INSTITUTE FOR LANGUAGE SCIENCES

Language and Institutions

Think Paper #6

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The mission of ILS is to further our knowledge about language as a product of the human mind/brain and its use in the social domain. Since language is highly complex, ILS brings together a range of perspectives from which it is studied: cognitive, social, formal-linguistic, communicative, historical, (inter)cultural, language developmental, educational, and technological/computational. ILS stimulates cross-pollination between 'traditional' linguistic subdisciplines, interaction with other disciplines, and building bridges between theory-driven and society-driven research.

ILS researchers try to find answers to a variety of research questions including the following: How and why do new language varieties arise in language contact situations, and how stable are these varieties? Under what circumstances will languages be under pressure and close to disappearance? How does the social context affect language use and vice versa, and how do people from different cultures communicate with each other? What is the meaning of words, and what is their contribution to communication? How does language interact with people's emotional and motivational architecture so that it effectively moves or persuades them? How do text characteristics interact with a reader's cognitive architecture such that information is conveyed in a coherent and comprehensible way? Which parts of human language structure are invariant (universality), and which parts display cross-linguistic variation (diversity)? How and why have related languages grown apart in the course of time? To what extent does bilingualism have any general effects on the perception of sounds (e.g., tone)? What is the role of language input and interaction for language development and language use (e.g. reading, writing) in educational contexts?

For answering these and other research questions, ILS researchers make use of various research methodologies and techniques, such as (comparative) linguistic analysis, corpus research, field work, cognitive (neuro)science experiments, and computational modelling. ILS research focuses on a wide range of language users, including adults, adolescents, children, monolingual and bi-/multilinguals speakers, children with language disorders, and language users in various social (e.g., family, dialect communities, peer groups) and institutional (e.g. medical, legal, educational) contexts.

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1 Preface

In this Think Paper various researchers from the *Institute for Language Sciences* (ILS) discuss relations between their research on language and communication and the *Institutions for Open Societies* (IOS) themes of *Equity and diversity*, *Democracy and good governance*, and *Transitions and well-being*.

Obviously, language serves us well as an incredibly versatile means of information transfer. But language and communication do more than transmitting information; they bring concepts into existence. Personal relationships, for instance, are brought into being by exchanging thoughts and feelings and end when communication ceases. In a similar way does communication bring about families, companies, cultures, and identities.

Pinget & Van de Velde point out the importance of language as an expression of identity. They discuss the role played by language in the formation of modern nation states. The choice of a standard language, Dutch in the Netherlands, German in Germany, is a central building block of the national identity. But language as an expression of one's identity does not stop at the level of society. Even in a small country like the Netherlands, many language varieties exist, such as sociolects (e.g., 'straattaal'), dialects (e.g., Urker dialect), regional languages (Low Saxon, Limburgian) and even different languages (such as Turkish, Kurdish, Moroccan Arabic, Berber and Polish). Frisian is in addition to Dutch the 2nd official language in Fryslân. Each of these varieties enables individuals to express who they are and to what group they want to belong. Also individual variables (e.g., 'Gooise r', 'zachte g', 'friet' vs. 'patat') can be used to express group identity.

The choice of a single standard language has been inspired, at least partly, by noble motives. If everyone speaks the same language, everyone can take part in society and its institutions. It is thus believed to create a level playing field, contributing to *equality*. However, as **Kotze** argues, language is a key mechanism of power and control, of inclusion and exclusion, of advantage and disadvantage. Native speakers of the standard language are at the advantage in education, in work, in society as a whole; but if the standard language is your second or third language, you are at a severe disadvantage whether it concerns taking part in society, in dealing with institutions, or in exercising your rights.

More and more authorities have realized that a standard language is not a panacea to the inequalities resulting from language diversity. And in order to combat these problems, language policies are in order. **Kester & Van den Berg** discuss how the strong position of Dutch on the Caribbean islands that are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands leads to severe problems in education. Given that for most of the inhabitants Dutch is only their second or third language, which they often only speak at school, this should come as no surprise. In particular more community-based research is needed to contribute in meaningful, effective and co-creative ways to the development of equitable and sustainable language policies that will serve students, and others, to achieve their full potential.

Jenks also discusses language policy issues, but much closer to home, namely the language policies of Dutch universities. As a result of their internationalization efforts, universities have recruited international staff and attracted international students. The majority do not speak Dutch, nor is, for many of them, English their native language. Jenks examines issues arising from what most universities have adopted as their language policy: using English as an academic lingua franca, while maintaining Dutch as the working language. From the perspective of *Equity and diversity*, Jenks points out the need for those international students and employees to be able to celebrate linguistic diversity without fear of alienation and marginalization.

Given that linguistic diversity is the standard rather than the exception in society and in institutions, it is important for *Democracy and good governance* that all voices are heard, even if they do not use the standard language. One might consider translation and interpreting as viable means to attain this goal. However, **Kotze** points out that such practices can have severe downsides, especially when power differences are associated with language varieties. Translating textbooks from a majority language into minority languages may endanger the latter languages' livelihood, as fewer people will find the need to write themselves in these languages. And interpreting may ensure that speakers of the dominant language "never have to leave their linguistic comfort zone", leaving the burden of interpreting to the speakers of the other languages.

One might think that the recent developments in AI, especially in the field of language technology, may provide solutions to these problems. However, impressive as the results of Large Language Models may be, **Van den Bosch** argues that these programs are trained on, and thus only apply to languages for which digital data are abundantly available. As a result, standard languages are – again – privileged compared to varieties of these languages, or languages for which such digital data are less available. This problem is exacerbated by the commercial nature of the organizations developing language technology: both the quality of their products and their market size are higher when focusing on standard languages. Rather than helping minority language speakers to have their voices heard, technology may increase the volume of the standard speakers' voices.

Language and communication are fundamental constituents of societies and their institutions.

But even if by divine intervention, all people of the world would speak the same language, this would not solve all problems posed by language diversity for *equality* and *good governance*. **Corver** discusses how many institutions have developed their own lingo, amongst others, to improve the efficiency of their communications. He discusses, for instance, legalese, the language of the law institution, showing how this variety has unique lexical and grammatical features. Such language varieties form a barrier for people to exert their rights and take part in governance. But apart from a problem for open societies, these institution-specific language varieties also provide a unique lens to study the institution's nature, identity and workings.

The third IOS theme, *Transitions and well-being*, concerns bringing about much needed changes in society. Such changes require at the very least policy support from citizens, and often actual changes in their behavior. The lack of trust in institutions is one of the biggest problems in current society, especially where it concerns changing human behavior in order to combat climate change, unhealthy conditions, and damage to the environment. **Hoeken** discusses the relation between trust and communication, both from the perspective as to how lack of trust severely hampers the institutions' communication as well as how communication is pivotal in regaining the public's trust.

In sum, language and communication are fundamental constituents of societies and their institutions. Their societal and institutional contributions are manifold; they act as means of information transfer, means of identity formation, means of policy making, means of power and control, and means of trust building in a changing world. And, obviously, there are many more ways in which they play a role in society and its institutions. Throughout our stages of life — from infancy, adolescence, emerging adulthood, and eventually to middle age and beyond — we discover, learn, and experience the different roles that language and communication play in the institutional contexts we encounter in daily life. For the young infant, this context can be her family, for the school-aged child her school, for the young adolescent her group of peers, for the middle-aged adult her working environment, and for the elderly person the (health) care context in which she finds herself. Importantly, issues related to *Equity and diversity*, *Democracy and good governance*, and *Transitions and well-being* matter in each of these stages and contexts. And so do language and communication.

