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Language, ethnicity, and the nation-state: on Max Weber's conception of "imagined linguistic community"

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Abstract Methodological nationalism in sociological theory is unfit for the current globalized era, and should be discarded. In light of this contention, the present article discusses Max Weber's view of language as a way to relativize the frame of the national society. While a "linguistic turn" in sociology since the 1960s has assumed that the sharing of language—linguistic community—stands as an intersubjective foundation for understanding of meaning, Weber saw linguistic community as constructed. From Weber's rationalist, subjectivist, individualist viewpoint, linguistic community was a result of social actions, not a prior entity as assumed by German metaphysical organicism (and historicist holism). Indeed, Central Europe in Weber's era was a battlefield of linguistic nationalism(s); in contrast to the national societies of the Cold War period, national borders were unstable and ultimately the multiethnic empires of the region were dismantled after World War I into ethnolinguistic nation-states. Experience of this contemporary reality brought Weber to the core of the relationship between language and politics: A language community is an imaginary one demarcated not by language itself but by conscious opposition against outsiders, with monolingual contexts within borders created artificially by homogenizing policies like linguistic standardization and national education—*the first modernity of language*. In this way, Weber felt, language can be a means to domination.

Keywords Anglicization · First modernity · Interpretative sociology · Methodological nationalism · National society · Sociology of language

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The concept of 'ethnic' community, which disappears with exact concept-formulation, corresponds in this regard, to a certain extent, to that of 'nation,' one of the concepts which vex us with emotional sensations the most....

—Weber [1921a] 1980a, p. 242 = [1968] 1978, p. 395[1]

[I]n a nineteenth-century Europe in which Latin had been defeated by vernacular print-capitalism for something like two centuries, these solidarities had an outermost stretch limited by vernacular legibilities. To put it another way, one can sleep with anyone, but one can only read some people's words.

—Anderson 1991, p. 77

Under ongoing globalization, the field of sociology has been expected to reconsider its methodological nationalism, that is, the identification of national boundaries with societal ones. According to Ulrich Beck, traditional categories of sociology are "zombie-categories" (Beck [2002] 2009, p. 8) with limited capacity to reflect current social realities, since they still rely on the nation-state frame. The practicability of methodological cosmopolitanism in sociological research may be surely questionable. Statistical social data, for example, are often for technical reasons gathered and analyzed in terms of national units. However, the notion that people's social lives are operatively confined to a national territory, or a *national society* equated with a homogenous nation-state, is already anachronistic. Since modern life is inseparably woven into a world-wide, diversified system of division of labor and a globally expansive information network, it cannot be maintained under national autarky. In this sense, the actual society inhabited by people today is "the world society" (Luhmann [1971] 1975), extending beyond national boundaries.

Against this background, this article aims to clarify Max Weber's perspective on language and show how his linguistic views may provide substantial cues for a critical examination of methodological nationalism, particularly in sociological theory. For this purpose, in the following sections, I demonstrate first that Weber viewed the language community as an imaginary construct, a fiction. From a perspective of rationalism, subjectivism, and individualism, he consistently denied the objective reality of such a community as part of a larger rejection of German metaphysical organicism (and historicist holism). Second, I analyze the political character of this linguistic community, with reference to the theoretical implications of Weber's general concept of community, according to which a language community is demarcated not by language itself, but by conscious opposition against outsiders. Third, to complement these considerations, I discuss the relationship between language and the nation-state in terms of certain social backgrounds. In contrast to the postwar period, which brought the stabilization of national societies and the naturalization of "sharing the same language" inside borders, Weber's Central Europe was a major battlefield of linguistic nationalism and boundary changes. Finally, I suggest

[1] All citations from Weber's texts in this article are my own translations from the original German into English, although I partly drew on existing English translations, whose publication years and corresponding page numbers I also included, following an "equal" symbol (=) for readers' convenience. In addition, in translating Weber's specific terminology from the original German into English, I often consulted Bruun and Whimster's (2012b) useful glossary (but I did not always follow their translations.)

that a gap in linguistic competence, especially in English, can lead to the stratificatory differentiation of the world society beyond national borders.

However, before all of these discussions, in the next section I start with a brief preliminary consideration of a linguistic turn in sociology since the 1960s.[2]

Preliminary consideration of the linguistic turn in postwar sociology

Sociological theory began to focus attention on language only surprisingly recently, from the 1960s onward. Before that, sociological theory was strongly influenced by Talcott Parsons's idea that normative values backed by religious (irrational) beliefs orient human actions toward the social order (Parsons 1978, p. 240). However, Parsons's presupposition of "shared religion" became ever less tenable as religion increasingly was left to individual choice in the postwar era.[3] This individualization (or privatization) of religion was a natural development in modern states founded on the separation of church and state, which entails a guarantee of freedom of religious belief. In this context, the secular state required a substitute for religion in order to unite the people of a polity in a way that transcended their pre-modern positions in the feudal hierarchy. Historically, language took on such a role. In a well-known argument, Benedict Anderson describes the contribution language made to the creation of the *nation-state*, or "imagined political community" (Anderson 1991, p. 6). Vernaculars replaced Latin as administrative languages ("state" language used by and for officialdom) in early modernity, and subsequently became, through the development of capitalism and communication technology, *national* print-languages that nurtured a sense of unity within their territories (Anderson 1991, chap. 3). "[T]he most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*" (Anderson 1991, p. 133, emphasis original).

It seems no coincidence that Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, phenomenological sociologists in the tradition of Weber's interpretative sociology (*verstehende Soziologie*), relied on both sociology of religion and sociology of language in their 1966 *The Social Construction of Reality*. These two research fields served as a pair of wheels for their sociology of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann [1966] 1989, p. 185; see also Tada 2015b). Berger and Luckmann were of course well aware of the significance of religion for human life, but never ignored the empirical fact that religion was fading as people's common basis for recognizing the world and acting within it. Nevertheless, they did not abandon the idea of a macro foundation common to people in a society and enabling their mutual understanding: They were confident that modern people share natural (or ordinary) language, with its origin in daily life. This idea appears to have been the point at which

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[2] I have briefly described this relationship in Tada (2015a).

[3] Parsons also noticed such an individualizing (secularizing) tendency in religious life. However, he never let go of the concept of religion as a key element for discussing the core of social order. For instance, he even interprets the Cold War as a religious war between two civil-secular religions, American civil religion and Marxian socialism (Parsons 1978, pp. 311–312). To begin with, he believed that the Protestant ethic was still maintained in American society, relativizing its standing. He writes, "In my opinion the Protestant ethic is far from dead. It continues to inform our orientations to a very important sector of life today as it did in the past. We do value systematic rational work in 'callings,' and we do so out of what is at some level a religious background" (Parsons 1978, p. 320, see also p. 322).

postwar sociological theory broke away from Parsons and took a linguistic turn, resonating with contemporary philosophical trends (Tada 2015b). Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action would be the zenith of this language-first sociological theory, which postulates language as primal in the public sphere (see Habermas 1981, chap. 3, 6; Habermas 1984; Habermas 1985, pp. 438–445). It is true that Habermas's academic interests veered in a more political-philosophical direction after the intensive development of the theory in the 1970s and in the 1980s, but the theoretical frame based on language was still maintained. For instance, he makes the following assertion in his hefty book of 1992 *Faktizität und Geltung* (*Factuality and Validity*).

> The communicative [reason] is distinguished from the practical reason by the fact that it is neither longer ascribed to an individual actor nor to a macro-subject like state or society. What enables communicative reason is rather the linguistic medium, by which interactions get networked and life-forms structured. This rationality is written into the linguistic telos of communicating (*Verständigung*) and builds an ensemble of conditions which simultaneously enable and restrict [communicating]. Anyone who uses *a natural language* for communicating with an addressee about something in the world finds her/himself forced to adopt a performative attitude and to get involved in especial presuppositions. (Habermas [1992] 1998, pp. 18-19, emphasis added)

In this context of discussion, Habermas clearly assumes that "we—who find ourselves in our linguistically structured life-forms" (Habermas [1992] 1998, p. 11) exist previously as a basis for communicating; however, to the present day, such a premise of "us" has apparently not been examined much in sociological theory. In this sense, it seems to have been a theoretical axiom (or an orthodoxy) to think that people shared a language in daily life.

But, what range of people share what language? The important thing is that it is arguable whether people's sharing of a concrete language as it really exists is truly natural—on the contrary, linguistic homogeneity in modernity turns out to be constructed more or less artificially. As Klaus Schubert says, "In 'natural' languages […] there is a good deal of *artificiality*" (Schubert 1989, p. 9, emphasis in original).[4] For the establishment of a far-reaching linguistic homogeneity, a particular language must be chosen or selectively cut out from a dialect continuum, standardized by authorities, diffused through the education system and mass media, and finally accepted by the people. In this sense, the construction of linguistic unity has historically been an intrinsic part of the politics of the modern nation-state. The so-called "first modernity" (Beck 1999, p. 2), in which governments powerfully advanced industrialization,

[4] As seen later, Weber also considered ethnic commonality to be an artificial construction. However, the natural/artificial dichotomy can be confusing. As Schubert (1989, pp. 9–10) points out, planned languages (artificial languages) also depend considerably on the material of natural languages, while many "natural" ethnic languages have grown into their present forms by accepting the language planning of literati, translators, missionaries, and linguists. In brief, languages cannot be classified objectively or definitively in terms of that dichotomy; one can only refer at best to "degrees of artificiality" (Schubert 1989, p. 10) in respective languages. Nevertheless, or therefore, the classification of languages as natural or artificial can be itself a research object, because it expresses a view on the language in question, as Kimura (2007) argues. In other words, the natural/artificial dichotomy is treated not as an explanatory term but as the object of a second-order observation.

demanded linguistic homogeneity, because, as Ernest Gellner (1983, chaps. 3, 6, 10) suggests, a multilingual situation could have hindered efficient cooperation in social (more precisely, intranational) division of labor. At the same time, increasing literacy rates extended and fixed the unitary political space through the vehicle of common written texts, and the rise of communicative labor tied to industrial-structural change also prompted the mono-lingualization of social life.

