SLICE: Critical perspectives on language (de)standardisation

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BACKGROUND

This book is the first publication from the international group of researchers involved in developing the SLICE programme, SLICE being originally coined as an acronym for *Standard Language Ideology in Contemporary Europe*. This title hints at the interests and objectives of the SLICE research group, but of course it doesn't define them. The programme is still evolving and the present book is designed to be part of the formative discussion through which empirical and theoretical priorities will be established and carried forward. The fundamental aim has been to establish a European network of like-minded (or perhaps constructively antagonistic) researchers, with the prospect of developing one or more innovative, comparative European projects on standard languages, linguistic standardisation and linguistic destandardisation.

Many key dimensions of SLICE remain to be determined, and we will introduce some of them in detail in this Introduction. But a first-level examination of the SLICE acronym suggests the following. *Standard language* is itself a slippery concept, and it is in need of further critical consideration. It is self-evident that many of Europe's languages can legitimately be called standard languages. But SLICE is interested in the criteria according to which the designation 'standard' can be applied, no doubt differently in different environments, and in whether the concept has different connotations and implications in different European countries and communities ('communities', because the programme will focus on several smaller regions as well as on nation-states). SLICE is interested in *ideologies* of language as much as in the forms and functions of languages themselves, and in exploring how ideology can be made visible by different research methods. This implies a commitment to researching the attitudes and value-structures that underpin attributions of 'standard', potential subjective complexities and shifts in these subjectivities. We expect language ideologies to differ across research sites, and in many cases also within them. Researching language ideologies should give us access to the social and cultural dynamics that position European languages as social-cultural symbols and resources in their different settings. SLICE is concerned with *contemporary Europe*, but this does not imply a neglect of history. On the contrary, we are interested in – and mainly motivated to analyse and understand – the ways in which contemporary sociolinguistic arrangements across Europe have recently evolved and are currently evolving. While most European languages have long histories of standardisation, SLICE focuses on what is changing *now*, in the context of late modernity. To that extent the SLICE acronym might alternatively be interpreted as *…in a Changing Europe*, with an emphasis on change specifically in the era of globalisation.

SLICE's networking ambitions are already being fulfilled. In February and August 2009 about thirty scholars from diverse European contexts gathered in Copenhagen for two exploratory workshops on 'The nature and role of language standardisation and standard languages in late modernity'. The following countries/ communities were represented at the workshops: Denmark, Finland (Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking), France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland (Irish-speaking), the Lowlands (Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch), Norway, Sweden, UK (English-speaking and Welsh-speaking). The preponderance of northern Euro-

pean communities should not be read as a signal that SLICE aims at some kind of geographical demarcation; it is a simple consequence of where the initiative and funding came from. Since the exploratory workshops, the SLICE group has been joined by interested researchers representing Austria and Lithuania. The final national/ regional and linguistic reach of the programme is not fixed, and SLICE welcomes participation from individuals and communities that are not currently active.

As contributions to this book will partly indicate, new research under the aegis of SLICE is already under way in some areas. But, as editors, our ambition for this volume is not so much to report that research but to lay the ground for future studies and perspectives. As we explain below, at this stage SLICE is foregrounding two different fields of new research. One is based in the tradition of quantitative *language attitudes research* which, in spite of the recognition that the paradigm faces methodological challenges, is able to generate concrete and comparable data on subjective assessments of language varieties and their speakers. The other is based in *media analysis* of different sorts (including critical analysis of media discourse), building on the conviction that, despite opinions to the contrary (debated in detail by Stuart-Smith, this volume), mass media are increasingly significant in carrying forward social and sociolinguistic changes involving (what are considered to be) standard and vernacular spoken varieties. We introduce the two strands in more detail, below. The book's chapters orient to these two principal perspectives, and, we believe, they offer unusually rich opportunities to refine and debate what can be delivered through original research in relation to each of them.

Unifying and transcending these two research fields, however, is a body of theory around language standards, standardisation and destandardisation, and SLICE has the ambition to make a concerted and original contribution in this area too. Key contributors to this literature have commented that existing (socio)linguistic treatments of standard language have been limited. For example, John Joseph begins his volume on 'the rise of language standards and standard languages' with the observation that 'In modern linguistics, the phenomenon of language standardization has not been a central interest, and it is noticeable that linguistic scholars have often been content with *ad hoc* and incomplete definitions of "standard language"' (Joseph 1987: vii). In Joseph's view, generative linguists have been uncritical of their own assumptions about standard language, particularly the assumption that the object of linguistic description and theory should be an invariant variety of a given language – its standard variety. But he is also critical of many sociolinguists' assumption that linguistic varieties can be assigned to categories of 'standard' and 'non-standard' on simplistic criteria such as 'educatedness'. Similarly, James Milroy (e.g. 2001) is critical of how variationist sociolinguistics have tended to make glib associations between standardness and prestige. In order, we hope, to do some ground-clearing work in this area of theory, we return to Joseph, Milroy and other authors in later sections of this Introduction.

We also take the opportunity to think through the social infrastructure of concepts such as 'the best language', 'proper ways of speaking' and 'refined talk', all of which are possible ways of glossing standard language. We situate this debate by revisiting social-theoretic accounts of 'civilisation' (in the writing of Norbert Elias) and 'distinction' (in the writing of Pierre Bourdieu). Our argument will be that some aspects of these foundational studies of the rise of 'proper' social practice can be helpful when we need to rethink standard language. Elsewhere in the Introduction we also reflect on Einar Haugen's very influential conceptualisation of language standardisation processes, asking to what extent his model is well-suited to the ambitions of SLICE and, in particular, to its interest in late modernity – a social ecology very different to the ones that Haugen was confronting. If we persist with Haugen's model, how can it be interpreted in relation to language attitudes research and media language research?

We also introduce SLICE's engagement not only with spoken language varieties in different communities but also with media data, and provide some perspective on destandardisation

and related concepts. One of SLICE's key objectives is to make informed assessments of the extent and nature of linguistic destandardisation in contemporary European contexts. While sociolinguistic attention has so far been given to standardising processes – the mechanisms by which language varieties 'rise' to function ideologically and practically as standard varieties – it is also necessary to move beyond linear accounts and to explore whether and how varieties that have functioned as standards may be losing their legitimacy. Is there evidence that ways of speaking that have been positioned as 'non-standard' or vernacular varieties are 'moving up' to function in domains previously associated with standard varieties? More radically, is there evidence that the ideological systems that have supported attributions of standard and vernacular language may be crumbling, losing their potency or being restructured? Is it appropriate to see late modernity as an era when linguistic standardisation is in some ways and in some places being reversed, or at least rendered more complex and multi-dimensional?

THE STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

The book's chapters are organised into two Parts. The first Part assembles a series of 'community reports' (which, in earlier planning, we referred to as 'country reports', a term that wrongly implied a nation-state perspective). Scholars from 13 European communities (which, again, might be thought of as 'speech communities', at the risk of opening up further terminological disputes) present short overviews of standard language issues and developments in each of the currently participating territories. The reports provide succinct accounts of how the diversity of European standard language realities came about and, on the basis of existing research evidence and personal experience, assessments of whether inherited arrangements are or are not changing, and how. One way of describing the remit of the reports is that each offers a critical overview of how a particular sociolinguistic environment is reacting in its engagement with late modernity and globalisation. In practical terms, this has meant limiting the historical remit of the reports to developments since about 1960. Accordingly, the community reports avoid being only, or even mainly, historically oriented, placing the emphasis on local experiences in 'contemporary Europe'.

In line with SLICE's main emphases, the reports pay particular attention to the role of ideology in language standardisation. Consistent with our position (above) that no fully comprehensive sociolinguistic framework for analysing standard language as yet exists, we have encouraged contributors to follow their own theoretical leanings, and of course their data, in interpreting standards, standardisation and destandardisation (although we discuss an initial conceptualisation, below). Similarly, as editors, we refrained from trying to impose any single perspective on 'how to decode ideology'. We suggested that ideological trends may be recognized not only in relatively explicit political of policy-based commentaries, and in overt pre- and proscriptions about 'good and bad language'; it might also be important to draw inferences, cautiously, from usage. The reports therefore comment on which voices are in circulation in which contexts, and with what ideological implications? Salient contexts would, we suggested, potentially include mass media, particularly in view of the media's acknowledged historical role in promoting and even in defining standard language usage in many communities (see, for example, Thelander's discussion of such processes in Sweden, and Östman and Mattfolk's parallel account of media influences in Swedish-language Finland, both in this volume). All the same, we anticipated that communities would have different experiences in this regard, and that normative styles might be judged differently under different circumstances. Are transnational developments in broadcasting (e.g. the increasing circulation of 'reality' TV shows, game show franchises and popular culture formats generally) having any systematic impact on what might more generally be considered (in Milroy's term) a 'standard language culture'? Is the role of the media (or, more plausibly, are some specific media segments) coming to be associated more with *de*standardisation than with standardisation (cf.

Nuolijärvi and Vaattovaara, this volume) nowadays? Do new interactive media offer resources for counter-normative communication practices?

