INTRODUCTION

Tangible traces of language ideologies

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As the last issue of the *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* (BJL), this volume delves into linguistic ideologies. Language usage and the evaluations we make about it are intricately intertwined: even in the absence of visual cues of the speaker or writer, we intuitively develop perceptions about the sociolinguistic context of our interlocutor. The language employed often offers subtle hints about their age, gender, or social and regional origins. Particularly in spoken discourse, we find ourselves assessing not just their accent, but also forming impressions about the individual's likability, perceived arrogance or intelligence, and various other attributes. Similar to its predecessors spanning 36 volumes, the content of this ultimate issue of the BJL is diverse, encompassing historical sources that shed light on language ideologies of bygone eras, insights from the language classroom, and perspectives from everyday language users.

Keywords: language ideologies, normativity, language communities, standardization

1.   The intricate link between language and ideology

To round off the BJL's wonderful adventure, the present volume looks at linguistic ideologies. Language use and judgments about language are inextricably linked: without even seeing the speaker or writer of a message we are exposed to, we all form ideas on the sociolinguistic background of our interlocutor. The language used may give us clues about their age, gender or social and regional background. Especially in the case of spoken language, we may decide whether we like their accent, and by extension whether we like this person, whether we think they are arrogant or intelligent, and so on. These attitudes are also reinforced by our awareness of the existence of a language standard, as emphasized by Milroy (2006):

> An important consequence of language standardization has been the development of consciousness among speakers of a 'correct', or canonical, form of language. In standard-language cultures, virtually everyone subscribes to the idea of correctness. Some forms are believed to be right and others wrong, and this is generally taken for granted as common sense.   (Milroy 2006, 133)

The standardized variety of the language serves as a benchmark against which language users compare – more or less consciously – their own language variety and the language as it is used by others. Even though they may feel proud of and attached to their language variety, speakers of varieties that differ phonologically and/or lexically from the standard to some extent, may often feel insecure. This is because their variety may be considered as markedly deviant by other, more influential, more vocal, or more prestigious speech communities (see, e.g., Grondelaers and Speelman 2013 for Flemish Dutch; Lambert, Giles, and Picard 1975 for Canadian French; Álvarez-Mosquera and Marín-Gutiérrez 2018, 2021 for South African English, or the overview article by Giles and Billings 2004).

Language standardization and codification are common processes that the main official languages of the European nation states have undergone. With evolving ideas of nation building throughout history, "[n]ation and language have become inextricably intertwined. Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a medium of communication, a 'vernacular' or a 'dialect', but a fully developed language. Anything less marks it as undeveloped" (Haugen 1966, 927). The value of a standardized variety is not just symbolic in nature, but also serves several practical purposes. A codified standard provides a tangible core that constitutes a reference for written language, and that also guarantees mutual intelligibility across varieties of a particular language. Besides, a clearly defined standard lays the foundation for language teaching at school, where children continue to develop and enrich their language skills by learning to spell and to write texts, and by being familiarized with differences in register. Teaching materials and norms for language tests are developed on the basis of the standardized variety. At the same time, advances in sociolinguistics have been key in sensitizing the educational context and society of the fact that dialects and vernaculars "were not ill-formed or half-formed variations" (Pearson and Stephens 1998, 90) of a standard language. The role of schooling should not be to discourage children to stop using their own variety or dialect, but to enable them to develop literacy and to expand their language skills. The school environment nowadays has also become a context where children come into contact with classmates with a different language background. Over the past three decades, we see a growing awareness within the educational field to discard the purely monolingual focus of curricula and to value the benefits of minority (migrant, indigenous) languages that children may use at home (see, e.g. Liddicoat and Curnow 2014; Abdelilah-