The assumption of sociological theory that a people (the people of a national polity) share the same language seems to have resulted from these processes of *naturalization of a standardized national language.*[5] Particularly after World War II, nations became more homogeneous on multiple axes, owing to broadly improved living and education standards following continued industrialization and economic growth. In addition, the Cold War brought relative stability to national borders. All of these circumstances allowed people to believe that they were living in distinctly bounded, homogeneous societies and to take for granted the territorial congruity of their political and cultural units. It seems that even sociological theorists confused such national societies with life-worlds, thereby perceiving national languages to be virtually a given—second nature.

Besides those historical conditions, there was also a theoretical reason for interpretative or phenomenological sociologists in particular to accept the idea of a shared language: It allowed their original aim of understanding subjective meaning to be replaced by that of understanding linguistic meaning (see Luckmann 1995 = 2002, p. 209; see also Habermas 1981, pp. 377–410; Habermas 1984, pp. 11–13). That is, they believed that intersubjective, public language preceded individual, subjective thought and regulated it; furthermore, this substitution would have been advantageous to their sociological practice, as linguistic meaning was evident to all and much easier to analyze than subjective meaning.

However, Weber, the father of interpretative sociology, himself never assumed language to be the foundation for understanding. This was not because he failed to recognize its intersubjectivity or publicness as a result of the relatively underdeveloped idea of language in his period. Rather, he deliberately kept his distance from such a linguistic view,[6] as is clear from his concept of language community (*Sprachgemeinschaft*).[7] As detailed below,

[5] As regards linguistic naturalization in relation to the nation-state, see also Law (2014, pp. 164–168).

[6] Historically, Weber lived in the period Ian Hacking calls the "heyday of meanings" (Hacking 1975, Part B, pp. 50–51, 153, 171), in which philosophical issues (and possibly all issues regarding human affairs) were regarded as problems of meaning, after which some came to suppose that any such problem could be solved in terms of language ("public meaning"). Regarding such ideas, common in Weber's generation, see also Hughes (1958).

[7] In this article, I use the terms *language community*, *linguistic community*, and *speech community* synonymously, although, for instance, Gumperz ([1962] 1968, p. 463) makes a distinction between the latter two concepts. Referring to Bloomfield ([1935] 1965, chap. 3) and others, Gumperz states that a *speech community* means in principle a community in which members speak the same single language, while a *linguistic community* is a community circumscribed against surrounding areas on the basis of the frequency of social interaction patterns. Concretely, Germany and Austria belong to the German *speech community* but are separate *linguistic communities* with their own communication densities inside their borders. In contrast, Switzerland is largely incorporated into the neighboring *speech communities* of the German, French, and Italian languages, but this multilingual country is itself a distinct (multilingual) *linguistic community* with its own patterns of interaction density. However, such an objectivist typology of community is irrelevant to this article. In the following discussion, I focus, with Weber, exclusively on the subjective element included in the process of the construction of community: Communal boundaries are variable because they are selectively drawn by members, and the linguistic community is no exception.

Weber did not admit linguistic community as an entity prior to individuals, declaring instead that it, like ethnic community, was a mere idea that would "disappear with exact concept-formulation." For Weber, the common basis of understanding was a rationality universal in human existence, which he called "calculability" (*Berechenbarkeit*).

With these theoretical differences from the sociologists of the linguistic turn in mind, in the following sections I concretely examine Weber's view of language and its historical background.

The subjective construction of linguistic community

This section clarifies the theoretical position of linguistic community in Weber's interpretative sociology. Note first that Weber had noticed the essential function of contingency in semantics, as shown in his famous discussion on *Beruf* ("calling"). According to Weber ([1905] 1963, pp. 63–64, 80–81 = [1930] 2005, pp. 39, 47), an expression of this kind, with a religious connotation of a "task set by God," occurs neither in languages of predominantly Catholic peoples (*Völker*) nor in the period of classical antiquity, whereas it does occur in the vernacular languages of predominantly Protestant nations, such as English and German. However, he flatly denied that, for example, the English or German people were by nature endowed with industriousness as a national characteristic (*Volkscharakter*) reflected in their languages. Against this reified notion, Weber suggested that the "industriousness" should be ascribed instead to contingency in translation:

> It is further shown that what is concerned is not some specific, ethnically conditioned property of the languages in question, e.g., the expression of "German national spirit" [*germanischer Volksgeist*], and that the word [*Beruf*] in its meaning of today comes from the *Bible translations*, to be precise, from the translator's spirit, *not* from the spirit of the original. (Weber [1905] 1963, pp. 64-65 = [1930] 2005, pp. 39-40, emphasis original)[8]

Translation by nature depends on the translator's choice. In Weber's view, Luther's translation of the Bible, which could have been otherwise than it appeared, happened to bring Protestant vocational ethics affirmed electively with the spirit of capitalism. Industriousness was a quality acquired through the *indeterminacy of translation*.

This idea of Weber's has a further implication. As has been known since at least Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the idea had prevailed in Germany that a mother tongue expresses a *Volksgeist* and therefore that, for example, the German language circumscribes and integrates the German nation.[9] Albeit euphemistically, Weber defied such an irrational, organicist metaphysics (and historicist holism) by arguing that there is no innate national character manifested in language.

[8] The same indication is also found in Weber ([1905] 1963, pp. 80–81 = [1930] 2005, p. 47). As for his criticism of the reification of a national characteristic, see also Weber ([1903–06] 1988 = 2012a).

[9] As for the connection of language to the rise of German national consciousness, see, among others, Stukenbrock (2005), Dann (1996), and Ito (2002).

Indeed, Weber clearly professed that the method of his interpretative sociology was rationalistic (Weber [1921b] 1980b, p. 3 = [1968] 1978, p. 6): “[T]he sciences of understanding [*die verstehenden Wissenschaften*] treat ascertainable regularities of such psychical processes entirely like laws of physical nature” (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 429 = 2012a, p. 274). Weber’s concept of understanding [*Verstehen*], in contrast to empathy theory [*Einfühlungstheorie*], aimed at a rational interpretation of subjectivity to explain human action. In this respect, his interpretative sociology was complementary to statistical (quantitative) social research—not only do statistics verify hypotheses about regularities in causal chains; also, subjective meaning and beliefs causally explains statistical regularities in human affairs (see Weber [1913] 1988, p. 437 = 2012a, p. 279). An example of the latter approach is his famous *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which begins—though its significance might easily be missed—by pointing out the statistical fact of regular differences in vocations, social stratification, and education between Catholics and Protestants (Weber [1905] 1963, pp. 17–30 = [1930] 2005, pp. 3–13). Weber considered this regularity explicable in terms of the “reverse causal connection” (Weber [1920a] 1963a, p. 12): In contrast to materialistic assumptions, such differences are a consequence of subjective, religious beliefs.

It is important to recall in this regard that Weber supposed that human action should be called *social* when meaningfully related to others’ behaviors,[10] but also that social action is nevertheless generally oriented toward the subjectively estimated *chances* of given outcomes for the actor’s own action, as well as expectations of and for others’ particular behaviors (see Weber [1913] 1988, p. 441 = 2012a, pp. 281–282; Weber [1921b] 1980b, p. 1 = [1968] 1978, p. 4). Hence, the prototype of social action was purposively-rational action (*zweckrationales Handeln*), in which individual actors are convinced that, as far as standing on the usual relevance (context) of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*), they can rationally pre-calculate others’ behaviors with a certain probability (see Weber [1913] 1988, p. 441 = 2012a, pp. 281–282).[11] In other words, the more purposively-rational an action becomes, the more regular it becomes and, in a sense, moves toward determinism. For instance, one has no other choice but to learn seriously in order to pass an exam, under purposive-rationally thinking. In this frame, the modern autonomous individual who rationally sets her/his own end and means is easy to understand.

Thus, Weber formed an action theory predicated on rationality, subjectivity, and individuality (as distinct from irrationality, intersubjectivity, and collectivity); he

[10] In this article, I do not distinguish “communal action” (*Gemeinschaftshandeln*) in *On Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology* (Weber [1913] 1988 = 2012a) from “social action” (*soziales Handeln*) in *Basic Sociological Terms* (Weber [1921a] 1980a = [1968] 1978), as they are virtually synonymous. Note, however, that in *On Some Categories* the “community” concept referred to social relations in general, and the “society” concept referred to merely one particular form of social relation. That is, community was a superordinate concept to society, although, later in *Basic Sociological Terms*, these two concepts became a pair, as in Tönnies’s work. See Orihara (1996, p. 149, chap. 5).

[11] To supplement this point, a reason that language has no part in Weber’s definition of social action is that he thinks that the subjective meaning of social action is not always reducible to a linguistic meaning. For instance, mystical processes consisted of religious actions are not adequately communicable in words (see Weber [1921b] 1980b, p. 2 = [1968] 1978, p. 3). This Weber’s view of meaning is explicitly distinct from that of sociologists of the linguistic turn like Habermas, who says, “I suppose that a non-verbally expressed meaning can be reproduced in principle and approximately with words: whatever can be meant can be said” (Habermas 1984, p. 12).

maintained this stance even when discussing language. This becomes clear if we contrast Weber's linguistic views with, for instance, those of Ferdinand Tönnies, who assumed the superiority of community (*Gemeinschaft*) to society (*Gesellschaft*) in people's mutual understanding. According to this German sociologist, nearly a decade senior to Weber, community was a natural unity based on "essential will" (*Wesenwille*), and society only a transitory existence produced by "arbitrary will" (*Kürwille*) through agreement and contract: "Community is the continual and genuine living-together [*Zusammenleben*], society just a temporary and apparent one. Accordingly, community itself should be understood as a living organism, society as a mechanical aggregate and artifact" (Tönnies [1887] 1922, p. 5). Tönnies defended this notion in terms of language:

> The true organ of understanding (*Verständnis*)[12] […] is language itself […]. Language has—as all know—neither been invented nor, as it were, arranged as a means or tool by which one makes oneself understood. It is itself a living understanding, and simultaneously [that understanding's] content and form. As is the case with all other conscious expression activities, *linguistic* expression is the spontaneous outcome of deep feelings and prevailing thoughts, and does not serve as an artificial means—which a natural lack of understanding would underlie—for the *purpose* of enabling one to make oneself understood. (Tönnies [1887] 1922, p. 20, emphasis original)

Thus, Tönnies virtually identified community as such with linguistic community, believing that a tacitly pre-shared language (a mother tongue) creates an affective bond of community and that a linguistic commonality enables people to make agreements or contracts in an explicit manner (see Tönnies [1887] 1922, pp. 19–23).