Inevitably, the community reports do not consistently deal with all of these issues. The most general aspect of the brief to authors was to frame their accounts, as far as possible, in relation to any detectable shifts over time in the broad climates of opinion about language values, especially in relation to standardisation or the value of vernaculars, e.g. among governments or opinion leaders, or media moguls, or 'the people', and to summarise any research evidence (the extent of which would of course vary form one setting to another) that they could access in support. We encouraged authors to reflect on the fate of language values in their communities under the socio-historical conditions of globalisation (as characterised in this volume, for example, by Gregersen), fully bearing in mind that globalisation is not the uniform, pan-national set of socio-cultural changes that it is sometimes held to be (Coupland 2010).

Part 2 of the volume consists of longer and more theoretically oriented chapters. We invited contributions of this sort that would serve as reference points, theoretically and methodologically, for SLICE as an evolving research programme. The Part 2 authors, including experts from outside the original SLICE group, were informed about the programme's main concerns and asked to provide empirically based analyses and arguments in relation to speculative questions of the following kinds. Are 'standards' of speech changing, and if so, in which particular senses? In their own research paradigms and projects, is there evidence that 'non-standard speech' – the most likely candidate(s) being the traditional low-status speech of large cities – is being upgraded as, in some sense, 'the best language', leaving the standard language ideology intact but differently targeted? Or might it be that 'standards' of speech are generally crumbling, so that the whole ideology of 'good and bad' language is losing ground? Are language-ideological shifts creating or exploiting new values in (some sorts and contexts of) vernacular language use? Can some particular sense(s) of the concept of destandardisation help to theorise attested sociolinguistic processes such as linguistic levelling and supra-localisation, as aspects of language change in progress? How should sociolinguists build research projects to explore language-ideological shifts towards more democratic and diversity-friendly orientations to language variation, also to new market forces dictating the production and consumption of mediated voices? What frameworks and data could they bring forward to clarify these questions, and perhaps even to begin to answer them? (We acknowledge that this is a daunting list!)

In response, the five Part 2 authors have offered particularly cogent and illuminating chapters, on the following themes:

- the historical de-Europeanisation of broadcast news in New Zealand, based on sampled media data (Allan Bell);
- the changing status of German in late modernity, based on variation analyses of spoken corpora (Peter Auer and Helmut Spiekermann);
- the social-psychological evidence for taxonomising speech varieties in the Low Countries as 'standard' or otherwise, based on speaker evaluation data (Stefan Grondelaers, Roeland van Hout and Dirk Speelman);
- the potential impact of television on phonological change in Britain, in the context of multi-disciplinary perspectives on 'media effects' and the role of the viewing public (Jane Stuart-Smith); and
- the pluralisation and localisation of norms for writing in networked, interactive new media (Jannis Androutsopoulos).

In their different ways, all five chapters directly address central facets of the SLICE programme. They clearly demonstrate the application of particular research methods that can be

used to generate insights into standardisation and destandardisation; they forge links between language ideologies and linguistic forms and functions; and they make major contributions to clarifying theory around standard language and destandardisation. We will not try to comment in detail on these chapters here, but, as with the community reports, we will refer to some aspects of particular authors' arguments and critical observations in later sections of this chapter.

STANDARDISATION AND SOCIAL PROPRIETY: ELIAS AND BOURDIEU

We shall come on to introduce mainstream perspectives on standard language shortly. But first, we want to suggest that it might be helpful to place these sociolinguistic debates in a wider context. Standardisation of course applies to many aspects of social life beyond language. Use of a standard language is one among many dimensions of perceived social propriety – of normative social practice underpinned by strong and always evolving ideological forces. These processes have been the focus of two major sociological contributions.

Civilisation is, we recognise, a word that cannot always be spoken with a straight face, particularly if it is intended to characterise the whole of contemporary social mores. Nevertheless, in his most important contribution, Norbert Elias (2000, originally published in German in 1939) modelled civilisation as a progressive cultural process, through the middle ages into modernity in Europe, whereby social groups socialised themselves into restrained and supposedly refined behaviour of various sorts. They did this, Elias argued, for a mix of practical, symbolic and political reasons. Using 'books of manners' and etiquette manuals from different periods, Elias documented how people came to stop eating food with large knives at the table, being openly aggressive to each other in public encounters, performing bodily functions in public, and so on. They came to accept codes of manners, based on a growing ideology of *shame*. The core constraining principle of the civilising process is that animalic and 'uncivilised' actions warrant shame, but what is acceptable and what is held to be shameful practice is open to historical redefinition.

The political dimension to the civilising process was that, Elias argued, states needed docile and self-controlling citizens in order for them – states themselves – to become the only legitimate means of aggression. State-internal civilised behaviour was therefore a strategic trade-off for external authority. Civilised behaviour was inculcated from the top, downwards in social structure, as progressively lower-class groups fell under the control of the shame principle, understood to be relevant to progressively more and more aspects of social life. But Elias saw that the civilising process was only able to work because the cultural system became self-regulating: people came to function socially by 'naturally' adopting behaviours that were agreed to be civilised. Civilised behaviour, Elias argued, became 'second nature'. So Elias offered a theory of the beginnings of polite or 'proper' society – he also referred to it as 'the good society' – in Europe. He made some comments about self-restraint in language use too, recognising that linguistic demeanour was and is one of the symbolic dimensions of civilisation. 'The good society' comes to style itself as civilised, even in dimensions (like speech) where there is no obvious practical or political payoff. Speech was a salient indexical domain for groups who wanted to demonstrate or actively style their level of social refinement.

Elias's ideas are cited by Pierre Bourdieu in his major work on *Distinction* (originally published in French in 1979, and available in a new English translation, Bourdieu 2010), which is considered by some to be the most important existing contribution to theoretical sociology. Bourdieu followed Elias in emphasising shame as a motivating consideration. Bourdieu went into enormous empirical detail, based on a large quantitative survey in France in the 1960s, about how three social classes in France oriented to multiple dimensions of 'taste' choices – in fine art, music, food, ways of eating, etc., but again also in language use. Distinction and taste for Bourdieu were fundamentally ingrained in social class relativities

(and vice versa), and he explains how distinction is maintained even when there is a form of upward convergence through the social classes. That is, he was able to explain how elites remained elites in their social practices, even when the petite bourgeoisie (and then those below them in the class hierarchy) came to feel ashamed of their taste choices and aspired to elite practices and commodities. For Bourdieu, a key element of the process was habitus or the set of habituated practices, which (very similarly to Elias's 'second nature') implies an internalised disposition to act within the bounds of your social class.

Bourdieu's (1991) book 'Language and Symbolic Power' elaborates on specifically linguistic aspects of distinction, showing how particular ways of speaking have symbolic cultural prestige, value and indeed capital, which can be 'cashed in' for economic capital (money) and material benefits, such as in gaining access to privileged social positions including employment. Bourdieu writes directly about 'the standard language' as 'a normalised product' developed to be consistent with 'the demands of bureaucratic predictability and calculability, which presuppose universal functionaries and clients'. Standardisation is, he argues, 'the construction, legitimation and imposition of an official language' (1991: 46–49). These ideas were taken up in sociolinguistics through the concept of *le marché linguistique* ('the linguistic market', empirically developed and applied in Montreal by Sankoff and Laberge 1978; see also Cameron 1995; Chambers 1995: 177–185), but in applications that generally lacked the political intensity and comprehensiveness of Bourdieu's theory.

Even from this sketchy overview, it is possible to identify several important principles that a theory of linguistic standardisation needs to debate and engage with. Elias and Bourdieu both adopted explicitly process-oriented perspectives; contemporary sociological reviews recognise this to have been a major innovation in Elias's work (Quilley and Loyal 2004: 6). Process here implies not only change over time but an emphasis on underlying social reproductive mechanisms that drive social experiences and the perceived conditions of standard (or civilised or elite) practices at any given historical moment. Bourdieu argued that aspirations and moves towards social distinction show a 'homology', a systematic (or systemic) patterning across multiple dimensions of practice, as the following quote explains:

> …there is no area of practice in which the intention of purifying, refining and sublimating facile impulses and primary needs cannot assert itself, or in which the stylization of life, i.e. the primacy of form over function, which leads to the denial of function, does not produce the same effects. In language, it gives the opposition between popular outspokenness and the highly censored language of the bourgeois; between the expressionist pursuit of the picturesque or the rhetorical effect and the choice of restraint and false simplicity (litotes). The same economy of means is found in body language: here too, agitation and haste, grimaces and gesticulation are opposed to slowness… to the restraint and impassivity which signify elevation. Even the field of primary tastes is organized according to the fundamental opposition, with the antithesis between quality and quantity, belly and palate, matter and manners, substance and form (Bourdieu 2010: 172).

It will be important to ask whether ideologies of standard language are, as Bourdieu suggests, always elements of wider socio-cultural value systems, and whether sociolinguistic change is correspondingly tied to wider processes of social change (cf. Coupland 2009).

