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Language planning and its discontents: lines of flight in Haugen's view of the politics of standardization

José del Valle¹

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Abstract

In this article, I claim that, while placing his theory of language, language planning, and standardization within a conceptual and historical framework inspired by Modernity, the emergence of the nation-state and liberal democracy, Haugen carefully mapped sociolinguistic phenomena onto their political treatment. And it was this careful and honest cartography—unafraid of generating internal tensions—that revealed aspects of language planning practice and scholarship in need of a critical treatment. Ultimately, Haugen embraced an understanding of linguistics that revolves around normativity and accepts language's fundamentally political nature.

Keywords Normativity · Politics of language · Standardization · Nationalism · Liberal democracy

Introduction

Just a few years ago, I was teaching a doctoral-level course on linguistic ideologies and nationalism in contemporary Spain and Latin America. A couple of weeks into the semester, as I sat in the cafeteria having lunch and catching up with a colleague from another department, we began to discuss our respective seminars (his—or was it hers?—was also somewhere within the general field of sociolinguistics). At some point in the course of our conversation, I said how stimulating it was always for me to return to Einer Haugen's work in order to introduce students to the intricacies of language planning. "*You make them read Haugen?!*" he said, jerking back, away from his salad, looking at me with wide-open eyes and a slightly noticeable smirk. I weighted my options and decided to go with a brief but firm "*Of course I do*". A little tense now, turning his face again to the broccoli and trying (unsuccessfully) to

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hide the judgmental illocutionary force of his question, he further asked “*But, isn’t it a little passé?*”

It is, of course, imperative to counter the founding-father effect, that is, the embodied repression of the critical gaze when it aims at the central foundational figures in a discipline. Admiration and respect ought to go hand in hand with an honest and critical engagement with our worthy predecessors. And yet, we should also take heed of the fetish of the new, the often high intellectual price we pay when we cave into the urge or, to think more sociologically, the institutional pressures to embrace, sometimes even uncritically, the newest intellectual paradigms in order to position ourselves and our universities in the avant-garde of academic production and innovation. On this occasion, however, I was less annoyed by my colleague’s knee-jerk dismissal of the old than surprised by his obliviousness to Haugen’s currency. So, I uttered a quick and confident “*No*” in reply to the second question. “*In fact,—I added—I cannot think of a better source to introduce students to language planning. To language planning and its discontents, that is.*”

This backhanded reference to Freud and the joint operation of *eros* and *thanatos* allowed me to signal the ambivalence with which as scholars we should permanently revisit our most distinguished predecessors. And it allowed me to state my double admiration for the Norwegian-American linguist: the lasting legacy of his paradigm-setting project deserves to be embraced and recognized; but so must be the tensions that, embedded in his work, invite us to exploit and interrogate the soft spots and lines of flight inherent to his proposal. What makes Haugen particularly worthy of occupying a salient position in the sociolinguistics hall of fame is the subtle revelation of his discontent or—to stay with the psychoanalytic analogy—the healthy recognition of the constraints on his codifying desire.

This (slightly fictionalized) campus anecdote that I just related came back to me as I received the editors’ invitation to participate in this opportune reflexive re-reading of one of the most influential thinkers in twentieth-century sociolinguistics. The retrospective gesture of revisiting Haugen, much like my exchange with my colleague, can in fact be taken as a recognition of the tensions that define the field’s epistemic stance and an acknowledgement of the historicity—the social and institutional embeddedness—of our own practices of knowledge production.

Since Haugen made his lasting contribution to a theory of language planning through a focus on language standardization, the field has further developed its methodological tools, refined the conceptual structure that informs its inquiry and expanded its scope to include sociolinguistic phenomena beyond standardization. The revitalization of minoritized languages, language shift and its possible reversal, the linguistic organization of transnational political entities, and the international promotion of languages as valuable commodities are just some among the many processes that have become the object of interest for language planning scholarship. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia’s desintegration, the end of the Cold War, capitalism’s neoliberal development and the revolutionary transformation of information technology—again, to mention just a few—are major changes that radically redefined, between the 1960s and the present, the sociopolitical conditions under which language phenomena are to be studied and, more specifically, language policies are designed and deployed. So, since some wines

are seasonal, and ought to be consumed within a short time once they are bottled, while others, if properly cared for, gain value with the passage of time, it is useful and necessary to return to Haugen, examine his scholarly output and assess its currency.

