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▶ **To cite this version:**

Astrid von Busekist. One Man, One Voice! One People, One Language?. Tamar Hermann. By the People, For the People, Without the People? The Emergence of (Anti)Political Sentiment in Israel and in Western Democracies, The Israël Democracy Institute, pp.51 - 86, 2011. hal-03569654

HAL Id: hal-03569654

https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03569654

Submitted on 13 Feb 2022

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One Man, One Voice! One People, One Language?

Astrid von Busekist

> And the Almighty came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.
>
> And the Almighty said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them." "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Almighty scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Almighty confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Almighty scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth. (Genesis 11:1–9)

In language matters there are two understandings of democracy: For team A, a substantial democracy needs a *lingua franca* to ensure large political participation, upward mobility, and equality of opportunities. Team A is utilitarian and views language merely as a tool. Team B, in contrast, values diversity and considers language as culture: People should have access to a "full societal culture" (and a full set of opportunities) in their own language (Kymlicka 2001), or at least in the language of their choice. Equality and mobility are not achieved through a common language but through the citizens' free choice to use their particular languages. In this essay I will discuss the virtue of each democratic genre in regard to participation, full citizenship, and fair representation.

Until recently, when social scientists looked at language, they focused almost exclusively on language *identity* (class or group identity) and language as an expression of a specific, unique culture, hence its intrinsic value regardless of its usefulness for communication. In line with Joshua Fishman's pioneering work (1972), scholars were committed to language diversity because language was valued as such. Nonetheless, they also knew that language diversity generally hinders efficient political administration and that one of the classical sequences of nation building has been language *rationalization*, i.e., the imposition of one official, national language (von Busekist 2006, 2009). Even postcolonial leaders have tried to adapt the wise principle of *cujus regio, ejus lingua*.[1]

Until not long ago, and despite the ubiquity of language conflicts, normative literature has not paid much attention to language, and even less to the linguistic dimension of democracy. Post-Rawlsian political theory has publicized a wide range of culture and identity related topics, but has barely considered language. Neither liberals nor communitarians have really addressed language equity. It was only in the 1990s that scholars in comparative politics (Laitin 1994, 2000)

1 [Whose realm, his language.] Language policy is an attempt to weigh on collective language choices by institutional means, to prescribe the public use of one (or more) language(s), to adopt language legislations (Laitin 2000). Historically, creating, rationalizing, or maintaining one language is the classical (European) sequence of language policy, mostly congruent with nation building in the nineteenth century. Official languages are not always national languages (one official language can coexist with a set of national languages); sub-state national communities or groups with a strong regional identity may challenge the official language and make new language claims. Official and national language policies are only efficient when there is a compulsory education system, a wide interest in learning and using the official/national language, and some kind of reward for doing so (professional, symbolic)—the latter is particularly true for national language policies.

and economics (Pool 1991b; Chiswick and Miller 1995; Grin 2004) began to look at language issues, generating sophisticated game theory models that, unfortunately, do not always apply to real world problems. The democrats among the social scientists, valuing deliberation and public debate and committed to freedom of choice, including the possibility of choosing the language we prefer to debate in, took a "deliberative turn" (Dryzec 1990), insisting on communication and deliberation rather than voting, but—until recently—somehow forgot to mention the precondition of a successful public debate: a common language. In recent years, shedding a new light on linguistic diversity (Kymlicka and Patten 2003) and linguistic justice (Van Parijs 2000a, 2003, 2004), in a system dominated by powerful global languages such as English, rapidly led to a wider discussion on the usefulness and/or the threats of a common language, a *lingua franca*, in the EU, in multilingual societies, and sometimes even on a global level.

One can link language claims to the theory and practice of democracy, to the citizens' willingness to participate in political debate or engage in political action, in various manners. Our common purpose in this book is to understand citizen's trust (politics) and distrust (antipolitics) of the political institutions and decision makers. My claim is that one of the variables that partially helps explain antipolitics, i.e., low levels of participation, auto-exclusion from the public sphere, protest vote, etc., is the lack of a common tool for sharing politically relevant matters: a common language (team A's claim), in the sense of a common natural language (mother tongue), and metaphorically, in the sense of speaking the same language of values.

Here, I will look only at the former sense and try to show that linguistically divided states are more vulnerable democracies and that a healthy debating democracy needs at least one common tool of communication. Empirical evidence seems to support that claim: Linguistic barriers are potential political barriers, and language is

most easily used as a "natural divider," sometimes even as an alibi to veil more substantial political disagreements on welfare, social justice, redistribution, and so forth.

One could of course reverse the claim and argue that acknowledgement of individual (or collective) claims to language diversity enhances the democratic quality of politics because the linguistic identity of every speaker or the linguistic boundaries of every community are fully and equally respected (team B's claim). Kymlicka (2001) calls this natural form of participation "politics in the vernacular." This argument has been well understood by multilingual federations—especially in the postcolonial era—to satisfy all linguistic parties (India, post-apartheid South Africa).

I will consider both sides in the following, draw on two examples, and refer to two different scales of citizen implication: the EU and Belgium. A common language as a necessary condition for a more substantial democracy has indeed been discussed within the European Union, inspired by what seems to be a linguistic *fait accompli*: hegemonic English. But the Europeans are contradictory. They encourage working knowledge in English, and to a lesser extent, in the classical EU and OECD languages (English plus French and German), but at the same time they celebrate language diversity. The Commission's rule is "equal respect due to all cultures and languages." The "European year of languages" (2001) has clearly illustrated the limits of sustainable diversity: The more languages one symbolically promotes, the more English is really spoken.

Large-scale and Small-scale Democracies

I will assume that the EU is a *large-scale democracy* or a "regional democracy" and test whether a common language would reduce what is commonly called the democratic deficit of the European Union. I will use data from the *Eurobarometer* surveys, namely the two special

issues on language (2001, 2006) and consider the following questions: Do we need a common language for a healthy democracy? Would social mobility and employability be enhanced if everyone spoke the same language? Do we need a *lingua franca* to discuss global concerns (such as environmental issues, pandemic diseases, global warming, etc.)? Is a common language required to create a more substantial democracy (local, national, global)? Would a common language avoid brain drain (if it were English for instance?) If we chose a natural language, is it fair—and under what conditions—that everybody learn it? Or should we opt for an artificial language?

On a much smaller scale, *small-scale democracy* Belgium shows that linguistic barriers are also "participation barriers": historically, not knowing a language, or not mastering it well enough was a strong disincentive and a strong motivation to join nationalistic movements. Today Belgium is a federation divided into three communities, each of which is a micro-democracy on its own; the political culture and the citizens' allegiance are bounded by linguistic frontiers. There is very little inter-regional or inter-community communication between Flanders and Wallonia, and there is less and less political communication between the Region Brussels-Capital and the rest of the francophone region in the south of the country, as their agendas do not overlap.