Elias and Bourdieu are particularly stimulating (but not in agreement) on the politics of social propriety. Elias argued that the civilisation process was, *de facto*, a matter of 'functional democratisation' (Elias 2000: 134f.; Quilley and Loyal 2004: 14). In a discussion of the history of spitting in public, Elias notes that the English, French and German judgement in the middle ages was that spitting was necessary and normal. By the late 18th century it had become 'a disgusting habit' and 'unhealthy'. Elias's point is, however, that pressure to view spitting as disgusting and shameful initially came 'down' as a social proscription from the higher social classes, who redefined it as shameful, before a scientific rationalisation of spitting being unhygienic ended up suggesting that all classes should refrain from the habit. For Elias, although the civilising process was based in the top-down inculcation of elite manners in this way, it generally ended up narrowing the power ratios between the social classes,

which allowed him to see civilising processes as democratisation. Bourdieu, on the other hand, is adamant that distinction is a matter of insidious and oppressive class politics, a 'power of suggestion which is exerted through things and persons and which, instead of telling the child what he must do, tells him what he is, and thus leads him to become durably what he has to be' (1991: 52). Distinction for Bourdieu is a social mechanism designed to protect privilege. We find this same tension in sociolinguistic research on standardisation. Is linguistic standardisation democratising and in some fundamental sense pro-social, or is it a crude manifestation of social class hegemony?

Elias and Bourdieu were both working empirically on sources that pre-date the 'contemporary Europe' that SLICE is concerned with, and to that extent there is no question of using their work as an 'off-the-shelf' model for theorising current standard language arrangements. (Bennett *et al*. 2009 present the result of a recent large-scale survey designed to compare Bourdieu's findings in 1960s France with social arrangements in contemporary Britain.) But the lines of interpretation developed by Elias and Bourdieu are nevertheless very suggestive. Primarily, they pioneered ideological accounts of normative social processes. They wanted not only to demonstrate that groups differ in their use of more and less prestigious social (and linguistic) forms and styles, but to explain the reproduction and evolution of social norms that underlie observable differences. They appeal to powerful psycho-social patterns, focusing mainly on the inculcation and avoidance of shame, to model the dynamics of hierarchical group relations, particularly in the dimension of social class. Of course, to what extent contemporary European societies continue to operate according to these principles remains to be seen. Very different tendencies are in evidence in contemporary societies, but they may be tendencies that can, to some extent, be explained using the broad frameworks we have just reviewed. Acknowledged gaps will also need to be filled – Bourdieu's neglect of ethnic and gender dynamics in the politics of taste and distinction, for example, has often been commented on.

Our enthusiasm for (in an uncomfortably gendered phrase) 'the old masters' of civilisation and distinction might seem misplaced, although we think not. We would argue that the main rationale for investigating standard language processes is that they are systematically linked to processes of social inclusion/ emancipation and exclusion/ hegemony. This is not to say that standard languages always construct social hierarchies and restrict social mobility; as we have said, SLICE is specifically interested in making grounded assessments of whether associations of this sort may be being attenuated or becoming more patchy. But 'the old masters' had issues of power, access, aspiration and shame in their theoretical sights, and that has not consistently been the case in sociolinguistics.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC TREATMENTS OF STANDARD LANGUAGE

A strong tradition of descriptivist, non-ideological and relatively apolitical approaches to 'standard and non-standard language' is to be found in sociolinguistics. This tradition exists *not* because of critical naivety, but because the standard/ non-standard distinction has been invoked in the service of non-ideological questions, most obviously the description of language change in progress. Sometimes, the ideological dimension of standard language has been positively down-played. In his discussion of standard English, Peter Trudgill (1999), for example, makes the case that standard English is just another dialect, albeit an idiosyncratic and irregular one. His argument is covertly ideological, working to challenge the perceived superiority of the standard and the belief that it is *non*-standard accents that are idiosyncratic or deficient by comparison with the standard. But there has been a much wider tendency to stress the social equivalence of standard and non-standard varieties, and to use this terminology without scrutinising its inescapably ideological implications. (Coupland 2000 puts this argument in more detail in a review of Bex and Watts 1999.)

Deborah Cameron, John Joseph and James Milroy (often in collaboration with Lesley Milroy) are among those who have pioneered ideology-sensitive theories of linguistic standardisation, and this work provides an important foundation for the SLICE programme. Within this tradition we should also recognise key contributions by Roy Harris (e.g. 1988) on the nationalist mythologising of standard English in the Victorian era; Tony Crowley (1989) on how linguistics and applied linguistics as academic disciplines have been complicit in the objectification of standard English; Alastair Pennycook (e.g. 1994) on the role of European standard languages in colonial exploits; and Richard Watts (2011) on myths of 'pure', 'polite' and 'educated' English (among many others). It may be helpful to briefly explore some of the main elements that these contributions have in common. We can then come on to consider other highly influential treatments of standardisation, particularly that of Einar Haugen.

Joseph draws an initial distinction between 'language standards' and 'standard languages' (see also Garrett *et al.*, this volume). Language standards are, he believes, value judgements of a sort that will inevitably develop in communities that contain linguistic variation:

> It seems to be a trait of the species that once people become aware of variants in any area of behaviour, they evaluate them. Thus do standards of behaviour come into being. (Joseph 1987: 3)

This is a view echoed by many sociolinguists, including Jack Chambers, who argues in favour of humankind's 'social identity instinct'. As part of this, and taking a Bourdieu-like stance, Chambers suggests that 'Speech is… a tool, perhaps a weapon, with which the higher social class can maintain the gap between itself and the rest of society' (1995: 251). The same argument – that difference naturally leads to the marking of social identity – is most fully developed by social psychologists following the lead of Henri Tajfel and his modelling of 'intergroup' processes (see Giles, Bourhis and Taylor 1977). We may not entirely agree with Joseph, Tajfel and others that hierarchy-producing standards or quality judgements (of language or anything else) are a truly *inevitable* consequence of diversity. There are, after all, many aspects of social life in which we are aware of diversity but where we do not rush to evaluate cultural forms as good or bad. The salience of specific social identity markers, including linguistic and semiotic markers, is liable to change over time and should not be taken for granted. But it seems reasonable to assume that diversity, including linguistic diversity, opens up potential fields for value-based discrimination, just as it opens up potential for (social and linguistic) change.

James Milroy (2001) also makes the point that, even if language standards and hierarchisation *were* inevitable, the process we refer to as language standardisation is *not* a universal one. He notes that some languages do not have forms that are recognised as standards and that 'some cultures are not standard language cultures' (2001: 539). A standard language culture is one where ideological values defining, favouring and policing standard varieties are dominant. Like Elias's civilisation and Bourdieu's drives for distinction, language standardisation is a particular set of social processes carried forward under specific socio-cultural conditions and promoted by specific groups and institutions under specific 'market conditions', in specific symbolic economies.

James Milroy and Lesley Milroy have for many years proposed a perspective on standard language and standardisation that is nowadays widely cited and accepted. (We might say that is has been standardised as one of two 'standard' accounts of language standardisation, the other being Haugen's – see below.) Its main elements are that: standardisation is a more coherent concept than standard language; standard languages don't truly exist because they are ideological idealisations; and that standardisation is a motivated socio-cultural process:

> Standardisation is motivated in the first place by various social, political and commercial needs and is promoted in various ways, including the use of the writing system, which is relatively easily standardised; but absolute standardisation of a spoken language is never achieved… Therefore it seems appropriate to speak

more abstractly of standardisation as an *ideology*, and a standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent.' (Milroy and Milroy 1985: 22f.)

This interpretation is complicated by Milroy and Milroy's repeated observation that standardisation is best defined, on the other hand, as the drive to reduce difference. In James Milroy's words, 'standardization consists of the imposition of uniformity upon a class of objects' (Milroy 2001: 531), and he even writes approvingly of this tendency: 'Standardization leads to greater efficiency in exchanges of any kind' (*ibid.*: 534). He is thinking of how societies need to settle on 'standard' (= conventional, agreed, functional) norms, e.g. for weighing and measuring things. This appears to be a far more descriptivist, non-ideological and 'innocent' interpretation of standardisation, although in the source cited Milroy goes on to concede that even the 'weights and measures' reading of standardisation will, in the case of standard languages, very probably be invaded by ideological judgements. As Deborah Cameron (1995) explains, the process of 'verbal hygiene' – the 'cleaning up' of language which includes promoting standard language through the education system – is commonly undertaken out of self-interest. Ways of using language that have, in one way or another, been rendered 'more hygienic' are likely (as Bourdieu argued) to be treated as more valuable social commodities. On the widest scale, standard languages have been shown to have global commodity values (see, for example, Pennycook's [1994] argument that standard English was an instrument and an imposition of the British Empire). Cameron argues that the social group she refers to as 'craft professionals' was able to create a single market by promoting newly standardised varieties of English in different eras. Perhaps the most famous example is Caxton's reaction against dialect diversity in 15th century England in developing the printing press, at least partly, Cameron suggests, out of economic self-interest (Cameron 1995: 41f.).

There remains the crucial question of how to assess the political and moral rights and wrongs of language standardisation in particular instances. As we suggested above, researchers' assessments differ quite radically. For example, in this volume Sandøy celebrates the decline of centralising standardisation in Norway around 1970, and Vaicekauskienė documents the oppressive impacts of Soviet ideologies of standardisation in pre-independence Lithuania. In the other direction, Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha explain the practical need for a standardised variety as a target for new learners of Irish, and many contributors comment on the socially integrative function of standardisation as an element of nation building. Most chapters represent dynamic, dialogic conditions where standardisation is neither a wholly progressive nor a wholly regressive process. In Wales, for example, while the revitalisation of Welsh depends in some crucial regards on a newly standardised variety of the language being available, there is also a tendency for new social inequalities to arise around the 'standard' versus 'non-standard' opposition (Robert, this volume).