For analytical purposes, Haugen's presentation of his theory of language planning and standardization can be said to consist of two separate though closely interrelated tiers: firstly, a technical-descriptive one where he lays out preferred selection, codification and elaboration protocols offering rational arguments in support of his endorsements; and secondly, a sociopolitical level where he maps standardizing practices onto specific sociopolitical constellations. It is this second, more explicitly historical level that I wish to revisit in this article.

The nation

In as much as it offers a general theory, Haugen's perspective on language planning results from his observation of different community types and the sociolinguistic profiles that they exhibit. Throughout his work, references to small villages or family clans pop up every so often and so do tangential notes on emerging international communication spaces. However, the main type of human political gathering within which he imagines the pertinence of language planning is the nation-state:

We shall here confine our attention to the secondary speech community, and of these particularly to the nation, since as Ferguson justly observed (1962: 25), this linguistically neglected entity is after all the usual basis for "communication networks, educational systems and 'language planning'" (170).

The nation, both as a cultural and political entity, has been of interest to social scientists and humanities scholars for several decades. Research on its nature and historical emergence became particularly profuse and central to our fields—to the point of structuring our thinking about objects such as language, culture, literature and so on—in the 1980s, retaining a certain vigor even into the 90s when they began to be displaced from the academic spotlight by concerns about phenomena and processes related to what, in common usage, we call globalization. It was enough time, however, for this scholarly tradition to produce a generous literature and a diverse and internally contradictory tableau where different theories of the nation's defining features and the conditions of their historical development co-existed. Anthony Smith (2000)—aside from his own ethno-symbolic take on the nation—produced a helpful cartography of the massive bibliography and a practical typology of views on the nation's character and history. Primordialist views of the nation, that emphasize its cultural basis, stand in contrast with voluntarist views, that focus instead on its political nature. Similarly, conservative approaches that see—or, rather, glorify—the nation as a reservoir of cultural accomplishments and traditions differ radically from progressive perspectives that

see it as a force of industrialization and material progress. As far as the nation's historical emergence is concerned, perennialists, who claim that the origins of nations may be as old as humanity itself, have been by and large defeated within scholarly writing by modernist perspectives that interpret the nation as a condition of modernity.

To my knowledge, there is no single publication that Haugen devoted to presenting a theory of the nation of his own. However, throughout his work, as he discusses the subtleties of language planning, we find frequent references to the topic that reveal an acute awareness of the issues that concerned nationalism scholarship and the parameters that framed the discussion. For example, in his 1966 article "Language, dialect, nation", while admitting the complexity and controversies surrounding the topic, he offers a basic but analytically operative definition:

It [the nation] is the effective unit of international political action, as reflected in the organization of the United Nations General Assembly. As a political unit it will presumably be more effective if it is also a social unit. Like any unit, it minimizes internal differences and maximizes external ones. On the individual's personal and local identity it superimposes a national one by identifying his ego with that of all others within the nation and separating it from that of all others outside the nation. In a society that is essentially familial or tribal or regional it stimulates a loyalty beyond the primary groups but discourages any conflicting loyalty to other nations (244-5).

Here, the defining feature of the nation—its "itness" as it were—is functional: it enables a community to engage in joint political action. But in order for the nation to actually and competently perform its role, it must endow itself with certain internal formal properties that guarantee that unity of action is supported by unity of purpose. Identity provides the tie that binds, the psychological glue that bundles multiple egos together weakening the affirmation of individuality and hindering their projection on to other human communities—whether smaller or larger than the nation—. Identity, in Haugen's formulation, is built and applied from the top down in order to promote the social cohesion needed to achieve whatever political goals the nation sets for itself. National identity is therefore a function of political objectives and a product of top-down efforts to shape individual subjectivities. His views on the historical emergence of the nation are even clearer:

Within the modern world, technological and political revolutions have brought Everyman the opportunity to participate in political decisions to his own advantage. The invention of printing, the rise of industry, and the spread of popular education have brought into being the modern nation-state, which extends some of the loyalties of the family and the neighborhood or the clan to the whole state (1972: 244).