> The country's other community is practically a foreign people. It is rather difficult for a political system to keep functioning satisfactorily with such mutual ignorance and hence such lack of mutual understanding of the two halves of the country. (Dewachter 1996, 136)

How did these transformations come about? How did Belgium shift from a constitutional, French-speaking monarchy to a federal state

with three official languages, three cultural communities, and three distinct administrative regions? How did Belgium shift from free individual language choice to constraining territorial unilingualism with two strong nationalisms facing each other and preventing democratic *vivre ensemble*, social justice, and interregional economic solidarity? Why did Belgian's consociational nationalisms, which were Belgium's long-time trademark, become aggressive ethno-cultural nationalisms rejecting peaceful negotiation and bargaining? The answer is: language.

Figure 1 Map of EU languages



Source: www.eurominority.eu/version/maps/map-european-languages.asp
Eurominority.eu - Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez - 2004

Figure 2 Map of Belgium's linguistic boundary



Source: www.ben-vautier.com/ethnisme/analyses/cartes/carte_belgique.html

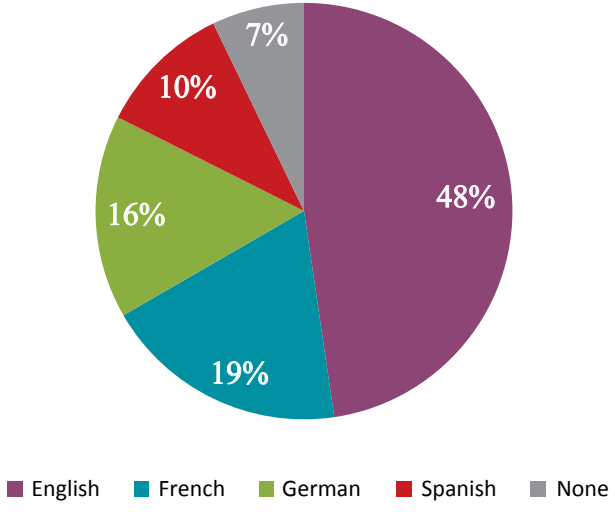
Going back and forth from the large to the small scale, looking at different initiatives to resolve language issues may help us to conceive coordinate language policies: a *summa divisio* between the divisive power of linguistic differences *and* the virtue of multilingualism.

Love of Language or Language Utility?

There are two sociolinguistic truths: (a) learning a language is rewarded only if a sufficient number of other speakers engage in learning, but once a language reaches a tipping point, its spread is self-sufficient (Pool 1991a; Laitin 2000); (b) people learn languages upwards, from the smaller to the bigger language, from the economically dependent language to the economically independent language (de Swaan 2001).

That is why Zamenhof's Esperanto has never become a widely spoken language: Esperanto has never reached its tipping point and accounts for less than 0.0005% speakers in the world (Piron 1989).[2] Esperanto lacks motivation, anticipated profit, and, above all, Esperanto cannot count on an institution, a nation-state to promote it. And that is why people choose to learn useful languages despite their love of a language. In Belgium, people learn French and English in Flanders, English and Spanish in Wallonia. In the EU English is the most widely spoken language.[3]

Figure 3 The most useful languages



Source: Author's adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

2 Ludwik Lazar Zamenhof (1859, Bialystok–1917 Warsaw) wrote his *Lingvo Internacia de Doktore Espéranto* in 1887. He also wrote the first Yiddish grammar in 1889.

3 Three-quarters of interviewed Hungarians, for instance, declared they would love to learn Italian and French (74%) or Italian (72%), but together

In other words, we anticipate the probability of actually speaking the language we decide to learn, and we anticipate the benefit of our newly acquired competence: it is *probability-sensitive learning* (Van Parijs 2006). The anticipated profitability of language training is a strong incentive and accounts for our learning commitments. But the choice of learning one specific language also depends on the perceptions and the expectations concerning other speakers' choices: We would not learn a language we cannot share.

That leads to another feature of language learning/sharing: the *maximin* principle. Borrowed and adapted from Rawl's *Justice as Fairness* (2001),[4] it simply means that in situations in which communication efficiency trumps every other consideration (language beauty, expressiveness), we maximize minimal linguistic competence and hence minimize exclusion, and according to Laponce (1984), a Canadian scholar, with a real risk of "killing languages by niceness": Global languages such as English will always be preferred to "small" or "local" languages.

Two final distinctive features characterize languages. Languages are *networks* with positive externalities: Every new user/speaker enhances the benefit or the utility for all, and hence the value of the specific network or language, including global. Languages are non-

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these lovely languages account for less than five percent of the learning preferences (Hartkamp 2007). According to another sociolinguistic truth, all universal languages have at one point ceased to be universal. If our generation decides to adopt English as *lingua franca* and engages in public policies of language training that indeed spread English as the sole European common language, we oblige future generations, which will be unable to make the same linguistic choices we can. We might, in other words, create that tipping point ourselves.

4 "It tells us to identify the worst outcome of each available alternative and then to adopt the alternative whose worst outcome is better than the worst outcomes of all the other alternatives" (Rawls 2001, §28.1).

excludable *collective goods*. Languages are networks because there is a strategic interaction between users of languages. Languages are networks much like transport or communication networks. People commit to such networks because they expect a benefit from doing so, and they are loyal as long as the next best option is too expensive or too time consuming. Joining a network enhances the global utility of that specific network. This benefit and global value are well known to economists as "external network effects": Every newcomer adds value to the whole. Languages are also public goods, they are even *hypercollective* goods because languages are networks of a special kind; they are free goods, "open societies." Even if there is an entrance fee (the time spent learning a new language), they are not created or owned by anyone in particular, they are *non-excludable*. It is impossible to exclude anyone from enjoying a collective good. No one has a *veto* on the survival of a language: languages need a significant amount of speakers, but the defection of one or some does not jeopardize a language. The efforts of one individual, conversely, are not sufficient to guarantee language maintenance: no one can create or salvage a language on his own. And, most important: A collective good does not diminish in value as new users join in. The specificity of languages as collective goods is that their value actually *increases* with each added speaker (de Swaan 2001, 38 ff.). Scholars have even shown that a 1% increase of English-speakers increases by 3.6% the people attracted to English in non-English–speaking countries (the figures are 2.2% for French and 1.8% for German) (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004, 50).

One Demos, One Language?

Let's start with the small scale. The debate about language is part of Belgium's political culture and memory; it is routine, and as such it

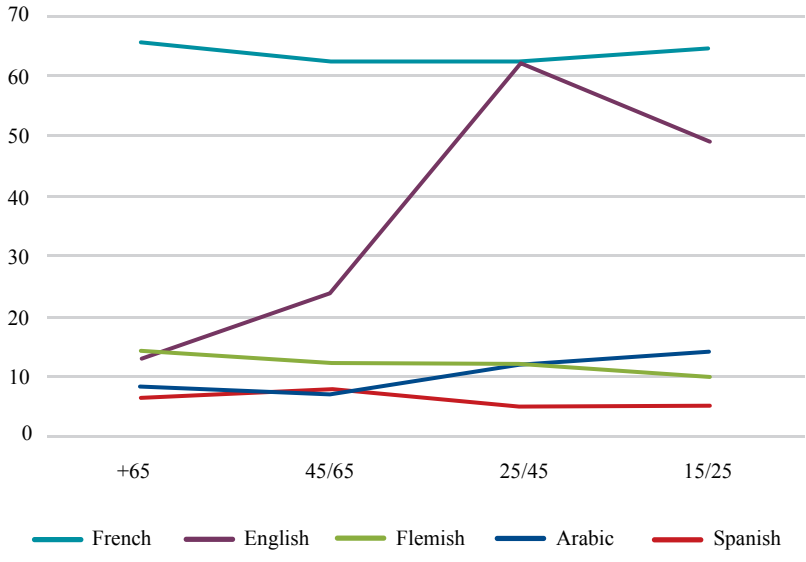
holds a great virtue: simplification. Citizens can immediately identify with the issue at stake, and politicians have an easy access to a well-embedded discourse. How did this come about?

