Norms and Usage in Language History, 1600–1900

A sociolinguistic and comparative perspective

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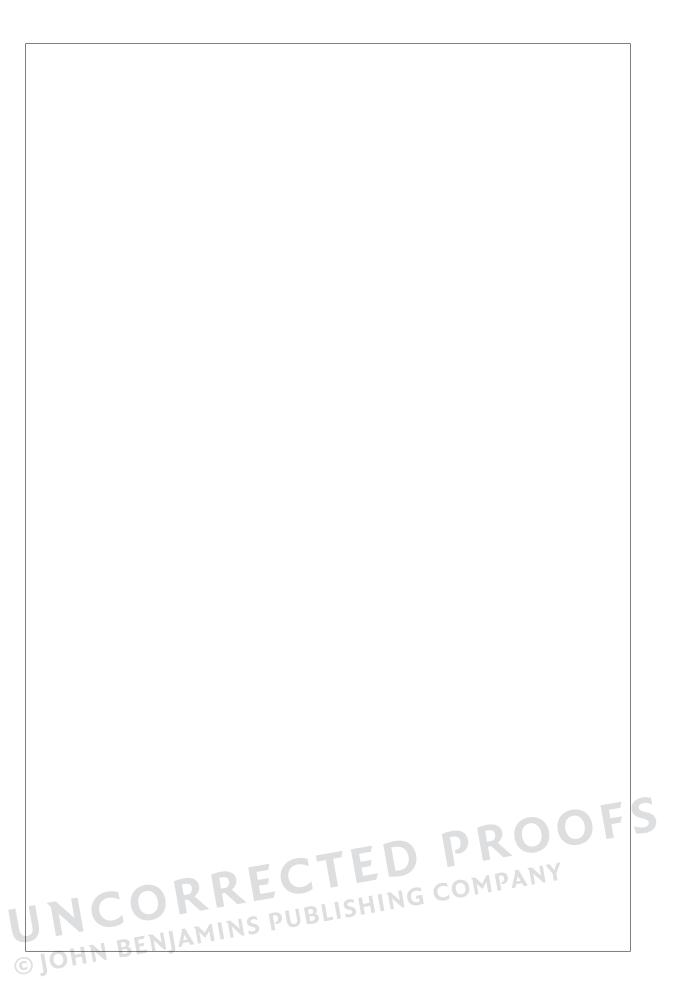Vrije Universiteit Brussel

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The interplay of language norms
and usage patterns

Comparing the history of Dutch, English, French and German

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1. Introduction

Historical sociolinguistics has come a long way. Inspired by the empirical approach to spoken language in modern sociolinguistic research, authors such as Romaine (1982) and Milroy (1992) felt the need to apply sociolinguistic research methods to language history. It became important to create reliable databases comprising source materials that were suitable for sociolinguistic investigation. In the absence of spoken language data, the most oral-like written sources were sought for, an enterprise that was theoretically underpinned by the work of authors such as Biber (1988) and Koch & Oesterreicher (1985), who criticized too rigid a distinction of the spoken and written code. The call for written language data reflecting the spoken language as much as possible led to the compilation of various corpora of what are now often called *ego-documents*, a cover term referring to genres that are considered to have been important in people's private lives and personal experiences, such as letters, diaries and travelogues. All too often, however, the traces of the past are exclusively linked to the upper ranks of society. Sources from the middle and lower ranks are notoriously difficult to come by. As these groups made up the large majority of past societies, historical sociolinguistics set itself the task of not only compiling corpora with relatively 'oral' language, but moreover with data from writers who are often neglected in traditional language histories such as women and members from other social ranks than the elite. The approach to language history that focusses on such sources and that aims to repair the social and gender bias found in many language histories, has come to be known as language history 'from below' (e.g. Elspaß 2005).