Bauer 2015). Even though opinions and practices are changing towards linguistic inclusivity, stereotypes and common beliefs surrounding bilingualism and plurilingualism can be quite tenacious (Abdelilah-Bauer 2015, 153–158; Schroedler, Purkarthofer, and Cantone 2022, 3–5). That is, not all bilingual backgrounds turn out to be valued equally. In case of languages that are associated with high prestige – as a direct reflection of the attitudes towards the cultural and/or economic standing of the population or country that has that particular language as its official language – bilingualism is often seen as an asset. If, however, a lower-prestige language is involved (e.g. the home languages of the migrant workers working in lower-wage industries), bilingualism is often not viewed in the same positive light (Extra and Yağmur 2011; Schroedler Purkarthofer, and Cantone 2022). The publication of the Companion Volume of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2020), a source widely used in policy making and language teaching and pedagogy, can be seen as a solid effort to demystify the misconceptions surrounding the alleged difference in usefulness of various bilingual backgrounds: all languages or varieties children use and encounter have their value, they can all be used to make them aware of the structure and functions of language and to build a versatile "plurilingual repertoire" (Council of Europe 2020, 30–31).

Language ideologies have been on the research agenda of several linguistic sub-disciplines, including historical linguistics, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Concepts such as standards and normativity, language and power, language attitudes, linguistic insecurity and glottophobia have been explored in detail for various languages and for various speech communities around the world. Illustrative recent publications include for instance Piccardi, Nodari, and Calamai (2022) on linguistic insecurity among Italian pupils, Ianos et al. (2023) on language attitudes in Catalonia, Rosendal and de Dieu Amini Ngabonziza (2023) on language, ideology and power in Rwanda, or the edited volume by Hudley, Mallinson, and Bucholtz (2024) on inclusion in linguistics. Linguists working on these topics have not just been investigating those contexts. They have also provided answers and guidelines for dealing with situations where language ideologies have a noticeable impact, such as in plurilingual spaces, educational settings or in political discussions on the value of regional languages. In addition, it deserves to be mentioned that they have contributed towards sensitizing non-linguists of the fact that "[s]peakers are not usually conscious that they are conditioned by these ideological positions: they usually believe their attitudes to language to be common sense and assume that virtually everyone agrees with them" (Milroy 2006, 133). BJL 37 will make a contribution to this rich area of research by further exploring the tensions between the presence of an ideologically glorified, standardized variety and the linguistic behaviour within speech

communities – as a result of, or in spite of, this "quintessential form of language" (Lodge 2004, 6).

2.   Overview of the contributions

Like the first 36 volumes of BJL, the content of the very final volume is varied, focusing as much on historical sources that can tell us more about language ideologies in the past, on the language classroom, as well as on ordinary language users.

In the first contribution, **Franz Meier** zooms in on the language columns written by Jesuit priest Joseph Deharveng in the 1920s. He investigates the strategies Deharveng used to establish his authority when advocating in favour of standard, Parisian, French to be adopted by Francophone Belgians.

Machteld de Vos and Ulrike Vogl then analyse the linguistic labels and the delimitation of languages in grammatical descriptions originating in the (northern as well as southern) Netherlands in the 16th and 17th centuries. They seek to answer the underlying questions (i) to what extent these representations differ in monolingual as compared to multilingual works and (ii) what these differences tell us about the position of Dutch as a language.

The next two papers are based on field research. **Leyla Tielemans** looks into the concept of 'language prestige' by examining the (motivated) choices made by university students of language and literature in Brussels. Her data illustrate how multi-facetted the concept of prestige can be. The article by **Deborah Meunier** reports on interviews with secondary school teachers about multilingualism in schools in French-speaking Belgium. On the basis of the interviews, she analyses teachers' views, allowing her to understand the impediments to making the most of pupils' linguistic heritage in the classroom.

Finally, in the last contribution, **Janine Berns and Sanne van Vuuren** discuss the concept of the native speaker norm for foreign language pronunciation teaching. By comparing the developments for English and French over time, the first essentially taking over from the latter as international lingua franca, we discover how both pronunciation teaching practice and normative thinking have evolved.

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