The political definition and voluntarist-constructivist perspective are further elaborated here through a historical lense that zooms into the material circumstances

that resulted in the crystalization of the nation-state. Technological, economic and political revolutions colluded, radically changing the conditions of human life and requiring a brand new type of community structure: the nation-state. The fact that “nation” and “nation-state” are practically interchangeable in Haugen’s writings underlines his top-down view of the nation’s historical development. In fact, Haugen’s view is almost uncannily reminiscent of Benedict Anderson’s and Ernest Gellner’s emblematically modernist theories of the nation (systematically advanced in 1983 in, respectively, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* and *Nations and Nationalism*). For Anderson, the political revolutions that displaced sovereignty from divine origin to the people in conjunction with the culturally revolutionary impact of print capitalism and its vernacularizing thrust created the conditions that enabled the imagination of a new type of community in which a sense of sameness was presumed to exist among people who had never and would never actually come into direct contact with each other. Fostering and shaping such imagining is precisely one of the roles that Haugen assigns to the nation-state. Gellner, for his part, highlighted industrial development and the subsequent need to systematically structure the education of the workforce. The creation of unified educational systems by state structures in order to serve the needs of rapid industrialization would in turn result in a standardization of cultural practices—including speaking and writing—that strengthened the sense of unity. These theories emerge from the same conceptual matrix as Haugen’s. Nations are a feature of modernity, a result of the concerted action of industrialization and education, and a response to the demand that units of political action be perceived by their members as socio-culturally integrated.

Language, language ecology and the nation

Language was and still is at the very center of academic as well as sociopolitical debates surrounding the nation. The standardization of linguistic practices, for example, is very much a part of the argumentation that leads Anderson and Gellner to the formulation of their theories; and research on the interaction between language and nation has been plentiful (Barbour and Carmichael 2000; Blommaert and Verschueren 1998; Coulmas 1988; Edwards 1985:23–46; Errington 1999; Fishman 1973; Joseph 1994; Judt and Lacorne 2005; McColl Millar 2005; Oakes 2001; Wright 2004). In spite of the fact that, as a linguist whose concern must be language, he was not directly casting a critical eye on to the nation itself, Haugen’s work falls in many ways close to this tradition of nationalism scholarship. And not without some cost to his status as a linguist. The tensions experienced by linguistics as an academic field during its development in the course of the twentieth century are made evident throughout Haugen’s work: titles such as “Problems of linguistic research among Scandinavian immigrants in America” (1942), “Linguistics and language planning” (1966) or “Linguistics and dialinguistics” (1970) speak to his unapologetic embrace of the discipline to identify his position as a scholar. But the reading of his works reveals that such position

was permanently challenged—or so he felt—by strains within the field that grounded the legitimacy of linguistics in the radical isolation of language from sociopolitical undertakings—from human will, as Joseph (1995) has argued—and in the reduction of linguistic description to the formalization of purely grammatical systems that account for all possible utterances. Haugen's views were, however, rather different. On numerous occasions throughout his work, he brings up the critiques thrown at Webster's *New International Dictionary* by North American intellectual Dwight MacDonald in *The New Yorker* (1962) for having caved into the principles of "Structural Linguistics." For Haugen, the episode illustrates the social centrality of language problems and linguistics' relevance in the public sphere. Such evidence countered linguist Robert Hall's claims to the discipline's autonomy with regards to public debates on linguistic correctness—an attitude conveyed in *Leave your language alone!* (1950) and *Hands off Pidgin English* (1955)—. For Hall, linguistics should commit to the accurate description of how language is, and linguists have no business getting involved in questions of normativity and correctness. Against this backdrop, and countering the dominance of descriptivist isolationism within linguistics, Haugen decidedly defended the need for linguists to recognize normativity as a linguistic problem worthy of systematic study and to become actively involved in language planning.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to delve, even if briefly, into the theoretical underpinnings of Haugen's views on language. At the deepest theoretical level, he subscribes to an intersubjective and communicative theory. The transfer of ideas from an individual's mind to another's—intersubjectivity—is possible because they are endowed with and share the ability and the mechanisms to codify and decodify the representation of a reality that, whether psychological or social, is external to the code itself. However, this semantic transparency generated by intersubjectivity and referentiality, which develops naturally in primary communities where most interaction occurs face-to-face, is not guaranteed—Haugen claims—in larger human groups where time and space have generated forms of linguistic diversity that get in the way of the unobstructed transfer of ideas from a person's mind to another's. In these cases, a process of standardization and the continued oversight of language guardians are required to safeguard unified political action and, when circumstances demand it, protect the community's social cohesion. It is this contextual understanding of language that places Haugen among the canonical authors in sociolinguistics: language is social practice and individual languages are a cultural and historical by-product of such practices. Ecology was Haugen's preferred metaphor to place language and the socio-political environment within one single conceptual structure.