In many historical-sociolinguistic studies, traditional language histories are criticized for being one-sided, partial, biased, founded on a limited collection of

sources linked to upper-class men, focused on literary language, on print language, and so on. In addition, they are criticized for creating a view of linguistic history that typically runs from medieval variation to present-day uniformity (Watts 2012; cf. the pluricentric approach to standards of English presented in Hickey 2012). Indeed, the history of European languages in post-medieval times is often cast as or limited to the history of standardization. However, it has also been noted (Fairman 2007) that purposely and explicitly leaving aside the more 'standard'-like textual sources found in print, in literature, in elite documents, and setting aside the possible influence of supraregional writing conventions, language norms and prescriptions, may run the risk of presenting another one-sided view of language history. In many of the recent historical-sociolinguistic studies based on large corpora of *ego-documents*, language norms and standardization are hardly referred to, or in any case mainly used to demonstrate the value of the sources 'from below' as far as they show other conventions and non-'standard' writing norms (e.g. Elspaß 2005; Elspaß et al. 2007; Elspaß & Vandenbussche 2007; Hickey 2010b; Dossena & Del Lungo Camiciotti 2012; Nobels 2013; Simons 2013; van der Wal & Rutten 2013; Rutten & van der Wal, to appear). Based on the considerable research tradition in historical sociolinguistics that has come into existence over the past few decades, the time has now come to integrate both perspectives, and to reassess the importance of language norms, standardization and prescription on the basis of sound empirical studies of large corpora of texts.

The chapters in this volume discuss the interplay of language norms and language use in Dutch, English, French and German between 1600 and 1900. Each chapter focuses on one language and one century. The original impetus for this volume came from the approaching retirement of Marijke van der Wal, professor in the history of Dutch at Leiden University. In her research, she has often focused on language norms and standardization in the history of Dutch, and in recent years, with the rediscovery and disclosure of an exceptional source of Dutch private letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, also on sociohistorical investigations of language use.

2.   Overview of the contributions

The picture of the interplay between language norms and language use in the Dutch language area from 1600 onwards starts off with a fresh and innovative look at the emergence of a standard variety in the seventeenth-century Netherlands (Judith Nobels & Gijsbert Rutten). The new perspective (which runs as a recurring approach through various other chapters in the present volume) consists in the fundamental choice to discuss both norms and usage in this prototypical

'crucial' age for the development of Dutch on the basis of a substantial and original new corpus of texts. Contrary to previous authors, Nobels & Rutten use original normative publications that circulated at the time as their yardstick for assessing the 'quality' of the written language. Their corpus comprises private letters from all social classes, drawn from the large (but only recently disclosed) collection of Dutch private letters kept in the National Archives in Kew, London. None of these had ever been used before for linguistic analyses and the corpus is thus a substantial new resource that will serve language historiographers far beyond the present volume (which is also the case for many of the other chapters in the current volume). Focusing on two highly salient features (negation structures and the formation of the genitive) the chapter assesses the actual impact of prescriptive literature on everyday writing in ego-documents. Nobels & Rutten's analyses substantiate that their scribes displayed a limited sensibility at best for the explicit language norms that were forwarded in the language advice literature. It is interesting to note that analyses of similar documents from the eighteenth century lead to identical conclusions. Tanja Simons & Gijsbert Rutten draw upon eighteenth-century letters from the same archive trove to test the equally un-researched influence of normative publications on language use in the Netherlands during that subsequent era. Once again, the genitive formation is at the heart of the analysis, now paired with the deletion of final -*n* in un-accentuated syllables. While the standardization process of (Northern) Dutch had meanwhile moved from the selection to the ongoing codification phase, there was no major increase in the impact of prescriptive normative literature on day-to-day writing practices in the private letters for the two aforementioned features. The dichotomy between, on the one hand, both contemporary prescriptive advice and subsequent widely accepted language historiography, and, on the other, the linguistic reality of ordinary, everyday Dutch is equally present in the contribution on nineteenth-century Dutch by Rik Vosters, Els Belsack, Jill Puttaert & Wim Vandenbussche. While the scene shifts to Southern Dutch (i.e. Dutch from Flanders) and the corpus used now pertains to the legal domain (various types of reports and depositions from high court files), we once again see that a number of persistent 'language myths' are fundamentally inconsistent with the linguistic reality found in archive documents. The authors dismiss the widespread image of Southern Dutch as a norm-less and chaotic collection of local language varieties and present a convincing image of a solid Southern normative tradition instead, well-rooted in the previous century and in ongoing developments. By analysing three prototypical case studies in the domain of spelling, each of which had a shibboleth Southern Dutch form, the authors show how, both in prescriptive practices and in actual usage, a gradual shift from traditional Southern variants to the Northern variants can be observed from 1815 onwards, i.e. after the (short-lived) political reunification