Norbert Corver & Hans Hoeken

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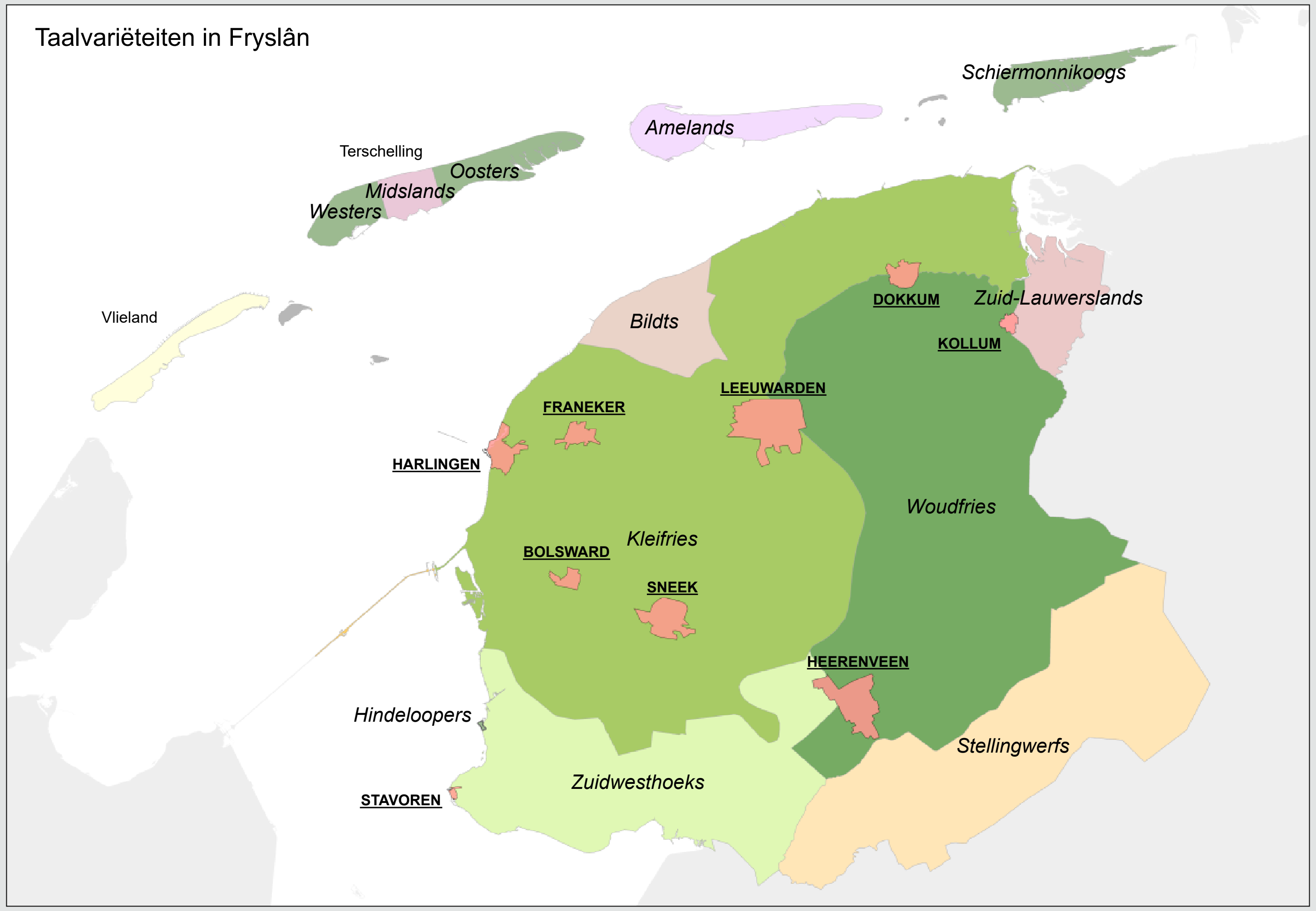

2 | Language variation, language vitality and institutional use: Managing the interplay and tensions

Anne-France Pinget & Hans Van de Velde

INTRODUCTION

The duality of language as a tool for communication and as an expression of identity is at the heart of the field of sociolinguistics: the study of language in its social context. Some sociolinguists are interested in the fundamental study of how languages vary and change, while others have developed interests at the intersection with other scientific disciplines, e.g., language choice (sociology), language attitudes (social psychology) and language policy and planning (legal studies, political sciences). In this paper we will point out some directions how, with *language variation* as the core concept, scholars of the *Institute for Language Sciences* and the strategic theme *Institutions for Open Societies* can join forces to tackle current societal and scientific issues at the intersection of language *in* institutions and language *as* an institution.

A UNIFORM STANDARD LANGUAGE

In the formation of nation states, a uniform language was often propagated and/or imposed. Dutch in the Netherlands or French in France have developed into such a standard language; i.e., a variety of the language that has been selected, uniformized, codified (in dictionaries, grammars, standard pronunciation rules), and accepted, often as an outcome of a long historical process. These languages possess an official writing system (with a script and spelling rules), which is sometimes reviewed when the language itself, the language ideology or the conceptualizations about the best way to write the language are changing.

As a result of these historical and political processes, a lot of societies are equipped with a societal and ideological conception of language as a uniform, shared and well-defined entity. Standard languages have become a (top-down) regularized institution, allowing to manage communication in institutional contexts (e.g., administration, education, news media).
In general, a uniform standard language is considered crucial in educational contexts, as it provides a clear model for the children, which can be defined as 'correct', 'grammatical', without 'spelling mistakes', deprived of dialect influence, etc.

At the same time, societies with a uniform standard language ideology often possess a range of governmental bodies and private institutions that act as language regulators or 'gatekeepers' of the language (e.g., Académie française for French, Euskaltzaindia for Basque, Nederlandse Taalunie for Dutch). Institutions like broadcasting stations and newspapers are (mostly) non-official regulators, but are often seen as models or embodiements of the standard language.

LANGUAGE VARIATION IS EVERYWHERE

The conception of language as a uniform instance that regulates society and creates equality among speakers is an idealized and naive point of view. In this section, we explain why this view does neither fit reality, nor the needs of twenty-first century societies. Variation is a core feature of language and every individual speaker makes use of variation constantly: by using different words, different constructions, or by having an accent related to the place where one grew up or to which social groups one belongs to or identifies with. The interest for language variation has been present from the cradle of linguistics as a scientific discipline: variation between languages (e.g., typology, language families) and within languages (dialectology, language change). Furthermore, variation in language use defines us as an individual and helps to express our identity in relation to our own and other groups. Speakers might switch between different forms or registers (between a dialect and the standard, between a colloquial and formal variety), but also between languages. Variation as a core feature of language stands in direct tension with the standard language ideology. We want to demonstrate this with two present-day tensions:

(1) THE STATUS OF LANGUAGE VARIATION IN A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

While it is popular belief that a society needs a strong and clear standard language, there are large differences in standard language ideologies in Europe. In language areas with a strong standard language ideology (e.g., France, Flanders), it becomes increasingly obvious that the prevailing ideology maintains inequalities between and creates threats to individual citizens. At the same time, the beginning of the twenty-first century is characterized by a shift in attention paid to individuals within society, in all their diversity and identity. In Scandinavia and Switzerland for instance, the local, regional or social dialects are used in both informal and formal spoken settings (e.g., newscasts, parliamentary debates, university lectures). We have entered a process of raising awareness, addressing and even tackling inequalities between societal groups, either modern equalities (e.g., natives vs. migrants, rural vs. urban) and historical inequalities (e.g., inherited from the colonial past). Holding to standard language ideologies prevents us from moving this agenda forward. We currently need to understand how language variation influences e.g., job selection, judiciary decision-making, contact with the police, health care, and education. And even if one is ready to abandon standard language ideologies, there are many questions to be answered. How can language institutions adopt a variationist and sustainable language policy, fitting the sociolinguistic situation and the needs of the citizens? How to create support for such a new language policy? Which variation patterns should be incorporated in grammar books, and how can they be labeled? How can they be implemented in teaching? How does such a variationist language policy shape literary texts? And how can it be applied in mass media?