The embrace of an ecological outlook and his concern with language in the context of modernity inevitably placed him in front of nations and nationalism. As mentioned above, Haugen saw the nation as a unit of political action that must be sustained by the acquiescence and loyalty of its members; and language turns out to be the engine that powers acquiescence and loyalty:

Since the encouragement of such loyalty requires free and rather intense communication within the nation, the national idea demands that there be a single linguistic code by means of which this communication can take place (245)

Transparent communication is a *sine-qua-non* for the legitimate celebration of what French philologist Ernest Renan referred to as the daily plebiscite to which all national projects must subject themselves: language is needed not just to properly administer the polity but also to foster social cohesion and unity of purpose.

In addition to enabling political action and the mobilization of affect—or, à la Anderson, enabling the imagination of a collective communion with others without sensory face-to-face experience of such identity—, languages perform yet one further role:

Nation and language have become inextricably intertwined. Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a medium of communication, a “vernacular” or a “dialect,” but a fully developed language. Anything less marks it as underdeveloped (244).

Here, Haugen acknowledges that communication does take place through means other than “fully developed languages.” But only the latter can symbolically stand for the nation. He suggests, in fact, that the connection between both entities is not so much symbolic as iconic. Iconization (one among several semiotic process that participate in the construction of linguistic ideologies according to Irvine and Gal 2000) stands in contrast with the arbitrariness of the symbol and suggests instead a certain degree of isomorphism between form and meaning. If language/nation constitute a sign, the effect of iconization is that formal properties of a language that result from greater or lesser development—minimally versus highly standardized, in Haugen’s theory—are assumed to be a mirror image of the formal properties that mark the nation as more or less developed.

In sum, Haugen implicitly embraces the principle of intersubjectivity and defines language as a system of communication. The inner workings of the system, however, are inseparable from the the environment in which they are used, and linguistics must therefore engage in a full study of language’s ecology. Central elements of the “modern” environment are nation-building and nation-maintenance, which require a particular form of language, a highly standardized form, that guarantees transparent communication, fostering a sense of unity and loyalty, and represents the nation’s health and advanced state of development.

Politics and the political in Haugen

The political philosophy that underpins Haugen’s ecological theory of language is not systematically presented and even rarely explicitly stated. In fact, political concepts tend to lay below the surface of his discourse breaking through only seldom to reveal some of their features. His arguments connecting language and nation are precisely the type of soft spot where one can examine Haugen’s understanding of the political and of language planning’s embeddedness in political practice.

Language planning, in Haugen’s theory, is a practical undertaking, a structured response to a perceived social need for solutions to language problems. Its systematic analysis and the subsequent production of an applicable form of knowledge (that Haugen develops under the inspiration of decision theory and information theory)

aim at tackling, through the conscious shaping of a common code, one particular problem: non-communication (161-67). For analytical purposes, Haugen establishes a typology of speech communities on the basis of their size and the nature of communication within each. Primary speech communities are characterized by face-to-face communication; secondary communities are larger, and, while there is partial understanding, they exhibit a degree of variation that may impair communication—they roughly correspond with nations—; and tertiary communities display differences so significant that make translation and interpretation necessary (166). Crucially, successful communication is a feature of all; it is precisely what renders them communities. The main difference among them, however, rests in how and the degree to which code noise reduction is achieved. In primary communities, Haugen says, the social dynamics of face-to-face interaction provide the corrective mechanisms to “individual anarchy”:

Anyone who has observed the process of child learning of language will not fail to note the numerous instances of mutual ridicule and intolerance on the part of the still untutored savages. Schizoglossia is rooted out among them by constant correction (152).

Each learner is corrected on the spot by other learners and his older models, often by the bitter expediente of mockery, until he has learned to conform to the best of his ability. The linguistic code is internalized by each member of the community (166).

In this type of scenario, a relatively fixed code will always emerge—whether imposed by force or through imitation of those who possess socially desirable identities—securing the community’s communication needs.

In contrast, such immediate corrective mechanisms are by and large absent from larger human groups. A typical feature of the nation (the most emblematic of secondary communities) is the fact that most of its members have never had and will never have face-to-face contact with the rest. And yet, in spite of this lack of sensory experience of the others and the opportunity to engage in the type of direct normative practice typical of primary communities, they still imagine themselves as somehow equal. Haugen argues, as does Benedict Anderson, that the development of an idealized spoken variety and, especially, a written version of it is the key to this particular exercise of the imagination. But given the absence of universal face-to-face interaction, the unity and communicative power of this code must be secured by other means: “it needs a specialized class of guardians to provide this therapeutic effect” (167). And this is one of the central themes in Haugen’s approach to language planning: the complexity of this process and the confluence of different social actors vying for the role of language guardians.