between the Northern and Southern part of the Dutch language territory. This fact inspires a discussion of the directionality of the relationship between norm and usage, i.e. whether there is actual normative influence on usage or whether 'normative authors simply codify existing practices'. This fundamental question echoes in quite a few of the other contributions in this volume (e.g. in the chapters by Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Ayres-Bennett and McLelland).

Seventeenth-century English witnessed major advances in the codification of orthography and vocabulary but, as Terttu Nevalainen shows, the literature promoting 'polite' language use was still far from becoming explicitly normative at the time. Using modern theories on language policy, Nevalainen reinterprets (and gives an innovative description of) the emergence of norms for the English language along the lines of usage, attitudes and 'language management'. She sheds light on the reasoned and conscious construction of specific language norms and on the strong ideological orientation underpinning specific linguistic choices. Norms were, in fact, sometimes imposed with specific intentions (especially towards the end of the seventeenth century), despite uncertainty on their actual acceptance and implementation in the writing community at large. When shifting our view towards the eighteenth century, the discussion of English norms and usage acquires a more exclusive focus on the specific case of grammar books. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade's contribution transcends a content analysis of these works and aims at a better understanding of the actual audience served by grammars at the time. A close analysis of the list of people who subscribed to one of the many prescriptive grammars published in eighteenth-century England presents us with a unique insight in the social identity (and professions) of its readership. The strong presence of the middle classes among the subscribers provides a glimpse of the promise of social promotion that good mastery of grammar conveyed to those who aspired to upward social mobility – an ambition and a strategy that could be gleaned from Dutch, French and German middle class writing alike in the same period. The heavy commercial competition between usage guides testifies equally to this fact, as does the ongoing success and spread of grammars in the nineteenth century, discussed by Anita Auer. After the previous excursions into both the ideology and the audience of grammars, Auer takes the discussion back to actual language usage among everyday writers. Her approach to language history 'from below' stands in a young but firm tradition (well-represented in the present volume) that focuses on the impressive amount of preserved ego-documents (here in English) written by unschooled or semi-schooled writers from the lower levels of society. Highly stigmatized forms in usage guides were frequently (and even predominantly) used by poor writers in their requests for financial relief to local authorities – much as was the case for the aforementioned scribes in Flanders and the Netherlands (and in Germany and France, too). As such, the tension between prescriptive advice,

the wish for social promotion and the limitations of one's writing education fore-grounds yet another thematic strand that clearly entered into the social history of all four languages under discussion in this work.

Given that France is frequently cited as the prototypical example of strict nor-mative approaches to language use and language standardization, one can right-fully wonder how the seventeenth-century codifiers of French dealt with the issues of variability that prominently figured in the preceding discussion of Dutch and English usage across three centuries. In line with the focus on the revalorization of original contemporary sources in this volume, Wendy Ayres-Bennett outlines the prescriptive framework within which French writers operated at the time, and then challenges the assumed impact of this model by testing it against sources that pertain to the informal side of the language continuum and may contain traces of orality. Her plea for the ongoing compilation of substantial corpora spread over various sociolinguistic domains mirrors similar desiderata formulated in other chapters of the present volume, as does the observation that new sources may inspire a reappraisal of the alleged major prescriptivist nature of French *bon usage* guides. Ayres-Bennett's suggestion that there may actually have been an aware-ness (and sensitivity) of the 'sociolinguistic' effects of stylistic variation within the community of normative language advisers prefigures Anthony Lodge's charac-terization of the real-life attitudes towards variability in usage of one specific (but most probably highly representative) autodidact scribe from eighteenth-century Paris. The sources Lodge draws upon explicitly reveal the vernacular French features that remained largely hidden (or implicit) in the seventeenth-century material and, moreover, show that tolerance of language variation and openness towards linguistic accommodation were part of the sociolinguistic reality at the time. Lodge thus once again foregrounds the fundamental observation that the prescriptive drive of the 'metropolitan elites' may actually have been far removed from the preceding relaxed attitudes towards variation and variability among a substantial share of the population – a statement (equally underscored in the contributions on Dutch, English and German alike) that cannot help but remind the reader of Jim Milroy's famous socio-historical maxim on the 'post eighteenth-century nature' of concerns with invariability in linguistic usage. As they discuss the writing practices of socially distinct writers from nineteenth-century French Canada, France Martineau & Sandrine Tailleur integrate both the reservations and new insights of their colleagues on seventeenth and eighteenth-century French into a coherent new whole. As was the case with Dutch, introducing a pluricentric perspective on the history of French standardization allows them to show how 'local' (here: in France) tensions between older and newer norms and usage were translated into assets of social identity. The mastery of supralocal norms by French Canadians – Martineau & Tailleur use a set of highly salient variables figuring

