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Reconstructing Language Hierarchies through Multilingualism: a Gramscian Contextual Approach to Language Policy

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ABSTRACT

In the current socio-political context, where the national dimension is increasingly interlinked with both local and international dimensions, talking about language hierarchies seems a necessity. Multilingualism, a de facto social reality, is yet often hindered by political and cultural ideologies of national monolingualism or global lingua francas. These ideologies, affecting multiple contexts, determine a classification of languages according to their socio-cultural prestige: while some languages are referred to as ‘national’ or ‘official’ languages, spoken by ‘majorities’, others are repositioned as ‘dialects’ spoken by ‘minorities’. The hierarchies thus created affect the status of both the languages and their speakers, and determine whether these languages are used or abandoned in the long term.

How can we approach the existing language hierarchies in a way that includes the multi-dimensional and multi-contextual nature of society? How can we reorganise these hierarchies so that the labels of ‘minority language’ or ‘dialect’ no longer affect the hegemony of a language? How can multilingualism become acknowledged as a normal sociolinguistic practice, where languages have equal chances of being spoken?

This thesis tries to answer these questions through a theoretical discussion that pivots on socio-political philosophy and socio-linguistic theory. Following Gramsci’s idea that any language matter is a symptom of the reorganisation of wider social forces, and ultimately a matter of cultural hegemony, the key to approach language hierarchies is through the non-linguistic factors that impact on languages. In a Gramscian perspective, these factors are identified as hegemony, state, ideology and intellectuals. Each of those non-linguistic aspects relates to key sociolinguistic theories, respectively: linguistic imperialism, effectiveness and fairness; historical-structural approach and micro and macro variables in language revitalisation; language ideologies, attitudes and beliefs; language management and mechanisms. Thanks to these connections, we can identify four contexts that play a key role in multilingual language matters: the socio-economic, the historical-political, the cultural and the executive context. An approach thus conceived outlines a Contextual Approach to language policy, which provides customised guidelines for the reconstruction of the existing language hierarchies so that they no longer work against, but rather in favour of, language diversity.
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Per aspera, ad astra.
THERE AND BACK AGAIN

The final form of what follows is the result of a long process of thinking that began before 2014, the year in which I started my PhD at the University of Auckland. It actually goes back to my Master’s thesis in linguistic sustainability and my Bachelor’s dissertation in contrastive linguistics and literary translation. But that is not quite accurate either: this thesis is, to a large extent, the sum of my intellectual interests that have been developing since long before my university years. Therefore, attempting to reconstruct this path is the best way that I have to explain the reasons why this thesis exists. I choose to do so by starting with a reference to *The Hobbit* by J.R.R.Tolkien. Bilbo Baggins, like me, started a long, at times troublesome but deeply meaningful journey through Middle Earth (and any reference to Aotearoa/New Zealand as Middle Earth is not that unintentional). Another similarity between me and Bilbo Baggins is that I, too, “come from under the hills”. I was born in Vittorio Veneto, a small town (not even 30,000 people) on the hills of the Alps in the North East of Italy. This beautiful town, surrounded by Prosecco vineyards, is located almost halfway between Venice and the border with Austria. Several Italians from other regions, once they understand where I come from, tell me “Oh, you are from Veneto, you are not Italian then! You guys do not want to be Italian!”. Some would even say “you are more Austrian than Italian!”. Do I feel the Austrian influence? No, I do not, even if my local language (I do not call it ‘dialect’ for reasons I will outline in the upcoming chapters) carries traces of the Austrian domination. Do I feel Italian? Yes, but…I am also Veneta.

My family may not be the greatest example of multilingualism, but it certainly is an example of language diversity. My father was born in my hometown, and so were most of his family. My mother was born in Tuscany, in a small town called Bibbiena, in the province of Arezzo. She grew up speaking the local language of that area, which is very different from mine. My maternal grandparents, however, were both originally from Veneto, and therefore my mother was still, somehow, in contact with a different way of speaking. On that side of the family, her grandmother was Croatian with a German passport, and she migrated to Brazil, and then back to Italy. Other relatives moved to Canada, United States, Chile, Argentina and Australia. When I was still a baby, my parents would sing me songs in Italian and Cenedese, my local language, but also in Friulan and Neapolitan, two very different language varieties from – respectively – the extreme North East and the Central-South West of the Peninsula. I was also lucky enough to start learning English at kindergarten when I was three years old, and I have kept using the language – one way or another – ever since. In my school and university years, I also studied Latin, Ancient Greek and Spanish, and I like to challenge myself with Portuguese and Catalan, although my competence in those two languages remains passive. On the paternal side of the family, I was also in stable contact with Cenedese, which was the main language used by my grandparents and my father. On my mother’s side, however, my grandmother would hardly ever speak ‘dialect’, as she thought it was inappropriate to use it, and she normally spoke a regional Italian, which was not our local language, but not Italian either. Going to
school made things worse in this sense, as teachers would tell us that ‘speaking dialect makes you sound and act like a peasant’, as if there was anything wrong with working the land anyway. When I think about those remarks, now, I feel that demeaning our local language in such a way was not only disrespectful of people, such as my grandparents and grand-grandparents, who used Cenedese on a regular basis and were farmers. It was also very offensive for the culture of a large part of my region, which has always been substantially related to the countryside and the land. Luckily, there were some exceptions. Some teachers used their local language daily, and, even if they did not have it as a medium for teaching at school, they certainly kept it in high regard. The best example I can think of is a song that a teacher, Stefania, taught us for the celebrations of the school anniversary:

Tzinque tzarese Tzeneda, l’è par quel che sen portadi par l’Inglese. Ma sì, a Vittorio i tzaresèr i tornarà a fiorir!

[Five cherries Ceneda, this is why we are good with English. But yes, the cherry trees will bloom again in Vittorio!].

Even though there is no real agreement on the written forms of some of the traditional sounds of the local languages of Veneto, “tz” is how most people transcribe the voiceless alveolar affricate ⟨t͡s⟩, to distinguish it from how it is written in Italian, “z”. This sound, not unusual per se among the Indo-European languages, is a distinctive trait in Cenedese because it can be found at the beginning of words. As for the song, even though it is very simple, it actually reveals an extraordinary truth. One of the strongest arguments of those who support the use of global languages, rather than the so-called local/minority ones, is premised on the belief that the two dimensions are incompatible. This song, however, draws a parallel between local languages and English, thanks to those sounds that exist in both languages and that make it easier for the speaker of one variety to learn the other.

This is also one of the fundamental points of my thesis: we should use as many languages as we can, as they all teach us something, they all give us access to something new and unique, and they are all useful and meaningful. In this perspective, minority languages should be an example of how multilingualism is already an everyday reality, and appreciating and promoting this diversity is the key to making multilingualism an officially recognised norm. If people realise that they are already dealing with different language varieties on a daily basis, then both individual and societal multilingualism will no longer appear as a utopian option, but rather a defining trait of who we are, something that does not hide or denounce our origins, but that in fact can only enrich them, enhancing the multi-dimensionality of the times we live in. For these reasons, I will say that I am multilingual, and I am from Veneto: I am both, and I am proud of that.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

L’insegnamento o la protezione del dialetto [...] dovrebbe diventare profondamente rivoluzionario [...], deve arrivare al limite del separatismo, che sarebbe una lotta estremamente sana, perché questa lotta per il separatismo non è altro che la difesa di quel pluralismo culturale, che è la realtà di una cultura.

[The teaching or the protection of dialects [...] should become deeply revolutionary [...], it must almost reach separatism, which would be an utterly healthy struggle, because the struggle for separatism is the defence of that cultural pluralism that is the real dimension of a culture] (Pasolini, 1987, p. 32)

1.1 Essential Multilingualism and National Realities

With 7,097 languages spoken in the world today (Ethnologue, 2017a), multilingualism clearly appears to be the everyday norm for the majority of the world’s population. Nevertheless, out of the 197 countries in the world (United Nations, 2017), only 60 are officially bilingual or multilingual. Among the latter, the most noteworthy for the number of languages officially recognised are South Africa with 11 languages, Zimbabwe with 16 languages and the plurinational state of Bolivia with 37 languages. What these numbers suggest is that, when we approach multilingual matters from a socio-political perspective, a striking contradiction emerges: while multilingual realities are the norm between individuals and in private contexts, they become atypical in the wider society. The matter becomes even more contradictory if we point out that public bi/multilingualism can correspond to individual monolingualism, and conversely, public monolingualism can be characterised by bi/multilingual speakers (see also Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015, pp. 55, 135). In other words, the fact that a certain language regime is official within a polity does not necessarily reflect the actual daily condition of its speakers, and vice versa. What the official status determines, however, is the prestige of the official language(s) in relation to the other non-official varieties, which are often dispensed with as ‘mere dialects’. This, in turn, generates a hierarchy among languages, which will eventually increase, in a vicious cycle, the sociolinguistic prestige of the official variety/ies and lower the status of the non-official ones. But why are some languages considered better than others? Where does the idea of language hierarchy come from? Why is multilingualism, an every-day reality among people, considered so unusual at official/state level? Why, in other words, is it necessary to talk about language hierarchies today?
As I will outline later, language hierarchies depend exclusively on non-linguistic factors. Therefore, it is because of the political, social and cultural ideologies of a given polity that certain languages become labelled as inferior and treated as such, often together with their speakers. The socio-political institution that has produced the highest amount of language hierarchies is undoubtedly the nation-state, with the nationalistic ideologies that underpin it. The rise of nationalism is a historical phenomenon that was most evident in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but that has never fully come to an end (see also May, 2012, p. 323). In fact, now it is finding new life with the numerous nationalist movements developing all over the world. Europe, in particular, is experiencing a significant revitalisation of nationalistic tendencies, from East to West, from North to South. While some of these movements are alimented by far-right xenophobic ideologies, with anti-globalisation/anti-Europeanisation tendencies, some others follow aims of regional separatism and minority independence (El-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006; Laible, 2008). The nation, therefore, is still a prominent dimension for all these current claims. To avoid or soften the cases of extreme nationalism, and in parallel maintain the use of minority and regional/local languages, we must engage in a discussion on how to revise the existing language hierarchies in the name of language diversity. In this way, multilingualism, i.e., the inclusion of all the language varieties within a polity, could ideally serve as a compromise between neo-nationalistic tendencies and the international dimension towards which we are all moving.