So, where is the political in this picture? First, we can see language planning embedded in a conventional understanding of politics as, on one hand, the mobilization of resources in order to access positions of power (from which decisions can be made on behalf of the community) and, on the other, the negotiations among stake-holders over the best course of action with regards to a perceived social problem. Given the existence of multiple would-be language planners, linguists, Haugen

maintains, must establish their authority, and they must do so by committing to a scientific understanding of normativity. It is this type of legitimacy, as language technicians, that will strengthen their bargaining power in the complex political negotiations that take place among the different social actors involved in language planning.

But there is yet a second expression of the political in Haugen's work. His perspective on language as social practice is framed by specific understandings of modernity and progress as well as by abstract assumptions about how, under such historical conditions, individuals come together to constitute polities. In this regard, one can discern the principles of liberal democracy underpinning his ecological theory of language:

The heaviest demand for codifiers arose... in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, primarily as a consequence of the American and French Revolutions and the spread of literacy. Reaching the masses was a problem of teaching, and books were the instruments of instruction (169–170).

He places the modern proliferation of codifiers—of what we might call proto-language planners—in a historical context characterized by the profound political transformations associated with the American and French revolutions. These are processes whose revolutionary nature manifested itself as a reconstitution of the legitimacy of power, displaced from divine authority to the consent of the governed. In Haugen's argument, the *raison d'être* for the modern version of language planning rests in language's central role in the remapping of authority, legitimacy and power, that is, in the specific strategies that the modern nation-state must deploy in order to "reach the masses."

Talbot Taylor, in a study of the links between John Locke's linguistic theorization and his liberalist position, shows how the British philosopher extends his affirmation of individual freedom to each person's ability to freely link form and meaning. The arbitrary relation between both and the voluntary action of the speaker to establish the link—each individual's ability to link any meaning to any form—threaten intersubjectivity, transparent communication and consequently the community itself. In as much as the drafting of the social contract through common consent requires semantic transparency and equal access to the language in which it is negotiated and written, individual freedom to generate meaning must be normatively constrained. So, just as Locke linked a particular theory of language to the very existence of a liberal society, so does Haugen's approach to language planning rest on specific understandings of meaning-making and social order that echo liberalist political philosophy.

And just as liberalism often leans on representative democracy and historically specific understandings of national and popular sovereignty, so does Haugen endorse democracy with an insistent emphasis on language planning's power to function as the great social equalizer:

Dialects, whether regional or social, have their charms, but they hamper communication by calling attention to features which either are or ought to be irrelevant to the message. They label their man by his social history, and

their maintenance is often advocated precisely by those who wish to maintain a snobbish distinction of class... There is no nation in the world where the dictionary has entered daily life to the extent of ours [the US, JdV], or where the teaching of “correct” grammar has touched as many lives. It is not difficult to see in this activity a reflection of the basic faith of Americans, however unrealistic it may have turned out to be, in equality of opportunity for all. In other countries one could learn the best usage only by associating with an aristocracy, which generally meant being born into one; here culture could be learned from a book (153).

The nation—the main framework within which modernization, industrial production and representative democracy develop—relies on a linguistic code protected from the noise of dialectal diversity. And, crucially, this code—in as much as it is anonymous, that is, external to any single individual (Woolard 2017)—is the principal instrument at the service of equality, the guarantor of equal opportunity for all to access the advantages of modernity and to participate, directly or indirectly via representation, in the political process that channels the nation’s present and future.¹

Liberalism, a philosophy of society based on liberty and equality, identifies the political process as the mediation between individuals’ state of nature and political order, that is, politics consists of the drafting, negotiating, implementing and revising the social contract. Liberalism’s preferred form of government to guarantee the rule of law and the protection of human rights and civil liberties is representative democracy, organized around the separation of powers, political parties and an electoral system. Transparent communication is central to this political philosophy. Citizens will be legitimately represented as long as they share with their representatives the ultimate system of representation, namely, language. The deliberations that result in the maintenance of the social contract through consensus will be possible as long as ideas can be cleanly transferred from one individual to the other. We might say, in sum, that, for Haugen, in keeping with the principles of liberal democracy, the possibility of intersubjectivity and the development of highly standardized languages are theoretical imperatives for liberal democracy.