In contrast to this organicist idea, Weber firmly held to his rationalist, subjectivist, and individualist standpoint.[13] In his view, language community is not a pre-existing foundation for something else, but a product of individuals' speech acts; and therefore pre-sharing of a national trait is not required for the establishment of a language community. Even objective commonalities, such as the same pronunciation, are unnecessary; rather, the important condition for the formation of a linguistic community is that individual actors orient their speech behaviors to the chance of being understood by a certain range of others: This range, in which actors can on *average* (therefore rationally) expect their speech behaviors to have meaningful, to some degree predictable, effects on others, is consequently circumscribed as a "language community" (see Weber [1913] 1988, pp. 455–456 = 2012a, p. 290). Simply put, a language community is founded on actors' subjective expectations of and for communicating (*Verständigung*). It exists only if one can rationally expect others' comprehension when talking to them.

In this sense, language community is not a presupposition but a result of social actions: After speaking to others and being apparently almost totally unable to make

[12] As the English word corresponding to *Verständnis*, "consensus" is suggested by Tönnies himself in brackets immediately before the above citation (Tönnies [1887] 1922, p. 19). However, "understanding" seems better here to avoid confusion with *Einverstäntnis* ("consensus") as used in Weber.

[13] Weber ([1921b] 1980b, p. 22 = [1968] 1978, p. 41) seems to suggest that he has a critical attitude toward the substantialistic implication of Tönnies's community and society. As will be seen below, *Weber himself regarded community and society not as* "*being*" *but as* "*becoming,*" *and used the terms* "*communitization*" *(Vergemeinschaftung) and* "*societization*" *(Vergesellschaftung).*

oneself understood, one may conclude that their language is different from one's own and that there is accordingly no linguistic community between oneself and them (see Tada 2010, p. 188). George Yule (2014, p. 256) concisely defined a speech community as a "group of people who share a set of norms and expectations regarding the use of language." However, the sharing of verbal norms and expectations can be confirmed only ex-post, in actual communication. As Nobuharu Tanji (1996, chap. 5, sec.) suggests, it is not because speakers belong to the same language community that they can communicate smoothly, but because they (appear to) communicate smoothly that they can be said to belong to the same language community. Hence, shared linguistic norms prior to speech acts are merely a kind of semblance taken for granted under certain conditions.

Weber ([1913] 1988, p. 453 = 2012a, p. 289) gives as another example the use of money, by which users orient their actions toward the expectation that others will gain benefit from receipt of money, an expectation grounded in the other's interests as well as one's own. Note that money-using actions are not oriented to pre-enacted or explicit agreement (see Weber [1913] 1988, p. 453 = 2012a, p. 289); the use of money is instead required despite, or rather because of, the lack of a common order such as an agreement or plan regarding how to satisfy demands with goods. (Under the genuine communist regime, money would become unnecessary in theory because of the perfectly planned production and full rationing system).

The market is the ideal-typical complex of such money-using actions (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 453 = 2012a, p. 289). Due to others' "blackboxness" (intransparency), purposively-rational actors must take rational account of others' interests to maximize their own self-interest. The market emerges from these kinds of individual actions. Weber clearly states that the market is "the case *as a result of* meaningful relatedness of the action of the money user" (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 453 = 2012a, p. 289, emphasis original). Thus, it is not a pre-existing entity, simply appearing "'*as if*' it had been achieved through orienting to an order that satisfies all participants' demands" (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 453 = 2012a, p. 289, emphasis added).

Weber extended the fictiveness of this "as if" to language community. This was a logical consequence of his interpretative sociology, as his starting point remained individuals' rational actions. By implication expressing a refusal to reify the linguistic community, he states:

> A language community is, in the ideal-typical "purposively-rational" limiting case, presented through social action's numerous *particular acts* oriented to the expectation that the other person achieves an "understanding" of one's subjective meaning. *This occurs massively* [*massenhaft*] *among a multitude of people through a semantically similar use of certain externally similar symbols, and somehow approximately* "*as if*" *the speakers oriented their behaviors to purposively arranged grammar rules.* (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 45 = 2012a, p. 289, emphasis added)[14]

As Stuart Hughes (1958, p. 310) notes, "In the social and cultural world, he [Weber] had found, a fixed reality was undiscoverable." Thus, Weber regarded even the language

[14] The original emphasis in "A *language* community" in the beginning is omitted.

community as a semblance emerging from a certain number of speech acts by individuals, rather than an invariable, a priori reality underlying people's linguistic activities.

Weber in this sense clearly grasped the role of subjectivity in language community construction. Even though speakers may externally appear to use the same language in the same way, they actually, as suggested in the above quotation, use *similar* language in *similar* ways, each one with their own *idiolect* (individual dialect),[15] and thorough observation should always show speakers' personal differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and even grammar. People simply, mutually, ignore differences in their language use, since they believe in their membership in the same language community. That is, the range of "same" depends on one's perspective. In this perspectivist sense, the language community is founded on subjective belief,[16] according to which its boundaries alter. As Pit S. Corder says:

> The concept of 'a language' is a matter of social psychology. A speech community is made up of people who *regard themselves* as speaking the same language. […] In other words, a speech community is defined in terms of *its beliefs*, not its language. (Corder [1973] 1993, p. 53, emphasis original)

With this insight in mind, the language community may be characterized as a type of imagined community: *imagined linguistic community*.[17] As a reality constructed through subjectivity, the language community both expands and contracts in the imagination and can correspondingly be either inclusive or exclusive in different contexts. That is, it is an ideal type existing in the actual world, changing over time.

Language community as a political product

As stated above, Weber's interpretative sociology set social action as its immediate object of observation. His radical rationalism prohibited him from assuming any non-empirical collective entity, as reflected by the concept of consensual action (*Einverständnishandeln*), which is discussed below.

Weber regarded social actions as consensual when the objective probability exists that an actor's expectations regarding others' behavior will be treated as valid (appropriate) by these others *despite no agreement* (see Weber [1913] 1988, p. 456 = 2012a, p. 291). In this respect, his idea of consensus (*Einverständnis*) means virtually the same as "common sense" in everyday life: Consensus exists if a certain chance (probability) of an action's

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[15] Regarding the concept of idiolect, see Lyons (1981, pp. 26–27). Needless to say, neither is an idiolect an invariable entity; as Lyons points out, it can be constantly modified and extended throughout a speaker's life. However, Lyons himself seems to attach greater importance ultimately to the shared sameness in the individual's language behavior, based on the empirical fact that individual speakers switch language variants according to the situation (see Lyons 1981, pp. 274–276). In contrast, I suggest that the Weberian individualist perspective should be more radically sustained in sociological investigations of language, because the interpretation of the verbal norm varies according to person. In other words, socialization remains an individual achievement.

[16] The term "subjective" in this context includes both cognitive and social factors that Law (2014, chap. 9) discusses as determinants of linguistic boundaries.

[17] Kelly-Holmes (2012, p. 337), Law (2014, p. 163, 166), and other authors also use the expression "imagined speech (or linguistic) community," mostly with reference to Anderson (1991).

having a particular consequence is taken for granted. Notable is that this consensus concept does not imply approval, solidarity, or understanding; it means "simply to 'submit to' [*Fügung*] the accustomed *because* it is accustomed" (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 471 = 2012a, p. 299, emphasis original). As typical instances of consensus in this sense, Weber offers multiplication tables drilled into a child's head and a tyrant's orders imposed on subjects. These are bindingly valid even though their basis or purpose is never understood: "Not by rational contemplating but by practiced (imposed) empirical cross-checking, one confirms whether one has calculated 'correctly' in the consented manner" (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 471 = 2012a, p. 299).

This Weberian concept of consensus may equate, in the terms of phenomenological sociology, to what is called the "*epoché* of the natural attitude." Weber himself remarks that people are in the main interested only in the expectations relevant to their practices (see Weber [1913] 1988, pp. 471–472 = 2012a, pp. 299–300; see also Weber [1921b] 1980b, pp. 10–11 = [1968] 1978, pp. 21–22). For instance, we use an electric tram or hydraulic lift without knowing the natural-scientific details of their construction (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 471 = 2012a, pp. 299–300), and conventionally obey laws without knowing their precise wording or necessarily their spirit: Once a new legal order acquires consensus and becomes entrenched, the original meaning that the lawgivers had purposively-rationally thought is forgotten or altered (see Weber [1913] 1988, pp. 471–472 = 2012a, pp. 299–300). As the complexity and differentiation of social life increases, it becomes more universal to bracket things outside of everyday practices (see Weber [1913] 1988, p. 472 = 2012a, p. 300). Hence, as phenomenological sociologists presume intersubjectivity to be a life-worldly (cultural) given, everyday consensus may be seen as the basis for understanding other people.