Talking about nationalism as a component of our discussion can be a problematic choice. First, the topic is connected to a thorny debate that involves multiple disciplines in social sciences (May, 2012), and that, due to the scope of this thesis, cannot find adequate representation here. Second, referring to nationalism often generates a spiral of questions of ethics, social justice and human rights (May, 2012; Wright, 2016). This is almost inevitable in a socio-historical perspective, especially considering what extremist nationalism generated in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, during colonialism and in between the two World Wars. In addition, in the current socio-political reality, one could also argue that nationalism can be easily related to chauvinism, fundamentalism and racism, ranging from the numerous terrorist attacks in the name of cultural and religious supremacy, to the protectionist and xenophobic measures promoted by various states against migrants and minorities. Nationalism can therefore become a dangerous phenomenon because, if not adequately measured, it can easily degenerate into uncontrolled social and political radicalism. On the other hand, there is also the argument advanced, for instance, by Wright (2016, p. 206) that the nation is no longer the core provider of social and political activities, as there are regional and supra-national levels that are becoming equally, if not more, important. Nevertheless, focusing on the nation as a working dimension has multiple advantages. First, even if the nation-state developed two centuries ago, the predominance of the nation as a socio-political tool has never fully ceased to exist. Second, we can clearly notice that, in the social sciences, a relevant part of the terminology still presupposes the existence of nations: nation, nationality, international, supranational, multinational, nationalisation, nationhood, nationless and so on. Even the argument that nations should be overcome because the interests are switching towards international or multinational organisations paradoxically perpetuates the use of nation as a social tool: how can an international organisation exist without a number of
nations to coordinate? Third, focusing on the nation as a basic unit allows us to maintain an initial point of view that implies both micro and macro levels, and to customise our discussion according to the specific contexts we want to focus on. In other words, the nation as a basic element intrinsically acknowledges that each component we consider has a specific socio-political reality to refer to. Thus, we can work on theories and possible solutions without the risk of suggesting a ‘one-fits-all’ model. This is especially true if we remember that nationalism is the tool chosen by several minorities to claim their independence, a fact that, alone, shows how diverse the application of a national(ist) theory can be. Finally, as will be clarified in chapter three, the nation is also the starting point that Gramsci uses to explain the differences between the inflexible top-down cosmopolitanism and the more bottom-up\(^1\) and open internationalism, towards which my idea of multilingualism is directed.

The fact that the nation is still central in the current socio-political debate does not mean that we should passively accept its potential side-effects. It is undeniable that national(ist) claims may seem to go against the current globalising tendencies, and they too often work against human and minority rights (May, 2012). In addition, as we have discussed, they are among the main factors that generate language hierarchies. Nevertheless, conversely, not even globalisation itself is immune to criticism, especially if we focus on the generalised exploitation of indigenous lands made in the name of global economic progress, which terribly affects the conditions of indigenous peoples, their languages and cultures (El-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006; Fenelon & Hall, 2008). If we accept the nation as a helpful working unit for the reasons outlined above, we can directly and effectively address language hierarchies. By discussing how nation-based socio-political institutions can become more inclusive, we can promote national identities that, at the same time, safeguard the diversity of cultures and languages in the world. In other words, multilingualism applied to the nation-state could guarantee both the maintenance of a national identity and a good degree of language diversity. This, in turn, would guarantee the preservation of minority languages and the accessibility of all the peoples to the international network of cultures, news and economies. Finally, and most importantly, multilingualism could offer a solution to the official recognition and inclusion of the languages and the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, even within a national context. In short, a national sentiment characterised by multilingual ideals does not imply unilingualism or totalitarian nationalism, but is rather inspired by forms of plurinationalism, as the wonderful example of the Bolivian Constitution effectively explains:

Poblabamos esta sagrada Madre Tierra con rostros diferentes, y comprendimos desde entonces la pluralidad vigente de todas las cosas y nuestra diversidad como seres y culturas […]. [Como] pueblo boliviano, de composición plural, desde la profundidad de la historia […] construimos un nuevo Estado.

[We inhabited this sacred Mother Earth with different faces, and have understood since then the existing plurality of all the things, and our diversity as beings and cultures […]. [As]

\(^1\) As clarified by Shohamy (2006), top-down policies are the interventions coming directly from governments and public authorities in general, while bottom-up policies derive from common people's involvement in policy making processes (but see also Ricento & Hornberger, 1996).
1.2 Background Considerations and Antonio Gramsci

The tools to engage with the discussion outlined above are to be found in the historical reality around us, since, as Antonio Gramsci teaches us, the tools to address society-related matters are to be found within that very society. Therefore language, as a socio-political product, should be addressed through socio-political tools and in a socio-political perspective: this ultimately asks for a Contextual Approach. We will discuss the features of this approach throughout the thesis, but for now it will suffice to say that this means starting to analyse language hierarchies while keeping the nation(state) as a point of reference. I will particularly focus on the European side of the matter, as this will also provide an insight on the contexts that Europe inevitably affected during its history, especially in the colonial period. The further step will be to address the four key elements of society that I have identified according to the theories of Antonio Gramsci. These four elements, namely hegemony, the state, ideology and the intellectuals, have been associated with a specific context detectable within society, respectively: the Socio-Economic, the Historical-Political, the Cultural and the Executive contexts, the latter being the practical application and representation of the previous three contexts. Every context (and its related key theory) provides insight on a specific element that not only characterises the relationship between language and society, but also deepens the discussion on how and why language hierarchies are formed and can be redefined. The four contexts have been analysed through the lens provided by Gramsci’s ideas combined with key sociolinguistic theories that appeared particularly relevant for each discussion, as outlined below. If we consider language policy following Spolsky (2004), i.e., as a field that discusses sociolinguistic matters far beyond the mere legal prescription of policy documents, then conceptualising society in this way allows for the creation of a holistic approach to language matters that relies on the actual context of those languages, including all the external factors that make every language case unique. Such an extensive use of Gramsci’s theories is legitimised by the reasons outlined in chapters four and five, which examine Gramsci’s life and theories in relation to language hierarchies, sociolinguistics, translation, multilingualism and (inter)nationalism.

The background mind-set that I have adopted to achieve this goal is exemplified by the quote at the beginning of this introduction. Pier Paolo Pasolini 2, one of the most important and eclectic figures in twentieth-century Italy, is, in our case, a key figure for two reasons: he was a great supporter of Italy’s local cultures and languages, and he was a sincere admirer of Antonio Gramsci. In regards to

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2 Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975) was a writer, director and intellectual. He was expelled from the Communist Party because of his homosexuality. He wrote, among the rest, a collection of poems called _Le Ceneri di Gramsci_ (Gramsci’s Ashes) (Pasolini, 1957).
the first point, Pasolini, coming from Friuli Venezia Giulia, a region with a strong regional identity, believed that all local cultures were the true and ancestral expression of the various peoples of Italy. He also argued that the propaganda in support of Italian as the national language imposed through the media was suffocating the cultural and linguistic diversity that represented the core of every region’s identity. His views relate to my personal experience of an Italian coming from Veneto, a region that borders with Friuli Venezia Giulia and that has been struggling for independence, as we will see in the last chapter. Similarly, I believe that the unfair treatment that has been meted out to the languages of Italy for cultural and political reasons significantly harmed the profound language diversity that the peninsula has historically had. The simple use of the term ‘dialect’ can itself affect a language to the point that its speakers would consider it a stigmatised variety. Therefore, I use the word ‘multilingualism’ also as a replacement for ‘multidialectalism’, because dialects, too, are languages. In this sense, the term ‘dialect’ will appear in this thesis only when employed by a quoted author, such as in the cases of Pasolini and Gramsci, or if it refers to similar varieties of the same language. In all the other instances, the expression ‘regional/local language(s)’ will be preferred (see also Telmon, 2016, p. 17). In addition, as the quote shows, I have decided to deliberately leave all the direct citations that I am using in this thesis in the original language, providing accessory English translations. This decision was dictated by the prominent role that I wanted to give to translation as a way to show that multilingualism, together with a goal, can also be used as an approach. I will return to this point shortly and in the next chapter.