Belgium was born in 1830 as a French-speaking constitutional monarchy, although more than half of the country (the Catholic north) spoke a variety of Flemish dialects without grammatical codification. The Flemish cultural-nationalist movement (like all other movements of the kind) rose in the mid nineteenth century, patriotic in its essence, never claiming secession or autonomy until the end of the twentieth century, and demanded equal recognition of Flemish culture and language. A unified Flemish language was created in the 1850s. After several political battles within the movement (between the Catholics and the liberals) and against the French speakers from Flanders (the *fransquillons*), official bilingualism was obtained in Flanders in 1898. This was the first move to territorialize language policy. The Walloon movement came into being later in the nineteenth century, mainly as a reaction to Flemish nationalism. Socialist, anticlerical, supported by strong unions, it feared economic backlash because part of public employment was now linked to linguistic competence in both languages, and the Flemings were far more bilingual than the Walloons for whom it had never been useful, neither economically nor socially, to learn Flemish.

The scene was set. The next step was official unilingualism in Flanders (1932) and the constitutional recognition of Flemish as second official language (1935). Brussels remained and remains officially bilingual, although only 10–15% of its inhabitants are Flemish natives. Walloons hold they have a civic view of nationhood and encourage minority rights, whereas Flemings are supposed to have an ethnic and exclusive conception of the nation twinned with a preference for majority rule. The democratic "genre" in Wallonia is unitarian and monolingual, the Flemish preference goes

with a bilingual democracy, accommodating linguistic territories and preferences. Two nations, one state, and an officially bilingual capital. Brussels has tried for at least half a century to foster distinct "*bruxellois*" citizenship with no real success. The capital is a cosmopolitan European, French-speaking city, which could almost exist as a *Stadtstaat*, without the Belgian state.

Figure 4 Languages spoken in Brussels (2008)



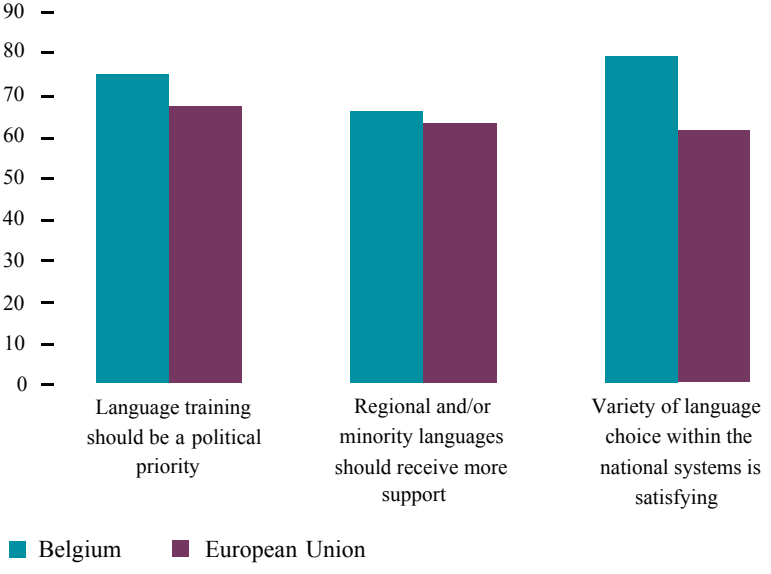
Source: Author's adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

The *recognition* of language sovereignty was thus intrinsically linked to the recognition of a distinct specific and autonomous cultural community. Language *policy* and the legitimacy of a sovereign language rule progressively became the core of most political conflicts. Although linguistic demands were accepted as part of a

regular political negotiation and mostly resolved—at least from a legal standpoint—they did not lose any of their strength. On the contrary, linguistic quarrels organize the public sphere in Belgium to this day, and the distrust vis-à-vis the other community is such that Belgium has recently spent more than a year without a government: the mediator appointed by the king (Yves Leterme) being incapable of submitting an agreed-upon list of representatives.

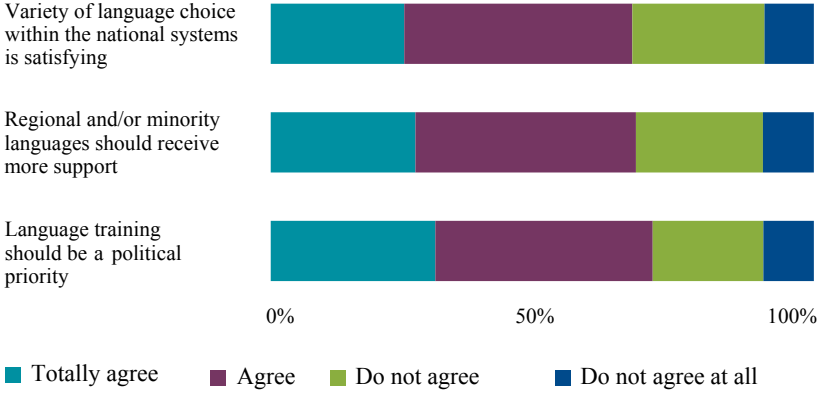
Paradoxically, the Belgians, who are apparently so poorly committed to their own state, are very fervent Europeans. Oddly enough, when interviewed, the Belgians are usually very strong advocates for equal respect to all languages. And Belgians score very highly on the language-competence scale. How are these elements linked?

Figure 5 Language training Belgium/EU25



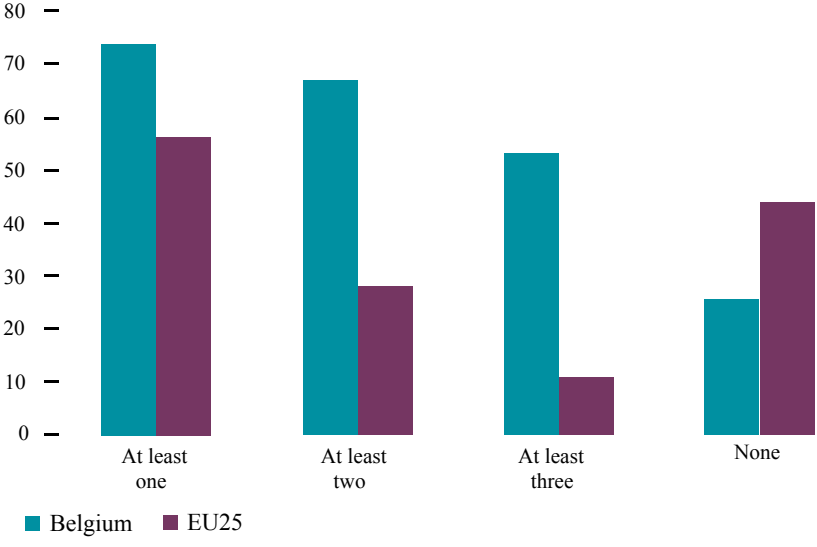
Source: Author's adaptation of EU data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

Figure 6 Variety and choice



Source: Author's adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

Figure 7 In how many languages are you able to converse fluently?