Joseph (1987: 3) suggests that the word 'standard' may derive its contemporary senses from some fusion of its earlier meaning of 'flag' (as in the English expression 'standard bearer', meaning 'one who carries a military flag') and the implication of permanence and fixity connoted by the verb 'to stand'. These possible origins hint at authority, stability and control. At the same time, many people have commented on the semantic vagueness of the term 'standard' in connection with language, where '[authorised or approved or favoured] standards of behaviour' (in the spirit of Elias and Bourdieu) is only one amongst many other possible meanings, as in the case of Milroy's 'weights and measures' interpretation. There is clearly very considerable room here for the core terminology used in SLICE projects to be interpreted inconsistently, and all research on standard language needs to be self-critical and explicit in its definitions of core concepts.

At least two further issues need close consideration: 'levels of language' and communicative repertoires. Milroy and Milroy's approach leaves open the question of whether standard language needs to be restricted to accent and dialect issues, or not. In his rather rare examples

of refined ways of speaking, Elias suggests that shame could be attributed to pragmatic/ discursive alternatives – what is said or not said could mark someone as being more or less refined. But he also hints at stylistic and indexical variants. Speech held to be 'delicate' was favoured (Elias 2000: 98), although Elias doesn't give clear examples. In fact he suggests that definitional criteria were self-fulfilling: speech is 'delicate' because it is *defined* to be delicate by 'refined people'. Bourdieu makes reference to social class dialects as the basis of social distinction. But he also makes some intriguing suggestions about how 'distinguished' speech follows two contradictory principles. One principle is social 'ease' – speaking without trying to impress, without needing to justify your practice; the other is 'hyper-formed' speech, where a speaker gives himself or herself license to exceed the usual norms of grammatical and lexical elaboration.

Many of Bourdieu's arguments give emphasis to form-focused practice in the performance of elite status, and this opens up the possibility of seeing 'formal' language as an outcome of language standardisation, in place of the variationist view that standardness and formality are orthogonal dimensions of variation, so that standard speech includes a range of styles or registers, even though this position is in conflict with Milroy and Milroy's view that standardised language is, at least in principle, invariant. Interestingly, the contributors to this volume differ in how ready they are to recognise that a standard language can, or can not, exist in multiple sub-varieties. Stoeckle and Svenstrup, for example, invoke the concept of 'substandard', meaning a version of standard German that shows minor regional features, just as Grondelaers and van Hout argue that increasing variation in Dutch does not in itself indicate declining standardness. Leonard and Árnason, on the other hand, describe an ideology according to which any deviation from standard Icelandic constitutes an abuse of national heritage.

In an ideological perspective, what will matter most is to identify how qualities of language and communication are attributed within communities, in whatever dimension of language use and social demeanour. It is unlikely to be the case that 'the best language' will be circumscribed only by accent/ dialect characteristics. *Avoidance* (including avoiding obscenity, offensive and impolite language, and avoiding using styles and features that are indexical of low class or other undesirable social attributes) and *display* (displaying control, status, awareness, and of course linguistic competence – normatively defined – and even virtuoso competence) might prove to be important organising principles.

Milroy and Milroy (in the above quote) comment that standardisation works through written language more readily and more thoroughly than through speech, which again foregrounds the more open question of which elements of communities' and individuals' communicative repertoires are targeted as foci of ideological assessments. SLICE is mainly interested in spoken language, because speech is the most active general field of ideological contestation in standard language cultures. Even so, interactive new media provide fields of practice where sociolinguistic assumptions of this sort need to be qualified. As Androutsopoulos (this volume) shows, interactive media provide opportunities for creativity and for the vernacularisation of writing, in ways that parallel developments in spoken interaction, mediated and face-to-face.

HAUGEN AND COMPARATIVE STANDARDOLOGY

Haugen (1966/ 1997) developed a model of the evolutionary stages of language standardisation which has continued to influence sociolinguistic research. (We might think of it as another 'standard' account of standardisation, which was in fact the first.) Haugen's approach has very wide applicability, but also particular relevance for Europe, where it provides a basis for 'comparative standardology', the contrastive study of language standardisation processes and sequences (Jespersen 1925; Joseph 1987: 13–16). The SLICE group shares the view that comparison is both a possible (but difficult) and worthwhile approach. Haugen identified four

main sub-processes, which to some extent can be seen as successive (but with potential overlaps too): *selection*, *codification*, *elaboration*, and *acceptance*. In later versions, *acceptance* is re-rendered as *implementation*, which we will use in what follows as a term for 'spreading' processes, which have both an ideological aspect (acceptance) and a use aspect (diffusion).

The Haugen model was felicitously chosen and applied as the comparative framework in Deumert and Vandenbussche's (2003) edited volume on *Germanic Standardizations*. In their introductory discussion, Deumert and Vandenbussche (*ibid.*: 9f.) point to what they see as two main weaknesses of the Haugen model. First, the model has little to offer with regard to the role of ideology – it does not invite us to focus on motivations for standardisation. Second, the model is teleological and can only grasp the linear route from diversity to unity; possible destandardisation processes fall outside of its scope. We agree with these criticisms, but note that *all* major perspectives on standardisation share this limitation (although see some remarks by Joseph, discussed below in connection with media and destandardisation). The SLICE intention is to shift the focus onto these two points, or more precisely onto the combination of them: *the role of ideology in contemporary (de-)standardisation*. In order to make progress in that direction, the SLICE group has found it useful to draw on Haugen's taxonomy of standardisation process, but without endorsing it as a fully adequate model, and with the explicit intention of continuing to build theory. In other words, we have, like many others, found Haugen's model to be a valuable heuristic, while the search for new data and more comprehensive theory building continue in parallel with each other.

Haugen's model raises (but does not resolve) a significant problem of agency. As above, Haugen suggested that languages are standardised by means of processes of *selection*, *codification* and *elaboration*, and all of these terms imply motivated human or institutional activity. *Selection* of a national variety, in Haugen's conception, was fundamental:

> Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a medium of communication, a 'vernacular' or a 'dialect', but a fully developed language. Anything less marks it as underdeveloped. (Haugen 1997: 345)

The implication here is that the standard should be singular or mono-centric, although (not least in the Norwegian case – see Sandøy, this volume) there is also the consideration of whether a pluri-centric norm and therefore twinned or multiple standard languages are feasible and socially functional. Haugen's account suggests that selection will be made by social and cultural elites, although in the case of a pluri-centric norm we would expect there to be more than one 'reference group' or normative centre (Blommaert 2009) exerting influence.

Codification involves developing or attempting to 'fix' the formal features of a standard language, and Haugen cites Charles Ferguson's earlier efforts to establish a standardisation scale on which any given language could be placed, principally according to its degree of codification. Codification is conducted by language academies and similar agencies, and Haugen considered French to be the most standardised of European languages in this regard. Codification again seems to be a mono-centric process, leading to an invariant standard. But here we should note Milroy and Milroy's argument (above) that there is *never*, in practice, an actual, single, delimited, spoken standard variety, and that we have to distinguish the ideals of mono-centricism and full codification (presumably in the ideological mind-set of language planners) from the lived reality of variation. As we noted above, conceptual inconsistency arises here across different researchers. For some, it makes no sense to conceive of 'variation within a standard language', because variation implies an absence or a failure of standardisation. Others (including Auer, this volume) have no difficulty thinking of a variable standard. The distinction, however, is of little significance if we agree that the critical issue is ideology, and that the attribution 'standard' must reflect social judgements and social practices in the community rather than the descriptive details of varietal range and variation.

Elaboration refers to promoting use of a standard language across many social domains and communicative functions, leading to the famous dictum that, 'As the ideal goals of a

standard language, codification may be defined as *minimal variation in form,* elaboration as *maximal variation in function*' (Haugen 1997: 348). The range of particular functions into which a standard language is elaborated once again remains to be established in particular cases. As Haugen says, 'maximal elaboration' may be an ideal (for some), but this is sociolinguistically very unlikely ever to be the case. A commonly cited case is when different kinds of 'foreign' expert terminology are introduced into a standard language in domains such as scientific writing and spoken discourse. But the more general point is that the ideological characterisation of particular styles as 'standard' more or less relies on complementary styles being ideologised as 'vernacular' or 'non-standard' (reminding us again of the social dialectics of Elias and Bourdieu).