Lines of flight in Haugen’s theory

In the previous sections, I have tried to present in a systematic and coherent manner the conceptual structure through which Haugen connected language, language planning and politics. Modernity, the nation-state and liberal democracy stood out as the context that structured his view of language as a system of communication and of language planning as the set of activities that shape this particular property of language under those specific historical conditions.

¹ In this respect, Haugen’s view of the nation as a unit of political action differs from theories such as Hobsbawm (1990), which identify the emergence of the nation with a particular phase in the development of capitalism and with specific needs to secure markets.

However, as stated at the beginning of the article, reading Haugen against the grain reveals some tensions within his theory that compel us to offer a more nuanced presentation of his glottopolitical thinking. Acknowledging these tensions, in fact, softens—and I use this term favorably—his theory by revealing its historicity and showing its sensitivity to the historical contexts both of its production and application. I refer to these soft spots as lines of flight, as points that exhibit theoretical richness not because they make the theory air-tight but precisely because of the opposite: in as much as they reveal the dialogic nature of Haugen's text, they invite us to examine them as keys to the text's internal dialog and to engage ourselves dialogically with the founding-father's work—and, crucially, with our own—.

Haugen did not question intersubjectivity, he iconically represented standardization as a sign of a community's development and he often fetishized communication along the lines described by Deborah Cameron: "The social analogue of a 'breakdown in communication' is a breakdown in cultural and political consensus, the eruption into public discourse of irreconcilable differences and incommensurable values" (25). "Schizoglossia and the Linguistic Norm" is arguably the article in which he most evidently engages in this semiotic processes. However, we also find cracks in his commitment to the rigidly representational theory of language that usually goes hand-in-hand with intersubjectivity. This is evident, for example, when, invoking Jakobson, he acknowledges the multifunctionality of language:

Jakobson (1960)... makes it clear that communication is not limited to purely referential conveying of information. There is that expression of ego which Jakobson calls EMOTIVE and the appeal to the listener which he calls CONATIVE; beyond these are such minor functions as the PHATIC, the METALINGUAL, and the POETIC. In terms of the social situation there is here involved an intricate interplay between the speaker and his audience, who may be taken to represent the community. He is expressing himself, but only that can be expressed which his community is ready to accept. Language does not merely serve as a means of social coöperation, but also as a means of individual expression (171).

Evidently, in these words we see verbal interaction complicated by situational and contextual factors that take its purpose beyond the intersubjective transfer of representations of an outside reality through language. There are instances of linguistic interaction in which linguistic forms may and do perform functions that, while instrumental in the construction of community, do so less through objective communication than through the mobilization of affect: "Schizoglossia is rooted out among them by constant correction, which goes far beyond the minimum needs of communication and virtually insists on identity of code" (152). Among children, Haugen implies, linguistic forms not only refer to external realities but rather index social identities and relations. It is this indexical property that allows for identity of code—practices that uncritically aim at the norm—to stand for loyalty to the community and submission to its order—for the purposes of illustrating the political relevance of indexicality, the difference between a group of children and a nation-state is just a matter of size—.

The concept of normativity is at the heart of Haugen's theory, and, although he never quite fully states it, his thinking suggests that he considered it a primary property of language. Not-fully-socialized children ("untutored savages") exhibit deeply normative linguistic practices; and so do communities in the margins of modernity where language standardization has not taken place, as he argues when he invokes Bloomfield's work with the Menomini. This belief in the fundamental character of normativity in language seems to have inspired much of his frequent confrontation with the dominant strains of linguistics whose insistence in scientific description left normativity outside the scope of the discipline. Description versus prescription became a binary opposition that defined the borders of linguistics in favor of the first element thus excluding certain phenomena associated with the second. Haugen engaged in a deconstruction of sorts of that conceptual pair in an effort to counter the banishment of normativity from the field. Robert Hall's prescriptions to proscribe prescription (*Leave your language alone!* and *Hands off pidgin English!*) were Haugen's favorite target when asserting the need for sociolinguists to deploy their tools on behalf of the understanding of normativity—prescription being just one particular manifestation of it—and, from their condition as experts, get their hands dirty in the social debates surrounding the linguistic norm.

In the previous section, I presented Haugen's claim that a properly standardized language at the service of respect for individual freedom and a democratic order functions as a social equalizer. And yet, a hesitance with regards to the social benefits of standardization or, at least, an acknowledgement of the limits of its democratizing power is weaved into the fabric of his argument:

There is a subset of users called the "lead," who are regarded as imitation-worthy and therefore have "prestige." The other users may imitate their usage to the extent that they have "access" to it (176).