as either European or Canadian-French identity markers – not only marked the watershed between successful social climbers from the *bourgeoisie* and the *peu lettrés* who aspired to (but failed to reach) a higher social position, but also defined the boundaries of the social networks within which the writers could operate.

In the concluding section on norms and usage in German, Nicola McLelland puts the prescriptive advice from iconic grammar-writer Schottelius at the center of her evaluation of normative influences in seventeenth-century texts. The availability of a large set of electronic corpora (one of which was specially compiled for the present analysis, while a second had only just been launched) allows her to make a well-substantiated assessment of the actual interplay between normative rules and language practice in various domains. While the prescriptive impact appears to be limited but significant, McLelland's results whet the appetite for further research that could support or disconfirm careful indications about the social stratification through time of the heightened sensibility for prescriptive advice. Nils Langer approaches German texts from the eighteenth century with a comparably straightforward normative framework at hand: contrary to many of his fellow authors, he draws the reader's attention to a series of explicitly stigmatized forms (i.e. examples to be avoided rather than rules to be followed). Very few instances of such 'bad German' are attested, however, in the printed sources used, yet they appear more frequently in ego-documents and other private texts from this period. As such, Langer becomes one of our many authors to stress the common request for a substantial increase of corpora containing informal (near-spoken) non-standard language. Failing to achieve this, we are bound to be confronted over and again with a restricted view on the 'the true extent of language use' in eighteenth-century German, or in any other language or century for that matter. Stephan Elspaß's concluding chapter on nineteenth-century German provides convincing proof and support for this explicit request. Given the relatively long tradition of research on the social history of German during this century, including linguistic analyses of substantial original corpora covering a wide array of social and regional parameters, the author is able to look into "the roots of present-day German" with probably some of the best chances of all to successfully achieve Labov's socio-historical challenge "to make the best use of bad data". Stepping away from existing analyses of the rise of standard German, Elspaß focuses on the ideological constructs underlying the various interpretations or models of 'correct' or 'standard' German at the time. The same ideological bias also directly influences the actual narrative of standardization that authors use to legitimize their prescriptive advice. As can be expected, Elspaß in his turn includes a convincing plea for more research on language history 'from below' – which also was the starting point of the first article discussed in this section. As the circle draws to a close, it becomes clear that all contributions force us to

question and reconceptualize our understanding of the standardization process and the relationship between individual language varieties and norms – a discussion we embark upon in the next section.

3.   Phased standardization and diaglossia

In this section, we will elaborate on theories and descriptions of standardization, supralocalization, diglossia and diaglossia. Our comments and observations have been inspired by the twelve chapters in the present volume and by other recent work in the field of historical sociolinguistics. They should not be interpreted as our final conclusions, but rather as general suggestions for research topics and directions in future explorations in our field.