However, Weber himself never accepted the idea of something collectively pre-shared for understanding. He warned not to identify concepts like social action or consensus with the image of "living with and for one another" (*Mit- und Füreinander*) and insisted that consensus does not immediately mean "exclusiveness" against foreign others (Weber [1913] 1988, pp. 463–464 = 2012a, pp. 294–295). In his opinion, even a genuinely intercultural battle like the Mongol invasion of Europe contained fragments of a consensual communitization (*Einverständnis-Vergemeinschaftung*): Battle is a social order that foes, respectively thinking of some meaning of their own actions, communally form together (see Weber [1913] 1988, pp. 463–464 = 2012a, p. 295). As a corollary of rationalism, subjectivism, and individualism, Weber thought that every community is *what individuals achieve through communitizing social actions*.

> Even if it is a matter of so-called "social objects" [*soziale Gebilde*] like "state," "church," "cooperative," "conjugality," and so on, social relation exists exclusively and merely in the *chance* that an action which, according to the content of meaning, connects with others in some definite way took place, takes place, or will take place. This is always to hold in order to avoid a "substantial" interpretation of those concepts. Sociologically, a "state," for instance, cease to exist as soon as the *chance* that certain kinds of meaningfully oriented social action occurs has disappeared. (Weber [1921b] 1980b, p. 13 = [1968] 1978, p. 27, emphasis original)

Weber applied this view to language community as well.

Nonetheless, the linguistic community seems to have no correspondent in Weber's typology of communities: It is normally neither a rational *purposive association* (*Zweckverein*); nor is it an *official institution* (*Anstalt*), such as the state (a kind of political community) or church (a kind of religious community), predicated on a binding power structure or rational statutes; nor is it in itself an *associative grouping* (*Verband*) with a consensual power order, such as a *household community* (*Hausgemeinschaft*) under a master of the house (see Weber [1913] 1988, p. 466–467 = 2012a, pp. 296–297). For these reasons, language community might appear to have grown naturally and existed as a transsubjective, fundamental entity. However, as with money use, language must be grasped in terms of individuals' purposively-rational, materialistic, and strategic actions, as primarily an instrument for satisfying personal interests.[18]

> The commonality of *language*, which is created through the same kind of traditions from the family and neighboring environment, makes easier in the highest degree mutual behavior, that is, the foundation of all social relations. However, it itself does not yet mean the communitization [*Vergemeinschaftung*, "community-building"], but only makes easier the intercourse [*Verkehr*] inside the group in question, namely, to make easier the genesis of societizations [*Vergesellschaftungen*, "society-building"], first among *individuals*, *not* in their property as linguistic comrades [*Sprachgenossen*], but as other kinds of interested people. Orientation toward the rules of common language is primarily, therefore, only a means of communicating [*Verständigung*], not the semantic content of social relations (Weber [1921b] 1980b, pp. 22-23 = [1968] 1978, pp. 42–43, emphasis original).

The above idea can be illustrated by the status of English as the lingua franca in the present era of globalization. English certainly helps speakers of diverse mother tongues to communicate, but in this regard serves mostly (e.g., in international relations) as a relatively neutral tool to achieve speakers' own (generally political or economic) aims. Such purposively-rational use of English hardly amounts to an English-language community of comrades, and non-native English-speakers participating in transitory intercourse in business English retain a sense of belonging to their own language communities.

As argued in the previous section, language community is *subjectively* demarcated. Let us examine further the question of the conditions required for such demarcation. The answer must lie elsewhere than in language itself, because using the *objectively* same(−seeming) language does not always build language community. On this point, Weber has made a suggestive remark: The subjective construction of community originally has a political nature. He states, "Only *the genesis of conscious oppositions against the third parties* can create the same kind of situation for the participants in the linguistic commonality, community feeling, and [enduring type of] societizations whose conscious ground of existence is the common language" (Weber [1921b]

[18] Weber also understood the growing importance of (national) languages in his time in relation to the purely economic interests of the masses. See Weber ([1912a] 1988a, pp. 485–486) and also Weber ([1921c] 1980c, p. 204 = [1968] 1978, p. 345).

1980b, p. 23 = [1968] 1978, p. 43, emphasis added). Simply put, the most crucial thing for community formation is awareness of the "us" (inside) versus. "them" (outside) distinction. Any kind of community comes from such a (in Rogers Brubaker's terms) "politics of belonging" (Brubaker 2015, pp. 132–135).

Language, in this conception, is merely chosen as an objective(−appearing) basis to justify the distinction between "us" and "them." From Weber's viewpoint (see Weber [1912a] 1988a, p. 484; Weber [1921/22] 1980, p. 515), the "we-consciousness" of a language community is based not on the sharing of language itself, but on *political destiny* in a broad sense, examples being the way the German-Alsatians had a sense of community not in general with the Germans, speakers of the same language, but with the French, with whom they shared political memories of the French Revolution; Polish people in Upper Silesia (*Oberschlesien*) having formerly had no Polish national feeling, rather regarding themselves as Prussian; and Baltic Germans eschewing unity with the German Empire (Weber [1921a] 1980a, pp. 242–244 = [1968] 1978, pp. 395–398; Weber [1921/22] 1980, pp. 528–529). Weber explains these instances in terms of *national feeling* (*Nationalgefühl*), insisting, "[O]ne must not grasp 'nation' as 'cultural community'" (Weber [1912a] 1988a, p. 485; see also Konno 2007, pp. 334–335). However, these cases also make it clear that an objective element like a common mother tongue is not essential for a sense of belonging together.[19]

Insofar as language serves to define "us" versus "them" subjectively, it becomes politically significant. To demarcate insiders, linguistic differences between them and outsiders are often arbitrarily exaggerated or even newly constructed. Since language boundaries themselves, as mentioned above, are not always distinctive, whether two linguistic variants are regarded as the same language's different dialects or themselves different languages depends on speakers' own sense of identification (see Coulmas 1985, p. 32). If a political community declares an independent state, its linguistic variant could also declare an independent national language. As linguistic boundaries can vary in such a way, the discussion in the previous section might have to be slightly amended: The range of intelligible communication does not directly reflect the range of language community. For instance, the two major Albanian dialects, Gheg and Tosk, are not perfectly mutually intelligible, but speakers perceive themselves as speaking a common language; in contrast, although Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish are mostly mutually comprehensible, they are perceived as different languages (Billig [1995] 2014, p. 32; Ruhlen [1987] 1991, p. 277). In this regard, Michael Billig states:

> [T]he boundaries between languages, and the classification of dialects, have followed the politics of state-making. Where national boundaries are established, then, the differences in speech patterns [on] either side of the boundary are more likely to be seen as belonging to distinctly different languages by the speakers themselves, their national centres and the world in general (Billig [1995] 2014, p. 33).

[19] As remarked above, phenomenological sociology postulated intersubjectivity to be a life-worldly or cultural given. Although Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, began his considerations with "I," the phenomenological sociologists started their discussion from "us." Needless to say, however, there remain doubts as to whether, how, and to what degree "we" can be presupposed as a theoretical foundation, because its range is always variable depending on the degree of intimacy among its constituents.

Thus, people may belong to the same nation, but not because they speak the same language. Rather, after political (mostly national) borders are demarcated, "languages themselves have to be 'imagined' as distinct entities" (Billig 1995, p. 36)[20]—people *must* speak the same language because they belong to the same nation.[21] Such nationalist ideology seems to be a major reason why many nation-states feature linguistic unity within their borders: Coterminousness of national territory and linguistic community is artificially produced by political opposition to the outside. And this "artificially" has two meanings: First, linguistic boundaries are subjectively established against the outside in the form of the belief in a shared language; second, national territories are actually homogenized by language planning or even by linguistic, if not ethnic, cleansing. Since language community is imagined and created in this double artificiality, it must be regarded as a selective achievement of human action—at least partly ideological, or *value-rational* action, which appears, according to Weber ([1921b] 1980b, p. 14 = [1968] 1978, p. 26), to be irrational from the purposively-rational standpoint. In nationalist ideology, linguistic homogeneity is itself an *eigen*-value to be fulfilled, and in this regard, Alastair Pennycook's following statement seems to get at the heart of the matter: "Language is located in social action and anything we might want to call *a* language is not a pre-given system but a will to community" (Pennycook 1994, p. 29, emphasis original).

[20] A similar idea can also be found in Georg Simmel's *sociology of space*. He demonstrated the "idealistic principle" (Simmel [1903] 1995, p. 141; Simmel [1908] 1923, p. 623) that space is not a physical but a mental phenomenon. Even natural boundaries like mountains, rivers, seas, and barrens cannot work as such without some symbolic meaning. Predicated on Simmel's idea, Auer (2005a) shows that political borders have a strong influence upon people's cognitive maps of linguistic boundaries, with people apt to treat actual (or former) political borders as linguistic ones. Hence, a transnational dialect is often perceived divisively as belonging to different languages on either side of a national border (and can therefore gradually diverge into these languages in reality).

[21] Such is the case even in the United States. Among some prominent ideologies of US national integration, like the "melting pot" or "cultural pluralism," the most dominant one in practice might well be the so-called theory of "Anglo-conformity," which asks immigrants to abandon their traditions and to assimilate to the Anglo-Saxon core group's behavior and values (see Gordon 1964, chap. 4–6). This ideology applies to language as well. In the early period of the state's founding, political intervention in cultural matters was deliberately avoided, and therefore English was not given constitutional status (Crawford 1992, pp. 29–30). Yet, an assimilating tendency persisted and increased, correlated with the emergence of an imperialism derived from a feeling of the biological and cultural superiority of Anglo-Americans, and also with the growth of new immigrant groups like Jews, Italians, Greeks, Magyars, and Poles, who, unlike earlier groups such as the Germans and Scandinavians, settled mostly in urban centers, and whose poverty, appearance, and manners came under Anglo-Americans' scrutiny. In reality, Congress approved a major change in US naturalization policy in 1906 to avoid giving citizenship to immigrants unable to speak English, and then English monolingualism became more binding as a civil defense countermeasure during World War I (Crawford 1992, p. 49–60). Theodore Roosevelt said in a message to the American Defense Society that "it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed or birthplace or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact an American and nothing but an American. If he tries to keep segregated with men of his own origin and separated from the rest of America, then he isn't doing his part as an American.… We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house" (cited from Crawford 1992, p. 59). According to Crawford (1992, p. 58–59), Roosevelt's statement captures the basic logic of the "Anglo-conformity," as has the English Only (Official English) movement since the 1980s, which comes from feelings of insecurity about growing immigration and veils its anti-foreignism, for instance, by insisting that the common language is indispensable to democracy and the avoidance of ethnic conflicts, and by holding that immigrants should acquire English both for themselves and for the country (Crawford 1992, pp. xii, 24, 237).