The second point introduced by Pasolini’s contribution is the struggle, a term that clearly draws a connection with the social struggle of Marxism, but specifically recalls Antonio Gramsci. Indeed, one of Gramsci’s pre-prison letters to his wife Giulia, dated 6 March 1924, reports

Che cosa mi ha salvato dal diventare completamente un cencio inamidato? L’istinto della ribellione, che da bambino era contro i ricchi, perché non potevo andare a studiare, io che avevo preso 10 in tutte le materie nelle scuole elementari, mentre andavano il figlio del macellaio, del farmacista, del negoziante di tessuti. Esso si allargò per tutti i ricchi che opprimevano i contadini della Sardegna ed io pensavo allora che bisognava lottare per l’indipendenza nazionale della regione […]. Poi ho conosciuto la classe operaia di una città industriale e ho capito ciò che realmente significavano le cose di Marx che avevo letto prima per curiosità intellettuale. Mi sono appassionato così alla vita, per la lotta, per la classe operaia.

[What saved me from becoming a starched rag? It was the instinct to rebellion. It was against the rich; when I was a child, because I could not go to school, even though I had top marks in all subjects in primary school; while the son of the butcher, of the pharmacist, of the fabric retailer could go. This instinct expanded against all the rich who oppressed the farmers of Sardinia, and I thought that it was necessary to fight for the national independence of the region […]. Then I met the working class of an industrial city, and I understood what Marx’s words were really about, those same words I had previously read only out of intellectual curiosity. Then I have become passionate about life, for the struggle, for the working class].

Gramsci offers the main theoretical contribution to this thesis. The reasons behind this choice are multiple, and will be revealed at length in chapters four and five. At this stage, it is important to note

3 On this topic, and the following role of translation, see chapter two.
that Gramsci was an eclectic figure not only in Italy, but also among the general intellectual world of his times (1891-1937). He was a brilliant thinker and a lucid analyser of people and society. The connections that he made within the various elements that compose society provide a holistic perspective that can be used to read the reality around us through the institutions, the people and their role in history. The opportunity of this insight, together with Gramsci’s interests in linguistics, make him the ideal choice for my analysis. Gramsci's name and fame are well-known worldwide, and the fact itself that his theories are widely used to this day demonstrates their effective applicability in various fields, especially within the social sciences and humanities (Filippini, 2011, 2017). This fortune, however, should not be mistaken for something universal. In Gramsci’s home country, Italy, the situation is significantly different. Several Italian academics, who I have tried to include in this thesis as much as possible, look at his works and theories, both as a focus and as a theoretical framework. Nevertheless, the name of Antonio Gramsci is often covered by a veil of taboo. The main reason behind it is related to the fact that Gramsci was one of the founders of both the communist-inspired newspaper L’Unità and of the Communist Party of Italy (Partito Comunista d’Italia), later to become the famous PCI, the Italian Communist Party. The stereotypes and the mistrust that Communism-related representatives and ideas experienced in Italy during Mussolini’s Fascist regime are still alive to this day. The situation is so critical that the Gramsci Institute in Rome, where Gramsci’s complete works are stored, does not have a proper name tag on the main entrance as it was vandalised more than once before my visit at the end of 2015. The circumstances seem particularly despicable not only for the facts themselves, but also because this situation limits the visibility of the great activities that the Gramsci Foundation regularly carries out, collaborating with scholars from all over the world. The availability and accessibility of Gramsci’s books guarantees that anyone can look at the original material that he wrote, including, upon request, the manuscripts. Among the various writings that Gramsci has left, I decided to focus predominantly on the Prison Notebooks, the 33 notebooks of theoretical discussions and translations that he developed while he was incarcerated by Mussolini’s Fascist regime. This main primary source has been integrated with the Letters from Prison and other pre-prison writings. As for the commentators of Gramsci’s works, I have decided to leave the discussion at the end of every section dedicated to the four key concepts mentioned above, and I chose to focus on those authors from both the Italian and the English-speaking world that read Gramsci without misinterpreting his thoughts or adding additional layers of interpretations, as clarified in chapter two.

As for the criteria used to choose the four key Gramscian themes, it must be noted that hegemony, state, ideology and intellectuals are but four of the numerous notions that Gramsci covers in his prolific philosophical activity. For this reason, one of the main limitations of this thesis, caused by space requirements, is that the discussion is inevitably only partial, and could not be extended by drawing more parallels between Gramsci, sociolinguistic theory and language policy, or by including more concepts, such as class and passive revolution, to name but two. Nevertheless, choosing hegemony, state, ideology and intellectuals seemed spontaneous and inevitable not only because

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4 In 2016, even Pasolini’s memorial monument was damaged by far-right groups.
they are among the most famous and meaningful contributions that Gramsci has given to socio-political theory, but also because they represent four pivotal components of languages when conceptualised in society. The order in which they have been presented was determined by content-related factors. Hegemony is the first one because it is the hegemony of a language, or, in other words, its consciously recognised prestige, that determines language hierarchies. In addition, the theory of hegemony is also present, at least in subtext, in any other Gramscian concept, and particularly in the ones I chose to discuss here. It seemed therefore necessary to settle the main features of hegemony first, and then proceed with the other terms. Ideally, there is an escalating progression in moving from one concept to the other, because each concept, and the related context that depends on it, adds on the previous one and moves the discussion forward. In other words, albeit relatively independent in terms of content, every chapter, in order to fully make sense, presupposes the discussion in the previous one. As a result, from hegemony, the natural progression seems to be the theory of the State⁵, with Civil and Political Society. It is indeed necessary to discuss how society works and what its internal power relations entail in order to be able to understand where and when language hierarchies can develop. Once this aspect has been clarified, it is possible to move the discussion to the role of ideology, which clearly explains the state’s power-relations, and why language hierarchies exist in the first place. Only once the Socio-Economic, the Historical-Political and the Cultural contexts have been outlined, can we move to the last context, the Executive one. This last context entails a more practical dimension and implies the ways in which language hierarchies can be exerted or challenged through the activity of the intellectuals/agents. In particular, the combination of non-hierarchical ideologies and the recognised hegemony of multilingualism is what ensures the active participation of the sociolinguistic agents in all public and private domains, which will allow the formation of a Sociolinguistic Bloc⁶, and ultimately the effective reorganisation of language hierarchies in support of multilingualism.

This perspective guides also the choice of the sociolinguistic and language policy theories examined in this thesis, and the selection of the case studies discussed in each chapter. For the first aspect, the theories were chosen according to how well they could be combined with Gramsci’s conceptualisations and with the related context each of these terms refers to. For these reasons, hegemony seems to work particularly well with the theory of linguistic imperialism and language effectiveness and fairness, which, together, well represent the Socio-Economic Context. The State, with its focus on the structural elements of society, can be paired with the Historical Structural Approach and the systems of Macro and Micro Variables applied to languages, in order to explain the Historical-Political Context. Ideology is naturally related to attitudes and beliefs, which, together, weave to form the Cultural Context. Finally, the intellectuals have been analysed together with language management and mechanisms to generate the Executive Context, i.e., the ensemble of

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⁵ On this concept, see chapters three and seven. I will only use the term ‘State’ with initial capital letter when referring to Gramsci’s theory specifically, or when I am using the term with the meaning Gramsci gives it. In all other instances, ‘state’ will appear in lower case.

⁶ The concept of Sociolinguistic Bloc, to which I will return in chapter nine, deserves a thorough, independent elaboration that would exceed the scope of this thesis. In this instance, therefore, I will only introduce the term and I will provide possible ideas for its future use.
agents who can ensure that a certain language practice is followed, thus reinforcing or challenging the existing hierarchies. The choice of associating the intellectuals with the Executive context rather than the Cultural one was determined by the careful interpretation of the concept in its Gramscian sense, and it will be further clarified in chapter nine. As for the case studies, I tried to offer a variety of examples showing the wide applicability of the theories discussed in each chapter in relation with the introductory overview on nation and nationalism. They range from the official languages of fully independent countries, such as Italian and Icelandic, to languages of wider communications, such as Latin and English, from languages of non- or partially-independent nations, such as Scottish, Catalan, Welsh, and Veneto, to languages spoken by indigenous peoples such as Māori and Mapuche, and pidgin and creole languages. Other additional case studies are those discussed each time by the contributors chosen in the thesis, especially Gramsci, who refers to situations such as the languages of China, Medieval Latin, Esperanto and the Language Question in Italy.

One clarification, at this point, is needed. Despite this variety of case studies, priority was given to the discussion of theories, rather than to the possible solutions/practical application of those theories. The theoretical elaboration of the Contextual Approach had to be developed in its entirety, and the practical application of this approach is a further elaboration on which I shall focus in the future, but that has limited space in this thesis. At this stage, the main purpose of the case studies is to provide brief examples of how the theories discussed in particular sections can be employed, and to suggest possible future developments in that direction. Even the distribution of these examples was subordinate to the order of the concepts examined in each chapter. For example, the two discussions of the language policies of the European Union and the two on the indigenous communities (Māori and Mapuche) are split into two chapters, instead of being examined together. This decision has been made to offer insight on similar questions from two different perspectives by focusing on two different contexts. In this way, even though it could seem conceptually illogical to have these case studies in different locations, it was my intention to show the great applicability of the approaches and theories I discuss. Finally, I wanted to show that all the Gramscian concepts and the sociolinguistic theories analysed in this thesis are equally relevant, and versatile enough to offer independent meaningful insights on multiple cases of language policy.

