the standard language ideology, more specifically to the one-nation-one-language ideology, is what Weber and Horner (2012: 18–20) refer to as “mother tongue ideology”, i.e., believing that everyone usually has only one mother tongue and that ideally all members of a nation share one mother tongue. Of course, *the* mother tongue is a rather problematic concept. The same is true for the concept of the native speaker. Leung et al. (1997: 555) for example suggest replacing the terms mother tongue and native speaker with the notions of language expertise, language inheritance and language affiliation. Language expertise then refers to how proficient someone is in a certain language. Language affiliation means the level of attachment to or identification with a language. Language inheritance finally refers to the language tradition of the family or community someone was born into. Such a re-conceptualization of the native-speaker concept is gradually gaining acceptance within (socio)linguistics. However, in practice, speakers are still evaluated with an ideal native speaker in mind and are included or excluded from a speech community based on a native/non-native dichotomy.

Finally, one may assume that language attitudes and their ideological foundations usually operate on an implicit or even unconscious level. Speakers are not necessarily aware of the fact that they themselves engage in processes of Language Making. Whether or not that is the case depends on the level of language awareness in an individual, a group or a society. Whenever speakers recognize that the application, acceptance or rejection of linguistic norms, both structural and functional, are part of a Language Making process, we may speak of a high level of language awareness (Seiler 2012: 100–108) or “discursive consciousness” in terms

of Giddens (1998); when speakers are less aware, Giddens (1998: 91–95) speaks of “practical consciousness”. They will then be able to consciously manage their contribution to the process, question some of its ideological foundations and try to counterbalance those aspects which contradict their own social and linguistic interests. Language awareness is a prerequisite for linguistic emancipation – a particular form of Language Making “from below”.

3.7 Stakeholders and agency

The reflections outlined above about the contribution of dominant and non-dominant groups to processes of Language Making hint to the significance of agency. In principle, any person inside or outside a speech community can contribute to the process of Language Making as soon as they engage in the use of the language or present metalinguistic ideas about it. They will then feed their own elements into the pool of structural or functional norms in the expectation that they will be adopted and reshape or reconfirm the conception of the linguistic entity at hand. The significance of such contributions or the extent to which an individual can influence the process, however, differs considerably between various parts of the society.

Among those whose part in Language Making has the most weight are persons who receive widespread attention for their language use, either as implicit role models or as institutionalized authorities. Examples of significant agents of Language Making include teachers on all levels of education,² journalists and other media professionals, politicians, language activists, writers and translators, and many more. Ammon (2005: 33–36) classifies relevant agents as “norm authorities”, “model speakers”, “codifiers” and “experts”. However, he describes these agents only in the context of standardization, and he opposes them to the majority of the speech community depicted as relatively passive “receivers” of the norm. A process of Language Making is more interactive since it also includes the bottom-up effect of widespread language use and especially metalinguistic thought and discourse. Hence, the roles of authorities and “regular” users, of agents and stakeholders, cannot be separated. Taylor (1990:135) points out that concepts such as “good” or “correct” language use are essential to the regular user to grasp what language is. Notwithstanding, social stratification and inequality always implies that there is an imbalance in influence over the exact trajectory of the process – experts such as linguists for example may have a particularly powerful position in

² See, for example, De Wilde (2019) with an account of the role of language awareness in connection with norms and variation in foreign language teaching in tertiary education.

managing normativity because of their institutional status as “metalinguistic ‘experts’” (Taylor 1990: 138).

In recent times, the concept of “new speakers” has received particular attention in sociolinguistic research, especially in the context of minority languages. As new speakers adopt a language, they reshape its structural and functional norms which so far had been defined primarily by “traditional” speakers (Darquennes and Soler 2019). Similarly, learners of a language in other settings – including regular second language acquisition, for example, at school – contribute to Language Making as well: as they strive to join the speech community, they contribute with their own attitudes and beliefs about the language (see, for example, Krämer [2019, 2020] for a case study about learners of Spanish in Berlin). All of these persons would not count as “model speakers” or “norm authorities” in Ammon’s sense, yet they do have an influence – though maybe a minor one – on the path which a Language Making process takes.

The specific role individuals and particular social groups play, whether they influence structural or functional norms and with which effect needs to be investigated in more detail for each setting in particular. Several papers in this special issue focus on specific agents or stakeholders in Language Making in selected case studies.