It may be necessary to make some embarrassing decisions. To choose any one vernacular as a norm means to favor the group of people speaking that variety. It gives them prestige as norm-bearers and a headstart in the race for power and position. If a recognized élite already exists with a characteristic vernacular, its norm will almost inevitably prevail (251).

In statements such as these, Haugen is far from idealizing language standardization. There is certainly a realpolitik sort of stance in his position. However, it is one that recognizes the limits of both standardization and liberal democracy as remedies for the social maladies associated with inequality, forcing his own hand as well as that of his readers to keep the discussion of language planning and democracy open.

Haugen's concern with inequality allows us to further explore the understanding of the political and the theory of power that underpin his theory of linguistic standardization. True that, throughout his work, power is mainly conceived as a top-down vector driven by a social elite and his approach to language planning also assumes a vertical schema and a search for strategies that facilitate the top-down imposition of linguistic norms:

The fact that each individual has to learn language anew, and never learns precisely the language of his teachers, and that people can and do change their language in the course of their lives, is sufficient to guarantee that there must be some area of choice. In so far as this is true, we can speak of LP as an attempt to influence these choices (162)

However, in spite of the overpowering presence of this top-down perspective in Haugen's work, his arguments also suggest lines of flight that move towards a more complex view of the political field, populated by a multiplicity of actors and structured according to a more reticular than vertical shape. His discussion of LP in modern Norway (1961) offers some valuable clues in this regard. He takes a descriptive and historical perspective, tracing the development of different normative linguistic proposals in the Scandinavian country. While the technical aspects of "the Norwegian experiment"—the explicit effort to create a new standard language—are of central interest to Haugen, no single account of the technical apparatus—such as orthographic choices and selection criteria for lexicon elaboration—is left to stand on its own as a purely technical problem. They are all instead embedded in a political ecology that ranges from the specifics of party politics (*e.g.* the Labor Party's appeal to "folk language") to ideological alignments ("being a socialist party, it could not at first embrace the nationalistic aspects of language reform" (136)), from specific symbolic associations (*e.g.* folk language's appeal to both the proletariat and the peasantry) to broad categories such as liberalism, socialism, democracy, class structure, welfare state or voice of the people. The effect of this sensitivity to context is a representation of the political field that, far from oversimplifying it, acknowledges its complexity and the multipolar structure of power: "About all the government can do is to create an atmosphere favorable to certain kinds of linguistic change, and recognize that there are forces that escape government regulation" (143).

In Haugen's discussion of implementation, this type of backdrop, representing a complex power field, is particularly visible, and suggests a diverse set of vectors whose movements realize the shape of a reticular structure on top of which a vertical top-down arrow is superimposed: "The linguist with his grammar and lexicon may propose what he will, if the methods that could assure acceptance are missing" (178). In his treatment of implementation, we can discern the silhouette of the actors that engage in language planning—linguists among them—confronting people whose agency is recognized. Their ability to contest linguistic norms and the social arrangements they represent must be factored into the theoretical equation.

A crucial aspect of implementation, therefore, is acceptance. But how is it to be gained?

To those who thought of language as having divine origin, the codifier was a pundit, dispensing God's truth to the people. Successively the code has been regarded as law and the codifier as law-giver, as etiquette and the codifier as arbiter of fashion, as national symbol and the codifier as a national hero. To estheticians he has stood as champion of the norms of beauty, to logicians as the upholder of rationality, to the philosopher as interpreter of the laws of thinking. Now that information theory has given us a new meaning of "code," we are prepared to think of a codifier as a linguistic technician. But as social

scientists we must be prepared to recognize that all the meanings of code and all the roles of the codifier which I have suggested still exist and enter into the complex function of language planning in human society (169).

The language planning field changes over time; but this is just one side of the historical coin, which displays, in its reverse, the always-already competitive co-existence among different social actors. Language planning is therefore embedded in politics in as much as it involves a struggle among social actors over influence and control of the process. And the political extends to the processes through which those actors build their legitimacy and secure their authority.