1.3 Redefining the Expectations Underpinning a Thesis in Language Policy

This section clarifies some further choices in relation to this thesis’ structure and content that may appear non-conventional when compared to other works in this field. As I will discuss in chapter two, the literature related to language policy reveals a significant gap when it comes to exclusively theoretical works. This lack of attention dedicated to the development of socio-political and
philosophical theories in relation to language policy has resulted in an over-abundance of empirical and case study-related research. Consequently, when I gave structure to my thesis, it was difficult to find a set of established guidelines to follow, and I eventually decided to adapt the structure to the content I wanted to explore, and not vice versa. Similarly, this thesis differentiates itself both from other works that use Gramsci as a theoretical framework, and those which exclusively focus on Gramsci as content, since neither of these typologies appropriately describes the work I am about to present. It is thus necessary to clarify the peculiar choices I have made that may be perceived as 'structural oddities'.

To begin with, the structure of this thesis apparently has two gaps. First, there is no chapter entitled 'methodology'. Does this mean that I am not interested in methodology? Certainly not, and chapter two is mostly focused on methodological issues. I simply preferred to highlight a series of preliminary questions that my thesis generates and that can be interpreted as methodological, but also theoretical, matters. Even though they are all threads that directly connect to the approach that I followed in giving a structure and content to my work, they can also be seen as themes that emerged as parallel discussions connected to my thesis. Part of that section will also provide a series of working definitions of some key matters related to multilingualism, which is employed here as a goal for language hierarchies’ redefinition, but also as an element underpinning my methodology. Similarly, there is no chapter entitled ‘literature review’. This decision was dictated by the fact that the theoretical nature of my work made it impossible to create a traditional literature review. The attempt was made at earlier stages, when the topic was also somewhat different. The result was an endless selection of literature that was supposed to discuss topics that could not be discussed because they were not yet introduced; at the same time, introducing them at the very beginning would have significantly disrupted the entire structure of the thesis. The closest element to a literature review that this thesis has is chapter three, a contextualisation chapter in which I show the frame within which my thesis should be read. This chapter also serves the purpose of clarifying some key terms that will appear throughout my thesis, i.e., language hierarchies and their multidimensionality, through nation, nationalism, and internationalism.

Two other choices that need to be clarified are content-related, and are the absence of a chapter dedicated to Marx(ism), and the little presence of the concept of subalternity. As far as Marx(ism) is concerned, this significant limitation, of which I am fully aware, is a choice dictated by two main reasons. The first one is that such a task would have been beyond the scope of my thesis. The main theorist I am using is Gramsci, and investigating why he developed his ideas the way he did, or what these ideas are compared to those of Marx and other Marxist theorists would have been not only off-topic, but also redundant, since these studies have already been developed by notable scholars such as Peter Ives (2004a, 2004b, 2005), Alessandro Carlucci (2013), Giuseppe Cospito (2016), Marnie Holborow (1999), Eric Hobsbawm (1982), Peter D. Thomas (2009b), Renate Holub (1992), and Deb J. Hill (2007), to name but a few. The second reason is that most works on Gramsci, including those just mentioned, start from a wide contextualisation with other Marxist thinkers and only after do they move to Gramsci. Alternatively, they dedicate large portions of text to other Marxist linguists, such as
Valentin Voloshinov and Mikhail Bakhtin, in order to identify similarities and differences with Gramsci in their conceptualisations of language within a Marxist perspective. This is undoubtedly a necessary passage and a fascinating aspect to linger on when working with Marxism and linguistics. However, mine is not a thesis on Gramsci, Marxism and linguistics. It is a thesis on language policy and diversity that owes its fundamental structure to Gramsci, but that tries to expand the connections between the philosopher and other fundamental contributions in the language policy literature. Implicitly, I have tried to move away from the traditional, purely Marxist approaches to Gramsci, which too often seem to give sense to Gramsci only within a Marxist perspective. Without neglecting that Gramsci’s roots are undeniably Marxist, I have tried to connect his philosophy with something other than traditional Marxism, and that could enhance instead the sociolinguistic components of Gramsci’s theories.

This perspective is also responsible for another absence: the concept of subalternity in relation to languages. Subalternity is referred to in chapter six and especially nine, but it is not used as the main focus of my discussion. This choice may seem particularly surprising in a thesis on language hierarchies, a concept that naturally recalls a system of dominant and subaltern elements in opposition. In fact, instead of “language hierarchies”, I could have used the expression “sociolinguistic subalternity”, and this is certainly a theoretical development that I shall explore in the future. At this stage, however, I discarded the option for one main reason: I wanted to avoid any terminological overlapping with Subaltern studies. Indeed, the Gramscian conceptualisation of subalternity is used as one of the foundational elements of Subaltern Studies (Guha, 1982; Spivak, 2005). Not dissimilarly to Postcolonial studies, Subaltern studies are a type of cultural approach that flourished during the 1980s as a reaction towards the cultural monopoly of Westernised cultures, particularly in previously colonised territories (see for example Mallon, 1994; Mignolo, 2000; Mordenti, 2006; Prakash, 1994; Spivak, 1996). Subaltern studies are undoubtedly commendable for giving voice to those cultures that were long silenced by colonial and Western powers, and for this reason alone they would deserve a space that is not in fact available in this thesis. In addition, though, they are also an example of Gramscian misinterpretations. In particular, Subaltern Studies’ understanding of subalternity and hegemony often proves how using Gramsci in translation, through literature selections, and without contextualisation can do more harm than good to his theories. Subalternity, but most of all hegemony, are among the concepts that scholars and researchers from all over the world regularly (mis)use, and they are also among the most frequently recurring. Why, then, has hegemony made it into the final draft of this thesis, and subalternity did not? The answer is dictated by practical reasons, and particularly by a conceptual hierarchy that, on this occasion, had to be respected. Even though any of Gramsci’s concepts requires significant attention, especially when the literature inspired by it is as noteworthy as the one on subalternity, hegemony de facto has the priority. If we do not conceptualise hegemony in the right way, most of Gramsci’s concepts will automatically become either misconceived or lacking full meaning. This is true to the point that, as noted by Burgio (2014, p. 215)

Gramsci [...] ritiene che non vi sia Stato senza egemonia. Ma Stato in senso forte significa modernità. E del resto la modernità è indubbiamente, a sua volta, il tempo dell’egemonia, in quanto epoca di un dominante che rivoluziona in senso espansivo la
concezione e la pratica della politica. Il che suggerisce che, per Gramsci, la centralità dell’egemonia sia frutto e premessa di sviluppi progressivi.

[Gramsci [...] believes that there cannot be a State without hegemony. But State in its strong sense means modernity. And after all, modernity is undoubtedly, in turn, the time of hegemony, as it is the epoch of a dominating force that revolutionises the conceptualisation and the practice of politics in an expansive sense. All this suggests that, for Gramsci, the centrality of hegemony is the result and the premise for any future development]. (My emphasis)

Therefore, a section on Subaltern studies is not present also because avoiding misconceptions and misinterpretation is one of the main aims of this thesis, and it has determined the constant use of Gramsci’s direct quotes in the original Italian with accessory translations. As we will discuss at length in chapter two, theoretical and conceptual misunderstandings occur because translations, albeit necessary, can be extremely misleading, and primary sources and original texts should be preferred in any case. This is especially true for Gramsci, since his work was not written for publication, and the fragmentary nature of the Prison Notebooks requires a thorough reading that cannot be substituted with a mere selection of passages:


[Approaching the Notebooks means, therefore, to be in a paradoxical situation. It is important to know that the text, as a complete totality, is somewhere else. The notes contain this text only partially (as potential). They do not complete it] (Burgio, 2014, p. 109).

1.4 Thesis Structure

To summarise, therefore, the remaining structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter two, Preliminary Questions, discusses theoretical and methodological matters related to this thesis. The first section is dedicated to the gaps in the literature on language policy theory, to the role of English and translation in academic literature, and the subsequent choice that I made to focus on a multilingual approach. The following part clarifies the role of translation and the way in which I have employed it in the thesis. Following Lawrence Venuti’s theories, I clarify what I mean by foreignising translation, a conceptualisation of translation that makes the translating process explicit, and how I have used this idea in dealing with Gramsci’s works. Finally, the last section clarifies the role of multilingualism in relation to language hierarchies, and introduces key working definitions and background clarifications of important concepts used throughout the thesis, such as language/dialect, minority languages, tolerance/promotion oriented approaches and so on.
Chapter three, *Language Hierarchies and Nationalism*, continues the discussion on multilingualism and language hierarchies, and clarifies the role of national(ist) theory in the creation of those hierarchies. The chapter starts with a preliminary discussion of the national, international and cosmopolitan dimensions in Gramsci, and with a further discussion of nation (state) and nationalism with particular reference to languages. In this section, other working definitions are discussed, drawing on political theorists, historians and language policy theorists such as Eric Hobsbawm, John Edwards, Stephen May, Monserrat Guibernau, Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten. Section three identifies three types of nationalism and the effects that they can have on language hierarchies, in particular: one language ideology, eternal nationalism and extreme nationalism. This categorisation follows a thematic criterion, even though I tried to maintain a chronological order in the discussion within each category. Section four briefly concludes the chapter and argues that we should challenge the existing language hierarchies within a multi-dimensional framework pivoting on the nation.