The theoretical orthodoxy that language and its community form a life-worldly given structure for social action thus becomes too naïve to maintain. It is true that Weber also conceived of language community as a kind of structure into which "one is normally born and educated" (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 466 = 2012a, p. 296). However, if linguistic community is assumed to be a natural product, it fails to reflect reality. The language communities into which today's people are born and educated are/were often designed by nation-states.

The trend by which sociological theorists take for granted the sharing of language seems itself to derive from the postwar epoché. As stated earlier, the nation-state gained relative stability under economic and educational development and additionally the Cold War. Therefore, people, including sociologists, ceased to think back on their national identity and instead continued to believe that they lived in a national society. National languages also became a given to the majority, as the "mother tongue" within each nation. As Michael Billig ([1995] 2014) indicates, nationalism came to be supported by banal practices, not by conscious choices. The absence of the nation-state is far more unimaginable today (Billig [1995] 2014, p. 77, 95)[22]; it has been *naturalized*, its artificiality forgotten.[23]

[22] Of course, there have been movements for autonomy or independence by linguistic/ethnic minorities in developed countries in the postwar era as well. However, it is not necessarily appropriate to say that these movements are essentially different from or against a dominating majority and are open to heterogeneity. Rather, they are also generally inspired by forms of nationalism, and their adherents generally believe (perhaps even more strongly) that it is natural that the nation as a political unity should be culturally homogeneous. Peter Berger et al. ([1973] 1974: 176–178) argue that these mini-nationalisms of minority groups in modernized Western countries have often developed in the direction of anti-liberalism or right-wing politics, having lost an initial liberal orientation of nationalism in defense of universal human rights.

[23] Ernest Renan, a French thinker known for his 1882 lecture "What is a Nation?", also refers to the function of forgetting for nation-building (Renan [1882] 1887). However, of more interest here is that he himself was an actual example of such national amnesia. Despite the history of coerced usage of the French language after the French Revolution, he innocently says, "An honorable fact for France is that it has never sought to obtain the unity of the language by means of coercion" (Renan [1882] 1887, p. 299). Furthermore, Renan was not always tolerant of the use of languages other than standard French. He famously defined nationhood in terms of the will to "become" the nation ("a plebiscite of every day"), as opposed to the German ethnolinguistic or racial notion of "being" inherently the nation. Therefore, it should have followed that the unity of the language never mattered to him. But, according to Eugen Weber, in 1889 Renan insisted that "no work of science, philosophy, or political economy could be produced in patois" (E. Weber 1976, p. 85). Renan evidently deprecated regional languages, which still survived in the France of the day, as inferior in terms of degree of civilization. Nonetheless, Renan would have had to tolerate them for the moment in order to justify the unity of his France, even if he had no longing for multilingualism deep down inside. His forgetting the past grudges of mandatory language education also seems to be to the same end. What must not be overlooked is that Renan's aforementioned lecture was originally held to propose a logic of nationhood opposing the 1871 annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Prussia, which was justified based on the German nation-concept. He implicitly aimed at justifying the place of the lost German-speaking area within French territory on the grounds of the inhabitants' will. He asserts in the lecture, "One is neither enslaved by his race, nor by his language, nor by his religion, nor by the courses of rivers, nor by the direction of the chains of mountains. A big aggregation of people, being sound in mind and having a warm heart, creates a moral consciousness called a nation. Insofar as this moral consciousness proves its force through the sacrifices which demand the abdication of the individual for the benefit of the community, it [the nation] is legitimate and has the right to exist. If doubts arise regarding its borders, consult the populations [in the lands] under dispute. They properly have the right to have an opinion in the issue" (Renan ([1882] 1887, pp. 309–310). However, this insistence does not mean that Renan was a flexible believer in multilingualism, which is far from a French national credo. Rather, he could not help making the above-cited assertion, simply because "[t]he [Third] Republic under which Renan formulated his idea had inherited a territorial unit but a cultural jigsaw" (E. Weber 1976, p. 112), to which the German concept of nationhood had no applicability at all.

In contrast, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Central Europe, where Weber lived, remained in a turbulent state of nationalism. Under such circumstances, this rational sociologist believed that even the boundaries of ethnic communities were not natural—that contrary to the common conception that ethnic communities were objectively defined in terms of race, common ancestor worship, religion, and language, they were actually rooted in people's collective imagination (see Yamazaki 1999, pp. 11–13, 18).[24] He argued explicitly that ethnicity is artificially (*künstlich*) classified on the basis of subjective belief, and that the political community, above all, awakens the belief in ethnic commonality (see Weber [1921a] 1980a, p. 237 = [1968] 1978, p. 389; see also Isajiw 1974, p. 116). In summary, ethnic groups are formed not through features objectively recognizable as common to the people making them up, but through people's self-recognition of themselves as a "political remembrance-community" (*politische Erinnerungsgemeinschaft*) (Weber [1921a] 1980a, p. 238 = [1968] 1978, p. 390; Weber [1921/22] 1980, p. 515). War is a typical case: A sense of "us" as a common unitary ethnicity can originate even when people are caught up, as a third party, in warfare between foreign powers (see Smith 1991, p. 27). As shown above, "common political destinies" (Weber [1921/22] 1980, p. 515; see also Weber [1905] 1963, p. 81 = [1930] 2005, p. 47; Weber [1912a] 1988a, p. 484) accentuate ethnic differences to others—and some of these differences become the core of modern national consciousness.[25]

It is often said that the national consciousness of Germany, Weber's homeland, was formed by appealing to language: Those who share the German language are the German nation. Herder, Fichte, and later Karl Wilhelm von Humboldt were major representatives of this idea. However, as mentioned above, many native German-speakers did not identify with the German nation. As James Crawford also points out, a notion that a language determines a natural political unit was a "historical phantasy" (Crawford 1992, p. 239). Hence, Weber kept a distance from the Germanic definition of the nation, and at least in later years, "refused to define

[24] As Yamazaki also notes, Weber was a precursor to authors like Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Anthony Smith, who deal with nation-building from a more or less subjectivist viewpoint. For instance, Weber had already suggested that a state is an ideal type "found in individuals' heads" (Weber [1904] 1988, pp. 200–204, 211–212 = 2012a, pp. 130–132, 136). He also asserts clearly that "A modern 'state' exists at no inconsiderable part […] as a complex of a specific cooperative action of people, *because* definite people orient their actions toward an *idea that* the state exists or *should* exist *so that* orders of the certain legal-oriented kind are also *valid*" (Weber [1921b] 1980b, p. 7 = [1968] 1978, p. 14, emphasis original). Concerning Weber's discussion of ethnic community and nation-state as subjective products, see also Fitzi (2004, pp. 206–216).

[25] Smith famously insists that nations always require "ethnic cores" (Smith 1991, p. 38), but does not consider such ethnic elements (i.e., *ethnies*) to be objective entities, rather describing them as "strongly subjective components" (Smith 1991, p. 22). According to Smith, nation-building can start without an ethnic core, but normally requires sooner or later some ethnic identity derived from pre-modern(−seeming) bonds. As a condition for national survival and unity, such an identity must even ultimately be forged if not already present (see Smith 1991, pp. 40–42, 126–127). He defines, therefore, nationalism as a "political ideology with a cultural doctrine at its centre" (Smith 1991, p. 74).

nation, with Herder, as a language community" (Mommsen 1974, p. 54), contrary to his view in early life.[26]

Accordingly, *the Weberian point of view also refuses to define a language community by a language*. Using the objectively same(−seeming) language does not necessarily lead to linguistic communitization. Despite admitting common language to be the most direct means of generating affinity, a sense of community, and ultimately national feeling, readily facilitating the sharing of cultural heritage and meaningful intelligibility among people (see Weber [1921a] 1980a, p. 238 = [1968] 1978, p. 390; Weber [1921/22] 1980, p. 528), Weber never regarded language community as an ontological entity with defined, invariable shape:

> A concrete language community [...] has boundaries *somewhere* (*mostly fluid*) *at each time*. That is to say: Normally, not all human beings who exist in general, but only a certain number of human beings, whose boundary is often quite unclearly determinable, *can be taken into consideration in the "expectations"* as an—actual and potential—participant in consensus at each time. (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 463 = 2012a, pp. 294-295, emphasis added)

Thus, a language or its community is demarcated depending on people's subjective expectations. As Danny Law notes, "Linguistic difference matters, but that difference is not just an independent objective feature of the world" (Law 2014, p. 168). A sense of speaking the *same* language or of belonging to the *same* linguistic community is none other than the "ideological construction of sameness" (Law 2014, p. 164), which can be enforced afterward by (or in spite of) linguistic facts.