To talk about language norms and usage in post-medieval Western Europe is to talk about standardization. Over the centuries, written language has displayed increasing uniformity resulting in the relatively homogeneous standard varietes of the present, while in recent times, dialect loss and the rise of geographically more widely diffused regional standards as well as regionally recognizable standard varieties are phenomena well-known from research on European dialect-standard constellations (Auer 2005, 2011; Kristiansen & Coupland 2011; Kristiansen & Grondelaers 2013). The development 'from dialect to standard' (cf. Haugen 1966) has been the topic of extensive and comparative research (Deumert & Vandenbussche 2003a and the references there; Vandenbussche 2007). Recalling the critique on the emphasis on this development towards uniformity (cf. Section 1), Salmons (2013: 264–265) stresses that the newly born standard languages did usually not replace existing varieties, but merely added yet another layer to sociolinguistic space. The chapters in the present volume that discuss norms and usage in the seventeenth-century all indicate that this century is traditionally considered a period of standardization, more specifically of codification. For Dutch and German, the seventeenth century, building on important developments in the late sixteenth century, counts as the first stage of the standardization of the language, mainly because it saw widespread codifying practices. As Nevalainen points out, seventeenth-century English was at an advanced stage of spelling regularization and had undergone extensive vocabulary enrichment. In France, the seventeenth century is considered the age of codification and prescription.

Starting from such Haugen-like observations, the chapters in this volume immediately problematize the accuracy, or rather the relevance of these observations. All too often, Haugen's (1966) original four characteristics of standardization, viz. codification, selection, elaboration of function and acceptance, are implicitly considered as consecutive stages, with codification and selection as the

main characteristics of the seventeenth century, and with the eighteenth century and especially the nineteenth century as the period of the spread of the standard language through society, both regionally (from the center to the periphery) and socially (from the upper ranks to the lower ranks). By implication, gradual acceptance of the standard language by the language community would follow codification and selection. This is the view of standardization that Elspaß in his chapter labels 'model A', and that he criticizes for various reasons, among which the complete neglect of writing conventions different from prescriptive norms that were, however, widely in use in nineteenth-century German. McLelland, in her chapter on seventeenth-century German, rightly remarks that acceptance and maintenance in the sense of Milroy & Milroy (2012 [1985]) often precede codification, and that normative metalinguistic discourse often only codifies what has become conventional, as Nevalainen and Ayres-Bennett also point out with regard to seventeenth-century English and French. Ayres-Bennett adds that what are perhaps the prime examples of European prescriptivism, viz. the works of *remarquers* such as Vaugelas, should not be considered stringent norm impositions because in many respects they appear to consist of keen observations of contemporary variation and change. Both language use and metalinguistic discourse may have been more varied than implied in 'model A' histories of the language.

Despite the fact that the standardization of German is supposed to have taken off in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Elspaß argues that in many respects it does not make sense to talk about Standard German even in the nineteenth century. The writers of private letters in his corpus do not always seem to orient themselves toward the supposedly standard norms found in prescriptive grammars, but adhere to other writing conventions, that are, importantly, not necessarily immediately linked to the spoken language. This means that they were not putting their local dialect to paper. The results from the chapters on the nineteenth century in the other language areas are very similar. Auer notes that in her corpus of lower-class letters, and in line with earlier findings, the second person singular form *you was* dominates, a variant that was already proscribed against in the eighteenth century. Martineau & Tailleur show that the writings of *peu-lettrés* from nineteenth-century French Canada are highly diverse, showing considerable inter- and intra-writer variation in the extent to which the writers adhere to local spoken and/or written conventions on the one hand, and to the prescriptive norms on the other. Vosters et al., discussing administrative documents in Dutch from a time when there were official spelling and grammar regulations, show that even the written language from the administrative/legal domain does not always follow orthographic prescriptions.