Chapter four, *Language Hierarchies in Gramsci’s Life*, moves the discussion forward by addressing the first part of why Gramsci is the appropriate thinker to use for this thesis. This chapter provides an overview of the historical and linguistic situation of Italy up to Gramsci’s times, and attempts a linguistic biography of Gramsci’s life. In so doing, it shows the contexts in which the philosopher lived, and the ways in which his life reflected not only Italy’s and Sardinia’s language hierarchies, but also a deep interest in, and understanding of, language matters, such as language education and translation. Chapter five, *Languages and Multilingualism in Gramsci’s Theories*, offers the second and more strictly theoretical part of the reasons why Gramsci can and should be employed in a discussion of language hierarchies. The main aim of this chapter is to show how Gramsci’s ideas on language matters were diverse and thorough, and substantially reflected the main facts of his life outlined in the previous chapter. In particular, in this section I will focus on his theories of language in society, Esperanto, national and local languages, translation, education, and grammar.

Chapter six, *Hegemony, Linguistic Imperialism and Effectiveness: the Socio-Economic Context*, is the first step in the theoretical analysis on the social contexts that contribute to the creation of language hierarchies. The first part is dedicated to Gramsci’s conceptualisation of hegemony, developed largely through Gramsci’s own discussions, and in part according to additional literature. This additional literature consists of a selection of both Italian-writing and English-writing authors, such as Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Anne Showstack-Sassoon, Raymond Williams, Peter Thomas, Pietro Maltese, Angelo Broccoli, Giuseppe Vacca and Norberto Bobbio. Section three is dedicated specifically to the use of hegemony to describe the current role of English as a global language. Particular attention has been given to those authors who specifically address the topic from a Gramscian perspective, such as Peter Ives, Marnie Holborow, and Susan Sonntag. The following two sections are dedicated respectively to the concept of Linguistic Imperialism as defined by Robert Phillipson, and to the concepts of Effectiveness and Fairness from the field of language economy/economy of language, and particularly the work of Michele Gazzola and François Grin. To conclude the chapter, the case of the Mapuche, an indigenous community in Chile, is analysed through the concept of hegemony. Overall, the aim of this chapter is to show how the socio-economic
context can be analysed through concepts that play a key role in defining, and therefore re-defining, language hierarchies. A similar structure is replicated in chapters seven, eight and nine.

Chapter seven, *State, Structure and Society: the Historical-Political Context*, focuses on the theory of the State as conceptualised by Gramsci. Once again, priority is given to Gramsci’s own words, and only subsequently have I added some further key contributions to the topic, mostly from the authors mentioned in chapter six. Gramsci’s Civil Society and Political Society are then put alongside the Historical Structural Approach developed by James Tollefson, and the system of Macro and Micro variables developed by Lenore Grenoble and Lindsey Whaley. The three case studies presented here are the case of Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the European Union, and the region of Catalonia in Spain. In so doing, the chapter outlines how language hierarchies can be defied by focusing on the role of the historical-political context.

Chapter eight, *Ideology, Attitudes and Beliefs: the Cultural Context*, starts, once again, with the introduction of Gramsci’s conceptualisation of ideology and its conceptual cluster that includes philosophy, common sense, religion and folklore, followed by the relevant secondary literature. As with hegemony, ideology is another term that has become quite popular in relation to languages: a section of the chapter is thus dedicated to the use of the concept of Language Ideology, with particular attention to the conceptualisations that look, even partially, at Gramsci. In this section, I discuss authors such as Susan Philips, Paul Kroskrity, Kathryne Woolard, Michael Apple, Jan Blommaert, and Norman Fairclough. The discussion continues in the following section, dedicated to two concepts often associated with ideologies, i.e., Attitudes and Beliefs, as conceptualised by Peter Garrett, Colin Baker and Bernard Spolsky. The two case studies I focus on in this chapter are Iceland and Scotland, in order to show how language ideologies coexist with a strong national identity both in monolingual and multilingual contexts, with different outcomes. The aim of this chapter is to show how ideologies, attitudes and beliefs work in relation to language and how, by building the cultural context, they play a primary role in developing language hierarchies.

Chapter nine, *Intellectuals, Language Management and Mechanisms: the Executive Context*, once again, starts with the conceptualisation of the intellectuals by Gramsci, followed by the relevant related literature. Once we have clarified that this concept, for Gramsci, goes far beyond the mere scholar or literate, we can draw a connection with Bernard Spolsky’s concept of language management and Elana Shohamy’s notion of language mechanisms. Both these concepts focus on who is responsible for implementing language policies and regulating language use, either explicitly or implicitly. It focuses on those agents who, by simply executing the function of using a language, can influence the way a variety is perceived, affecting therefore language hierarchies. This chapter, connecting theory with practice in light of the preceding chapters, calls for the creation of a Sociolinguistic Bloc, as a convergence of factors that can lead the agents to challenge language hierarchies. The case studies of this section, too, reflect this sense of continuity, and revisit and concludes some case studies introduced in previous chapters, such as Latin and the Language Question in Italy, together with some new ones, such as pidgins and creoles, and Wales.
Finally, chapter ten, Conclusion: The Contextual Approach and the Winged Lion of St. Mark, offers a summary of the Contextual Approach outlined in the previous chapters, while suggesting potential applications of the model. This chapter is also supported by a final case study, that of the language of Veneto (Italy). The interesting combination of historical, political, cultural and socio-economic factors of this less-known case of language revitalisation, which makes it a hierarchy within hierarchies, serves the purpose of drawing together all the four contexts highlighted in this thesis while suggesting some considerations for further applications of the Contextual Approach.

The thesis has also two appendixes. Appendix I reports all the passages from the Prison Notebooks that I directly or indirectly quoted in the thesis. They are divided per Notebook, with the number of the section and the page number according to Valentino Gerratana's edition7. Appendix II reports a list of all the letters that I directly or indirectly quoted in the thesis. Because of the wider availability of Gramsci's letters, and particularly of the Letters from Prison, I preferred to list them in chronological order, mentioning the date in which they were written and the person to whom they were addressed. In this way, they can be retrieved for future reference from any edition in any language.

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7 For more details on the editions of Gramsci’s works, see chapter two.
CHAPTER TWO
PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

2.1 Introduction

A theoretical thesis, possibly more than other types of works, poses numerous queries: I will try to address the most relevant ones in this chapter. The first question relates to the significant gap existing in the literature on theoretical research in language policy. This is a key point not only because it implies that, ultimately, research in this area is still surprisingly explorative, but also because it shows the great potential that researchers have in producing innovative and meaningful contributions in this field. For these reasons, section two will offer an overview of the research in language policy from a theoretical perspective. In so doing, I will highlight the side effects of the neglect that seems to affect this area of study. In particular, I will cover the possible misconceptions associated with this theoretical underrepresentation, the absolute dominance of English as the chosen language of publication in discussion of language policy, and the subsequent need for employing translations. The third section will thus be dedicated to the issue of translation, and specifically to the use I make of this practice both theoretically and practically, as a tool towards the foreignisation of texts – that is, the foregrounding of the process of translation and its impact on the readers’ understanding of texts. Section four clarifies how I use translation in relation to Gramsci’s work by pointing out the reasons why it is necessary to approach his production via a foreignising, multilingual approach. Finally, in section five, I will pull the threads of this chapter together by focusing on the concept that connects all the previous sections, i.e., multilingualism. I will clarify the way in which I conceive multilingualism and the related terminology, and I will show how this concept is deeply connected to language hierarchies, and actually implies their very existence. Far from being a complete discussion on multilingual themes, already available in Stavans & Hoffmann (2015), Berthoud, Grin & Lüdi (2013), Martin-Jones, Blackledge & Creese (2012), Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh (2012), Todeva & Cenoz (2009) and Edwards (1994), my intention here is rather to introduce the core concept of language hierarchy, and how it is characterised in relation to multilingualism and other key themes that I will discuss in later chapters.
2.2 Theoretical Research in Language Policy and Multilingualism as an Approach