[26] For instance, in his inaugural lecture about West Prussia held in 1895 at Freiburg University, Weber still identified nations like Germans or Poles based first on linguistic difference and then on sectarian difference in that region (Weber [1895] 1988, pp. 3, 6 = 1994, pp. 3, 6): Those who spoke German as their mother tongue in the German east—East Prussia, West Prussia, Posen, and Silesia—were of course regarded as German brethren, even though they were Catholic like the majority of Polish-speaking people. Weber in the early year of his career was famously a German nationalist and strongly stressed the defense of the territorial integrity of that region against Poles (both indigenous Poles and inflowing Polish laborers with foreign nationality) (Weber 1892; Weber [1895] 1988). Unfortunately, I cannot afford to present here the whole picture of Weber's *realpolitische* engagement in the so-called "Polish problem," but showing some of his reaction to this question is significant for the discussion in this article. The most interesting thing in this context is that Weber was, despite his former discriminatory statements about Poles, clearly critical of the 1908 coercive language policy adopted toward the ethnic Polish minority in Germany (Mommsen 1974, pp. 63, 63 Fn. 102, 142–143, 143 Fn. 175; Konno 2003, p. 166). For him, the language policy pursued toward Polish-speaking people was both impossible and nonsense (even though oppressive language policies against Polish-speaking people had already existed as part of the "Germanization" of Prussia since the 1871 unification of Germany. See Konno 2009, e.g., pp. 61, 115, 125). Such criticism by Weber was, however, not predicated on a humanitarian perspective; rather, for the sake of German national interest against the perceived threat of Russia, Weber used a carrot-and-stick approach to the integration of the Polish minority in Germany, remaining throughout his career a German nationalist despite swinging from right to left at a certain point (Mommsen 1974, pp. 51–64; Konno 2003, pp. 162–170, 192–195; Konno 2007, pp. 213–214, 256–257). "If we drove a German national politics in the East, we would make the 15 million in-between Slavs our deadly enemies and Russia's supporters" (Weber [1916] 1988, p. 170; see also Weber [1917] 1988). As Konno (2003, 2007) demonstrates in detail, Weber's later insistence on the cultural autonomy of the Polish minority was merely a *realpolitische* means for the integration of the multi-ethnic German Empire, and in his mind, German nationalism and Western liberalism were compatible with each other: He did not convert from nationalism to liberalism with age, but was a liberal nationalist his whole life through.

Toward the re-turn from lingualism

As discussed above, a common language does not directly imply the creation of linguistic community, but simply facilitates communication, which in this context is to say societization. Even if people can communicate smoothly with each other, they do not always feel themselves to belong to the same linguistic community.[27] Furthermore, sharing the same language is not a necessary condition for communication, because unsuccessful communication due to linguistic difference is also communication. In this sense, the speaker can know only after communication what language the other uses.

[26 continuation] That is, his early discriminatory attitude against Poles was, as it were, "liberal xenophobia" trying to prevent the incursion into Germany of "culturally inferior" (uncivilized) Slavs (Konno 2003, pp. 6, 215–237); Weber thought that Poles worked as cheaper labor because of their "bigger cultural poverty" (their lower demand for wages or lesser need for land) and in doing so drove Germans away from the East (see Weber [1917] 1988, p. 179). To begin with, Weber's theoretical standpoint of rationalism, subjectivism, and individualism also seems to come from his nationalistic desire for Germany to achieve a Western-style civil society. But, for these reasons, Weber evidently came to think that Polish people inside the German territory deserved to be citizens of Germany if they got sufficiently "civilized" (Westernized): This criterion of nation-building had nothing to do with either race or ethnicity. Indeed, Weber said later that the circumstances surrounding Poles in Germany had totally changed first because of a "development in the German Pole (*das deutsche Polentum*), which no longer allows to only speak of 'cheaper labor'" and that a "*state* does not necessarily have to be a 'nation-state' in the sense that it orients its own interest exclusively toward the interests of one and only one nationality dominant in it. A state can serve the cultural interests of several nationalities, even in the case that the interest peculiar to the main nationality is well-understood" (Weber [1915] 1988, pp. 123, 128, emphasis original; see also Weber [1917] 1988, pp. 179–180). As for this "change" in Weber, Mommsen comments as follows: "Here lies [Weber's] fundamental turning away from the nation concept oriented toward ethnic or linguistic qualities, that is, [Weber's] extensive approach to the Western European idea of state-nation (*Staatsnation*) which counts any citizen—who subjectively admits her/himself to belong to the state—into the nation regardless of her/his origin if the citizen. Renan called this subjective concept of nation a "plebiscite of every day" in a masterly manner. What was decisive for Weber as well was the subjective communal consciousness, which—directed toward the existence of an own state—becomes a national consciousness" (Mommsen 1974, p. 54). Indeed, Weber himself states that nation or nationality cannot, sociologically viewed, be attributed to common biological or cultural qualities (Weber [1912b] 1988b, p. 487). This suggests that Weber had thought that "non-German" citizens in terms of race or ethnicity could be also included in the German imperial nation and that the notion of an invariable *Volksgeist* is therefore irrational as a standard for demarcating a nation. However, one must be careful again not to characterize Weber's change as a liberal "reform" from being a follower of the "cultural nation" (*Kulturnation*)— based on culturally inherited objective properties like language—to that of "state-nation"—based on subjective will to national unity—in a distinction made by Friedrich Meinecke ([1907] 1928). Rather, Weber had, in accordance with his self-recognition as a West European, supported the frame of the state-nation all the time, and simply thought in the early years that the Poles had not achieved a sufficiently civilized level to belong to the German state-nation. See also the following note 33.

[27] For this reason, Tanji's (1996) above-mentioned discussion seems insufficient, as he did not take into account the speaker's subjectivity. Barbour ([2000] 2007a) illustrates this issue with reference to other empirical research. For instance, while speakers of different "German" dialects sometimes cannot understand each other well, speakers of north-western German dialects and those of neighboring Dutch dialects can communicate to a certain extent. Nevertheless, the latter two groups of speakers would seldom admit to speaking the same language. Barbour states, "[T]he German language is, in all kinds of ways, a highly problematic construct" (Barbour [2000] 2007a, pp. 152–153). Similarly, Sorbs, a Slavic minority group subject to uninterrupted political control by German-speakers since the Middle Ages, can mutually comprehend neighboring Polish-speakers to some degree, although Sorbs themselves would never regard Sorbian to "be" Polish (Barbour [2000] 2007a, p. 154). Simply put, it is difficult to demarcate a language objectively, without considering speakers' identity.

Here again, Weber avoided reifying language community by virtue of his confidence in rationalism, subjectivism, and individualism. Indeed, assuming that language community pre-exists as an invariant entity is metaphysical and scientifically insupportable; instead, it is the dynamics of linguistic communitization that should become the object of sociological investigation. For example, as Weber ([1913] 1988, pp. 462–463 = 2012a, pp. 294–295) suggests, the extent to which social actions using a particular language are open or closed to other people can vary from situation to situation:

> [T]he participants in a language community have normally, for instance, no interest in excluding third persons from the consensus […]; and market-interested persons are also often interested exactly in an "expansion" of the market. Nonetheless, both a language (as sacred, hierarchical, or a secret one) and a market can be monopolistically "closed" through consensus and societization. And on the other hand, although the participation in the specific social action of concrete political power organizations is normally closed through societization, it also can be kept widely open (for "immigrants") precisely owing to the interest of power (Weber [1913] 1988, p. 463 = 2012a, p. 295; see also Weber [1921b] 1980b, p.24 = [1968] 1978, pp. 44-45).

Indeed, there are a large number of inclusion and exclusion issues that concern language, such as linguistic assimilation, linguistic imperialism, multilingualism, and "language wars" (battles or competitions for linguistic hegemony).[28] Sociology, as the study of society, must be capable of dealing with these matters, and therefore cannot naively postulate that language and its community are a natural, stable, and perhaps peaceful foundation for social actions. Language and its community are rather an object for sociology to research, and, for this purpose, the nation-state seems to be one of the most useful analytical lenses. That is, as stated above, the language community does not necessarily coincide with the state, an officially institutionalized political community; *nevertheless, the modern nation-state typically tries to match itself to the language community*. This "nationalist equation of one language = one nation = one state" (Auer 2005b, p. 8) is at the root of many sociolinguistic issues, and its obstinacy has been illustrated relatively recently in certain ex-Communist countries in Europe, sometimes peacefully, sometimes not.

According to Anthony Smith (1979, p. 58), from the eighteenth century to the present day language has remained one of the prime objects of efforts at purification in the service of nationalism. The phenomenon of linguistic affiliation's becoming central to one's social identity is very often a result of nationalist ideology, and is not universal in human history (see Law 2014, pp. 171–173). With modernization, the basic principle of state construction shifted *from religion to language* (see Tada 2015b). This change had not only an ideological but also a practical reason: For the sake of industrialization and militarization, modern states needed to make it easy for people to communicate with each other, and homogenized their working language for this reason. Even an ideal

[28] It can be said in principle that the "war of all languages against all languages" has appeared in modernity because of the (at least theoretical) equality of languages. The *ancien régime* of a sacred or status-based language was "enlightened" (or disenchanted), and a fixed hierarchy of languages was removed (again, in principle).

"public sphere" (*Öffentlichkeit*) would not have been immune to such linguistic homogenization. Usually, the term "rationalization" would remind us foremost of the *disenchantment process from religion to science.* However, parallel to that kind of rationalization, which secularized people's conception of the world, *linguistic rationalization* also occurred through the standardization of language and the spread of schooling, as the modern state needed a "disciplined" common language to achieve "national mobilization" efficiently. Urbanization, too, encouraged people of different origins to use a common language as they mixed.

With linguistic diversity thus reduced, daily life became monolingualized, and the *first modernity of language* was established. This then became the background against which sociological theorists shifted their axis, beginning in the 1960s, from the Parsonian to the phenomenological school, that is, from the theory that looked for the root of social integration in the religious idea to one that emphasized the vital role of public language in understanding others' meaning and in the constitution of the social order.

Unfortunately, this "linguistic turn" in sociological theory appears to have been out of step with actual changes in the world. In those days, the *second modernity* was already dawning, whereby the uniformity-orientation of the first modernity was reflexively revised. Such a theoretical shift in sociology would have been ideologically sympathetic to the second-modern movements, for example, ethnic, racial, and anticolonial movements,[29] but it relied practically on methodological nationalism or the image of the national society. The linguistic turn in sociological theory, while rejecting religion as a remnant of pre-modern state identity, still presumed a shared language, one of the core elements of the modern nation-state identity, to be the intersubjective foundation of society.