3.1   Target groups and nationalization

If standardization is the hallmark of post-medieval language histories, taking off with codification in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and resulting in the gradual dissemination of the standard variety in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then the observed absence of unambiguous effects of prescriptivism on language use in the nineteenth century poses a crucial problem for the unilinear model of standardization referred to above, and forces us to reconsider the viability of a theory of standardization that is founded on the temporal succession of various stages. One question that rises in this context is the social extent of language planning efforts. Who do we talk about when we talk about standardization? Nevalainen remarks that we need to reflect on language norms in terms of their target groups, which were usually quite restricted in the seventeenth century. English grammars, for instance, were often targeted towards either foreigners, typically merchants, or meant for schoolboys, on the assumption that the acquisition of Latin would be easier when grammatical terms and concepts had first been learnt via English. In such cases, language planning has a markedly practical orientation: it is a means to reach a specific goal considered beneficial to the language user. A more symbolic meaning, according to which language norms fulfil an identitary function and/or index the writer's mastery of a style or code that is deemed appropriate independent from any practical concerns, was largely limited to the domain of literature. With the rise of the middle classes in the eighteenth century, a new ideology came into being, at the core of which lies the idea that upward social mobility depends on language skills, i.e. on the ability to use the 'standard' (Beal 2004). Moreover, this new middle class was subsequently ready to accept all the social prejudices inherent in a unified, exclusive standard (Hickey 2010a). Increasingly, standard language norms became essential and defining factors in the creation (or appropriation) of a specific social and educated identity. In England, as Tieken-Boon van Ostade argues, this led to a new genre, when in the later decades of the eighteenth century the usage guide developed from the eighteenth-century grammatical tradition. McLelland points out that in Germany, the prescriptions found in the single most important codifying work of the seventeenth century, viz. the grammar of Schottelius, probably only influenced the language use of a small circle of language professionals – if it had any lasting influence at all. In the eighteenth century, however, the social split between those with access to supraregional High German and those without, did not run between an elite of experienced language users and the majority of the population, but was shifting towards a divide between the lower classes on the one hand, and the middle and upper classes on the other, as alluded to by Langer. This widening of the target audience of metalinguistic discourse can also be discerned in the history of

Dutch, as discussed in the chapters by Nobels & Rutten and Simons & Rutten. The decisive turning point can be located in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the former elitist orientation is abandoned in favor of an inclusive approach to language, underpinned by a nationalist ideology. At this point in time, practical concerns are not dominant anymore in language planning activities, but have given way to a highly ideological discourse of nationality, citizenship and social advancement. Ayres-Bennett argues that seventeenth-century French metalinguistic discourse was connected to a climate of social mobility, in which the newly ennobled aspired to assimilate the linguistic habits of their new social environment. Again, this relatively limited reach of explicit language norms was replaced by the ideology of a unified linguistic code that symbolizes the political unity of the nation. Lodge, in his chapter on eighteenth-century French, uses this ideology characterizing metalinguistic discourse of the period as the background for his interpretation of the linguistic experiences of Ménétra when he traveled through France in the 1750s and 1760s. In the changing socio-political circumstances of the second half of the eighteenth century, with the rise of modern nation-states and nationalist ideology, language became one of the tools suitable for symbolic representation in nationalist discourse. Historians have argued that from c. 1750 onward, in the so-called *Sattelzeit*, crucial concepts of European culture underwent far-reaching semantic transformations, among which are *people* or *volk* and *nation* (Koselleck 1972; cf. Leerssen 2007). In the language areas discussed in the present volume, this implies a great divide between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century efforts at standardization. Target audiences changed from identifiable groups such as socio-cultural elites into the nation as a whole. Normalized language changed from a tool for specific situational and/or stylistic purposes into a central issue of education for the entire population. Language planning changed from one out of many socio-cultural occupations into a core element of the socio-political construction of national identities. In sum, language underwent "nationalization" (Burke 2004: 166), so that discontinuity may be more typical of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than is suggested by the perspective of a continuous process of standardization.

3.2   Standard language ideology

The effect of standardized language becoming a symbol of nationality entails the definitive degradation of other linguistic forms and varieties to non-standardness. In that sense, the standard language ideology (Milroy & Milroy 2012 [1985]; Lippi-Green 2012) was born in the eighteenth century as a side effect to a new period in history, viz. the period of the nation-state (cf. Hickey 2010a). What is striking about Ménétra's experiences as discussed by Lodge, is the almost complete