2.2.1 Theoretical Underrepresentations

The existing research in the area of language policy, language planning, and sociolinguistics in general is diverse and comprehensive, and it clearly shows the current vitality of these fields. Nevertheless, when we approach it from a theoretical and methodological point of view, the situation drastically changes, and we can detect a significant gap especially in terms of general guidelines (see also Kymlicka & Patten, 2003, p. 1). While most key manuals cover various aspects of research theories, methods and methodologies in these areas (see for example Cassels Johnson, 2013; Hult & Cassels Johnson, 2015; Li & Moyer, 2008; Martin-Jones et al., 2012; Ricento, 2006; Spolsky, 2012), the attention is seldom on theoretical research itself. As a consequence, the philosophical, social and political inputs that should naturally be involved in sociolinguistic research are in fact often underrepresented, and left to the individual researcher to sort out. If we focus on the sole role of theory, the only three manuals that extensively address theoretical (and methodological) questions in language policy research are Kymlicka & Patten (Eds., 2003), Ricento (Ed., 2006), and Hult & Cassels Johnson (Eds., 2015). These three texts are different with respect to their backgrounds, purposes and timeframe, but they all extensively address the discussion of the non-empirical contributions to language policy. They show what Cassels-Johnson noted in another publication, i.e., that “there are traditions of research within the field which proffer important concepts, frameworks, methods, and theoretical developments” (Cassels Johnson, 2013, pp. 26-27). The volume edited by Kymlicka & Patten (2003), to which I will return in later sections, is a collection of notable contributions, among which we count May, van Parijs and Grin. The aim of this text is to explore how the many facets of political theory can contribute to the field of language policy. Hult & Cassels Johnson (2015), instead, offer a summary of the available research on language policy that focuses largely on methodological matters, but still has contributions that focus on the role of theory in research, such as May (2015, see also below). Nevertheless, the volume that more than any other categorises and clarifies questions of theory and methodology in language policy is Ricento (2006). The manual offers contributions by key scholars in the field, most of whom will be discussed at length in later chapters, such as Ricento himself, Tollefson, Pennycook, Grin, Wiley, Baker, Blommaert, May, Skutnabb-Kangas, Fishman and Phillipson. Most importantly, the volume clearly separates the areas of theory, method and topic in language policy research, providing, possibly for the first time, a notable well-organised selection of potential answers to the “what” and “how” of language policy research (Ricento, 2006, p. x).
Is this enough, though? The answer is no, especially if we look at the most recent research outcomes. If we use a tool as immediate as the ProQuest database for theses and dissertations (ProQuest, 2017), and we look at the research produced by university students on language policy theory in the past five years, the situation appears rather dramatic. Undoubtedly, all the available material has a dedicated section for theoretical considerations and frameworks, but it is extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to find works that have theory as the main or sole focus of language policy research. It is therefore not surprising that “there is perhaps no grand theory of language planning and policy” (Cassels Johnson, 2013, pp. 26-27). Even though it is undeniable that theory is only one aspect of research, it is also arguably the most important, for at least two key reasons. First, theories are what shape the way we read the topics we are interested in. If we are not familiar with, or aware of, the theories that are most suitable for our topic, then the resulting research will not be able to fully reflect the depth of the social dimension behind languages, failing the very scope of sociolinguistics. If we accept to work within sociolinguistics, then we must also accept that socio-political theory needs to play a comprehensive role in our research. In this sense, there should be a deeper correlation between language policy and political theory, as shown by Patten (2001), Kymlicka & Patten (2003) and May (2012): instead, “th[at] relationship […] still remains relatively underdeveloped” (May, 2015, pp. 46-47). In particular, Peled, Ives & Ricento (2014, p. 297) note how there is a “continual disengagement” between language policy and political theory. This is true in two ways. On the one hand, philosophical-political theorists are often interested in languages almost exclusively as far as nationalism is concerned. On the other, language policy research and sociolinguistics in general do acknowledge the strong political component of the field, but - it seems – not yet on a large scale, with few exceptions (see Blommaert, 2010; Holborow, 2015; Ives, 2009a; Sonntag, 2008).

The second reason why theory is a paramount aspect in research is the risk to start from the wrong premises. If theory is neglected, or limited as a mere set of ideas that can be indiscriminately taken from any theorist and applied wherever necessary, then the whole research will be based on uncertain assumptions. In turn, if the premises are unconvincing or misinterpreted, then the rest of the research will be too. Theoretical misconceptions can be caused by numerous factors, but they are generally related to the way primary and secondary sources are handled and addressed, especially across languages. Primary sources are the “original sources of information about the phenomenon under analysis”, while secondary sources “gather […] data from pre-existing analyses that are based on either primary or secondary data” (Mahoney, 2004, p. 141). In order to avoid a stockpile of multiple layers and interpretations on a theory, primary sources should always be preferred to secondary sources, as the use of indirect material can lead to possible shallowness and misconception (Kiser & Hechter, 1991, pp. 23-24). Naturally, there may be cases in which it is difficult if not impossible to access primary sources, and this can be due to geographical distance, actual unavailability of the source, or lack of proficiency in the language in which the primary source is written. This last point is particularly interesting for our discussion, because it involves the role of translations, an issue that we will extensively cover in this chapter, as well as in chapters four and five. The question of translation of literary, philosophical and academic texts has been addressed by Venuti (1998), the theorist of
translation that we will examine below. Venuti argues that, in the academic field, the role of translation appears extremely contradictory: on the one hand, the use of translated texts is the preferred option in study and research activities; on the other hand, translations are hardly ever highlighted or acknowledged as functional for conveying the text. This unstable role of literary and philosophical translations is particularly risky because, when language is used to express the conceptual depth of philosophical theories, it cannot merely communicate the ideas of the original text, but it will also reconstruct them according to the translated one (Venuti, 1998, p. 108). Translation is often a necessity, and it “may be blasphemous, insensitive or inaccurate but, in a multilingual world, we need it” (Edwards, 1994, p. 52). Nevertheless, if it is understandable that not all the languages can be equally accessible to researchers, and that translations are consequently inevitable, it is also a procedural mistake to forget to acknowledge their existence or their implications. Indeed, once we understand that translation is a form of interpretation (see also below), then using a translated text instead of the original one adds a layer of potential misinterpretation, of which researches must be aware. If we note that consulting secondary sources increases the gap between the original text and the researcher, and if we consider translation as a form of secondary source, then we can see how even a translated primary source ultimately amplifies the risks of misconceptions.

2.2.2 Multilingualism as an Approach

Another theoretical question related to the use of sources in languages different from that of the researcher’s is that all the major academic publications, including in the area of language policy, are now in English¹. This often significantly limits if not the choice of topic, at least the approaches used by the researchers, who must make sure that the areas they want to analyse are English-friendly or generally available in English. The role of English as an (academic) lingua franca, by admission of van Parijs, one of its most renowned advocates, is to be welcomed, even though it raises questions around justice and inequality (van Parijs, 2011, p. 3). If it is true that having a unique working language is useful and necessary, especially in science (de Swaan, 2001a), it is also equally true that having English as the main language to share knowledge “limits the use of other languages even within their home countries” (Ammon, 2001, p. viii). These limitations become significantly challenging in the area of social sciences, because of the key role that language has in this area as a source of data. Another prominent advocate of English as a lingua franca, de Swaan (2001a, p. 76), admits that the studies of social sciences and humanities are so deeply entangled with people and their experiences that communication and inter-comprehension become paramount. Therefore, social scientists may gather their data from linguistically diverse sources, but if they want their research to reach a wider audience, they must make it available in English. As a consequence, the risk is that

¹ For a detailed discussion on the topic, see chapter six.
English-speaking contexts may be prioritised over non-English ones, presenting in this way Anglo-American case studies as a “universal human destiny” (de Swaan, 2001a, p. 78).

In this sense, what is even more problematic, not to say contradictory, is that a field such as language policy, which often entails discussions on language rights, language inequality and bi/multilingualism, expresses its knowledge almost exclusively in English (Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012, p. 3). Under the effect of a sort of Stockholm syndrome, the large majority of the publications against the phagocytising influence of English advocate for a more equal use of minority languages, ironically, only in English. To continue the irony, this thesis, too, is written in English. English is the language of the institution where the thesis was written, and this work needs to be read by people who are proficient in English. As will be clarified in chapter six, this choice shows that English is both dominant and hegemonic in the academic field, because it is recognised as an imposition but also as an opportunity. English is undoubtedly the current most powerful way to reach and to be reached by a large group of peers, and publications in other languages do not have equal chances to achieve the same goal. This inevitability of English, however, cannot stop the quest for multilingualism, as multilingualism can very well include English (Stăvans & Hoffmann, 2015, p. 124 ff.). Therefore, we must look at alternative ways in which we can include other languages while also containing English absolutism.

For these reasons, the proposed way to maintain language diversity in an English-written text is to use multilingualism as a methodology (see also below), and it is in this sense that the title of my thesis should be interpreted. Working “through multilingualism” does not simply mean that the expected outcome of such a discussion is a society that is more inclusive of multilingual practices. It also means that the best way to achieve this outcome is to put multilingualism into practice, and use it as a tool to redefine the existing language hierarchies. The way this thesis approaches multilingualism as a methodology is by employing literature and direct quotes in multiple languages, accompanying them with accessory translations that I prepared in order to make the content more accessible to readers. Consequently, this thesis is written in English with quotes and expressions reported in various languages, especially Italian, English, Spanish, Catalan, and Latin, all of which are accompanied with an accessory translation in English. The literature examined for this work is in four languages: English, Italian, Catalan and Spanish. In this way, it was possible to make sure that English, albeit the main language per presence, was not the only one used. Reasonable levels of multilingualism have thus been pursued while still guaranteeing accessibility for a wider audience.