Needless to say, the relationship of language to the modern nation-state as discussed thus far in this article is but an ideal type, with many variants and exceptions. Furthermore, this article lacks the scope to go into further detail on the history of sociology since World War II and the place of language therein. However, it is already evident that *lingualism*—a linguistic reductionism that optimistically conceives of language, in its sharedness, as the solution to problems of meaningful understanding and the social order—is insupportable.[30] In fact, language itself causes a range of social problems, particularly coupled with

[29] In reality, such sympathy could also bring a paradox: Many Western(ized) sociolinguists in the early 1960s approved of language policy and planning because they regarded linguistic diversity as an obstacle to national development (Ricento 2000, p. 198). They believed that inequality derived from language would be resolved by linguistic standardization. Aside from whether such a belief is "good" or "bad," language policy and planning can be clearly linked to struggles for linguistic equality in this way (see Schubert 1989, pp. 17–18). Likewise, some protest movements based on second-modern subpolitics ("direct" politics from below) are nevertheless inclined to seek new nation-state-building—the first modern form of the state. Yōichi Kibata (2014, p. 267) indicates that the nation-state frame is indeed strengthening in the twenty-first century, following the period he calls the *long twentieth century*—by which he means not the well-known, US-hegemony-based definition by Giovanni Arrighi but instead the span between the beginning of imperialism proper in the 1870s and its final end in the 1990s. The fall and transformation of the twentieth-century imperialist world order globally re-emancipated ethnic, racial, and anticolonial movements for their own nation-states.

[30] For the term "lingualism," see also Hacking (1975, pp. 84–85, 174–176, 182–184). His definition is not particularly clear, but he rephrases the word as "linguistic idealism," the idea that all reality is verbal, and then criticizes such an extreme language-reductionist standpoint. This insight is fully acceptable, but Hacking conceives of lingualism as a variant of (idealistic) individualism, and thereby reifies something collective demarcated by distinct language: "Knowledge, once possessed by individuals, is now the property of *corporations*" (Hacking 1975, p. 184, emphasis added). In contrast, I have denied such a collectivism throughout the discussion in this article, and I use the term only in the above sense.

the nation-state frame. For instance, minority language groups may be easily relegated to a lower social position if they have less than full command of a common national language. Such structural discrimination occasionally spurs oppressed people into mini-nationalisms, leading them to seek self-government as a unique linguistic community or even independence as a country with its own national language.

As Stephen Barbour ([2000] 2007b, p. 17) argues, a national language is one of the major components of nationalism. He says:

> While the linguistically homogeneous state is extremely rare, and while a high proportion of languages are actually not sharply distinct from others, the demand for the linguistically homogeneous nation and the clearly distinct national language has become a standard part of nationalist ideology (it goes without saying that such ideology demands that nation and state be coterminous; in fact it regularly merges these two concepts) (Barbour [2000] 2007b, p. 14).

As suggested in this cited passage, it is incorrect to assume that a homogeneous linguistic community underlies the nation-state. On this issue, Karl Deutsch made a suggestive point as early as the 1940s, referring to a series of *The Statesman's Year-Book*: "The national languages of today appear not only as a cause, but as a result, of national differentiation" (Deutsch [1942] 1968, p. 605). According to him, the number of "languages" in Europe increased proportionally from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century with the growth in the number of states, as nationalist ideology imagined languages one after another during that period. Concretely speaking, the number of languages in Europe rapidly grew from 16 in 1800 to 30 in 1900, and to 53 in 1937, while the number of sovereign states in Europe increased from 15 in 1871, to 21 in 1914, and to 29 in 1937 (Deutsch [1942] 1968, pp. 599–600, 606). "So far as the language factor is concerned, the bulk of the evidence shows for the years from 1800 to 1941 a steady increase in the diversity and strength of nationalistic feeling" (Deutsch [1942] 1968, p. 600).

Central Europe was the major notable battleground for such linguistic nationalisms because in this land of "belated nations," nationalism took the form of *ethnolinguistic* nationalism, and the notion of the national language was already well rooted during the second half of the nineteenth century (see Kamusella 2011; 2001, p. 239; and also Anderson 1991, chaps. 5–6).[31] In this context, it is also no coincidence that Esperanto was created in the second half of the nineteenth century in Central Europe. Ludoviko L. Zamenhof, the father of this "international" neutral language, intended to reconcile opposing ethnolinguistic groups with its widespread use, and says that his devising of Esperanto—this name means "one who hopes"—was motivated by his childhood experience of ethnolinguistic hostilities among Russians, Poles, Germans, and Jews in his hometown, Białystok, in Poland, under the Russian Empire (Zamenhof 1929, pp. 417–418).[32] However, the vast multiethnic empires of Central Europe (the German,

[31] For instance, at the mixed-nationality frontier of Prussia and Poland as late as the eighteenth century, the most relevant factor dividing the population into groups with their own identities and interests was religion rather than language (Hagen 1980, pp. 24–30).

[32] Just as a point of information, Weber evidently had negative views on the prospect of linguistic unification through an artificial language like Esperanto, but in contrast positively evaluated the creative significance of the diversity of "natural languages." See Weber ([1909] 1988, pp. 418–419 = 2012a, p. 264) and Radkau (2013, pp. 412).

Austrian-Hungarian, and Russian Empires) were eventually dismantled due to World War I into smaller nation-states based on ethnolinguistic identity. The expansion of linguistic nationalism in Central Europe was thus, for Weber, a decidedly contemporary phenomenon, the experience of which led him to perceive language as an *ideological apparatus* for nation- and nation-state-building. He writes as follows:

> Today, in the age of language wars [*Sprachenkämpfe*], "language community" is particularly valid as [national commonality's] normal basis. [...] In fact, "nation-state" became nowadays conceptually identical with "state" based on language uniformity. Great numbers of political associative groupings actually have such modern character on a "national" basis in this linguistic meaning. Aside from them, there are also political associative groupings that contain several language communities. [...But they] usually, not always, give preference to one language for the political intercourse (Weber [1921a] 1980a, p. 242 = [1968] 1978, p. 395).[33]

Weber was clearly aware that the linkage between the name of nation (*natio* in Latin) and a national language emerged in modernity (Weber [1912a] 1988a, p. 486), and, as the above excerpt suggests, he did not overlook the relationship of politics to language. This seems to be a corollary of Weber's consistent viewing of the nation-state not as something metaphysical but as the "worldly power-organization of the nation" (Weber [1895] 1988, p. 14 = 1994, p. 17). Symbolically, he took language as the first instance or opportunity to clarify the phenomenon of domination (*Herrschaft*) in human affairs (Weber [1922] 1980, p. 541 = [1968] 1978, p. 941). According to him, the elevation of a given dialect as the language of officialdom (*Kanzleisprache*) had frequently, as in Germany, had a decisive impact on the development of extensively integrated literary-language-communities; conversely, as in the case of the Netherlands and Dutch vis-à-vis German(y), political separation often establishes the final differentiation of languages; furthermore, controlled dominance over the schools fixes the kind and superiority of the official school language.

These examples show that language is closely but unnoticeably associated with a state's governing systems, like administration and education. This further implies that language is constantly exposed to artificial selection by these systems of power.[34]

[33] Weber also says, "With the democratization of the culture, the language community becomes exclusive in the masses as well, and the national confrontations necessarily sharpen, tied strongly with the ideal and economic interest of the mass-literati (*Massenschriftstellerei*) in each of the vernacular languages (*Volkssprache*)" (Weber [1916] 1988, p. 177). With the Poles of the German Empire in particular in mind, Weber explains the difficulty of a coercive language policy as follows: "Unnoticed remained all experiences [regarding the language policy toward the Poles] that such regulations, everywhere and always, united any nationality which is *not* analphabetic any longer but is equipped with its own press and own literati class, already through the material interest of these classes, into the intense resistance which has *never* knuckled down before. The 'masses' get involved earnestly now" (Weber [1917] 1988, p. 179, emphasis original). This was one of the *realpolitische* reasons that Weber was opposed to the language policy toward Polish-speaking people inside the German Empire. As stated above in note 26, Weber aimed at maintaining the national integration of the Empire through an appeasement policy.

[34] Additionally, see Auer (2005a, p. 11; 2005b). While Anderson argues only that a *written* standard variety of language spread over a territory by means of printing technology, hereby helping to establish an imagined national community, Auer points out the role of a *spoken* standard as well, which with the written one had contributed to national unification in many European states since the late nineteenth century, when compulsory schooling spread to the remotest regions (and among speakers of the remotest dialects).

Deutsch states that "[t]he acceptance of a common national language contains an element of choice" (Deutsch [1942] 1968, p. 603). If this were the case, it would be less and less sensible to presuppose language as a natural, certain foundation for understanding meaning. Linguistic homogeneity, at least in modernity, is rather a social construct that must itself be investigated by sociology.

Perspectives: sociology of language in the age of the world society

As is well known, Martin Luther rejected the Latin linguistic dominance of the church in the sixteenth century, translating the Bible into German.[35] Historically, this incident represented a turn from sacred language to the secular vernacular, out of which emerged national language.[36] Today's linguistic nationalism may, however, be rooted more immediately in revolutionary France. French nationalism was an amalgam of civic and ethnic components (Smith 1991, p. 13), of the universal and the particular (see Billig [1995] 2014, pp. 24–25)—the revolutionists insisted on standard French throughout the land, at least partly in pursuit of a mission of civilization backed by self-perceived French cultural supremacy (see Calvet [1974] 2002, chap. 7). In this ethnocentric sense, even French nationalism seems to have included ethnolinguistic elements, although it is usually characterized as a purely civic nationalism.

In any case, language was *territorialized* by the nation-state (Auer 2005a, p. 11). Monolingual environments within borders are more or less a political product. On the other hand, even dialectal communities in provincial areas might remain, in a broad sense, a political construct based on inhabitants' counter-identity in relation to a capital city or central government using the standard language. But as long as individuals always speak their own idiolects, there is in theory no community featuring a pure linguistic homogeneity. Owing to individual variation in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, the idea of a group of people sharing exactly the same language through socialization is unsustainable; but in the real world, a sense of belonging to a particular linguistic community hides such idiolectal differences.