(2) THE CASE OF MINORITY AND REGIONAL LANGUAGES

In many countries with a well-defined standard language (ideology) the dominant language coexists with one or more minority or regional languages (e.g., Frisian, Low-Saxon or Limburgian in the Netherlands; Basque, Breton and Occitan in France). Language activists and policy makers keep striving for the vitality of minority languages and stronger linguistic rights in the context of domestic (local, national), regional (e.g., European) and international laws and regulations, as all citizens should have the right and the means to use their mother tongue in the public space. It is crucial to investigate how language laws and regulations affect the vitality of these languages, and how language affects conflicts world-wide (as a cause, a propaganda tool, or a solution).

Language activists commonly strive for language uniformization processes (e.g., banning dialect words and pronunciations, introducing a standard spelling system, normative language tools, etc.), even for languages that have never been written before and only exist – as most of the world’s languages and language varieties – in spoken form. However, we now know that doing so reduces the variation within these languages and alienates part of the language users from this new standard variety. Why do language activists generally stick to conservative ideas? And why do local language activists so often disagree on what should be done? This results, somewhat ironically, in threatening the vitality of these languages. How can present-day societal and technological developments cope with this paradox? Can developments in artificial intelligence and speech technology help to embrace variation and to bypass the need to uniformize language to maintain it?

Variation as a core feature of language stands in direct tension with the standard language ideology.

CONCLUSION

We observe that traditional language institutes are in crisis. One of the main reasons seems to be the blind adherence to a language ideology inherited from nation building in the nineteenth century. This paper aimed to demonstrate the tension between language ideology, present-day societies and the needs of speakers (individuals and groups). The burning question is how to create a language ideology matching the twenty-first century global world in all its complexity and diversity.

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The burning question is how to create a language ideology matching the twenty-first century global world in all its complexity and diversity.

3 | Linguistic diversity, social justice and linguistic mediation: Foundations of institutions for open societies

Haidee Kotze

INSTITUTIONS AND LANGUAGE

Institutions do not exist without language. More specifically, institutions do not exist without people *using* language for particular purposes (what we could call 'discourse'). This is true irrespective of how broadly or narrowly one defines the notion of an institution; whether we think of the family, school, work, parliament, or the media as institutions – language is constitutive of all these.

The role of language and discourse in institutions (as much as the role of institutions themselves) is complex. Language is not only the fundamentally human form of social cooperation (Tomasello, 2008); it is also, at the same time, a key mechanism of power and control, of inclusion and exclusion, of advantage and disadvantage (Fairclough, 2001). Whenever we think about institutions and their role in (open) societies we therefore of necessity must also take account of language, and reflect on questions like:

- How is language related to social (in)equality in institutions?
- How do the language policies and practices of institutions reflect the dynamics of power in society more broadly?
- How do language policies and practices include or exclude, open up or close down participation in the institutions that are fundamental to open societies?

This is what Piller (2016) calls the intersection between linguistic diversity and social justice, highlighting the importance of understanding this intersection for working towards open societies: "…if we do not understand how linguistic diversity intersects with social justice and if we are unable even to recognize disadvantage and discrimination on the basis of language, we will not be able to work towards positive change" (Piller, 2016, p. 5).

WHAT IS LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY?

Whenever people use language, there is variation. This variation exists at multiple levels, ranging from differing accents in the same language, different varieties or dialects of the same language, or different languages altogether. This variation is socially meaningful, or marked, in particular contexts. For example, some accents may be held in high esteem while others are derided; some languages may be allowed, encouraged and valued, while others are disallowed, discouraged and disparaged; some varieties of a language may be stigmatized while others may be accorded prestige.

Language variation, then, is not neutral. In all institutions (whether education, work, health-care, social security and safety, civic and political participation) this variation may be used in overt and subtle ways to exclude and limit participation. This is the point of intersection between linguistic diversity, institutions, and social justice.

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND/IN INSTITUTIONS: KEY AREAS OF RESEARCH

Many different configurations of linguistic diversity exist in different parts of the world, and it is essential to acknowledge the unique interplay of local and global forces, and the complex histories that have given rise to these (see e.g., Blommaert, 2010). Against the background of this diversity, a research agenda focused on the relationship between institutions, language, and open societies may broadly be seen as concentrating on two aspects: *language policy* and *language practices*. Language policies are (linguistically!) codified and crystalized statements that reflect institutions' ideological stance on issues of language, and the degree to which notions like language rights or linguistic justice are foregrounded. Importantly, the absence of a language policy can say as much about an institution's linguistic ideologies as its presence. But beyond policy, of course, lies practice, and language practices in institutions (and the way in which they are used to implement language policies, or diverge from policy) are the real spaces in which linguistic diversity and social justice are enacted or contested. Such language practices can be both formalized and develop informally. The types of practices around linguistic diversity in institutions not only reflect power relationships between languages, and speakers, but also maintain them. In this sense, language practices themselves become institutions.

Formalized practices for dealing with linguistic diversity might include translation and interpreting. While translation and interpreting are often viewed in an oversimplified (and even romanticized) way as aimed at transcending linguistic divides and enabling intercultural communication, these practices are often a double-edged sword, particularly where power differentials between languages exist. For example, the vast majority of African-language books for children used in South African schools are produced by translating books from English (Kruger, 2012). While this ostensibly seems like a laudable use of translation, in fact what this use of translation does is to suppress original writing in the African languages, and the participation of African-language authors in publishing institutions, by making original writing in the African languages unnecessary. In this way, translation reinforces the hegemony of English, and excludes economic and intellectual participation of African-language authors in publishing institutions. Another example: interpreting may be seen as a way to ensure equal participation and equitable representation in many institutional contexts, ranging from healthcare and law, to politics and governance, to education (particularly institutions of higher education, like universities). The availability of trained interpreters in such settings are, undoubtedly, a mediation practice that may ensure linguistic equity. But interpreting can also be a way of ensuring that some speakers (those from dominant languages in particular contexts) never have to leave their linguistic comfort zone, while the increased effort of participation in linguistically diverse institutions falls to linguistic minorities – who are reliant on interpreting in a way that speakers of majority languages are not expected to be. In many cases, then, institutional practices like translation and interpreting may become ways of doing mere lip service to linguistic diversity and inclusivity, while maintaining an unjust status quo.

Other, informal, practices may emerge, of course, and even become institutionalized. For example, multilingual language practices, like code-switching, code-mixing, and translanguaging, may become acknowledged and legitimized over time. Such usages reflect the complex, fluid, and often hybrid nature of people's language repertoires and how they use these in institutional contexts as much as elsewhere. The legitimization of such practices reflects a shift in language attitudes and ideologies.