absence of any indications that Ménétra was influenced by this new language ideology. At odds with the standard language ideology, Ménétra seemed to consider language as something flexible and malleable that could be adapted as the circumstances required. In view of the markedly different, i.e. in many respects 'non-standard' written language found in private writings from nineteenth-century English, French and German as well as in official documents in Dutch, the evidence presented in the present volume suggests that what has spread downward from the upper ranks of society, is first and foremost the standard language ideology, not so much or to a considerably lesser extent the standardized variety itself. This is again a view that links up with historical work where it is argued that nationalism is not just a socio-political development, but also, and importantly, an intellectual and ideological enterprise (Leerssen 2006, 2007). For standardization studies, this means that what are often considered to be the final stages of one and the same process, viz. the maintenance, prescription, implementation and dissemination of the standard, are fundamentally different from the earlier stages of selection and codification. Whereas the latter can be identified in language practices throughout the Early and Late Modern Period, the former are discursively constructed in metalinguistic discourse and policy documents and can be "totally irrelevant" (cf. Elspaß, this volume) for actual language use.

3.3 Sources

Drawing attention to the linguistic experiences of a figure such as Ménétra, the chapter by Lodge stresses the importance of a bottom-up perspective on (the rise of) the standard language ideology, and on the interplay of language norms and usage generally. One of the main goals of historical sociolinguistics over the past few decades has been the collection of appropriate source materials and the compilation of sociolinguistically relevant corpora (cf. Elspaß 2012; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2012). The empirical evidence for sociolinguistic language histories should be taken from original archive sources and preferably not from published and edited work. The text types included should be as varied as possible, representing relatively formal language characteristics of the written code, but also, and importantly, genres that are closer to the spoken language such as private letters, trial records and plays. The writers should be as diverse as possible, too, both socially and regionally, avoiding the emphasis on male writers, on the socially and economically upper ranks, and on specific regions, often the capital and its surroundings, characteristic of traditional language histories. The chapters on the nineteenth century by Vosters et al., Auer, Martineau & Tailleur and Elspaß clearly testify to the importance of tapping into new language sources, without which the general conclusion that prescriptivism

had only a limited effect on language use in this period would not have been easily drawn. The chapters on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries all demonstrate that the selection and codification of a standard variety cannot be seen as the general nor the main characteristic of the languages under discussion, even if they constitute the main metalinguistic development in the history of the languages. As Langer notes in his chapter on eighteenth-century German, the fact that there was such a wide gap between the formal written language and the spoken language in the nineteenth century (cf. Elspaß 2005), only suggests that this gap also existed in previous periods, and, we would like to add, may even have been much wider. This is indeed confirmed in the corpus-based explorations in the chapters on these earlier periods.

3.4   Supralocalization

By uncovering uncharted territory through corpus-based analyses of variation and change in actual language use, the discipline of historical sociolinguistics forces us to rethink our concept of standardization. In particular, we need to reconsider our idea of language norms and address the co-existence of multiple, varying and flexible points of normative orientation, dependent on regional, social, identitary and situational factors. Many contributors to this volume stress the importance of distinguishing between prescriptive norms on the one hand, which are, for that matter, not always homogeneous, and other norms or writing conventions on the other hand. All authors discuss prescriptive norms and compare these to the patterns of usage that arise from the sources, and that often testify to other norms or conventions. Elspaß calls the latter norms of usage, which are distinguished from prescriptive norms by being inherent to all languages, upon which the secondary, prescriptive norms may be superimposed by codifiers or other norm authorities. Ayres-Bennett makes a slightly different yet similar distinction between descriptive norms and prescriptive norms, following Houdebine-Gravaud (2002) in her study of what she calls *l'imaginaire linguistique* ('linguistic imaginery'), who distinguishes objective norms (comprised of systemic and statistical norms) and subjective norms (prescriptive, fictive, communicative and evaluative norms). These remarks on different types of norms tie in with the observations referred to above that the target groups of norm traditions may be fairly restricted and may vary over time, suggesting that other groups of language users were thought to adhere to different sets of norms. Referring to Milroy (1994), Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2006: 288) argue that "standardisation is often facilitated by the prior development of suitable supralocal norms, being as it were, superimposed upon them". They describe supralocalization as "an umbrella term