Up to this point, then, Haugen's model of standardisation implies top-down, controlling activities by national governments and their agencies (although we can imagine that Haugen would not have excluded a role for elites also, given his own rather elitist comments about the inadequacy of dialects and phrases like 'self-respecting' in the above quote). But in terms of agency, things look very different when it comes to Haugen's fourth process or stage, *implementation*, where the earlier three processes come to be socially implemented. Deumert and Vandenbussche (*ibid.*: 7) interpret this fourth process as 'the gradual diffusion and acceptance of the newly created norm across speakers as well as across functions', and they go on to say that '[t]he implementation stage is the "Achilles heel" of the standardization process: acceptance by the speech community ultimately decides on the success of a given set of linguistic decisions …'. The model's change of perspective – from decisions made at the top of the institutional or status hierarchy to acceptance obtained from the speech community in general – is likely to contribute more obscurity than clarity to our discussions of what to understand by standard language and language standardisation. Haugen was aware of potential obstacles to acceptance, and at one point he suggests that acceptance by elites alone might have to suffice, linked to further top-down efforts to promote acceptance:

> *Acceptance* of the norm, even by a small but influential group, is part of the life of the language. Any learning requires the expenditure of time and effort, and it must somehow contribute to the well-being of the learners if they are not to shirk their lessons. (Haugen 1997: 350)

As we suggested above, there is certainly a lack of ideological perspective in Haugen's model, and certainly no ideology critique (even though he does at least raise questions of evaluation in relation to acceptance). Also, we know (including from some of the community reports in this volume) that language planning initiatives often fail, that they often have unintended consequences, and that they are not always well-informed and not always benign in their effects. Methodologically, a further problem is that Haugen's model doesn't clarify how investigations into the ideologies which go with elite decisions about selection, codification and elaboration will have to be different in kind from the investigations that are needed to measure degrees of acceptance (and related social evaluations) in the community. Returning to the earlier point about how to define 'standard', it is likely that the process of standardisation will be understood quite differently by those engaged in top-down agentive roles and by others, 'the people', who make on-the-ground assessments of the social implications of using different ways of speaking. Top-down discourses of language standardisation may not overlap with on-the-ground discourses, and the social judgments of language use that matter most may even remain below the level of metalinguistic formulation (see below).

Elite deliberations and decisions have always been on the agenda in concrete historical situations, in which the interests involved will be of many kinds and make their appearance as ideologies – basically purism vs. liberalism – which legitimise the decisions made in terms of deference to 'principles' to do with pedagogy, democracy, communicative effectiveness, national unity, etc. Whether this continues to be the case, or to be fully the case, in late modernity is, on the other hand, a fundamental question. But if, for now, we persist with a Hauge-

nesque scenario of standardisation, we can already see that, no matter how governments and elites define a concrete standard norm in terms of *selection*, *codification* and *elaboration* (narrowly or more broadly), they still face a task of a different order in seeking to *implement* the norm (if this is indeed their aim), understood as *acceptance and diffusion* across speakers and domains throughout the whole community.[1]

INVESTIGATING IMPLEMENTATION: DIFFUSION AND ACCEPTANCE

As we have said, and as Haugen acknowledged early on, success in implementing a planned standard language is far from being a matter of course. In general, the history of European standardisation shifts has shown the task to be much easier with regard to written language than with regard to spoken language (see Gregersen, this volume, on the history of written language standardisation in Denmark). Actually, it is a crucial fact about language standardisation that the creation of a standard for writing – which is seen as corresponding to a particular choice of speech variants (i.e. it is associated with a particular way of speaking) – enters as an indispensable element of institutional support towards the acceptance and diffusion of a spoken standard (cf. Pedersen 2009). Also, scholarly deliberations about whether a community has a standard language norm or not, and of which type (narrower or broader), are much easier and unproblematic with regard to written language than with regard to spoken language.

Particularly in relation to spoken language, a further, double, problem with *implementation* has to do with the relationship between acceptance (which we can interpret as a matter of attitudes) and diffusion (which we can interpret as dominant patterns of language use, or [in social-psychological terminology] 'behaviour'). One theoretical question is this: *Can we have acceptance without diffusion*? The answer is *Yes* if attitudes are defined in terms of 'mentality'. The answer is *No* if attitudes are defined in terms of 'behaviour'. Hence, researchers need to take a position on how they see the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Another theoretical question is this: *Can we have diffusion without acceptance*? The answer is *Yes* if diffusion happens independently of attitudes (perhaps as a mechanistic process of unknowing mutual influence). The answer is *No* if diffusion happens in virtue of attitudes, i.e. if language ideology is the decisive driving force behind the spread of use. Hence, researchers need to take a position on how they see the issue of what drives the spread of particular ways of speaking. Positions taken on these fundamental theoretical issues will have far-reaching methodological consequences for the survey kind of investigations we need to carry out in order to decide whether, or to which extent, a community can be said to have a standard spoken language in terms of implementation. In short, we need to decide on what kind of significance we should accord to ideology (if we equate this with Haugen's acceptance) and what kind of significance we should accord to usage (diffusion), respectively.

These questions have a substantial history in sociolinguistics, and particularly in relation to critical assessments of the variationist paradigm. First of all, how should we relate to the rather common variationist practice of inferring social evaluations of linguistic varieties and variants from distributional patterns of use alone? This practice amounts to taking the position – whether it is done implicitly (most often), or explicitly (with reference commonly being made to troublesome validity and reliability problems associated with language attitudes re-

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[1] We may note that it is not necessarily easier to get a broad norm accepted and adopted than a narrow norm. Actually, it is a common argument among professional 'standardisers' – at least in Denmark – that their cultivation of a narrow norm reflects general public requirements, in opposition to their own more liberal ideology (and see Robert, this volume, for a similar observation on language planning in contemporary Wales). To the extent that the claims about general public requirements hold true, one might see these requirements as an indication that a strong *standard language ideology* is already successfully propagated in the community.

search) – that attitudes can only, or best, be studied as behaviour. Milroy and Milroy, for example, claim that 'statistical counts of variants actually used are probably the best way of assessing attitudes' (1985: 19). If we adopt this view, the consequence is that we explore and compare implementation across 'standard language situations' simply as a matter of diffusion at the level of use. It amounts to a decision that, contrary to Milroy and Milroy's declared stance on the ideological basis of standardisation, ideology is effectively ruled out of the picture, analytically. But this also carries the assumption of working with a reductive interpretation of 'language use'. From any critical sociolinguistic perspective, use means far more than the distribution of features or varieties as these are captured in variation surveys. Language in use might well reveal attitudinal/ ideological loadings, but only if we look at how variation is made meaningful and how social meanings are made contextually in salient practices (Coupland 2007). Experimental and survey work on use (in the variationist sense) and on attitudes therefore needs to be supplemented with close critical examination of indexicality in social interaction, where 'critical' means trying to access and expose covert ideologies operating behind and through discourse.

Next, we need to relate to the fact that those studies that have collected and analysed evaluation data, independently of use data, have typically found that the standard language has a much stronger position in the community in terms of acceptance/ social evaluation than in terms of diffusion/ general use. The evaluative hierarchical ranking of standard vs. non-standard varieties and variants tends to be *shared* by community members in a way that standard vs. non-standard use is not (and, hence, Labov's reliance on the ideological fact of 'shared norms' in his definition of the 'speech community'). In other words, the reality seems to be that speech communities often display little connection between acceptance and diffusion. In consequence, if we base our discussions on such (empirically established) patterns of attitudes and use, we will end up with two quite different conclusions about the reality of 'standard language' in terms of implementation.

In face of this well-documented discrepancy between, on the one hand, overtly expressed support for 'standard language' and, on the other hand, the quite pervasive persistence of non-standard language use, the traditional sociolinguistic reaction has been to hypothesise the existence of covert attitudes, i.e. social evaluations of language which remain hidden when people display their attitudes overtly (for instance in talk about language), but which reveal themselves in people's use of language. The resulting picture of two distinct value systems attached to the use of language does of course complicate the task of deciding what kind of significance we should accord to ideology (acceptance) and use (diffusion), respectively, in our efforts to theorise standardisation and standard language in a way that makes comparison across communities possible and meaningful. What is the consequence if the communities (or, as a further complicating factor, if only some of the communities) display a covert evaluative ranking of varieties which, in contrast to the overt ranking, accords well with patterns of diffusion (spreading use)?

We hasten to stress that, in language attitudes research, covert values also need to be established empirically – in empirical data that are collected and analysed independently of the established patterns of diffusion. Otherwise, if we just infer evaluations from 'statistical counts of variants actually used', we will of course find that covert values accord well with patterns of diffusion. We may note here that William Labov – as the champion of empirical studies in variationist sociolinguistics in what concerns values as well as use – at the end of his long-standing efforts to picture covert evaluative hierarchisation of variants, has concluded that it looks very much the same as the overt evaluative hierarchisation. He seems to be drawing radical theoretical implications from this finding, largely moving the potential for explaining diffusion of use away from 'social evaluation' to 'linguistic mechanisms'. However, as it seems unlikely that Labov's methods for gathering evaluations have ever yielded data from informants who were unaware of giving away attitudes to language (this was

probably never Labov's intent), we find it reasonable to question in which sense these data can be said to represent covert evaluations (see Kristiansen 2011 for a discussion of this issue and the claimed development in Labov's work). In any event, in the context of contemporary Europe, and particularly in relation to the issue of what happens with standardisation and standard languages, we find it premature to downplay the role of covert values in how patterns of use change. The SLICE credo is rather that we need to establish more (quantitative) empirical evidence for a better understanding of overt *and* covert values and their relative importance to how people use language (see Grondelaers *et al.*, this volume, for a full discussion of empirical criteria underlying theoretical concepts like 'standard language'), while also exploring alternative (qualitative) critical methods designed to read language ideologies in action.

