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

4 José del Valle¹

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7 **Abstract**

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

16 **Keywords** Normativity · Politics of language · Standardization · Nationalism ·
17 Liberal democracy

18 **Introduction**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

87 **The nation**

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

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

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

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

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

129 It [the nation] is the effective unit of international political action, as
130 reflected in the organization of the United Nations General Assembly. As
131 a political unit it will presumably be more effective if it is also a social
132 unit. Like any unit, it minimizes internal differences and maximizes exter-
133 nal ones. On the individual's personal and local identity it superimposes a
134 national one by identifying his ego with that of all others within the nation
135 and separating it from that of all others outside the nation. In a society that
136 is essentially familial or tribal or regional it stimulates a loyalty beyond
137 the primary groups but discourages any conflicting loyalty to other nations
138 (244-5).

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

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

157 The political definition and voluntarist-constructivist perspective are further elabo-
158 rated here through a historical lens that zooms into the material circumstances

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

184 **Language, language ecology and the nation**

185 Language was and still is at the very center of academic as well as sociopolitical
186 debates surrounding the nation. The standardization of linguistic practices, for
187 example, is very much a part of the argumentation that leads Anderson and Gell-
188 ner to the formulation of their theories; and research on the interaction between
189 language and nation has been plentiful (Barbour and Carmichael 2000; Blom-
190 maert and Verschueren 1998; Coulmas 1988; Edwards 1985:23–46; Errington
191 1999; Fishman 1973; Joseph 1994; Judt and Lacorne 2005; McColl Millar 2005;
192 Oakes 2001; Wright 2004). In spite of the fact that, as a linguist whose concern
193 must be language, he was not directly casting a critical eye on to the nation itself,
194 Haugen’s work falls in many ways close to this tradition of nationalism scholar-
195 ship. And not without some cost to his status as a linguist. The tensions experi-
196 enced by linguistics as an academic field during its development in the course
197 of the twentieth century are made evident throughout Haugen’s work: titles such
198 as “Problems of linguistic research among Scandinavian immigrants in America”
199 (1942), “Linguistics and language planning” (1966) or “Linguistics and dialin-
200 guistics” (1970) speak to his unapologetic embrace of the discipline to identify
201 his position as a scholar. But the reading of his works reveals that such position

202 was permanently challenged—or so he felt—by strains within the field that
203 grounded the legitimacy of linguistics in the radical isolation of language from
204 sociopolitical undertakings—from human will, as Joseph (1995) has argued—and
205 in the reduction of linguistic description to the formalization of purely grammati-
206 cal systems that account for all possible utterances. Haugen’s views were, how-
207 ever, rather different. On numerous occasions throughout his work, he brings up
208 the critiques thrown at Webster’s *New International Dictionary* by North Ameri-
209 can intellectual Dwight MacDonald in *The New Yorker* (1962) for having caved
210 into the principles of “Structural Linguistics.” For Haugen, the episode illustrates
211 the social centrality of language problems and linguistics’ relevance in the public
212 sphere. Such evidence countered linguist Robert Hall’s claims to the discipline’s
213 autonomy with regards to public debates on linguistic correctness—an attitude
214 conveyed in *Leave your language alone!* (1950) and *Hands off Pidgin English*
215 (1955)—. For Hall, linguistics should commit to the accurate description of how
216 language is, and linguists have no business getting involved in questions of nor-
217 mativity and correctness. Against this backdrop, and countering the dominance of
218 descriptivist isolationism within linguistics, Haugen decidedly defended the need
219 for linguists to recognize normativity as a linguistic problem worthy of system-
220 atic study and to become actively involved in language planning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

259 Here, Haugen acknowledges that communication does take place through means
260 other than “fully developed languages.” But only the latter can symbolically stand
261 for the nation. He suggests, in fact, that the connection between both entities is not
262 so much symbolic as iconic. Iconization (one among several semiotic process that
263 participate in the construction of linguistic ideologies according to Irvine and Gal
264 2000) stands in contrast with the arbitrariness of the symbol and suggests instead a
265 certain degree of isomorphism between form and meaning. If language/nation con-
266 stitute a sign, the effect of iconization is that formal properties of a language that
267 result from greater or lesser development—minimally versus highly standardized,
268 in Haugen’s theory—are assumed to be a mirror image of the formal properties that
269 mark the nation as more or less developed.

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

278 **Politics and the political in Haugen**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

393 Liberalism, a philosophy of society based on liberty and equality, identifies the
394 political process as the mediation between individuals’ state of nature and politi-
395 cal order, that is, politics consists of the drafting, negotiating, implementing and
396 revising the social contract. Liberalism’s preferred form of government to guarantee
397 the rule of law and the protection of human rights and civil liberties is representa-
398 tive democracy, organized around the separation of powers, political parties and an
399 electoral system. Transparent communication is central to this political philosophy.
400 Citizens will be legitimately represented as long as they share with their representa-
401 tives the ultimate system of representation, namely, language. The deliberations that
402 result in the maintenance of the social contract through consensus will be possi-
403 ble as long as ideas can be cleanly transferred from one individual to the other. We
404 might say, in sum, that, for Haugen, in keeping with the principles of liberal democ-
405 racy, the possibility of intersubjectivity and the development of highly standardized
406 languages are theoretical imperatives for liberal democracy.

407 **Lines of flight in Haugen’s theory**

408 In the previous sections, I have tried to present in a systematic and coherent manner
409 the conceptual structure through which Haugen connected language, language plan-
410 ning and politics. Modernity, the nation-state and liberal democracy stood out as the
411 context that structured his view of language as a system of communication and of
412 language planning as the set of activities that shape this particular property of lan-
413 guage 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 develop-
ment of capitalism and with specific needs to secure markets.

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

425 Haugen did not question intersubjectivity, he iconically represented standardi-
426 zation as a sign of a community’s development and he often fetishized communi-
427 cation along the lines described by Deborah Cameron: “The social analogue of a
428 ‘breakdown in communication’ is a breakdown in cultural and political consensus,
429 the eruption into public discourse of irreconcilable differences and incommensura-
430 ble values” (25). “Schizoglossia and the Linguistic Norm” is arguably the article in
431 which he most evidently engages in this semiotic processes. However, we also find
432 cracks in his commitment to the rigidly representational theory of language that usu-
433 ally goes hand-in-hand with intersubjectivity. This is evident, for example, when,
434 invoking Jakobson, he acknowledges the multifunctionality of language:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

584 **Conclusion**

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

590 that compel us to read it against the grain. Upon careful reading, Haugen's commit-
591 ment to avail linguists of a conceptual apparatus that renders them language techni-
592 cians and, at the same time, his effort to make linguistics relevant to the social sci-
593 ences and to governance reveal an astute awareness of the project's epistemological
594 and political entanglements.

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

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

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

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

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Language planning and its discontents: lines of flight in...

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