Linguists themselves – “metalinguistic ‘experts’” (Taylor 1990: 138) - can be particularly influential Language Makers. When researchers document, describe and label the linguistic practices they work on, they can adopt the views of the speakers in terms of delimitations of a language or variety and confirm or underpin their Language Making efforts. In the same vein, they can make use of the speech community’s own label for their language. For her research about multi-ethnic urban youth language in Germany, Wiese (2015: 343–344) coins the term *Kiezdeutsch* ‘neighbourhood German’ with two objectives in mind: Minimizing the stigmatization of the linguistic practices and the speakers, and using a label that emanates from the community itself (see Williams [2017] and Wiese [2012] for further backgrounds in connection with multi-ethnic linguistic practices relevant for the concept of Language Making). In other cases, the attribution of such labels can be completely external to the linguistic community which may not even be aware of the name linguists apply to their practices. Stein (2018: 280–281) reports that the descendants of Indian indentured labourers in Guyana or Trinidad rarely know or use the label *Bhojpuri* frequently used by linguists to refer to the local varieties of South Asian languages. It is fairly common that the entities linguists distinguish as separate languages or varieties do not coincide with the entities the speakers operate with. Academic and community-internal processes of Language Making, then, can come to largely differing classifications of linguistic entities. The dialects in the Southwest of Germany are a case in point. In the federal state of

Saarland, many speakers refer to their vernacular speech as *Saarländisch*, conceptualizing their practices along a political space which does not coincide at all with scientifically established dialect areas. As a matter of fact, the state is divided between the two dialect zones of Moselle Franconian and Rhine Franconian – a difference many speakers are perfectly aware of, but the regional politico-cultural identity prevails in the community’s idea of what their variety is called and where it is used.

4 Why a new concept?

Many of the individual aspects of Language Making outlined above have been thoroughly analysed and described in the literature already. Why would there be a need to introduce a new term or a new concept to describe these processes? Blommaert (2018) claims that

[w]e need new terms, or renewed terms, often for no other reason than to check the validity of old ones. Neologisms, from that angle, are crucial critical *Gedankenspiele* that remind us of the duty of continuous quality control of our analytical vocabulary.
(Blommaert 2018: 2)

Whether one agrees with this principle or not, the aim of introducing the concept of Language Making into (socio)linguistics and neighbouring disciplines goes beyond the mere purpose of a new impulse provided by a *Gedankenspiel* in Blommaert’s sense. With other words, we strive to suggest not only a new term but also a new concept.

4.1 Counteracting Language Making and un-Making Language: from resources and repertoires to languaging and metrolingualism

If the term “Language Making” covers such a wide range of settings and cases, isn’t it ultimately devoid of all specific meaning; doesn’t it simply cover any observation of a socially embedded linguistic practice? As a matter of fact, we can observe situations in which speakers deliberately or unconsciously avoid and even undermine processes of Language Making. These are cases with which approaches rooted in concepts such as translanguaging or metrolingual practices are primarily concerned. Recent linguistic developments in Africa, for example, in Kinshasa or Addis Ababa, provide an enlightening example: what used to be perceived as more or less classical examples of “urban youth language” can be described today as

“an array of fluid urban practices that extend into the social, global, and virtual worlds beyond their original community of practice and are freed from social, spatial, ethnic or linguistic constraints” (Hollington and Nassenstein 2017: 391). Makoni and Mashiri (2006) call for a deliberate disinvention of languages as a basis for productive language policy in Africa: a process in which long-standing colonial practices of enumerating or naming languages or drawing boundaries between them need to be overcome.

In cases like these, normative delimitations are questioned and transcended, rather than constructed or reconfirmed. In a similar vein, Seiler (2012) reports that speakers in Martinique construct very complex and often conflicting images of linguistic normativity in their environment in which local and European forms of French interact with Creole. Some may construe the situation as diglossic with clearly delimited entities or authoritative norms while others perceive the situation as much more flexible, making the demarcation of linguistic units less plausible.

Current sociolinguistic research on multilingualism and its various manifestations challenges the view of languages as countable units that are distinct autonomous systems both in human cognition and in human behaviour. The essentialist conception of languages as entities with clear boundaries results from previous paradigms in language studies that continue the tradition of the ideology of the 19th century’s Romantic Nationalism, the era of the nation-state projects (Dufva et al. 2011; Laakso 2018; Wei 2013).

According to the current understanding in sociolinguistics, no language is only “one language”. Instead, language is an inherently diverse, heterogeneous phenomenon of fuzzy and fluid nature, which is difficult to define. Nobody “knows” “one language” in its entirety, and nobody uses “one language” in its totality in interaction (Dufva and Pietikäinen 2009; Dufva et al. 2011). Instead, speakers use linguistic features (and not discrete languages) (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010) – they use “bits of language” (Blommaert and Backus 2013a). Blommaert and Backus (2013b) stress the variety of individual learning paths through which individuals’ repertoires may emerge. According to them, language learning is a life-long process and it is never finished. An individual’s language skills are always incomplete and cover pieces of varying sizes from fragmentary repertoires of individual words to more comprehensive registers, styles, specialized vocabularies, or genres.