In particular, it appears that there has been considerable theoretical and methodological 'confusion' as to the role of awareness, or consciousness, in the distinction between values of an overt vs. covert kind. As a rule, overt values are thought of as being openly present in public discourse about language, institutionally promoted in ways that make it generally accessible and reproducible. In this sense, all community members are likely to be aware or conscious of the overt valorisation of language variation in their community, and likely also to be readily able to draw on and reproduce this valorisation 'in their own words'. In contrast, and in fact *by definition*, there can be no public discourse about covert values. Therefore, community members are not 'aware' of covert values in such a way that these can be elicited in direct questioning. To the extent they are a reality, covert values will have to be studied in people's reactions and practices when they are not aware of displaying or (re-)constructing evaluative rankings of ways of speaking. We might even suggest, along with Rampton (2006), that covert values amount to (what Raymond Williams originally described as) 'structures of feeling' – particular emotionally and ideologically intuited types of habitus associated with cultural experience. To that end, many and varied approaches can be helpful and worthwhile, including not only non-obtrusive observational studies of how various ways of speaking are embedded in different domains of community life, but also experimentation, as long as we make sure that attitudinal data are gathered without respondents being aware of offering attitudes.

The general acceptance of Copenhagen speech as 'best language' (see below) emerges in data that are subconsciously offered. 'Subconsciously' simply means that the informants were not aware of giving away attitudes to 'accents' when they listened to audio-taped speakers and assessed them for a number of personality traits. It is important to notice, though, that the same informants assess the local dialect as 'best language' in data which is offered in full awareness of what the data collection is about. The evaluative ranking of 'standard' and 'nonstandard' language is consistently turned upside down depending on the nature or degree of awareness involved. How can these two 'layers' of consciousness be understood?

The local patriotism that lurks behind the flagging of one's own dialect as 'best language' does not come as a big surprise in adolescents, perhaps, even if it contrasts with many anecdotal reports of self-deprecation among speakers of dialects that are stigmatised in overt language ideologies. In fact, it is in harmony with the positive attitude to dialects that has been the official school ideology from the 1970s onwards, i.e. from the time when the dialects faded from use (i.e. dialects were no longer passed on to, or taken over by, local kids as the language used in playgrounds and peer-groups; dialects became the language of the older generations).

It is harder to understand the existence of an opposite and nationwide system of covert values. How can we explain that audiences of 16 year-old students (school classes) from all over Denmark, as their average result, subconsciously produce evaluative patterns that look like copies of each other – and upgrade Copenhagen speech relatively to their own local way of speaking? The only possible explanation, as far as we can see, must lie with young people's shared experience with language as used and treated in the modern spoken media. In

other words, the general agreement among young Danes about the evaluative ranking and social meanings of late modern Danish accents is likely to result from the addition of the modern media universe to the traditional public sphere (with its schools and business institutions). The ideological division of the 'best language' idea into one in terms of 'dynamism' and one in terms of 'superiority' is a product of a more complex public sphere, where the criteria for excellence and success in the media world are different from those that apply in the world of education and business. The Danish evidence does not indicate that the standardisation process, either as diffusion or acceptance, has turned into destandardisation in the sense of 'value levelling' (an issue we take up in more detail in a following section).

Overall, therefore, the study of the implementation stage of standardisation is about the relationship and relative strength of standard vs. non-standard language in terms both of diffusion (use) and acceptance (ideology). This relationship has appeared in a variety of dialect/ standard constellations throughout the history of Europeans communities. While SLICE's focus will mainly be on the contemporary and emerging new shapes of standard vs. non-standard constellations, we do realise that present-day situations can only be well understood and compared when the backdrop of historical developments is taken into account. As we explained earlier in this chapter, the ambition of Part 1 of this volume is to establish at least some of the historical backdrop, community by community.

AUER'S TYPOLOGY OF DIALECT/ STANDARD CONSTELLATIONS

The community reports were prepared partly in light of Peter Auer's (2005) influential proposal for 'a typology of European dialect/ standard constellations' (see for example Östman and Mattfolk, this volume). Auer's text was a key preliminary reading for the first of the Exploratory Workshops. His model is a concerted attempt to bring 'Europe's sociolinguistic unity' to light in an historical perspective. The relationship of standard/ non-standard is pictured as a cone, in which the top point represents the standard, and the ground circle represents the gamut of non-standard varieties. The relationship is either of a diglossic kind (a question of either/or choice between the standard and the dialect) or of a diaglossic kind (a question of using more-or-less within a continuum of variation between the standard and the dialect). Processes of switching and levelling occur both 'vertically' (between standard and non-standard) and 'horizontally' (between non-standard varieties), and over time lead to a significant reduction in the total amount of variation. Eventually, the distance between the top point and the ground circle becomes very small; the traditional dialects have disappeared and the ground circle variation can be seen as variation within the standard.

Auer warns that '[o]ne should be careful not to lose sight of the simplifications which are inherent in any model of this type; in our case, this caveat refers in particular to the distance between the base dialects (ground line) and the standard variety (top point) which is *systematically ambiguous between an attitudinal and a structural interpretation*' (*ibid.*: footnote 8, our italics). Rather than stressing this as a weakness, we prefer to see the model as helpful and worthwhile exactly because it invites us, in our investigations of the relative strength of standard versus non-standard varieties, to reflect on how we should go about resolving 'the systematic ambiguity between an attitudinal and a structural interpretation'. The model invites questions like the following. Is there a particular attitudinal situation behind the switching of diglossia, and a different attitudinal situation behind the sliding of diaglossia? Or should it be understood the other way round: is it the case that diglossic situations result in different attitudinal constellations than diaglossic situations? A good model invites good questions; and these are good questions for anyone who wants to compare historic developments and understand the role of ideological forces in the distributional vicissitudes of speech varieties and variants. In relation to the main research interest of SLICE and its focus on the contemporary historical situation, the Auer typology shares the second weakness that Deumert and Vanden-

bussche pointed out regarding the Haugen model (and which we recognised, above, to be a general limitation of the standardisation literature): it has a teleological flavour, in that the road seems to lead unidirectionally from diversity to (more and more) unity.

This teleological diversity-reducing characteristic of models of language standardisation can be explained by their historically backward orientation, of course. Yet, the 'naturalness' and 'obviousness' of ever more unification as the essence of language standardisation seem a less secure ideological construction today than in earlier times. Thus, the primary foundation of the SLICE group is a shared uncomfortable feeling about the modelling of standardisation in terms of unification, and a shared interest in reconsiderations of the nature of language standardisation and standard languages under late modern conditions.

DESTANDARDISATION AND DEMOTISATION

A preliminary description of the SLICE project, as it appeared in the funding application for the Exploratory Workshops, was included in the preparatory materials that were sent to participants. This text, extracts from which appear below, tentatively introduced some terminology that might be helpful in theorising destandardisation. These terms feature in some of the contributions to this volume. The text, authored by Tore Kristiansen, was entitled 'The nature and role of language standardisation and standard languages in late modernity' and it motivated interest in this topic initially by referring to the increasingly anti-authoritarian, individualistic and democratic ideology that, according to some sociologists, characterises late modernity:

> Sociologists describe contemporary history as the *late modern age*, which is a time of undermining of the power of authority (Giddens 1991). Previously, the power of political, scientific and religious authorities was accepted and respected. Today, power is spread out and individuals have the right to partake in public debate. This change has also been described as *democratisation* (Fairclough 1992) and it coincides with the acceleration of globalisation from the end of the 20th century.

In addressing the historical aspect of language standardisation in Europe, the resulting outcome was seen as a continuum stretching from communities with very strong standard languages and related ideologies to communities with very weak standard languages and related ideologies:

> In Europe, the development of standard languages played a most important role in the building of nation states. The construction – through *selection, codification, elaboration* and *implementation* (Haugen 1966) – of one language variety as the 'best language' turned all other varieties into 'bad language'. However, for historical reasons – to do with power relationships of various kinds both externally between states and internally between social classes – there are great differences to be found in the development and outcome of the language standardisation processes across Europe. If we conceptualize this as a continuum, we will at the one end find countries like Denmark, Iceland, Great Britain and France with strict and strong 'standard languages' (at least in terms of ideology; the degree of implementation/acceptance in terms of usage varies more). At the other end, it is an open issue whether Norway can be said to have a 'standard language' at all. In between, countries like Sweden, Finland, and Germany feature more or less strong standard languages.

Although characterisations like 'strict and strong' might refer also to the selection, codification and elaboration aspects of standardisation, the relative placement of communities on the continuum arguably derives mainly from speculative assessments of degrees of implementation: how well accepted is the standard variety in the community, how much is it used?