In many cases, then, institutional practices like translation and interpreting may become ways of doing mere lip service to linguistic diversity and inclusivity, while maintaining an unjust status quo.

Code-switching, code-mixing and translanguaging

Code-switching and *code-mixing* refer to situations in which language users alternate between two (or more) languages or language varieties in a single conversation or text. Some linguists use these two terms interchangeably, while others make a distinction between them. However, the way in which this distinction is made is not consistent, and varies across different research areas and theoretical paradigms.

Often, *code-switching* is used to refer to communicative situations in which there is a clear 'main' language (referred to as the matrix language), into which elements from another language (referred to as the embedded language) are inserted; this is also called *intrasentential* code-switching (switching within a sentence or speech turn). But code-switching is also used to refer to situations in which people alternate between languages from one sentence to the next; this is also called *intersentential* code-switching (switching between sentences or speech turns). *Code-mixing* is sometimes used as a synonym for intrasentential code-switching, but more often it refers to a more hybridized form of mixed language use, where the grammatical conventions of the two languages involved are melded and it is no longer clear what the matrix language is.

Below are examples of intra- and intersentential code-switching, taken from a corpus of written online comments on South African television soap operas analyzed in Van Rooy and Kruger (2018).

INTRASENTENTIAL CODE-SWITCHING
my boyfriend's family invited me to join them for family picknik, but nna ['I', Sotho] i don't know gore ke reke ['whether I should buy', Sotho] food from the shops, or bake

INTERSENTENTIAL CODE-SWITCHING
Almost forgot to say yesterday i felt embarrassed. UGrace angayenza kanjani into enje ['How could Grace do something like this', Zulu]

Translanguaging is a broader term, referring to all the ways in which bi- and multilinguals use the full repertoire of their languages to communicate and make sense of the world. It is founded on a fluid conceptualization of language that challenges "the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281). It is a term that developed particularly in the context of education, where translanguaging has been advocated as a form of language use, and pedagogical approach, that leverages the rich linguistic resources of bi- and multilinguals, rather than enforcing a reductive monolingualism (see García & Wei, 2014).

It is important to keep in mind that code-switching, code-mixing and translanguaging are not seen as deficit forms of language use, but as ways in which bi- and multilinguals put their linguistic repertoires to work for particular purposes, ranging from identity expression, communicative creativity, and intersubjective or social alignment.

Political institutions, particularly parliaments, are an important type of institution in which these kinds of dynamics can be studied. Parliaments are microcosms of democratization; they become more inclusive over time, and this inclusivity is reflected in language use: which languages (or language varieties) are used in parliament, who uses them, and how they are used (see Korhonen, Kotze & Tyrkkö, 2023). The South African parliament offers a good illustration, reflecting over the course of more than a century the evolution and recognition of Afrikaans as a language distinct from Dutch, conflicts between English and Dutch/Afrikaans, and the move from a bilingual to a multilingual parliament – including the use of interpreting and translation, but also extensive code-mixing (see Van Rooy & Kotze, 2022).

It is not only the practices that are of interest, but also the actual language use in these institutional discourses; in other words, the outcomes of these practices. Institutional language can be studied to understand processes of language variation and change more generally. For example, language use in (post)colonial parliaments can be studied as a way in which to understand how new linguistic usages and norms develop in pluricentric varieties of a language (so, for example, how Australian, South African, or Hong Kong English is different from British English; see Collins et al., 2021), and what role language contact (also through translation and interpreting; see Van Rooy & Kotze, 2022) plays. In this view, multilingual parliaments are sites of language contact, and particularly sites within formal institutions in which the norms of language are contested and ultimately established. Institutional language can also be studied to investigate how this type of discourse itself changes over time. We could study, for example, how persuasive strategies in political discourse change over time, in different places in the world (see Kruger, Van Rooy & Smith, 2019). We could also investigate how particular topics of social importance (e.g., the climate crisis, vaccination, war) or groups of people (e.g., women, immigrants, transgender people) are constructed in institutional discourses in different places and over time (see, for example, the work of the Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science (CASS) at Lancaster University)[1], and whose interests such representations serve.

INTO THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

Rapid advances in language technology are reshaping the nexus of linguistic diversity, social justice and institutions, and represent the frontier of research in these areas. How will the use of language technology, like synthetic text generators and machine translation, in institutional discourse affect the relation between linguistic diversity and social justice? Will it bring more access, more participation, more equality – or less? How will it affect processes of language variation and change?

1 https://cass.lancs.ac.uk

While language technology seems like it might offer increased accessibility, at the moment such technologies are strongly biased towards dominant languages (and language varieties), as much as towards the values of dominant cultural groups, reflecting and simultaneously amplifying existing biases. Can language technologies be used in institutions in ways that contribute to the safeguarding of equal participation and openness, or are such technologies precisely a risk to participation and equity, contributing to situations where, as O'Neil (2016) points out, "[t]he privileged... are processed more by people, the masses by machines"? This is a crucial question for the future.

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How will the use of language technology, like synthetic text generators and machine translation, in institutional discourse affect the relation between linguistic diversity and social justice?

Image: Robert Borges (https://stemmenvanafrika.nl/meertaligheid-op-het-strand-wat-borden-en-posters-zeggen-over-taalvitaliteit-op-aruba)

4 | Language policies in language contact situations

Ellen-Petra Kester & Margot van den Berg

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world, language policies are based on a colonial heritage language that has a dominant position in institutions for education, governance and the judiciary, while not being the home language of the majority of the population. In our paper we will specifically address language policies in the education systems of the Caribbean islands that are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands consists of six territories: the Dutch Windward Islands of Saba, Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten, and the Dutch Leeward Islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. The home languages of the great majority of inhabitants of these two islands groups are varieties of English lexifier Creole, on the Windward islands, and the Spanish/Portuguese Lexifier Creole Papiamento/u, on the Leeward islands. Varieties of English and Spanish play an important role as well, due to migration, tourism, and the increasing influence of the media (television, the internet).

Papiamentu and Papiamento

The variety of the language spoken on Bonaire and Curaçao is known as Papiamentu, whereas the Aruban variety is referred to as Papiamento. The varieties are mutually intelligible, but they make use of different spelling conventions.

Since 1954 the six islands constituted the country of the Netherlands Antilles (according to Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands) up until 1986, when Aruba received 'Status Aparte' as an autonomous country within the Kingdom. After the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles on October 10 2010, the larger islands of Curaçao and Sint Maarten also adopted a status as autonomous countries within the Kingdom, whereas the smaller islands of Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius became exceptional municipalities ('public entities') of the European Netherlands.

LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE FORMER NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

For centuries, Dutch was the only officially recognized language in the six islands, dominating the administrative and educational systems, as well as other formal domains of the public sphere. This situation changed when Papiamento/u was recognized as a co-official language with Dutch in Aruba (2003) and with Dutch and English in the Netherlands Antilles (2007) leading to increasing use in the administrative and education systems as well as in the media. Nevertheless, the language policy in the islands is still Eurocentric and tends to be dominated by European discourses that assume monolingualism in Dutch to be the norm for communities and individuals that are characterized by multilingualism and cultural diversity. For most inhabitants of the Caribbean islands Dutch is not a first language they learn at home, nor a second language they learn in their communities, but rather a foreign language they primarily learn at school and almost never encounter outside the classroom.