Language is thus perceived primarily as a constantly changing, contextual, fluid, and local phenomenon. Instead of languages, the researchers speak of resources and repertoires of resources. The term resource suggests that language is seen more as a process and use rather than an object or a system with clear contours. According to a metaphor by Dufva et al. 2011, language should be seen

more as a verb than as a noun. They highlight that speakers have different resources at their disposal that enable them to “get along” in different situations, in different media, with other speakers and with different audiences. The ways to use language vary and change in different stages in the lives of individuals – language use is not homogeneous in different situations, it is not stable, it is not repeated and it does not remain the same. Instead, it is accommodated according to the situation and the target audience and its resources (see also Blommaert and Backus 2013b).

Where one language “begins” or “ends”, what belongs to it and where it becomes another language is like a line drawn in water. Languages are not closed units, but are transformed and intermixed as speakers draw from resources that are conventionally conceptualized as other languages and adopt features from them. New types of language use and new mixed styles emerge. In this respect too, languages do not form distinct entities from one another. The border between languages and dialects is not clear either (Laakso 2018; Palander et al. 2018).

In recent years, numerous new terms have been introduced that highlight the local and contextual variation of language use. These terminological reforms may be seen as reactions against Language Making processes, which are maintained and supported by previous concepts and terms. Instead of “a language”, it is now common to speak for example, of repertoires, resources (see already above) or of languaging. The languaging approach sees language as an activity, not as a system (Dufva et al. 2011). Languaging provides, for example, an alternative to “code-switching”, an older term, which presupposes a mixing of entities belonging to two different, separate “camps”. Prefixes such as “multi-” and “bi-” (for example, multilingualism, bilingualism) have also turned out to be problematic since they maintain the idea of languages as countable units (Lehtonen 2015: 299; Otsuji and Pennycook 2010). Otsuji and Pennycook (2010) suggest the use of the term *metrolingualism* instead. Similar terminological reforms concern the speakers, for example the re-conceptualization of the native speaker (Leung et al. 1997: 555).

On a level of language structures in use and interaction, Zinkhahn Rhobodes (2016) shows how boundaries between languages can be permeable and blurry. She analyses the practices of bilingual Polish-German speakers who defy structural norms by fading grammars into each other to the point that parts of the utterances they produce are hard to attribute unequivocally to one of the two languages (see also Jungbluth [2016] for the notion of “co-constructions” in similar contexts). The well-established concept of “crossing” in youth language can count as a similar case. Young speakers create meaning by transgressing linguistic norms associated with particular identities to create additional meaning in interaction

and this way actively engage in practices which question efforts of Language Making (Rampton 2005).

These new approaches, the view of languages as resources and repertoires, languaging, and metrolingualism, may be seen as anti-Language Making actions by linguists or at least as efforts to deconstruct the conception of “a language”. Some of these efforts are linguists’ reactions against Language Making processes that have resulted in boundaries and distinctions when scholars have described hybrid language use that challenges the monolingual norms. Ultimately, recognizing and critically assessing processes of Language Making is a necessary step to overcome long-standing methodologies and practices in linguistics, for instance with the objective to decolonize sociolinguistic research (Ndhlovu 2021: 195–196). Understanding and analyzing processes of Language Making is a prerequisite for the “disinvention and (re)constitution” of languages (Makoni and Pennycook 2005).

4.2 Reconciling seemingly competing scenarios

The relevance of this new concept, in our view, lies in the fact that it allows a broad application to situations which so far have been treated separately in research. While the term itself has been occasionally used in the literature for specific scenarios – for example, when Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) refer to Language Making in connection with urban multilingualism – we suggest building on it as a basis for a comprehensive concept. Irvine and Gal (2000: 77) notice a “shift of attention from linguistic communities to linguistic boundaries” in sociolinguistics. Instead of considering these two dimensions as separate, the concept of Language Making helps to bring them together. It allows us to understand how communities construct boundaries in processes of language. Even though we notice, as we showed in the previous paragraph, that current trends in sociolinguistics tend to deconstruct language boundaries and fixed communities altogether, we still need the theoretical tools to describe the processes in which most non-linguists (and, for the time being, also a considerable number of linguists) do continue to conceptualize such boundaries. For critical approaches to the sociology of language, for instance when challenging “Western” or “Northern” biases, the concept of Language Making can provide a descriptive framework against which alternative approaches can be devised (see for example, Rudwick and Makoni 2021).