Source: Author's adaptation of EU data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

Let's look at the large scale.

If we accept the idea that the EU is a large-scale democracy, a third wave democracy (Dahl and Tufte 1973) different in nature than "national" democracies, not only because of its size but also because of the modes of political participation and hence the proper way of organizing fair representation, we must admit that the overlapping electoral district "European Union" has a lot in common with our small-scale example Belgium. Reflecting on cosmopolitan democracy, David Held argues convincingly that:

> National boundaries have traditionally demarcated the basis on which individuals are included and excluded from participation in decisions affecting their lives; but if many socio-economic processes, and the outcomes of decisions about them, stretch beyond national frontiers, then the implications of this are serious, not only for the categories of consent and legitimacy but for all the key ideas of democracy. At issue is the nature of constituency, the role of representation, and the proper form and scope of political participation." (Archibugi, Held, and Kohler 1998, 22)

Politics can only be conducted if citizens are able to participate significantly in their polity as "insiders": "[T]he logic of moral equality … is best realized through democratic processes which bring insiders and outsiders together as transnational citizens with equal rights of participation" (Linklater 1998, 126). In my view, the state of "insiderness" depends on a variety of factors (trust, fairness, etc.), but also on a basic linguistic competence enabling participation. Language is one of these social resources that can either poison or cure like the Greek's *pharmakon*, venom and remedy at the same

time. Poison—because it is generally used as an exclusive identity device; cure—because it would suffice to retain one common language to communicate Europe-wide beyond national boundaries and communitarian tensions. Communitarian and or regionalistic tensions are formatted and determined by national, domestic politics and are not affected by large-scale politics. On the contrary, large-scale politics often soothe domestic tensions. In his *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), T. H. Marshall argued that the right to protection under the law is useless unless citizens could participate in the law-making process; the right of participation is inadequate unless citizens have access to the social resources that make it possible for them to experience what would otherwise remain merely a formal right. Language is such a social resource.

Overlapping Consensus, Cosmopolitan Democracy, and Language Policy

> [T]he very idea of consent through elections and the particular notion that the relevant constituencies of voluntary agreement are the communities of a bounded territory or a state, become problematic as soon as the issue of national, regional and global interconnectedness is considered and the nature of a so-called "relevant community" is contested. Whose consent is necessary and whose participation is justified in decisions concerning, for instance, AIDS or acid rain, or the use of non-renewable resources, or the management of transnational economic flows? What is the relevant constituency: national, regional or international? To whom do decision

> makers have to justify their decisions? To whom should they be accountable? (Held 1995, 18)

The question of the proper district and the proper constituency is relevant to the large scale *and* the small scale. Belgium could probably be rescued by an overlapping electoral district that would oblige politicians to set a common agenda for both nations in the Belgian case, and for all European member states in the case of the EU. In principle such a common district exists in the EU, but we all know that European electoral debates are conducted within the nation-states and following domestic agendas. The French and the Dutch "no" to the European Constitution was to a large extent a "no" to domestic policy.

But extending the public sphere to the Belgian federal state, agreeing to discuss principles regardless of language and language communities, and achieving an overlapping consensus through an overlapping electoral district is possible only if citizens accept the idea of treating language as a private matter instead of a public issue, and if they accept that fairness, welfare, and so on are not bound by linguistic frontiers. It would indeed suffice if one-third of the electoral body were trans-regional, trans-communitarian, within a single federal electoral district, to oblige the linguistic wings of the main parties to share an explicit common program.

Let us now proceed the other way around. Instead of asking whether compromise could be achieved regardless of language (team A, language as a tool), let us assume that commitment to one's language is a handicap such that no federal solution of the kind sketched above is possible (team B, language as intrinsic cultural value). Given that federal loyalty in Belgium is defined foremost in terms of linguistic loyalty, would it be possible to invent a new type of linguistic equity that satisfies all Belgians? Which solution would be the fairest one to

meet two contradictory and ultimately undecidable truths: language as a means of public communication, a tool, versus language as a substantive part of identity? In other words, is language truly a part of my specific identity (such as faith, for instance) that must be recognized as such (linguistic communitarianism[5]), or is language just a means to successfully interact, secondary and unimportant with regard to social justice (linguistic liberalism[6]). Liberal political regimes have to choose between very few institutional answers or

5 The problem with the identity model is that it blends different kinds of arguments, normative and historical. The *historical* argument (the language situation yesterday) is used to implement language justice today [in May, 2001]. Languages have disappeared in the course of history, but not all of them die a natural death; most languages have disappeared in the nation-building process and the periphery has been forced to adopt the linguistic norms of the center. Nations indeed eat up languages and gradually destroy vernaculars. We now have to either (a) actively protect the languages that have escaped oblivion; (b) apply restorative justice and positively discriminate speakers of languages that have suffered, or (c) revitalize dead or dying languages, by all means—even illiberal ones (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994).

6 Two kinds of arguments intertwine: the quest for democracy and justice as well as the quest for language equity. The language equity claim may be put as follows: If my language is part of my specific culture and defines me (as a citizen and as an individual), then it is fair to share the state territory according to that specific identity. At least regionally, I should be able to practice my own language. But the claim can be reversed: The recognition of a specific culture, and hence of a specific language divides the state territorially, but foremost divides the community of citizens and upsets the equality principle. Citizens in this case are equal only if they speak the same idiom. The justice claim may be put as follows: Is language just any means of political communication or communion? Is language the sign and the symptom of my very specific "encumbered" identity that must be recognized as such or is language merely a general tool to communicate widely? Does it matter which language I speak to have my liberty fully recognized?

public policies.[7] Both recognize linguistic liberty in the same way we recognize religious freedom, free speech, etc., but expel it from the public sphere. Liberty of language then belongs to the private sphere. Speak whatever you like in your homes, in your associations, and so on, the political sphere admits only one public language.

The other solution is to recognize language diversity by adapting the procedure and extending it to substantive minority rights. Philippe Van Parijs (2000b) suggests there are many scenarios but only one solution: territorial separation.[8] There can be no viable democracy

7 Either we state that minorities have the same rights as the majority—and we then need to shape a constitutional architecture to satisfy those rights—or we admit that the law of the majority has to prevail. Majority rule does not exclude fair representation of minorities; liberalism has solved that part of the problem, as our representatives, although elected by part of the social body, speak in the name of all. The normative question for the state is then: How can a neutral, liberal state protect vulnerable languages if it does not decide to confer a specific value to a minority language (or a majority language: Flemish in Belgium, French in Canada)? Protection of a minority language also means protection of its speakers and the cultural patrimony of the community. In other words, the "Kymlicka claim": since some communities, languages, and so on, are more vulnerable than others, the state has to protect them.