This focus on implementation as the interesting (but 'Achilles-heel') aspect of standardisation continues when the text addresses the new conditions of late modernity. Without the change being thematised (which might have been a good idea), *standard language* is replaced by *language standards* (cf. our discussion of Joseph's use of these terms, above). This re-

placement moves the focus even more unambiguously to implementation, as we take language standards to be less subjected to official and elite decisions in terms of selection, codification and elaboration, and to exist primarily in virtue of unofficial social group perceptions and judgements. Two different processes were proposed for consideration as possible late modern developments – *destandardisation* and *demotisation*:

> Standards for language in late modernity
> Now, what happens to language standardisation and the standards for language use (i.e. the criteria for 'language excellence') as we pass from the 'constructive' age of nation state building to the 'deconstructive' age of globalization, or late modernity? To judge from what has been said about this so far in the literature, we should take two possible scenarios into account:
>
> (i) Destandardisation: We will use this term to refer to a possible development whereby the established standard language loses its position as the one and only 'best language'. Thus, Fairclough (1992) proposes that the democratisation process can lead to a 'value levelling' that will secure access to public space for a wider range of speech varieties. Such a development would be equal to a radical weakening, and eventual abandonment, of the 'standard ideology' itself. Countries at the strong-standard end of the continuum would move towards the other end and become 'new Norways', so to speak.
>
> (ii) Demotisation: We choose this term (inspired by 'demotizierung', Mattheier 1997) to signal the possibility that the 'standard ideology' as such stays intact while the valorisation of ways of speaking changes. This appears to be the implication of the Danish evidence. Standard Danish is today commonly spoken in public (including prime time TV presentations of the daily news) with features which used to be associated with low-status ('popular') Copenhagen speech. Throughout all of Denmark, features from this 'low-Copenhagen' speech are rapidly adopted by young people, who also evaluate this way of speaking more positively than other 'accents', including the traditional 'high-Copenhagen' accent, as well as the 'locally coloured' accents of Copenhagen speech that most local youngsters speak themselves. Therefore, the belief that there is, and should be, a 'best language' is not abandoned (Kristiansen 2003), but the idea of what this 'best language' is, or sounds like, changes. In young Danes' representations, the 'low-Copenhagen' accent is replacing the 'high-Copenhagen' accent as the 'best language', especially when the evaluative perspective is 'speaker-dynamism'. In other words, 'low-Copenhagen' speech indexes an 'effective, straightforward, self-assured, interesting, cool…' persona – i.e. a successful media personality, one might argue (Kristiansen 2001).
>
> While destandardisation would create 'new Norways' out of strong-standard countries, demotisation might well have the opposite effect and promote language standardisation in no-standard or weak-standard countries. Demotisation is revalorisation, ideological upgrading, of 'low-status' language to 'best-language' status. In Denmark, only the 'low-status' speech of the capital city (Copenhagen) is upgraded this way. To the extent that this upgrading is linked to the development of the media universe, as the new and dominant public space of late modernity, one might argue that the media are instrumental in creating, ideologically, a new standard for 'language excellence', and also instrumental in its *elaboration* (spread to new usages) and *implementation* (spread to new users). If the fundamentals of this picture are valid and do apply more generally than in Denmark, demotisation in Norway will mean that Oslo speech with traditionally 'low-status' features develops into more of a standard language than Norway has ever had before.[2]

The basic and very simple assumption behind the above scenario, which does not try to conceal its Danishness, is that the standardisation process, in all its aspects, is driven by the idea that 'there is a best language'. This was so evident to the 16th century's Danish grammarians when they selected Copenhagen speech for standardisation that they simply argued in terms of *det beste Sprock* ('the best language'). To those of us researching the Danish situation, it seems just as evident today that all subsequent efforts to cultivate and disseminate (codify, elaborate and implement) the selected variety presuppose a conviction that a 'best language' exists that deserves and requires cultivation and dissemination (regardless of what the explicit arguments for this may have been).

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[2] It was against this background that Norwegian linguists recently organized a conference on the theme: *Does Norway have a standard language?* The conference papers are published in *Norsk Lingvistisk Tidsskrift* 2009/2. For a deeper insight in the Norwegian situation, see Sandøy in this volume.

The distinction between destandardisation and demotisation is based on speculations (derived from analyses of the 'language attitudes situation' in Denmark) about the fate of *the idea of 'best language'* under late modern conditions. All the same, several contributors to this volume provide detailed and illuminating interpretations of these concepts in relation to their own communities – notably Auer and Spiekermann in the German context, Grondelaers *et al.*, in relation to the Low Countries and Sandøy in the case of Norway.

Destandardisation, as suggested in the extract above, equates to value levelling in Fairclough's sense. In its ultimate consequence (even though we consider this to be just as unlikely and idealised as a fully standardised, invariant standard language), value levelling implies a situation with no valorisation of differential language use, a situation where the idea of 'best language' no longer is an issue in the community. While such a situation might be welcomed as the ultimate liberation from the negative aspects and effects of language-related social-psychological mechanisms (teasing, mocking, denigration, discrimination, social exclusion), we assume that social evaluation of language variation is, at some level, here to stay and will not go away. This need not be in fulfilment of Chambers' simple 'social identity instinct' (see above), which seems unnecessarily pessimistic about social hierarchies and too deterministically socio-biological. The idea of 'best language' seems unlikely to become entirely redundant (cf. the extensive discussions of sociolinguistic prejudice in the USA context by Lippi-Green 1997 and Niedzielski and Preston 2000, and the USA is by no means exceptional). But it is quite conceivable that the version of it which developed in the era of European nation state building, and, ultimately, Haugen's rather statist model of institutionalised standardisation, will need to be significantly revised.

SLICE research may be able to establish that there is no longer the same felt need to obtain general acceptance of one, and only one, 'best language' variety; belief in the blessings of linguistic unity may not be so strong anymore. We already know that evaluative discourses are not generally univocal and (as it has been argued in many different paradigms) they respond to social and interactional contexts. Given that we know (not least from the quantitative language attitudes research tradition) that attitudes are multi-dimensional and contextual, we have to expect that there will be contexts where people will judge other people outside of normative ideological frames. Young people, for example, have been shown to orient to their peers differently on the basis of potential friendship networks or in relation to what they perceive to be cool ways of being, rather than, on the other hand, on public, institutional criteria such as how well they might succeed at school (cf. Garrett *et al.* 2003). These judgements are again matters of ideology, but framed by specific ideological priorities.

In order to substantiate a claim for destandardisation in this qualified sense (where value levelling implies attenuation and complexification but not disappearance of the idea of 'best language'), it will be interesting to look for the existence of several distinct evaluative rankings across geographical and/or social space in the community. Plural and variable judgements are one type of evidence of destandardisation. And, most importantly, we need to establish whether there is growing general acceptance that different community members and groups both use and evaluate linguistic varieties and variants differently. Destandardisation, then, might be a community's ideological development towards seeing, or rather experiencing, variable language and variable evaluative rankings of language as 'the most natural thing in the world' – in Elias's term, 'second nature'. Evaluation of language differences would still be part of community life, but the idea of 'best language' in its absolute and totalising singularity would be gone.

Demotisation, in contrast, is understood as the kind of development which has been documented in Denmark. The idea of 'best language' has changed, all right, but there are no signs of any radical weakening or attenuation. In fact, there is little doubt that the idea of 'best language' has a much stronger position in Denmark today than ever before. This is particularly evident if we base our judgement on the 'Achilles heel' of standardisation: implementation. In

terms of *use*, the general diffusion of the standard language (i.e. Copenhagen speech) to the young generations throughout the whole country is a post World War II phenomenon. While this diffusion of Copenhagen speech is well studied and documented, implementation in terms of *ideology* is far less studied. For evaluations of the degree of acceptance in the community before the 1980s, we have to rely on what is known about use (diffusion) and we then draw the inference that there was less acceptance. Since the 1980s, comprehensive studies of language attitudes among young Danes (see Kristiansen 2009) unambiguously show that Copenhagen speech is seen as the 'best language' – as long as the evaluation is offered subconsciously; more about the consciousness issue below.

These studies also unambiguously show that Copenhagen speech comes in two varieties, one which is deemed best by the youngsters when the evaluative perspective is 'superiority', and one which is deemed best when the evaluative perspective is 'dynamism'. However, this different evaluative ranking of two Copenhagen varieties does not fall under what we above described as destandardisation. Why not? Because exactly the same evaluative pattern is reproduced by youngsters all over Denmark: speakers with a flavour of traditionally 'low' or 'popular' ('demotic') phonetics are upgraded as more 'dynamic' than speakers with a flavour of traditionally 'high' phonetics, while the latter (for the time being?) are still seen as more 'superior'. There is no variation in this pattern across social groups. Boys and girls from across the whole country and the whole social status gamut unite in reproducing the same pattern. At the age of 16, they have all got the same idea of what the 'best language' is, and how it should be evaluated. There is no 'value levelling' of the kind that would indicate destandardisation. It feels safe to claim that the acceptance of the social valorisation of Copenhagen speech as 'best language' has never been stronger.