Knowledge of Dutch is considered important for tertiary studies (in the ABC-islands and in the European Netherlands) and for local government employment. Many speakers disfavor the use of languages other than Dutch in the education system, due to negative attitudes toward multilingualism in education in general and persistent myths raising doubts about the adequateness of Creole languages (such as Papiamento/u) for academic purposes. There are also many practical and financial concerns about the availability of school materials and teachers to carry out a new language policy that is different from 'Dutch only'. These negative attitudes, myths, and concerns have been restraining change and advocating the submersion of Caribbean students in a European-based system with Dutch as the only language of instruction. High drop-out rates, grade repetition and exam failure characterize the outcomes of the education systems of the six islands (Dijkhoff & Pereira, 2010; Pereira, 2018).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Over the past decade a number of successful innovations have been implemented that contribute to increased use of home languages as languages of instruction in the islands.

More community-based research is needed to contribute to the development of equitable and sustainable language policies.

The Scol Arubiano Multilingual (SAM) in Aruba (Croes, 2011) uses Papiamento as the language of instruction and initial literacy, whereas Dutch, English, and Spanish are taught as second or foreign languages. In Curaçao, two schools use Papiamentu as the language of instruction for primary education (Kolegio Erasmo) and secondary education (Skol Avansá Integrá Humanista), respectively (Kester, Mijts & Faraclas, 2022). Saba and Sint Eustatius have recently implemented a transition to English as the medium of instruction throughout the school system (Faraclas, Kester & Mijts, 2019). In addition, the support provided by the Taalunie for the development of materials and curricula for Dutch as a Foreign Language demonstrates that policies are not only shifting toward increased use of home languages as languages of instruction, but also toward teaching Dutch as a foreign language, rather than as a first or second language, in the education systems of the islands (Mijts, Kester & Faraclas, 2020).

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

Sociolinguistic research utilizing a community-based approach is key to the development of language policies in colonial language contact situations, as it aims at acknowledging and mobilizing the knowledge and expertise of the researched community (Faraclas, Kester & Mijts, 2019). The engagement of community members as co-researchers is not only important for the research tasks of description and analysis of the problems the community encounters, but also for achieving adequate solutions to those problems. Moreover, community involvement increases the likelihood of valorization of the research project and acceptance of its outcomes and recommendations (Faraclas, Kester & Mijts, 2019). Hence, by recognizing and respecting local knowledge and expertise, the community-based approach is able to contribute to the development of an equitable, sustainable language policy for an education system that will serve students to achieve their full potential.

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5 | Internationalizing Dutch: The role of language and culture in an international university

Christopher J. Jenks

INTERNATIONALIZATION PRESSURES

Dutch universities are faced with growing pressures to succeed in a neoliberal system that rewards institutions for recruiting international staff and students, publishing in English-medium journals, and creating global partnerships. Such efforts feed into and are based on metrics that are created by university ranking systems, such as the oft-cited table by the Times Higher Education, that view the prestige and quality of higher education through the lens of internationalization.

Internationalization within the context of higher education “includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—and even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). According to this definition, internationalization should not be confused with globalization: the latter term refers specifically to the socio-political context, including cross-border occupational initiatives and free-trade agreements between ally or neighbouring countries, that encourage universities to pursue internationalization.

While there are many policies and practices that form the foundation from which universities pursue internationalization, from creating satellite campuses to following transnational quality assurance guidelines, recruiting international staff and students demands special attention because of the far-reaching implications this policy has on the way a university functions. For instance, recruiting international staff and students requires universities to create an institutional culture that accommodates the demands and expectations of working in multilingual and intercultural spaces. The communicative and intercultural issues and challenges of working at an international university are well-documented, which include dealing with miscommunication based on cultural traditions, combating racial microaggressions, creating equitable language policies that address the needs of all staff, and designing support programs in language and culture for incoming students from different countries, to name a few examples.

THREE KEY AREAS FOR SUCCESS

In the Netherlands, a multilingual policy of using English as an academic lingua franca while maintaining Dutch as the main working language is the most common approach to address the communicative and intercultural challenges of internationalization. Although this approach is conceptually simple and ostensibly attends to a wide range of linguistic profiles within a university, languages and language use are inextricably connected to a host of political, communicative, pedagogical, and cultural issues that are often overlooked or not fully addressed in multilingual policies.

1. DUTCH AS A WORKING LANGUAGE

The use of Dutch as a working language requires universities to ensure that international staff and students can fully participate in all working and teaching activities. Many universities address this challenge by offering Dutch language courses to international staff and students. However, Dutch language support is a long-term commitment that must be embedded within all aspects of university life, as well as based on empirical research. Research shows that developing a level of proficiency required to communicate at the workplace or in academic settings can take three to five years or more, and even when working proficiency is attained, language learners are often discriminated against or even ridiculed for their "non-standard" accents.

2. ENGLISH AS AN ACADEMIC LINGUA FRANCA

The use of English as an academic lingua franca requires universities to ensure that all research and teaching activities are conducted at a level of proficiency that meets international standards. While there is much debate regarding how to measure such expectations, uncontroversial policies followed at other top universities include requiring all teaching staff to communicate at an established international standard, designing curricular goals based on research on English as a medium of instruction, and helping research staff develop writing and rhetorical skills that will enable them to disseminate high-level, impactful research. Furthermore, pedagogical and language policies must be established to protect students that do not speak Dutch, allowing them to fully participate in classrooms, social and pastoral activities, and graduation events, to name a few.

3. INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

A multilingual approach to internationalization requires universities to consider the cultural diversity that comes with using multiple language resources, such as Dutch and English. This consideration requires universities to ensure that all multilingual contexts, including service encounters and public spaces, are inclusive and equitable. Staff and students have the right to express their linguistic and cultural identities, but more importantly, they must be able to do so without fear of alienation and marginalization. Celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity, and not treating it as a deficit, entails delivering intercultural training programs and creating policies that attend to the political, pedagogical, and institutional dynamics of an international university.

Many universities have specific policies and practices in place to address some of the issues and challenges identified above. Yet these efforts are often carried out as disparate initiatives within universities with little to no cross-departmental organization and discussion. This situation is problematic given the intricate and interrelated nature of language and culture. Each policy and practice must be based on research; more importantly, multilingual policies and practices must be accounted for collectively as a singular, coherent, and robust approach to internationalization. Such efforts come with enormous challenges. Internationalization efforts coexist in a political climate of rising nationalism, which is characterized in part by discourses of fear and cultural othering. Concrete and sustainable language and cultural policies within universities, and at the national level, are therefore needed to navigate these challenging times.

LOOKING FORWARD

This paper has explored some of the salient communicative and cultural aspects of internationalization, which will hopefully provide a springboard for a more serious discussion about the costs and benefits of multilingualism. It is crucial that universities do not view internationalization as a road that ends at staff and student recruitment. International staff and students bring their linguistic and cultural identities to an equally complex Dutch setting, creating exciting yet challenging opportunities to co-exist within a global academic context. Given the deep and varied expertise in language and culture at Utrecht University, this institution should take a leadership role on these communicative and cultural issues for other universities and within the country.

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International staff and students bring their linguistic and cultural identities to an equally complex Dutch setting, creating exciting yet challenging opportunities to co-exist within a global academic context.

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6 | Technology and the multilingual landscape: Towards language equality and inclusivity

Antal van den Bosch

BIG TECH, LANGUAGE POLICIES, AND THE MULTILINGUAL LANDSCAPE

For the big tech industry, the multitudes of languages spoken on major market areas such as the European mainland or India represent a major challenge, yet also a sizable market opportunity. Offering high-quality software and hardware tools that support writing, reading, listening, speaking, searching and chat functionalities in local languages require a significant effort in each language variant. How does this market-driven digital view on language relate to twentieth-century tenets of language policies and actual language use, and how is it bringing language equality and inclusivity closer?