to refer to the geographical diffusion of linguistic features beyond their region of origin". With its focus on individual linguistic features and their occurrence in the written language, in principle independent from the spoken language, supralocalization attests to a multifaceted and dynamic view of norm convergence in which uniform standards emerge from various competing supralocal conventions and writing traditions (cf. Joseph 1987; Deumert & Vandenbussche 2003b; Schneider 2007; Hickey 2012). The chapters in this volume bear witness to such variation in the conventions adhered to, while demonstrating that rigidly conceptualizing sociolinguistic space in terms of standard and non-standard is much less fruitful than traditional, unilinear standardization histories suggest. As stated before, when talking about standardization, an important question is who the new standards are meant for. By implication, other language users apparently employed other standards. But instead of talking about standardization when discussing norms and usage in post-medieval Europe, we may want to consider talking about supralocalization, thus avoiding the unilinearity silently implied in the concept of standardization.

3.5   Diaglossia and diglossia

The foregoing discussion has far-reaching implications for the typology of European dialect-standard constellations as discussed by Auer (2005), and in particular for their history (Auer 2011). Dossena (2012: 26–27) argues that the sociolinguistic evidence gathered in Dossena & Del Lungo Camiciotti (2012), a volume with studies of English, German, Dutch, Portuguese and Finnish letters, shows that the history of these languages in the Late Modern period should be thought of in terms of *diaglossia*. Building on the familiar concept of *diglossia*, diaglossia "means that there are intermediate forms (layers of speech) between standard and dialect which 'fill up' the structural space between the two" (Auer 2011: 491), which are often referred to as regiolects or regional dialects. The space between the two extremes of (spoken) dialects and the (spoken and written) standard should be thought of as a continuum, with a "good degree of levelling" both between the base dialects and between the base dialects and the standard (Auer 2005: 22). Crucially, diaglossia is "a relatively late phenomenon, usually of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century" (Auer 2005: 23). It particularly characterizes the present-day situation in many European language areas and is considered to follow a stage of diglossia. In other words, diglossia preceded diaglossia in the history of European languages, as outlined by Auer (2011). The studies in the present volume clearly confirm Dossena's (2012) suggestion that diaglossia should be extended much further back in time. The

linguistic evidence provided by historical sociolinguistics, both in this volume and in earlier studies, indicates that the dialect/standard continuum was filled up with intermediate varieties in historical stages of the languages as well. Note, moreover, that this applies to the written language, which is supposed to have been standardized well before the spoken language. None of the chapters in this volume provide evidence of transliterated dialect, while many of the variants under discussion are localizable. At the same time, many chapters argue against the existence of a monolithic standard variety. Irrespective, however, of whether one accepts the existence of a standard variety in the period 1600–1900, all chapters demonstrate that what would count as intermediate varieties in the present were very much part of the written language of the past. As such, the present volume contributes to the growing historical sociolinguistic body of evidence that historical stages of written varieties of many European languages were essentially diaglossic.

Against the background of the rise of the standard language ideology as discussed above, which implied the demotion of many linguistic forms and varieties to non-standardness, and which is closely linked to the rise of nationalism and the formation of nation-states in the eighteenth century, a final issue that we wish to raise is whether the relationship between diglossia and diaglossia is, firstly, historically opposite in that diaglossia precedes diglossia, and secondly, a metalinguistic rather than a linguistic phenomenon. If we accept that the linguistic development of the languages under discussion is characterized by diaglossia, even in the nineteenth century, the question is whether there actually have been periods that could be characterized as diglossic. We suggest that diglossia, with a highly uniform standardized H-variety on the one hand, and multiple, variable L-varieties on the other hand, is the discursive result of the standard language ideology. In line with the disciplining ideals and acts of the national regimes of the eighteenth century and beyond, sociolinguistic space was discursively split into standardness and non-standardness, despite the actual state of diaglossia that can be discerned in historical corpora. Teaching the people the H-variety became a means of social conditioning, which however built upon the widespread and only partially localizable variation that existed. As such, diglossia is perhaps only a relatively recent metalinguistic counterpart to diaglossia.

The contributions to this volume strenghten our conviction that, as van der Wal has shown us throughout her career, see van der Wal (2006) for example, research into uncharted territory or 'white spots' in the social history of language not only forces us to fundamentally question long-established accounts of language historiography, but also urges us to continue and explore the linguistic loot forgotten in the folds of time.

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