8 He rejects Mill's solution, i.e., generalized unilingualism, for three reasons: Linguistic diversity is also protection of cultural diversity (the consequentiality long-term argument); linguistic shift is unfair to speakers who have to bear the cost of learning a new language (the justice short-term argument); the pragmatic argument of course is that no one believes in this scenario any longer. While 60% of the native speakers are Flemish, they produce 70% of the GNP. He also rejects generalized bilingualism**,** because of the vulnerability of one language vis-à-vis the other in a soft version of bilingualism where people would be able to choose their language freely and because of its prohibitive cost for the people and the state. He then rejects non-territorial separation, i.e., the Austro-Marxist version of personal federalism in which communities have full autonomy on cultural

in a multilingual society and no generous redistribution in a small open economy. The more decentralized redistributive powers, the tighter the economic constraints on redistribution. To achieve both democracy and redistribution, one paradoxically has to strengthen linguistic significance of borders while weakening their socio-economic importance.[9] He therefore pleads for *territorial separation*, in other words regional unilingualism.[10] The practical side to this

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and linguistic matters as religious entities had in the Ottoman empire, for two reasons. First, because in a soft version, free membership probably benefits the stronger and economically more efficient communities and will lead to linguicide (parents will prefer to send their children to schools that are run in the socially more prestigious and economically more profitable language). Secondly, because our native language blessing is sheer luck. Our native tongue is not a matter of choice, but of luck or misfortune, and non-territorial separation may lead to apartheid.

9 For Ernest Gellner, nationalism can be defined as follows: social importance of cultural borders diminishes, political significance rises (Gellner 1983). The Van Parijs alternative is: linguistic importance of borders rises, while socio-economic significance diminishes (Van Parijs 2000a).

10 All states "speak," issue laws, and administer, language therefore cannot be benignly neglected as can, for instance, religion. In monolingual settings, the public sphere is entirely ruled by one language; in multilingual states, mostly federations, legislators have a choice between two principles: *territoriality* and *personality*. The first and most widespread principle (Belgium, Switzerland, Cameroon in its simplest form) is based on territorial rights: It legally recognizes a red-speaking territory, on the basis of a majority of red-speaking individuals. Variants are territorialized individual rights (Catalonia, South Tyrol), sectoral policies for minorities (Australia, the United States, Germany, Hungary), and territorial bilingualism for minorities (Estonia, Bosnia, Pakistan). Territoriality is usually associated with administrative bilingualism (civil servants speak all or part of the official languages) to ensure state-wide communication; it provides language stability and language security

argument is evident: Belgium is already regionally unilingual. His main proposal regarding language is to "gently foster a common forum of discussion which will increasingly be in the emerging first universal *lingua franca*: English."[11]

A 1999 survey among three age groups asked whether Belgians "Can [you] speak the other national language correctly?" The conclusions are disillusioning: In the Flemish mother tongue group, 15% of the individuals in age group 55 or older speak French; 31% in

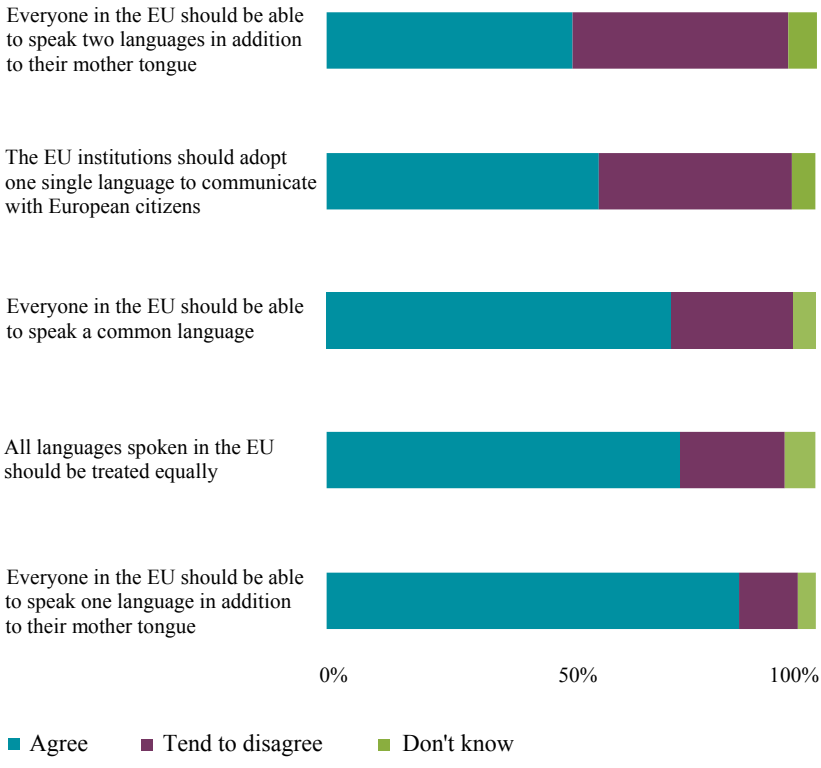
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(small languages are protected on their territory, relative language scales are relatively stable), but obliges all to speak the official language in its territory of reference. Territoriality generally leads to juxtaposed unilingualisms and may disrupt intercommunity communication as in Belgium. The personality principle on the other hand is best described by institutional multilingualism. The state acknowledges and recognizes individual language choices: Regardless of where I am in the territory, its administration has an obligation to answer in the language of my choice. Canada was ruled by this principle, but has abandoned it in part because of Quebec's claim to protect French and the subsequent legislation (Bill 101, 1977) making French the sole official language in the province. Canada is a pioneer in language matters. When the government voted for the creation of a new province for the Canadian Eskimos, Nunavut indeed adopted Inuktitut as its official language.

11 In Belgium, redistribution was achieved at the federal level, but without adequate recognition of the consequences of having two separate democratic spaces. The task is to fairly accommodate this separation, while preserving the sustainability of global solidarity: (1) the protection of the linguistic integrity of Flanders and Wallonia (though not of Brussels); (2) a reform of (key sectors of) Belgium's welfare state that combines a central collection of resources with capitation grants to the three regions, each in charge of the conception and management of its own health and education systems; (3) a reform of the electoral system that induces vote pooling across the linguistic border; (4) the gentle fostering of a common forum of discussion which will increasingly be in the emerging first universal *lingua franca*: English (Van Parijs 2004).