FAST-PACED ADVANCES OF LANGUAGE AND SPEECH PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY

In a 2012 publication by the Meta-Net EU Network of Excellence, “The Dutch language in the digital age”, Utrecht professor Jan Odijk observed a sizable gap between the tech market’s interest in English versus that of Dutch (Odijk, 2012). One decade later, big tech has increased the development of technology capable of speech recognition and synthesis, as well as dialog, chat, information search, translation, and writing support. They do so with an increasing and increasingly better support for the Dutch language, which can be directly linked to the fact that there is a lot of Dutch digitally available, disproportionately much relative to its number of speakers. The ample availability of Dutch data can be attributed to both bottom-up and top-down developments: the high level of use of internet and digital communication tools in Dutch-speaking countries, and over two decades of significant transnational government-driven large investments in gathering high-quality digital text and speech corpora for Dutch.

With the advent of Large Language Models (LLMs) based on the Transformer technology (Vaswani et al., 2017) and the meteoric arrival of OpenAI’s ChatGPT[2] late 2022, the wider public has now also gained awareness of the possibilities offered by these computational language and speech processing technologies. LLMs are part of a larger growing toolbox of Artificial Intelligence technologies that appear in all areas of business, media, government, health and essentially, life. Yet, the more limited the language is represented in the digital realm, the lower the performance, because the underlying technologies rely strictly on the availability of data, and more data, to gain better performance.

LANGUAGES ARE DIALECTS WITH ARMIES: THE CASE OF DUTCH AND THE DUTCH LANGUAGE UNION

In a recent article[3], Dutch linguist and science communicator Marc van Oostendorp retells the

2 https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt
3 https://www.de-lage-landen.com/article/waarom-we-het-nooit-eens-worden-over-het-nederlands

story of the Nederlandse Taalunie, the Dutch Language Union, a transnational organization shared between the Netherlands and Flanders founded in 1980, with Suriname as an associate member, that aims to govern issues concerning the Dutch language. Van Oostendorp summarizes the Union's stance on Dutch as being *polycentric*: it presupposes a division of the Dutch language landscape with multiple centers that each have their standard version of Dutch. The Union essentially distinguishes between Dutch as spoken in Belgium (sometimes referred to as Flemish, or Dutch spoken in Flanders, or Belgian Dutch) and Dutch as spoken in the Netherlands (or Netherlandic Dutch). Van Oostendorp, voicing what is pretty much an academic consensus, offers a sharp criticism on this distinction, noting the fluidity of language variation within and beyond the borders of the Netherlands and the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. The only reasons for arriving at this distinction have been natio-political, echoing the old lament by speakers of minority languages as well as linguists[4] that what is a "language" always seems to be defined by the rest of the world as dialects that happen to have an army or navy, or had one at a crucial point in time.

Although many big tech developers of AI-based language and speech technology only distinguish one standard for "Dutch" (e.g., Google Translate), some take the same polycentric view of two main variants, typically referring to "Dutch (Netherlands)" and "Dutch (Belgium)" or "Flemish" (e.g., Microsoft Office). For the same reason pointed out by linguists, this neglect of true variation is problematic. It can be stipulated that *the more a user of that language deviates from the centroid user of what is taken as the "standard", the less the AI applications will fit the particular needs for that user*. As an illustration of this problem, a speaker of Limburgish (a formally recognized border-crossing regional language spoken in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany[5]), whether from the Belgian or Dutch province of Limburg, cannot make the same level of use of Dutch automatic speech recognition as compared to a speaker from one of the Holland provinces in the Netherlands.

HOPES AND PROSPECTS

So far, big tech has stuck to a politically-motivated definition of what a language is, also for economic reasons of scale and profit. This continues to reinforce age-old patterns that go against the linguistic reality of present-day speakers, and that hinder inclusivity, access to information, participation in the digital society, and ultimately threaten the democratic functioning of our nations. It hinders the battle against low literacy (e.g., with non-native speakers learning the language of their new home) and does not help in closing or bridging the divide between the digitally literate and illiterate.

What we should strive for is language equality. As the European Language Equality (ELE)[6] initiative points out, language equality in the digital age means that all speakers of all languages, "standard" or minority, should have a basis of equal quality in digital means and tools to use their language. As the EU and governments are taking initiatives such as ELE to remedy this problem, and as European projects are set up to counterbalance the English-dominated tech world with products such as ChatGPT, the question is whether this is all not too late and too little in view of big tech's massive grip on future developments. Practically, our hope and efforts should be concentrated on convincing big tech of diversifying their linguistic strategy, and our locally funded efforts should focus on collecting more digital data for all language variants.

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Language equality in the digital age means that all speakers of all languages, "standard" or minority, should have a basis of equal quality in digital means and tools to use their language.

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_language_is_a_dialect_with_an_army_and_navy#:~:text=%22A%20language%20is%20a%20dialect,of%20a%20language%20or%20dialect
5 https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/languages-covered
6 https://european-language-equality.eu


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7 | Linguistic creatures in an institutional world

Norbert Corver

AN ANCIENT QUESTION

What kind of creatures are we? In trying to answer this ancient question, scientists aim at identifying properties of our modern selves that distinguish us from other animals in the world. Language arguably is one such property (Chomsky, 2016). This core aspect of human nature allows us to produce and understand an infinite array of hierarchically structured expressions that have a meaning ("a language of thought") and an externalized form (sound or sign). The unboundedness of the set of linguistic expressions, and also their hierarchical nature – the embedding of a linguistic unit X in a larger linguistic unit Y –, can easily be shown on the basis of the following range of increasingly complex patterns:

(1)
a. John saw [Mary]
b. John saw [a statue [of Mary]]
c. John saw [a picture [of a statue [of Mary]]]
et cetera

Our language capacity makes it possible to share our individual inner thoughts and feelings with others. Being social creatures, we use language to communicate with each other. This social aspect of our human nature brings us to another core property of ours, namely our ability to organize our social lives in terms of institutions. Hindriks and Guala (2015, p. 459) phrase it as follows:

"Institutions are peculiar products of human activities, to begin with, and may hold the key to understand our special place in the natural world. Why are humans the only animals who can build social organizations and who constantly invent new ways of living together? The other social animals do not seem to have institutions […]."

It does not seem implausible that our linguistic capacity (linguistic competence) and our ability to use it in communication (linguistic performance) closely relate to our "institutional capacity". Being able to generate an infinite number of "linguistic thoughts" that can be shared with others through communication seems to provide a good basis for (jointly) establishing and codifying structures –systems of social rules – that shape our social lives, in short: institutions (North, 1990, Hodgson, 2006). The quintessential role of language in our institutionalized world is well worded in Searle's (1995, p. 60) statement that "language is the basic social institution in the sense that all others [e.g., family, businesses, law, education, military, religion, peer groups; N.C.] presuppose language, but language does not presuppose the others."

WHAT'S IN AN INSTITUTIONAL TERM?

Words are central building blocks of human language. Our knowledge of words allows us to think and talk about aspects of the world, including the social institutions in our everyday lives. A rich variety of institutional concepts find their way into our institutional vocabularies.