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2 Exceptions to this are the two quotes by Marx and Engels that I reported directly in English, as my limited knowledge of German did not allow me to provide a translation of the original text.
2.3 **Translation and the Foreignisation Effect**

Translation thus becomes necessarily involved when we talk about multilingualism. This occurs because, even if “much is lost in translation, […] without translation nothing is gained at all” (de Swaan, 2001a, p. 76). When we work with more than one language, as in our case, guaranteeing comprehension is an important part of the process. The way in which we conceive translation in relation to multilingualism, in particular, becomes crucial for the development of an appropriate methodology. The idea of translation that will be followed here is the one discussed by the aforementioned Lawrence Venuti, a translator and a theorist of translation who points out the complexity and the socio-cultural implications of this activity. In general terms, Venuti starts his discussion with the most common conceptualisation of translation, i.e., the one belonging to the English-speaking world of British and American translations. Within this context, in order for a translation to be acceptable, the translated text must be characterised by fluency and transparency, i.e., it has to ensure that the text is readable and that there are no traces of the original foreign text (Venuti, 2008, p. 1). In other words, translation should *domesticise* the foreign material in order to ease the activity of the reader and present the text as if the translation was the original work. What this idea implies is that the translator must become invisible and produce “the effect of transparency that simultaneously masks its status as an illusion” (2008, p. 5). The achievement of this unique effect undergoes a complex process of interpretation, functional to the audience of the translated text. In this sense, for Venuti, translation becomes fundamentally a “forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the translating language reader” (2008, p. 14). Within a domesticising approach, however, this cultural and linguistic replacement affects the uniqueness of the foreign text by forcing it into a different frame. Attempts should be made, then, to move away from the invisibility of translation. Rather, translation, far from being a mere intellectual or creative activity, is a process that involves two languages and cultures, and occurs in a specific social and historical frame (Jacquemond, 1992, p. 139). Such a process will necessarily make a political statement (Venuti, 1992b, p. 10), as translation also reconstructs ideologies and identities through a practice that is both cultural and political. If we consider that domesticising translations occur especially from other languages into English, which is the most translated language worldwide (Venuti, 1998, p. 160), then we can easily understand the impact that a generalised domesticising approach has in light of our wider discussion of multilingualism.

The reconstruction of a text through translation, therefore, cannot be developed unidirectionally towards the translated text to minimise the differences with the original one. Instead, it should follow a *foreignising* process, which “signifies the differences of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the translating language” (Venuti, 2008, p. 15). In this way, it is possible to “develop a theory and practice of translation that resist dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text” (2008, p. 18). In other words, it is necessary to translate the text in an understandable way while considering the cultural peculiarities of
the foreign work. For Venuti, this is the type of translation that “cultivat[es] a heterogeneous
discourse, opening up to the standard dialect and literary canons to what is foreign to themselves”
(Venuti, 1998, p. 11). Within this framework, it is crucial to acknowledge the role and the potential
effects of translation: otherwise, an entire culture could be introduced into another through linguistic
and cultural misconceptions, when not manipulations (1998, p. 73). Moreover, translation as a cultural
practice can even affect social change if it is not ideologically aware and independent:

Translations thus position readers in domestic intelligibilities that are also ideological
positions, ensembles of values, beliefs, and representations that further the interests of
certain social groups over others. In cases where translations are housed in institutions like
the church, the state or the school, the identity-forming process enacted by a translating text
together affects social reproduction by providing a sense of what is true, good and possible

In order to avoid the risk of ideological bias, Venuti suggests looking at an approach to translation
that is able to defy domesticising ideologies and institutions. The cultural identity thus formed will be

simultaneously critical and contingent, constantly assessing the relations between a
domestic culture and its foreign others […]. This identity will be truly intercultural, not merely
in the sense of straddling two cultures, domestic and foreign, but crossing the cultural
borders among domestic audiences” (1998, p. 84).

This approach is particularly relevant if we consider that there are “irreducible differences” always
present in translation, and they are generated by the linguistic and cultural dissimilarities of the two
languages involved in the process (Venuti, 2002, p. 216). This implies the uniqueness of each
language system, and shows clear affinities with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity 3,
which argues that every language is the unique and irreplaceable symbol of a culture. As a
consequence, whenever a translation takes place, there is an inevitable loss of features that are
present in the original text and cannot be replicated in the translated one. In this sense, a foreignising
approach to translation, with its conscious and holistic attitude, “hybridises hegemonic values [and]
can stimulate cultural innovation and change” (Venuti, 1998, p. 178), so as to guarantee a more free
and independent translating technique.

The ways to pursue this approach are various, as there can be multiple ways in which the text
can be deconstructed and then recreated in another language, so as to unsettle the mass culture by
maintaining the minoritising traits of foreignness. Venuti uses his own experience as a translator to
explain how the foreignising effect can be achieved in practical terms. He discusses in particular his
own English translations of the work of a nineteenth century Italian writer, Iginio Ugo Tarchetti, who
wrote fantastical, gothic and surreal novels and short stories. Venuti’s most common way of
foreignising the text is to maintain the syntax of the foreign language in the translating one, or to use
an archaic lexicon so as to make the differences evident (Venuti, 1998, pp. 13-15). Other foreignising
translation methodologies involve a holistic approach to the author and his background. For example,

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3 We will return to this theory in chapter five. For a more detailed discussion of linguistic relativity and Sapir’s
in order to maintain the alienating prose of Tarchetti’s original Italian text, Venuti thoroughly analysed the background of the writer’s work, his translations of other English authors and his philosophy of literature (Venuti, 1992a). Finally, another tool that can be used is intentional compensation, i.e., the use of a feature that was not present in the original text in order to compensate for the loss of another feature that could not be maintained in the translated version (Venuti, 2002, p. 220). As a result, the translated text appears unusual, at times confusing, as it does not respect the traditional features of the prose of the language into which we are translating. The primary effect of such a translation would be to put the reader in a condition of awareness of the nature of the text itself. In particular, through a translation that prioritises the text and its context, rather than the accessibility of the text itself, the reader is constantly reminded that what they are reading is not the original work, and that someone transformed the text so that they could appreciate not only the content, but also the nuances and the depths of the overall process that made that version of the text possible.

2.4 **Foreignising Gramsci**

In order to maintain a general imprint of multilingualism, I have applied Venuti’s translation theory, and particularly his idea of foreignisation, to the translations of the passages from Gramsci’s work, as well as to my theoretical analysis of all the key Gramscian concepts covered in this thesis. In introducing the four key concepts of hegemony, state, ideology and intellectuals, I have tried not to immediately contextualise them within a wider Marxist/philosophical framework, domesticising in this way the topic in relation to a more traditional and immediate context. Instead, as anticipated in the previous chapter, I preferred to keep the concepts as independent as possible from this framework, giving priority to Gramsci’s original words. In practical terms, this means that I developed the discussion of Gramsci’s work through an approach that pivots on the original Italian text and its content as such, rather than on the accessibility of the text itself, or on any pre-existing English translation or interpretation. I did so in two ways. On the one hand, I tried to reconstruct the content of Gramsci’s theories through key excerpts from his texts such as the *Prison Notebooks* and the *Letters from Prison*, which I deliberately and principally reported in Italian. I tried then to reduce the adaptation to the English context to the minimum required by the presence of accessory English translations. These translations prioritise the content of the original Italian text rather than its rendering in current English prose, and therefore may appear to be written in an unusual style. An exception in this sense is represented by a small number of cases in which the quoted passages are reported directly in English: this occurs when I did not want to interrupt the flow of the chapter with too many quotes, or when I am repeating an already quoted passage. On the other hand, another way in which I have tried to maintain the foreignisation effect is by focusing initially only on the ways in which Gramsci represents a theory, collecting the relevant passages in which he discusses the topic. Only after this section have I built a contextualisation of Gramsci’s theories functional to the discussion of
the chapter. Even the contributions that I employed to contextualise Gramsci philosophically, socio-politically and linguistically were chosen according to this principle. As anticipated, I looked at those theorists who discuss Gramsci without misinterpreting, distorting or transforming his theories into something that significantly departs from his original thought for the sake of increasing his work’s clarity or making it up-to-date. In other words, I wanted to avoid what Kipfer and Hart (2012, p. 337) suggest, i.e., reading Gramsci from inevitable English translations and then interpreting his theories through the lenses provided by other thinkers (namely, in this case, Fanon, Bannerji, Lefebvre).

The sought outcomes of my choice of using this foreignising effect are multiple. First, developing the discussion of Gramsci’s ideas through the accessibility of the original Italian texts allowed me to reduce to the minimum the impact of translation and interpretation combined, which, as we have seen, increases the chances of distortions and misconceptions. Second, I wanted to ‘let Gramsci speak’ first, rather than rely on immediate and arbitrary contextualisations of Gramsci’s work within traditional political and philosophical frames. In this way, it was also possible to increase the amount of translated passages from the *Prison Notebooks* available in English: this will hopefully allow more people to access the work of Antonio Gramsci beyond the anthologised passages available in English, on which we will return shortly. Finally, and ideally, I wanted to maintain a foreign veil to the whole discussion; in this way, not only the variety of examples that I provided, but also the discussion of Gramsci’s concepts itself become an instance of how multilingualism can be contextualised as a methodology in multiple disciplines, and as a useful academic means of knowledge sharing.