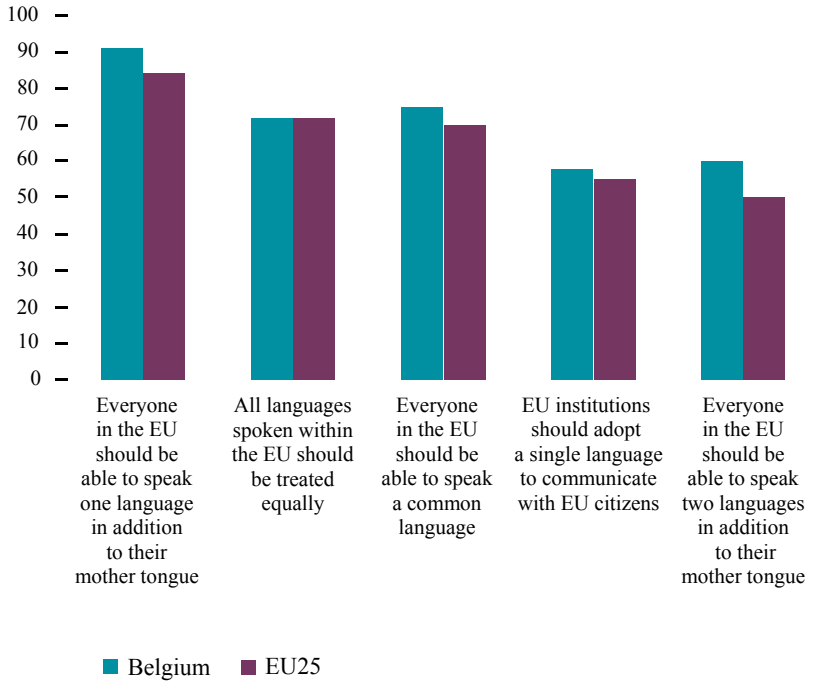
the age group 35–54; astonishingly 35% in the age group 14–34. Only 0.7% watch French TV. In the French mother tongue group, 19% of those age 55 or older group speak Flemish, 12% in the age group 35–54; and 4% in the age group 14–34. The percentage watching French TV is ridiculously low (Van Parijs 2000b).

Figure 8 EU25 *Lingua Franca* (Eurobarometer 2006)



Source: Author's adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

Figure 9 Comparison Belgium/EU25

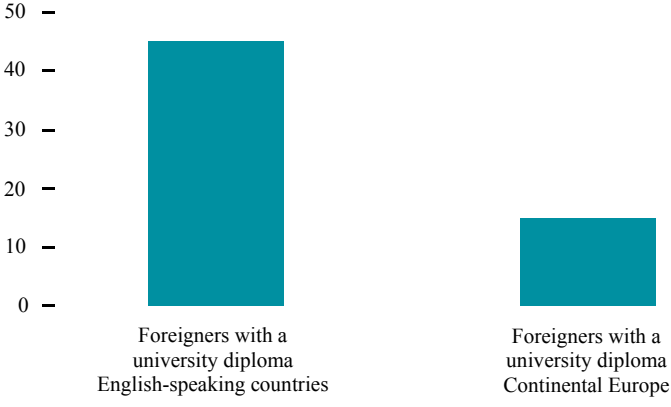


Source: Author's adaptation of EU data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

This common forum of discussion in one common language is under discussion on the large-scale side: the EU. The debate about the usefulness of a *lingua franca* comprises almost all the issues mentioned above. It is about identity, as we have to choose a single common language while respecting all the others. It is about deliberation and democratic procedure, as we have to commonly agree on a *lingua franca*; it would be unfair to choose a language without debating, especially if the choice is compelling once it has been made. It is about utility because the choice of a *lingua franca* is

outcome oriented: Global communication, employability, and social mobility are supposed to be enhanced by a common language, by English in particular, and brain drain would supposedly be avoided if Europe's common language (especially within research, academia, and business) were English.

Figure 10 Language zones and brain drain

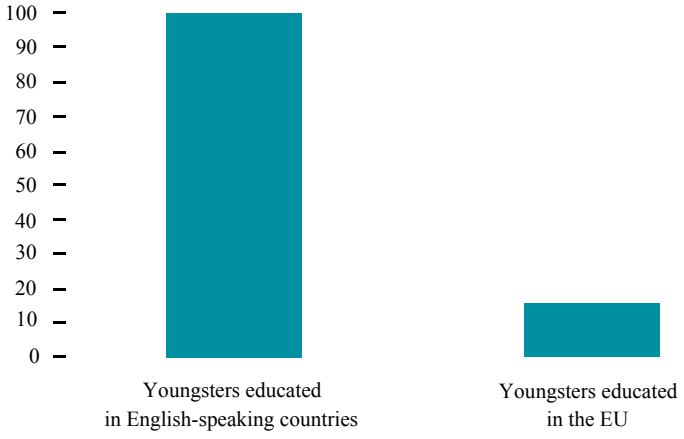


Of the brain drain, 75% > English-speaking countries (USA, Canada, UK, Australia)
Source: Extrapolation from Ph. Van Parijs 2006.

A few words about history, namely, about the difference between imperial languages and a new *lingua franca* for Europe. Imperial "common" languages such as Latin or French differ from modern national languages which are the result of rationalizing and homogenizing policies. Imperial languages or languages of diplomacy were not considered as identity markers, and diglossia was the rule. The center and the imperial or royal administrators spoke the high language, the vast majority spoke dialects, and the intermediary

powers were generally bilingual. Nation building and nationalism rationalized language communities around one single compelling national or official language to achieve nationwide literacy, employability, and communication (Gellner 1983; Laitin 2000).

Figure 11 Academia, language zones, brain drain

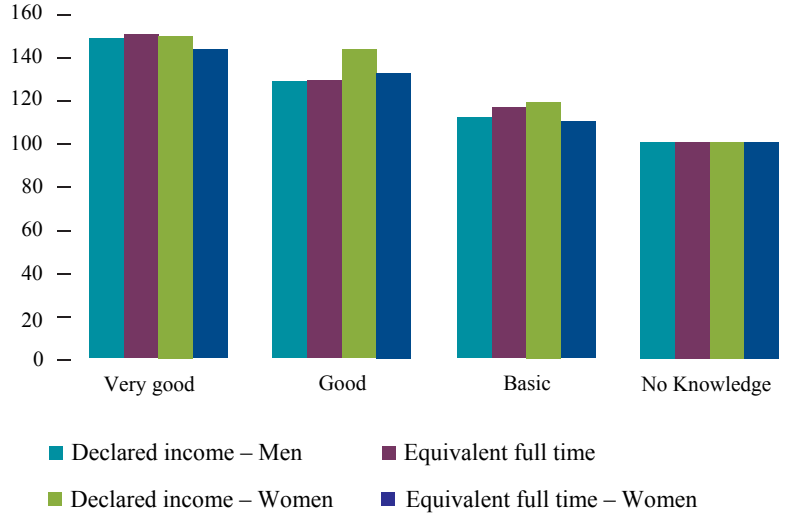


Source: Extrapolation from Ph. Van Parijs 2006.