So far, this picture—representative of Haugen’s overall understanding of the politics of language planning—does not differ from how politics is conceived by liberal democratic doctrine. However, also on this issue we find a few lightly traced lines of flight. We saw already Haugen’s awareness that linguistic standardization emerges from and into a community characterized by class structure and inequality, and we noted his acknowledgement that it never quite fulfills its promise to function as the great social equalizer. Inequality persists because unity of code ultimately results not from—or not only from—a sequence of negotiation and consensus but also from the imposition of a hierarchy—whether by the strongest among a group of “untutored savages” or by “the lead” in a nation-state—.

This last point has major implications for considering the politics of language planning; not just how it manifests in Haugen’s work, but how any approach to language planning constructs its political stance. Politics as consensus-seeking engagement that mediates between the state of nature and social order is certainly not the only option. Conflictual understandings of the political have been advanced in order to focus attention on the exclusions inevitably perpetrated in the construction of any social order. Politics, in this sense, is the social action that challenges the erasure of exclusion and pursues the empowerment of the excluded through the production of conflict and their constitution as political subjects (Rancière 2007; Mouffe 2007).

Haugen stops far from embracing a conflictual understanding of politics, but his subtle but visible recognition of the complexities and tensions that are constitutive of sociolinguistic life can certainly inform alternatives to hegemonic intersubjective and representational theories of language. And, above all, they can inspire critical self-reflexive approaches to language planning that insert our production of knowledge in a multi and transdisciplinary network and understand that both language planners and scholars who take it as their object are inexorably embedded in multiple fields characterized, crucially, by power struggles.

Conclusion

To conclude, I have tried to respond to the editors’ invitation to re-read Haugen by placing his highly systematic approach to language and language planning in front of a concave mirror that, like our dentist’s, deforms the tooth in order to reveal the cavities. This task, however, was greatly facilitated by the fact that Haugen himself—however strategically, however consciously—left clues throughout his work

that compel us to read it against the grain. Upon careful reading, Haugen's commitment to avail linguists of a conceptual apparatus that renders them language technicians and, at the same time, his effort to make linguistics relevant to the social sciences and to governance reveal an astute awareness of the project's epistemological and political entanglements.

While placing his theory of language and language planning within a conceptual and historical framework inspired by the emergence of the modern nation and liberal democracy, he carefully mapped sociolinguistic phenomena onto their political treatment. And it was this careful and honest cartography—unafraid of generating internal tensions—that revealed aspects of language planning practice and scholarship in need of a critical treatment. Ultimately, Haugen fought the good fight for an understanding of linguistics that does not turn its back neither on normativity nor on language's fundamentally political nature.

Finally, we must ponder on the contemporary pathways drawn by those Haugean lines of flight. Throughout the article, I have insisted in Haugen's embeddedness in a specific historical context. Therefore, in the same spirit, I must emphasize our own embeddedness in a multiplicity of history-specific formations as well as processes of social change and resistance to change. As pointed out at the beginning of this article, if the dominance of modernity, the nation, and liberal democracy framed Haugen's academic production, we now also experience global forms of socio-economic and cultural organization; and we witness not just severe challenges to liberal democracy but also claims that Modernity's founding values have entered a crisis. Widespread global political frameworks, high-tech forms of cultural production and distribution, and neoliberal forms of economic organization are new conditions under which language operates as social practice. Accordingly, some strands of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and language planning studies have confronted the challenge by developing methodological and theoretical tools that respond to our present sociolinguistic experiences and to whatever new conditions of knowledge production have resulted from this changing political-economic framework. Research grounded in the notion of linguistic ideologies has claimed the performative functions of language and speakers' stance vis-à-vis language as central objects of sociolinguistic scholarship; critical sociolinguistics has identified language as a fundamental site for the production and reproduction of inequality; pragmatics has fine-tuned strategies for the analysis of indexicality as a core meaning-making property of language.

So, the "return" to Haugen that I espouse in this article does not represent an idealizing retrospective review of his powerful model for structural-positivistic approaches to standardization, nor an admiring affirmation of his emblematic legitimizing representation of the linguist as language technician. I claim instead that his own work on language standardization contained a recognition of the limitations of Modernity, the nation, and even liberal democracy itself. I hope to have unveiled his recognition of language's performative function (and its relevance to constructing social differentiation), of language's inherent normative nature (at a fundamental level, much deeper than the history-specific process of standardization that he attempted to systematize), of the limitations of rational and democratic standardization as a top-down equalizing force, and of the de

facto participation of multiple actors in the sociolinguistic life of communities (hinting at a reticular rather than vertical understanding of power). Thus, my concluding claim is that, perhaps, it is high time to return to Haugen in order to get over Haugen.

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