These terms can stand for various things, including individuals, objects, properties, activities, and time. In legal contexts, for example, we find institution-specific terms such as *verzoeker* 'applicant' (individual), *akte* 'brief' (i.e. document of process; object), *niet-ontvankelijk* 'inadmissible' (property), *betekenen* 'to serve' (activity), and the Latin loan expression *ex nunc* ('from now on'; time), a legal term to signify that something (e.g., a legal contract) is valid only for the future and not the past. Zooming in a little further on legal terms that denote individuals, we notice that they can designate certain roles within the institutional context. The inner word structure of the legal term tells us something about this role. For example, composite nouns with the internal structure 'verbal root + *-er*', as in *eis-er* 'claimant', *verweerd-er* 'defendant', and *verzoek-er* 'applicant', typically denote an 'agent', that is, the doer or instigator of the action denoted by the verbal root. Thus, *eiser* is 'the one who claims', where the element *-er* contributes the agentive meaning. Legal terms such as *gelaedeerd-e* 'injured/aggrieved party', *gedaagd-e* 'defendant', and *geïntimeerd-e* 'respondent', which have the inner structure 'passive participle' + *-e*, denote a so-called 'theme', that is, the individual that undergoes the effect of some action. Thus, *gelaedeerde* is 'the one who has been injured or aggrieved'.

What these examples show, is that institutional (e.g., legal) terms tell us something about meaningful dimensions in social systems. Other dimensions that play a role in person-related institutional terminology regard, among others, spatial relationships (hierarchy within a system), temporal relationships (seniority within a system), (non)-biological relationships, and ex-situ or in situ relationships (being inside or outside the system). Some illustrations are given in **(2)**.

(2)

a. vader; grootvader; overgrootvader; betovergrootvader
father; grandfather; great-grandfather; great-great-grandfather

b. kind; kleinkind; achterkleinkind; achter-achterkleinkind
child; grandchild; great-grand-child; great-great-grandchild

c. (onder-)officier; (hoofd-)docent; (vice-)burgemeester
(non-commissioned) officer; (senior) lecturer; (vice) major

d. moeder; schoonmoeder; stiefmoeder
mother; mother-in-law; stepmother

e. ex; hoogleraar emeritus; generaal-majoor buiten dienst
ex(wife/husband); professor emeritus; retired Major General

Notice also here that the combinatorial power of language —our ability to combine smaller units into bigger ones, as, for example, in *[over [groot [vader]]]*— allows us to characterize these different roles of individuals in institutional contexts. And also here, we can keep on building linguistic structures, as in *een [achter [achter* [achter <etc.> *[kleinkind]]]]*.

WHAT'S IN A RELATION?

Institutions include sets of relations between individuals or entities (Hodgson, 2006). As shown in (3), these (social) relations can be expressed through language, again in a principally unbounded way: you can keep on adding *van*-phrases. At the (sound) surface, these patterns look like strings of words, in which one word precedes the other: *Jan + van + Mia + van + Kees*. At a more abstract (hidden) level, these patterns turn out to have a hierarchical structure, with one structural layer being embedded in a larger structural layer. The linear string *Jan van Mia van Kees*, for example, has the more abstract hierarchical structure *[Jan [van [Mia [van [Kees]]]]]*, where *Kees* is structurally part of the unit *van Kees, van Kees*, in turn, of the unit *Mia van Kees, et cetera.*

(3)

a. Jan van Mia van Kees
'Jan, who is the son of Mia, who in turn is the daughter of Kees'

b. de broer van een neef van een tante van mij
'the brother of a nephew of an aunt of mine'

c. het secretariaat van het hoofdkantoor van de Rabobank
'the secretariat of the head office of the Rabobank'

The patterns in **(3)** are interesting not only from a linguistic perspective but also from an institutional perspective. The pattern in **(3a)**, for example, is typically used in small dialect-speaking communities, whose members are familiar with other people's kinship relations.

THE CODE-SWITCHING LANGUAGE USER IN AN INSTITUTIONAL WORLD

As individuals we participate in manifold institutions throughout our lives. It is quite remarkable that we manage to switch so easily between different institutional contexts. This switching behavior is also manifest in our language. We smoothly switch from one "institutional language" to another, often without being aware that the linguistic properties of one institutional code, sometimes referred to as a 'register' (Ferguson 1982), may differ from those of another institutional code. Interestingly, these differences often regard so-called function words, such as definite articles (*de* 'the'), copular verbs (*zijn* 'to be'), pronouns (*hij* 'he'), and prepositions (*van* 'of'). These "small" words have abstract meanings, form a closed class, display a high frequency in language use, and signal structural relationships that words have to one another. They differ in these respects from so-called content words such as nouns (*moeder* 'mother'), verbs (*eten* 'to eat'), and adjectives (*aardig* 'kind'). Interestingly, as exemplified in (4) and (5), function words can be absent in certain institutional codes.

(4)
Eiseres heeft *verweerder* verzocht om kentekenplaten zonder duplicaatcode te verkrijgen.
'The plaintiff has requested the defendant to obtain license plates without a duplicate code.'

(5)
Minister afwezig bij opening academisch jaar.
'The minister was/will be absent at the opening of the academic year.'

Example (4) is an instance of so-called 'legalese' (institution: law): it shows that the definite article de 'the' (also het) can be left out when it precedes nouns denoting legal parties in a lawsuit (*eiseres*, *verweerder*). Example (5) illustrates the phenomenon of 'headlinese' (institution: media). In this example, not only the definite articles (*de*/*het*) are absent, but also the copular verb (*is*) and the preposition *van*.

Language users acting within these institutional contexts have knowledge of the grammatical rules of these different "institutional codes". According to Roeper (1999: 184), these "islands of grammar variation which [..] allow a nuanced array of communicative powers to the speaker" should be analyzed as a kind of language-internal bilingualism.

ECONOMY OF REPRESENTATION

As noted by Hindriks and Guala (2015, p. 475), "an important function of institutions is to promote economy of thought." For example, legal terms such as *subpoena*, *heirs*, and *to litigate* are convenient terms within the institution of law; they compactly summarize institutional information (events, roles, actions, *et cetera*) and this way reduce the cognitive costs for the institutional participants during interaction. A further illustration of this tendency towards economic (symbolic) representation of institutional concepts comes from the use of abbrevations, which are ubiquitous within institutions. Some examples from the institution 'Military Forces' are given in (6):

(6)
a. GVT (**ge**v**e**cht**t**enue), BT (**b**attle **t**ank), KVV (**K**ort **V**erband **V**rijwilliger), PRAT (**P**antser **R**ups **A**nti **T**ank), KMA (**K**oninklijke **M**ilitaire **A**cademie)
b. lupa (**lu**nch**pa**kket), vupo (**vu**ur**po**sitie), laro (**la**nd**ro**ver), hiba (**hi**ndernis**ba**an), pluba (**plu**nje**ba**al)

The formation of such institutional abbreviations follows certain rules of language. The patterns in (6a), for example, are formed by taking the first sound of each word or syllable in a composite word or phrase. Those in (6b) are formed by taking the first two sounds of a sequence of syllables – technically, the onset and the nucleus – and forming a single pronounceable unit from them.

CONCLUSION

Language is a multi-faceted phenomenon worth of study. It constitutes a core property of our human nature and provides us with a mirror reflecting the creativity of our mind (Chomsky, 1968). This creativity is manifest in our use of language in institutional contexts, for example in the expression of institutional terms, conceptual relations, abbreviations, and the presence versus absence of function words. The study of institutions at the interface with language opens up an interesting research program, both from a cognitive perspective and a social perspective.