A question mark remains over whether the term 'demotisation' is the most appropriate one here (and see Auer and Spieckermann's discussion, this volume). In a straightforward derivational-morphological perspective, the happier English term might be 'demot*ic*isation', although this would detach the term from its German origins. It would also even more clearly imply a shift to 'more demotic' (more egalitarian or more democratic) sociolinguistic arrangements, and this is not the intended implication. In the Danish case, as indicated above, stylistic elements of a previously 'low' Copenhagen variety have, in one sense, 'risen' to feature in young people's ideologised version of the 'best language', but in so rising they lose their 'low' indexicality. There is the further complication that the new 'best' variety is judged to be 'best' in relation to 'dynamism', and that there are good reasons to associate dynamic speech with changing norms and practices in the mass media. So it will be necessary to overlay considerations of context and genre on apparently uniform categories of restandardisation and demotisation. If, within demotisation, there is the implication that ways of speaking come to be judged differently in relation to different social contexts or frames – 'best' in relation to media versus 'best' in relation to established public institutions – then this starts to shade back into the more pluricentric normativity associated with destandardisation.

MASS MEDIA AND DESTANDARDISATION

As we have explained, the SLICE programme has emerged in the first instance from a programme of social-evaluative research in Denmark. This allows the Danish researchers involved to pose one simple but far-reaching question (cf. Gregersen, this volume): Is Denmark an exception or is Denmark the rule with regards to standard language in contemporary Europe? At the same time, SLICE is committed to understanding role and impact of social shifts on a global scale, summarised in the concept of globalisation. It would be surprising if there were not many resemblances between the Denmark/ globalisation sociolinguistic interface and parallel interfaces in other European contexts. (There are many ways to try to capture the material, symbolic and ideological shifts entailed in globalisation. For a 'tendentious list'

of generalised, multi-sited social changes over the last 50 or so years, see Coupland 2009: 29f.; on linguistic, semiotic and discursive aspects of globalisation, see chapters collected in Coupland 2010; also Appadurai 1996; Blommaert 2009; Castells 1996; Fairclough 2006; Hannerz 1992; Jaworski *et al.* 2009; Machin and van Leeuwen 2007; Pennycook 2007; Wright 2004.)

We saw above that there are intimations of mass media having some salience in the Danish quantitative research, and changes in the prevalence and social functioning of mass media are perhaps the most obvious and striking facets of globalisation. We can reasonably talk of 'the mediatisation of social life' under globalisation, and we have argued previously that *mass media are changing our terms of engagement with language*. This is not the claim that mass media are decisively and directly influencing language change – the proposition that is debated and *not* ultimately rejected by Stuart-Smith (this volume). It is the claim that modern media are increasingly flooding our lives with an unprecedented array of social and sociolinguistic representations, experiences and values, to the extent that (to put the case negatively) it is inconceivable that they have no bearing on how individuals and communities position themselves and are positioned sociolinguistically. Social indexicality in general is proliferating, and reflexivity about social meanings and symbolic forms is on the rise (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 25–28).

We must add to this the demonstrable shifts in media cultures, norms and technological systems between around 1960 and the present day (the SLICE 'window'), which involve some very specific and some very general sociolinguistic reorientations. In the context of a diachronic study of changing television news broadcasting norms in New Zealand over roughly this period, Bell (this volume) points to ethnic and social diversification, as more and more voices have appeared in broadcast media, but also to a degree of Americanisation, in the progressive adoption of specific features (and determiner deletion is one that Bell studies in great detail) that were originally associated with USA speech. Americanisation is a global process of influence on both English-language and non-English-language broadcasting around the world, in different regards. There is a tradition of comparative sociolinguistic research on lexical diffusion from the USA and another on the incorporation of English loanwords into other languages. But as yet we have little evidence of genre and style transfer (but see Machin and van Leeuwen [2007] on the global dissemination of gendered stances, ideologies and feature writing in the many national versions of *Cosmopolitan* magazine), whereby discursive formats of mass media first seen in the USA are spreading to other cultures, reshaping what we expect of mass media and how we expect to consume it and be addressed by it. The most widely discussed shift of this sort is the conversationalisation of public (and media) discourse (Fairclough 1994), whereby some of the discursive attributes and styles of informal conversation come to feature in non-intimate interactions, with a 'synthetic' or false implication of interpersonal solidarity. Bell documents many features of this sort in contemporary New Zealand broadcasting.

Bell also discusses the *vernacularisation* of the mass media over recent decades (cf. Androutsopoulos, this volume). Bell's perspective is on how media are nowadays more likely than formerly to broadcast indexically New Zealand-sounding accents and colloquial speech. This can be theorised as localisation, the resistant counter-flow to globalisation, in the dynamic system of centripetal and centrifugal social tendencies that is captured in the word 'glocalisation'. SLICE needs to address this issue empirically, seeking out evidence of which features, styles, genres or norms are flowing and being disseminated through globalised media, and which features (etc.) indicate either resistance to global flow (the persistence of the local) or the emergence of new vernacularities (new resources for localisation). In one of his last projects Bourdieu (1998) turned his attention to television, to theorise how 'journalistic capital' plays out in political and economic dimensions of contemporary cultures. He mentions journalists' stylistic preferences for simplicity and directness which he sees as underly-

ing the marketability of TV language, but also their preferences for sensationalising and for displays of objectivity, both of which are again subordinated to commercial priorities. In this treatment we begin to see how vernacular speech and practices are likely to hold considerable value for contemporary media, although the details very largely remain to be worked out.

As Bell and Stuart-Smith's separate chapters (this volume) explain, television and radio, along with print media (that is, the 'old media'), in their earliest guises were quite widely considered to be guardians of standard languages. In some cases, as for example with the BBC in Britain, the 'national broadcaster' for several decades took on the explicit role of promoting the 'best language', phonologically characterised as Received Pronunciation, as part of its public service remit (Garrett *et al.*, this volume). Shifts into *and out of* this language-ideological arrangement are documented by Mugglestone (1995). Broadcast speech style remains a focus of social evaluation in Britain, for example in a recent thread of internet comments on Neil Nunes, a continuity announcer on BBC Radio 4 whose voice retains resonant phonological traces of his Caribbean upbringing. Comments to the BBC included the following:

> We wish to hear intelligent speech on Radio 4 and we wish to hear it well-spoken.

> We wish to hear British English, in all its varieties, including received pronunciation. We do not wish to hear the English language spoken by accents from other parts of the globe.

> How refreshing, at last, to hear tones which aren't white, Anglo-Saxon and Little England.

> (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/voice-from-jamaica-divides-radio-4-linteners-472301.html. Accessed 14 September 2011).

The most significant aspect of this range of opinions is that it is varied, suggesting a mixed ideological field, in place of the pro-standard consensus of earlier decades. (Soukup and Moosmüller, this volume, report similar historical shifts in relation to TV broadcasting in Austria.) It will be important to document metalinguistic commentaries of this sort in SLICE research, and to draw conclusions from whatever real-time comparative broadcast data are available in particular communities.

As above, however, it will be important to build theoretical frameworks in which data of this sort can be interpreted, and particularly to build theory that is broad enough to span mediated and non-mediated sociolinguistic contexts. One interesting theoretical initiative has been to extend Norbert Elias's perspective to make it more directly relevant to the late modern period. Cas Wouters argues that the long-term formalising of manners and disciplining that Elias documented was reversed in the twentieth century, which saw

> …an extended process of informalisation of manners along with a disciplined relaxation of people's conscience and self-regulation… Manners have become more lenient, more differentiated and varied for a wider and more differentiated public; an increasing variety of behavioural and emotional alternatives have come to be accepted and expected . (Wouters 2004: 194)

This view maintains Elias's frames of reference, but tilts the analysis towards global processes. Wouters argues that the United States was starting to influence global understandings of 'good manners' before World War II and that its more demographically diverse (in terms of age, ethnicity, gender and sexuality) and entertainment-focused popular culture tended to be exported around the world in the decades after the War. An anti-authoritarian norm developed that proved incompatible with many of the personal and social restraints, and indeed the centralising statism, that Elias had recognised in 'the civilising process'.

Wouters sees a quite general process of democratisation of public life beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. Regimes of manners, he says, lost their credibility as well as their rigidity;

social styles became less category-bound and new means of self-expression came to the fore, including dress-styles, dance and music as well as, in Wouters' view, 'written and spoken language' (Wouters 2004: 207). A 'collective emancipation' developed in the 1980s, to be replaced by a dominant market ideology (*ibid.*: 208, and see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) that restricted opportunities for emancipation and social advancement to the realm of the individual (cf. Bauman 2001 on the individualisation of late modern societies). But, still according to Wouters, post-War informalised relations have generally held sway.

Expansive and over-generalising as these claims probably are, they do connect well with much more specific sociolinguistic arguments and analyses. Informalisation connects with Fairclough's conversationalisation thesis; collective emancipation connects with Kerswill's arguments about mobility, meritocracy, dialect levelling and the decline of Received Pronunciation in Britain (Kerswill 2001); Americanisation and demographic inclusiveness connect with Coupland's (in press) account of the vernacularising tendencies of 1960s and later popular music. As early as 1987, Joseph was speculating about language destandardisation as a theoretical possibility, although he noted that, at that time, it was a concept that 'does not occur in the literature' (Joseph 1987: 174). There is clearly a research agenda needing to be developed and fulfilled to clarify the place of language destandardisation among the many other '-isation' processes that, as far as we can see at the moment, constitute much of the ideological and practical distinctiveness of late modernity. SLICE's two main strands of research will, we are sure, make a substantial contribution to this agenda. The results of this work will be published in follow-up volumes to the present one.

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