National policies were strongly linked to democratization, at least in Western Europe, and literacy was a means to wide integration. That sequence does not fundamentally differ from the present situation in Europe: The need for horizontal communication (much like the horizontal solidarity within the nation-state, as opposed to the vertical organization of societies in the ancient settings) may rest on the same type of common literacy as in the nineteenth-century nation building process. But, should the adoption of a *lingua franca* follow the national model (a process of rationalizing around one official

language), or do we have to invent something else? What are the benefits of a common language? Do the economic/democratic benefits of a common language exceed the costs (material and symbolic) of learning a new language? Is it morally justifiable that we all learn the same language? Are the citizens of Europe willing to participate more if they can all speak, write, and understand the language of European politics, if they are able to share the language of those who govern? Would a common language be the condition for a European demos?

Figure 12 Income variance / English knowledge (Percent)



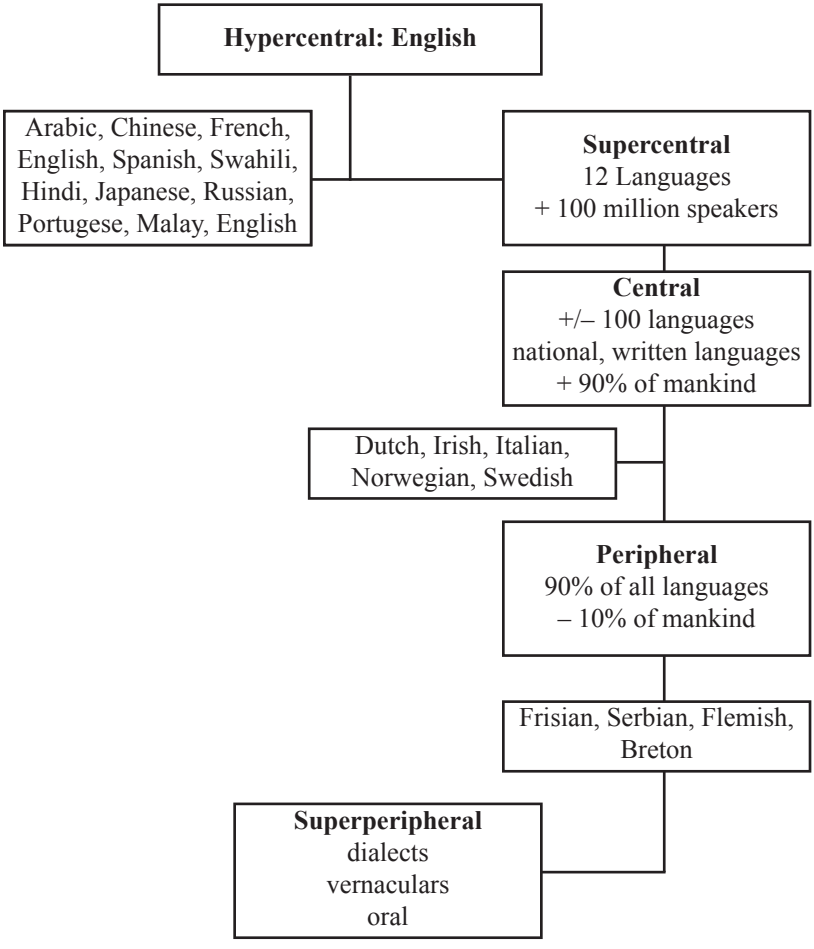
Men n=1141
Women n=803
Value 100=no knowledge

Source: Extrapolation from Ph. Van Parijs 2006.

Languages and Politics are Networks and Collective Goods

In his *Words of the World,* Abram de Swaan (2001) claims that an economic approach to languages, or at least an analogy between economic theory of collective goods and communication can help explain not only the *utility* and the *communicative value* of languages to speakers, but also the commitment to smaller and apparently less useful languages (via "collective cultural capital" accessible, for example, only through those specific languages), without having to rely on "identity" claims only while explaining linguistic preferences. Languages are *tools*; they are useful for connecting people. Certain languages enhance upward social mobility, link more people than others; some languages are more useful than others; and learning of some languages is more beneficial than others (de Swaan 2000). The world's language constellation is a result of past or present power relations (linguistic normalization, rationalization, creation of official languages and killing dialects, etc.). A synoptic look at the world language system indeed shows a constellation, a hierarchical order, or a planetary system with a sun and its moons. A huge amount of languages (98%) is spoken by a very small percentage of mankind (10%): these are *peripheral* languages. They gravitate around about one hundred *central* languages (foremost national, written ones: "archive languages"), spoken by the vast majority of mankind. This second group is then connected—through its multilingual speakers—to a dozen *supercentral* languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, English, Spanish, Swahili, Hindi, Japanese, Russian, Portuguese, and Malay, all (except Swahili) spoken by more than a hundred million speakers. The hypercentral language that holds the entire system is English: "the centre of the twelve solar systems" (de Swaan 2001, 31).

Figure 13 The world's language constellation



Source: Extrapolation from A. de Swaan 2001.

The next step is to look at individual speakers or groups of speakers, i.e., the combinations of micro-decisions to actually learn a language, practice a language, and maintain a language. The assumption here is that these decisions are not random. One can explain this through the above-mentioned characteristics of languages. The utility and the communication potential of one language are derived from the number of speakers, and namely, the multilingual speakers of one language or within one language repertoire. The advantage of this perspective in my sense is that it can account for language acquisition preferences, concerning "useful" languages, but it can also account for the desire for language maintenance (of vulnerable languages). But how are we to evaluate the economic or intellectual "value" of a language? In order to answer this heterodox question, de Swaan invents an indicator, the *Q-value*, to calculate the perceived value of a language within an overall constellation.

The *Q-value* of a language is calculated through its prevalence and its centrality within the overall language constellation. The prevalence purports to be the proportion of native speakers in a particular repertoire. Using blue for example, the group of blue speakers is connected to other groups and speakers through their multilingual speakers, i.e., those who speak blue but also yellow, red, or white, hence the proportion of speakers that can *directly* be connected in a given repertoire. Centrality indicates the number of connections, or multilingual speakers, that link the languages in this repertoire with all others, hence the proportion of *indirect* connections. Using red as a non-native language, all blue, white, and yellow speakers who speak red are connected with each other.

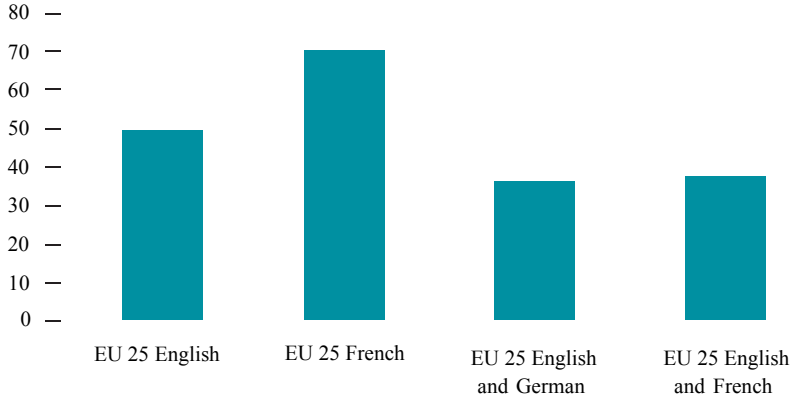
English, for instance, has a poor prevalence in Europe (there are fewer British than Germans or Polish), but a very high centrality: Many more Europeans speak English than any other language. Does this mean that English should officially be adopted as the European *lingua franca*?