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Institutional (e.g., legal) terms tell us something about meaningful dimensions in social systems.

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8 | Trust in Institutions: A language and communication perspective

Hans Hoeken

INTRODUCTION

More and more people feel betrayed by institutions such as the government, health care officials, or research institutes. They no long trust these institutions and doubt their expertise on relevant issues, or even worse, question their intentions. This crisis of trust has severe consequences for the effectiveness of these institutions' communication. Yet communication also plays an important role in fueling this distrust. But on the upside: communication can play a decisive role in restoring trust.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INSTITUTION'S REPUTATION FOR ITS COMMUNICATION

It is hard to overestimate how much humankind has benefited from its ability to communicate. Without communication, each individual would have to find out for itself which mushrooms are edible and which lethal or how to compute the hypotenuse in a right triangle. Yet, these advantages come with the risk of being, intentionally or accidentally, misinformed. To reap the benefits of communication without falling prey to its disadvantages, people have developed epistemic vigilance skills (Sperber et al., 2010): the ability to distinguish messages that should be believed from those to be rejected. According to Mercier and Sperber (2017) epistemic vigilance focuses on two questions: *what to believe* and *who to believe*?

For the question concerning *what to believe*, the focus lies on the content of the message. Mercier (2020) argues that two cognitive processes are used to answer this question. The first process, plausibility checking, entails that people assess whether the message's content corresponds to, or aligns with beliefs already stored in memory. Information that does not pass this filter can still be accepted by the second process: reasoning. If people find the supporting arguments convincing, they will accept the claim even if it clashes with their currently held beliefs. When confronted with a message that aims to persuade them, people immediately generate intuitions about how convincing this message is (Mercier & Sperber, 2017). Hoeken et al. (2022) show what mechanisms may generate these intuitions and under what conditions these intuitions may be normatively sound.

The question as to *who to believe* centers on the perception of the information source: should we take this source on his or her word? Mercier (2020) dissects this question into two sub-questions. The sub-question of *who knows best* refers to whether the source's information is likely to be accurate because of the source being witness to the events, possessing specialized knowledge, or the opinion is shared by a large number of independent individuals.

The second sub-question concerning the source is *who to trust*? Central to this question is the perception as to whether the interests of the audience and those of the source are aligned. Mercier (2020) distinguishes between two types of alignment. In the case of natural alignment, the source and receiver share the same interests as is the case of a goalkeeper informing a defender about the presence of a striker, their common interest being to prevent this striker from scoring. In the case of social alignment, the source's interest is to be perceived by the receiver as a person who provides relevant and accurate information. If the receiver considers the information as incorrect or irrelevant, this will damage the source's reputation as a valuable group member and will lessen the impact of his or her future communications.

The two questions on *what to believe* and *who to believe* are not independent. A trusted, knowledgeable source will need far less argumentation to have the audience accept a claim that clashes with their current beliefs compared to a more neutrally perceived source. A distrusted source will need irrefutable arguments to have this same claim accepted. Worse, even what could be considered irrefutable arguments from an objective point of view may nevertheless be rejected as people often suffer from the my-side bias (Stanovich, 2021). This bias is the tendency to apply more strict criteria to evaluate arguments that go against currently held beliefs or interests whereas evidence in line with these beliefs is evaluated much more leniently. Consequently, for communicating inconvenient truths or providing unwelcome behavioral advice, the reputation of the source is essential.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ITS COMMUNICATION FOR AN INSTITUTION'S REPUTATION

Whereas a source's reputation has a decisive influence on the impact of its communication, the reverse is true as well: communication has a decisive influence on the source's reputation.

> ***For communicating inconvenient truths or providing unwelcome behavioral advice, the reputation of the source is essential***

Two important ways in which communication influences a source's reputation are whether it is able to explain its actions (e.g., policies, laws) and whether it creates correct expectations among its audience about the consequences of these actions.

Explainability has two dimensions: comprehensibility and justifiability. Comprehensibility is essential for messages in which institutions *explain* their policies and plans, or *instruct* citizens how to act. To some extent, comprehensibility is determined by the linguistic makeup of the message. Building on developments in machine learning, Pander Maat and colleagues have developed and validated text analyses programs that automatically analyze messages and provide an estimate of the percentage of Dutch citizens that will be able to comprehend the message (Kleijn, 2018; Pander Maat et al., 2014). The importance of comprehensible language in various contexts has been increasingly acknowledged. Cramwinkel, Pander Maat and Sanders (2023) have been invited by the Nederlandse Juristen-Vereniging (NVJ) to write an advisory report on comprehensible language in law.

For the large – and growing – number of Dutch citizens that are functionally low- or illiterate, or for whom Dutch is not their native language, the linguistic route alone may be insufficient to reach more comprehensible messages. Visual communication using icons and symbols could be a promising route to reaching these audiences. Van Hooijdonk et al. (2021) conducted a study (funded by the Taalunie) on the comprehension of icons developed and used by Dutch and Flemish local governments. Van Weelden et al. (2022) studied (funded by Netspar) the use and interpretation of visualizations in pension communication.

Apart from comprehensibility, the institution's reputation also depends on its ability to justify its actions, especially if these actions appear to go against (part of) the audience's interests (e.g., measures to deal with the nitrogen crisis), or do not match the audience's moral views (e.g., sentences that are considered too lenient for certain offenses). Acceptance of the policies or measures does not only depend on their outcomes, but also on the perception of procedural justice (Skitka et al., 2003). Procedural justice is about the quality, notably the fairness and the transparency, of the processes by which decisions are made. Blader and Tyler (2003) distinguish between the quality of the decision process and the quality of how the involved parties have been treated. The latter part is essentially about communication and deals with issues such as whether the parties feel themselves heard by the deciding institution and whether they consider their interests have been appropriately weighed in the decision process.

When justifying the proposed policy or measure, institutions are likely to exaggerate its positive consequences while downplaying its undesirable side-effects. Although this strategy makes sense from the short-term perspective of having the policy accepted, it sows the seeds of a long-term reputation disaster. Stressing the positive consequences will raise the audience's expectations. If these expectations are not met in practice, this will raise questions about the institution's expertise, and, perhaps more importantly, the institution's trustworthiness, as it seems to have broken its promise to safeguard people's interests. Lentz and Hoeken (2022) wrote a report (commissioned by Netspar) on these risks associated for the communication about the new pension system.

CONCLUSION

The crisis of trust in institutions has severe consequences for their ability to communicate effectively. A distrusted institution has to ensure that its audience understands and accepts its arguments to have its policies accepted. That could be very difficult as "Whenever an issue is important enough for public debate, it is also complicated enough to be difficult to understand" (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017, p. 16). In order to prevent alienating even more people, institutions will have to communicate comprehensibly and convincingly without raising expectations about the consequences of their proposed policies above the level they can meet.

As important and difficult the above task is, it does not even come close to the challenge of regaining the trust of those who lost it.

Interesting in this respect is the distinction made by Blader and Tyler (2003) between the institution as an organization and its organizational representatives with whom the audience interacts at the personal level. For disappointed audience members to trust the institution again, is more likely to be accomplished in one-on-one interactions. Jol and Van Charldorp (2023) study the delicate process of building trust in conversations between parents and health care workers concerning HPV-vaccinations (funded by the RIVM). Without understanding how such micro-conversations can help the audience to take a leap of faith, the macro-problem of a growing distrust of institutions will not be solved.

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