For further research inside and outside linguistics, for example, in sociology, anthropology, or the historical sciences, the concept of Language Making can contribute to a broader understanding of mechanisms which perpetuate social stratification through language boundaries. This is why we stress the role of agents

or stakeholders since Language Making processes can have inclusive and exclusive effects; they can foster or hinder social cohesion. Based on this insight, the concept can also have a broader social impact as linguists or teachers may make use of it to raise critical language awareness. The constitutive ambiguity of Language Making processes lies in the fact that they can have emancipatory potential, for example, in the case of minoritized languages, but they can also have drastic effects of marginalization, as numerous examples of dominant standard languages show. The “dialectical” qualities which we can observe in social diversity are reflected in and inherent to the concept of Language Making.

4.3 Five case studies on various Language Making processes

The five other articles in this special issue represent selected case studies that illustrate how Language Making functions in different linguistic scenarios, in diverse geographical, cultural and political contexts, and in different times. Together the articles highlight a non-exhaustive range of different agents who contribute to Language Making processes, including social actors such as linguists, language academies, language activists, new speakers, language teachers, translators, and translation students.

The first article, “Scholars and their metaphors: on Language Making in linguistics” by Marlena Jakobs and Matthias Hüning, focuses on the role of linguists in forming and shaping concepts of languages. By discussing selected metaphORIZATION processes from the 19th century to current times, the authors show how linguists’ metaphors lead to new language concepts and consequently, contribute to Language Making. The analysed biological and evolutionary, territorial, and liquefying metaphors of language illustrate linguists’ search for a concept of language which corresponds to their understanding of linguistic diversity. According to the authors, every linguist is inevitably engaged in Language Making by selecting, systemizing and generalizing linguistic phenomena.

In the second article, “Language making of Creoles in multilingual post-colonial societies”, Philipp Krämer, Angela Bartens and Eric Mijts relate the results of previous sociolinguistic research on Atlantic and Indian Ocean Creoles to the Language Making framework. Their theoretical reflections about Language Making concern the emergence and introduction of linguistic norms, the naming strategies of glossonyms, standardization processes, language policy and planning, and the agents of Language Making. The article shows that in postcolonial societies, in which previous colonial power structures have influenced the views on languages and their mutual hierarchies, different Language Making processes can contribute both to the preservation of colonial inequalities and to

decolonization. In addition, grass roots heteroglossic linguistic practices that blur the lines between entities conceptualized as different languages may lead to the opposite of Language Making, to the un-Making of Languages as distinct units.

Hanna Lantto’s article “New speakers and Language Making: conscious creation of a colloquial Basque register in the city of Bilbao” shifts the focus to the interfaces between Language Making and speaker making. According to her, the processes in which languages are made and contoured as imagined entities in a hierarchical order entail simultaneously speaker making, the creation and hierarchical judgement of speakers with different repertoires. By investigating new speakers involved in a bottom-up revitalization project of Basque, the author describes the characteristics of a new Basque colloquial variety this group has created for its own communicative purposes. This new informal variety draws from heteroglossic lexical and grammatical sources mixing Spanish, Basque standard and Basque vernaculars. By literally making their own language and inventing new norms, these new speakers react to the tensions between linguistic authority and authenticity in the Basque Country.

The fourth article by Ulrike Vogl and Truus De Wilde concentrates on foreign language teachers who are important gatekeepers in the selection of varieties regarded as appropriate to be learned as a foreign language. The title of their article, “Teachers as foreign Language Makers: on standard language ideology, authenticity and language expertise”, highlights different ideologies that guide the beliefs of the investigated French and Dutch teachers and that contribute to the making of these languages in the foreign language classroom. By comparing the views voiced by language teachers and textbook authors from Early Modern times with the interviews of university teachers at European universities in the 21st century, the study unveils both commonalities and differences across the centuries: whereas the native speaker has remained an important authority through history, the impact of standard language ideology on the selection of varieties to be learned is visible only in the present-day teachers’ justifications.

In the final article, “Translating into an endangered language: filling in lexical gaps as Language Making”, Päivi Kuusi, Helka Riionheimo and Leena Kolehmainen examine a very concrete case of Language Making: the creation of new lexical items for an endangered language. The study is situated at the intersection between translation and revitalization, where both processes typically consolidate, and not question, the perceived boundaries between languages or varieties. The data consists of reflective assignments of participants in a series of translation courses targeted to learners of Karelian, an endangered language spoken in Finland and Russia. By analysing the course participants’ reports on overcoming lexical gaps for the purposes of a translation task at hand, the authors show how

the participants perceive the borders and connections between Karelian and other languages. A rather flexible and pragmatic view on linguistic borders dominates in the reports: when creating Karelian neologisms, the translation students drew on all heteroglossic resources available to them.

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