People learn English because they anticipate European language dynamics, the European language constellation with English at the center of its planetary language system. "Anticipated probability and profitability" or "opportunity sensitive learning" (Van Parijs 2004) produces a wide consensus concerning language training in English.

In short, the *Q-value* is a rough and ready measure for the communication value of a language in a given constellation. A simpler measure (straight figures for the number of speakers) would do no justice to the *dynamics* of the constellation.[12]

English is central, but would a European demos be able to function in English only?

Figure 14 Levels of exclusion



Source: Extrapolated from Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004.

12 The *Q-value* also purports to reconstruct the value that speakers themselves attribute to language, an evaluation that guides their choices of foreign languages to learn (de Swaan 2001, 39ff.). But it doesn't tell us whether language policies we ought to implement are fair.

Exclusion by Language?

The answer is straightforward. The exclusion rates are far higher if English were the sole European language: 50% of the EU25 population would be excluded. The situation would be even worse if French or German were *linguae francae*: 71% of the Europeans would not be able to participate at all. The solution is a *common set of languages*.

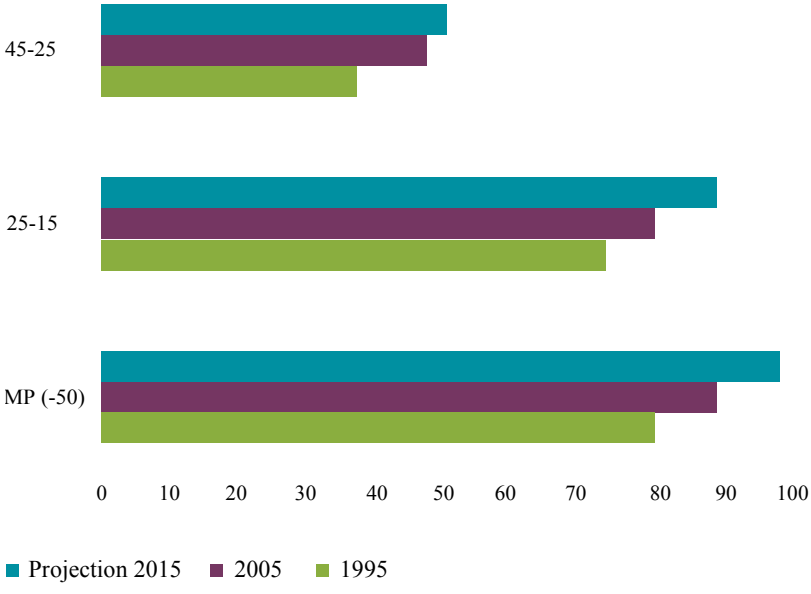
But if it were a combination, results are rather surprising. The French/English hypothesis would be the fairest one in EU15 (maximum exclusion in Portugal with 59%); but in EU25 English/German excludes a little less (38%), but the compared exclusion rates within the member states are far higher for the English/French combination than for the English/German combination (75% in Hungary vs. 84% for English/French) (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004, 52ff.). The least exclusive combination is English/French/German: 19% in EU 15, 26% in EU 25, 35% in anticipation of EU28.

Reasonable, fair, and cheap, the three-language combination seems to be the best solution. Cheap—because all European legal texts already exist in these languages; the OECD functions in these languages and most of the international organizations (the UN among others) have adopted them as working languages. Cheap—because translation costs are 64 million Euros per year and per member state (Malta trumps all other member states with 980 Euros per citizen) (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004). Cheap—because the EU would avoid transportation costs (from Brussels to The Hague, Luxemburg, Strasbourg, etc.).

The question is: how? There are two ways of achieving this type of language coordination. The first and easiest one, and the most respectful one of national preferences, would be to offer the possibility

that member states invest the budget of European translation costs into language training (in the three classical languages). Within two generations, the language problem would be solved (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh and Weber 2004).

Figure 15 English knowledge (by age groups, EU25)



Source: Author's adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

The other solution, a bit more complicated to achieve, would be to copy the "Indian system."

In India, the postcolonial government has adopted a very flexible system, a 3 +/- 1 language constellation. There are two official languages, Hindi and English (3–1), the language of the member

state of the Indian federation (2 + 1 = 3), and the protected minority language within the state, if any (3 + 1).[13]

Let's try to adapt the Indian system to the EU. Native speakers other than English, French or German, learn English, French or German (1 + 3). Native English, French or German speakers learn the two other ones (3 – 1). This is obviously an unfair solution.

Is there another way? Native speakers other than English, French or German learn two out of three classical languages (1 + 2 = 3) and native English, French or German speakers learn the two other classical languages (1 + 2 = 3). Despite the numbers, the second solution is as unfair as the first solution because native English, French or German speakers would know the three classical languages, whereas the others would only know two of them.

Language Democracy, Language Equity

The ideal match is the following: native speakers other than English, French or German, learn one classical and/or one extra-European language (1 + 1 + 1 = 3), and native English, French or German speakers learn one or two classical ones, or one classical and one extra-European language (1 + 1 + 1 = 3). What is the advantage of the latter solution? Aside from the fair numbers, this solution respects, at least to a certain extent, the individual's language choice and hence the "language training market" within Europe while at the same time satisfying the needs of a common set of known languages; it respects the dynamics of the language constellation (English is not a *fait accompli* anymore, English interacts dynamically with other languages); this solution shows that language coordination within the EU is possible;

13 David Laitin, 1997. "The Cultural Identities of a European State." *Politics and Society* 25/3: 277–302.

and, maybe most important, this solution maintains extra-European connections: Individuals may choose extra-European languages, and according to the sociolinguistic truths we mentioned above, will probably choose those languages which most fit the probability of speaking them and the anticipated added value of knowing them.

For Belgians (Figure 7) this system would not be a problem. English already is the best means of communication to bridge the gap between the two communities. Flemings still learn French (Walloons stopped learning Dutch after 1988 when the government decided to abolish compulsory learning of the other official language), the German-speaking community in the Eastern part of the country (Figure 2) would be satisfied, and Brussels would continue to be a multilingual capital (Figure 4). Together with an overlapping electoral district/body, this system might even be able to save the country from breaking up.

Conclusion

I have tried to show, based on EU language data and on strong intuition, that a common set of languages could serve to foster a new type of transnational political debate encompassing all citizens, on the large (EU) and on the small scale (Belgium); such a common set of languages may eventually even counter antipolitics and build a new type of communion among citizens and between citizens and their representatives.

Who is right: team A or team B? What is the best democratic genre? The one that postulates that language is a tool or the one that insists on language identity? The "Indian solution" allows avoiding answering such a question. It is flexible enough to accommodate the language lovers and those convinced by the utility of learning specific languages (Figure 12). A common language is not necessarily a common language of values, but I believe that the implication of transnational citizenship can only be achieved if people can share languages with their leaders.

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