An individual's linguistic identity is formed on the basis of political grounds, not linguistic ones, because, as Law indicates, "[O]ur linguistic choices say something to others about us" (Law 2014, p. 169). On this point, the rise of linguistic nationalism in modernity seems to represent a shift "from *Gesellschaft* to *Gemeinschaft*" (Wallerstein

[35] Incidentally, Luther was the first translator of the New Testament to go to the Greek original since the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the fourth century (Schildt 1991, p. 97).

[36] According to Lauren Keeler (2008, p. 358), Anderson's theory has a flaw, as it showed nationality to be a construct and thereby historicized (de-naturalized) the Herderian concept of the nation, but assumed discrete (national) languages to be a natural given and conceived such languages as a functional requisite in the formation of nations. In contrast, Keeler herself insists that a (national) language does not predate national imaginings but rather rests on them for its demarcation (Keeler 2008, p. 358). She illustrates this with the case in which Chinese linguists in the early twentieth century, referring to the Western *Stammbaum* (pedigree) model of language relatedness, reconstructed and re-imagined the "Middle Chinese" phonological system as the common ancestor of Chinese "dialects." And similar patterns seem to occur in other languages. Auer (2005b, pp. 14–15) shows that late-standardized languages whose new standard varieties were first introduced in writing, such as Norwegian, Finnish, Greek, Czech(o-Slovak), Bulgarian, etc., were typically subject to such archaization. For instance, some Northern and Central European languages standardized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often made conscious reference to older and sometimes considerably distant, but more prestigious, varieties than the vernacular language of the time.

[1986] 1991, p. 75).[37] A small-scale community does not grow to a large-scale society; nor is a community ontologically real while society is unreal. Rather, communities like that of the nation-state were sought after the emergence of *the world society*, because people needed novel anchorages for their survival and psychological security (see also Bolz 2001, p. 39).

As Weber asserted, the state is an officially institutionalized *community.*[38] Since it can never be a *society*, a spontaneously emerging order, methodological-nationalistic identification of state with society is clearly a conceptual confusion. However, this confusion arose for a reason: Nationalism itself became a secular religion that gave social cohesion and identity to the growing "middle-class masses" relieved from traditional bonds in the postwar era (see Hobsbawm [1983] 2012, pp. 263–268, 303).[39] Although Weber mentioned the church as another example of an officially institutionalized community, religious community was destined to decline with modernization. Indeed, Weber himself said that the Puritan spirit had already in his time escaped from the "iron cage" [*stahlhartes Gehäuse; steel-hard shell*] (Weber [1905] 1963, pp. 203–204 = [1930] 2005, pp. 123–124). Contrary to Parsons's supposition, religion was ceasing to be the shared norm upon which action was based, and was becoming instead a consumer good left to individual choice. Under these circumstances, combined with the relative stability of national borders under the Cold War, the nation-state offered itself as a major resource to supply social cohesion and identity. We may perhaps dare to summarize this development in Parsonian terms, but with a key substitution: Nationalism replaces religion as the *irrational* element to foster social integration within borders; it itself becomes the civil religion of the nation.

In many developed countries, the frame of the nation-state is so self-evident that people tend to conceive of their living in a definitely bounded national society; and territorialized language appears to be the biggest contributor to this naturalization of the nation-state, as it usually feels like an inherent, shared aspect of the nature of the national society. This is why sociological theorists came to view language, not religion, as the common determinant of people's world-view, taking national language for natural language. They failed to question the idea of the pre-existence of the language community.

Weber's individualist view of language may fit today's reality far better. As noted above, he did not reify the linguistic community at least partly because of his contemporary context. Likewise, in our present days of globalization, as more and more people move across borders, nation-states are becoming less and less monolingual. Furthermore, the sub-politics of linguistic minorities seeking official recognition of their language rights can no longer be ignored. If the government compels the whole population to learn a particular language, it can lead to language wars. We are living in the *second modernity of language*.

On the other hand, the linguistic unification of the world society is also progressing. English is rapidly gaining influence in non-English-speaking countries. To borrow Anthony Giddens's (1991, p. 18) terms, English has become a kind of "symbolic

[37] Wallerstein himself refrains from using this expression, restating the point as follows: "[O]ur only *Gesellschaft*, the capitalist world-economy [...] has been creating our multiple, meaningful *Gemeinschaften*" (Wallerstein [1986] 1991, p. 75).

[38] Note that Anderson characterized the nation-state precisely as an imagined *community*.

[39] The period Hobsbawm deals with is thirty or forty years before World War I. However, as argued earlier, the situation seems to have become far more common after World War II.

token" that enables "disembedding" beyond the local frame of a national society. In fact, like Latin or French in earlier times, the world-wide expansion of English may even be giving rise to a so-called *New Medievalism*: a stratified society crossing national borders. Those in this upper(−middle) layer can construct borderless human networks through their use of the world language, perhaps finding greater familiarity and solidarity with foreigners equal in intellectual and cultural cultivation and similar in taste than they find with others of their own nationality (see also Gellner 1983, p. 113)—*English-based cosmopolitanism*. Yet, those in the lower layer might also cross borders with relative ease by taking jobs abroad that do not require high levels of English proficiency. Consequently, (lower-)middle-class people seem most likely to be left behind in their home countries, specialized for the domestic labor market through national education and language, which previously functioned as a barrier to immigrants or guest workers entering the white-collar labor market of a host country, but nowadays hinder middle-class members from entering the global labor market. The middle tier in English-speaking countries may also feel themselves facing stiff challenges from overseas students and cheap foreign workers with adequate English proficiency. The anxiety of this declining class regarding their everyday life and livelihood has been widely observed to be a cause of the recent spread of nationalism and "populism" in developed countries, which may seem much like the dying scream of a disintegrating national society: In the era of globalization, the (lower-)middle-class could fall into the lowest class because of their low mobility.

Class issues derived from language are, of course, not the sole factor in the current unsettled global situation. However, some people undoubtedly feel pressured by English linguistic imperialism,[40] concerned that their mother tongues might be devalued to mere minority or local languages in the global context, losing their prestige as national languages even inside national borders, which would mean a loss of their social status as well. Norbert Bolz says, "In the Global Village of the internet, mother tongues [languages other than English] appear as a blockade on world communication" (Bolz 2001, p. 55). It goes without saying that this is not limited to cyberspace.

Thus, language, like religion, has increasingly become an individual choice—a kind of individualization (or privatization) of language. For the sake of social and economic interests, an enormous number of people personally choose English foreign language education for themselves or their children. Indeed, the enthusiasm for learning English is a societal movement that has evolved from the bottom up (Wright 2000, p. 250), because, as Stephen Ryan states, "Language learning is primarily concerned with how people regulate their future or future oriented actions" (Ryan 2006, p. 38). On the other hand, as Ryan argues in detail, learning English can be also correlated with a new self-

[40] An interesting episode related to this matter can be recalled: When George H. W. Bush dispatched the Peace Corps into post-Communist Poland and Hungary in 1990, he suggested that the newborn capitalist countries required a medium to nurture free ideas and to sustain free enterprise, and remarked to the departing volunteers as follows (Crawford 1992, p. 206): "The key you carry with you will be the English language—what Paul [D. Coverdell, Director of the Peace Corps] calls the language of commerce and understanding. And just as national literacy has long been the key to power, so today English literacy has become the key to progress. Like your liberty, your language came to you as a birthright and a credit to the dreams and sacrifices of those who came before. […] Your investment is America's investment in the consolidation of democracy and independence in central and eastern Europe" (Bush [1990] 1991, p. 830).

identity. According to him, young people who eagerly learn English today are apparently motivated at least partly by the desire to obtain recognition of and legitimacy for their membership in an *imagined global (language) community*, rather than purposively-rationally by some direct socioeconomic benefit. Aside from an individual's local identity, an ideal, transnational, global self-identity can be constructed in part by learning English and using it as an objective means to present such a self in certain domains, decoupling English from particular Anglo-American countries or contexts, whereas eager learners of English in days past might have held, for example, a cultural admiration for the United States, and *value-rationally* targeted the country as a community to access through learning English. In this global era, the change from such a nation-state-based world picture also occurs in terms of English and English learning itself. The target community with which the current younger generation of English learners identifies in the imagination can be de-nationalized, although this may in turn itself be part of a "new medievalization" process.

In parallel to such a de-nationalizing tendency among individual learners, a paradoxical phenomenon has also been emerging from the frame of the nation-state: Some governments prefer to instill English into their own people for the sake of their survival and prosperity in global competition. This *nationalistic Anglicization from above* may bring leftists or liberals around to ethnolinguistically advocate for their national languages. As Anderson (1991, p. 134, 148) suggests, anyone can in principle learn any language, although temporal limitations can prevent its full acquisition. However, mandatory English education at the cost of one's mother tongue would inevitably entail emotional conflict, just as the ethnic community or nation is "one of the concepts which vex us with emotional sensations the most" (Weber [1921a] 1980a, p. 242 = [1968] 1978, p. 395). To begin with, if such an Anglicization from above succeeded well, it would be highly likely that the language policy would produce the contrary effect—a brain drain from the country.

In either case, the current globalized era no longer allows sociological theories to assume naively the collective sharing of the same language on the presupposition of a homogeneous "national society." Since we live in a heterogeneous global society, sociology cannot securely postulate linguistic intersubjectivity for mutual understanding. Such a methodological-nationalistic axiom is itself a social product of the first modernity. Today, language must be dealt with as a sociological research object; and to study various social issues and phenomena regarding language, Weber's rationalist, subjectivist, and individualist standpoint should be revaluated, as it enables us to look at languages and their communities in terms of their dynamics and to recognize them as social constructs.

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