Indeed, the fact that Gramsci’s name is known worldwide undoubtedly highlights how the accessibility to his works is ultimately related to translation. Nevertheless, if we focus on the two main collections of Gramsci’s writing, the *Letters* and the *Notebooks*, we can understand how the circulation of his work in languages different from Italian is rather irregular. While the *Prison Letters* are available in several languages of wider diffusion, such as English (Gramsci, 1992-2007), Spanish (Gramsci, 2003) and French (Gramsci, 1971b), to mention but a few, the situation of the *Prison Notebooks* is quite different. The *Notebooks* are available in Spanish (Gramsci, 1999) and French (Gramsci, 1992-1998), and these are both translations of the Italian critical edition by Gerratana (Gramsci, 2014 [1975]). The whole content of the *Prison Notebooks* is also available in Portuguese, thanks to the six volumes edited by Nelson Coutinho (Gramsci, 1999-2002). In this case, the volumes are the translation of another Italian critical edition, the first edition ever published of the *Notebooks*, which was organised thematically and not chronologically by Felice Platone (Gramsci, 1948-1951). As for the English-speaking audience, a complete edition of the *Prison Notebooks* has been initiated by Joseph Buttigieg (Gramsci, 1992-2007), but the work, albeit undoubtedly significant, is yet far from being finalised. In short, the complete writings produced by Antonio Gramsci, including early works, articles and letters, are only available in Italian, both in single individual editions and in the still in progress National Edition, developed by the Gramsci Institute in Rome together with the Institute of the Italian Encyclopaedia. The lack of a full translation in English, which, as we have discussed, is the language of academic knowledge today (Ammon, 2002), together with the fact that not many people can access the Italian text, ultimately imply that many researchers still rely on the *Selections from the*
Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, by Hoare and Nowell-Smith (Gramsci, 1971c). This, in turn, means that “un-anthologised passages remain largely unknown to the scholars who cite [Gramsci]” (Brennan, 2001, p. 144). Even though Buttigieg wrote The legacy of Antonio Gramsci more than 30 years ago, I believe that there is still truth in his words when he points out that

To most English speaking readers with no knowledge of Italian, then, Gramsci is still known only in bits and pieces through selections stitched together, and given a measure of coherence by well-intentioned editors and translators (Buttigieg, 1986, p. 9).

Consequently, it will appear clear now why I chose to focus my analysis of Gramsci’s theories exclusively on the original Italian texts. For the same reasons, I also intentionally did not read any translation of any of Gramsci’s work before reading and translating the passages used in the thesis, as I wanted to avoid the unconscious bias about which Venuti (2002) warns us. I also visited the Gramsci Institute in Rome (Fondazione Istituto Gramsci) in order to be able to access the full corpus of pre-prison and prison writings, either in printed editions or in manuscripts. For the Letters from Prison, I used the volume edited by Santucci (Gramsci, 1996), integrated with the one by Fiori (Gramsci, 1994), while for the Prison Notebooks I used the Italian complete critical edition by Valentino Gerratana (Gramsci, 2014 [1975]) as my source. In addition, as a support for the analysis of the Notebooks, I also employed the online tools offered by the websites Antonio Gramsci: I Quaderni del Carcere (Soave, 2014), Gramsci Project (Filippini, Morbidoni, & Forenza, 2017), GramsciaNet (Roggero, 2008), and the Gramscian Bibliography (Cammett, Giasi, & Righi, 2017). The passages from the Notebooks are quoted in the standard format (Q. n, § n), where Q stands for Quaderno (Notebook), followed by the number of the Notebook and the related section (§) according to Gerratana’s edition. A full list of the quoted passages with the page number is provided in Appendix I for further reference. As for the Letters, I referenced them with the date and the recipient, and a full list of the letters used in the thesis is provided in Appendix II. As anticipated, and in line with Femia’s approach (1981, pp. vii-viii), I personally translated all the quotes from Gramsci’s works employed in my thesis, together with any other quote from languages other than English. In addition, with my visit to the Gramsci Institute, I wanted to ensure that the literature on Gramsci in Italian was appropriately represented. Therefore, I did not follow the approach by Filippini (2017, p. xiii), who limited the use of secondary literature mainly to texts translated in English, in order to make it accessible to a wider audience. His choice is dictated by the nature of his work, which is a much-needed response to the current mass-employment of Gramsci’s theories in the literature worldwide. My aim is indeed to facilitate the availability of Gramsci’s work to a wider public, domesticising his work by providing translations. Nevertheless, I used literature in Italian regardless of whether an English translation was available or not, as I wanted to make the reader aware of the inherent multilingualism of this thesis by enhancing the different linguistic layers, in line with the foreignising effect.

4 For the case of the Notes on Glottology, see chapters four and five.
2.5 **Multilingualism and Language Hierarchies**

So far, our discussion has pivoted on two key related ideas: translation and multilingualism. We have already discussed translation, but what can we say about multilingualism? Multilingualism indicates the presence and use of multiple languages in a given context, both at an individual and at a public level\(^5\). With particular reference to language policy, we can describe multilingualism as a “policy of awareness, recognition and inclusion of language diversity. It comprehends, but also transcends the simple defining of working languages” (Risager, 2012, p. 117). As a phenomenon, it is generated by the contact between speakers of different language varieties (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015, p. 11).

This contact is not unproblematic, and often, when multiple languages are used in the same context, it is almost inevitable that one of them will gain *prestige* over the others. Sociolinguistic prestige, a term that we will encounter often in this thesis, is a feature that identifies a certain language variety as ‘better’ than others because it represents, or it gives access to, wealth, power, and culture, or because it is used by a certain group that is considered important in a particular context (Stockwell, 2002, p. 11; Wardhaugh, 2015, p. 36). Prestige plays a key role in determining both language variation, i.e., how a language changes, and language shift, i.e., the gradual or abrupt abandonment of one language in favour of another (Fishman, 1991). Most importantly, prestige also determines hierarchies among languages, to the point that, when some language varieties are considered to be superior compared to others, the latter often become ostracised, opposed or stigmatised. This sociolinguistic reorganisation consolidates the formation of hierarchical relationships, defined by Liddicoat (2013, p. 5) as “hierarchies of prestige”, or, more generally, *language hierarchies*. In simple terms, these hierarchical formations develop whenever a language is considered ‘better’ and another ‘worse’, and this labelling affects the use of those varieties. As clarified by Edwards (1994, pp. 89-90), the reasons why this happens, far from being intrinsically linguistic, are in fact entirely extra-linguistic, and involve socio-cultural, political and economic factors. In other words, no language is structurally ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than another, and the judgment is solely due to external causes, which bring the speaker to *project* certain attributes from culture, society, politics or economics to language.

Together with prestige, another way to look at language hierarchies is as the product of a *choice*. In this sense, due to reasons of prestige, we can say that language hierarchies occur any time one language is *chosen* over another. Risager (2012, p. 115) describes this process of language hierarchisation as “simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. When one chooses a language in practice, one simultaneously excludes all other languages, specifically the language(s) that compete with it in the context in question”. In this sense, Ricento (2014, p. 354) points out that this language choice reflects the hierarchy and inequality that are intrinsic in human society, and that “these inequalities are enacted and (re)produced in conversations, interactions, and textual productions and interpretations in virtually all genres of speech and writing”. This often generates *language discrimination*, defined as

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\(^5\) For a more explicit engagement with the distinction between individual and social bi/multilingualism, see Spolsky (for example, 1998, 2004).
the ways in which the language variety that a person speaks “indexes [that] person’s social class, educational background, regional origin, or racial category” (Ricento, 2014, p. 358).

One of the most evident examples of language hierarchy is *diglossia*. While bilingualism refers to a situation where two languages are generally used interchangeably in a given context, diglossia is a particular form of bilingualism where each of the two coexisting varieties is only used in specific, well-determined, and non-interchangeable contexts (Ferguson, 1959). Diglossia is inherently hierarchical as it is characterised by a variety with more cultural prestige, called ‘High’, and another one, more informal, called ‘Low’. Their respective domains are fixed and their use cannot be inverted: in particular, the High variety is used only for official and literary purposes, and the Low variety is employed only in non–official and familiar contexts. In parallel, Ferguson identifies a situation called *standard with dialects* (1959, p. 245), where the High variety can be used in the contexts of the Low variety, but the opposite is not socially acceptable. As noted by May (2014, p. 380), diglossia is the solution often suggested by the supporters of English as a global lingua franca, such as the aforementioned van Parijs (2011) and de Swaan (2001b). This solution would allow people to keep their language(s) as Low varieties on the side, and employ English as the official, High variety, thus maintaining a certain degree of language diversity. It is in this sense, though, that Kymlicka & Patten (2003, p. 43) describe diglossia as a tool that increases language marginalisation rather than ameliorating it. The diglossic hierarchical imprint must thus be problematised as it would unbalance even more the odds in favour of English, disregarding the multilingual repertoires that characterise the majority of the world population. For these reasons, May (2014, p. 382) argues that “diglossia entrenches, rather than subverts, existing language hierarchies”.

Another example of language hierarchy is the distinction between language and dialect. Distinguishing a language variety from another by calling it a ‘dialect’ cannot be explained via solely linguistic issues. Haugen (1972, pp. 497-499) clarifies that there is a strong hierarchical relationship between the two terms, as ‘dialect’ is always subordinate to ‘language’ and “excluded from polite society”: in other words, it is a combination of class-related and cultural-shaped factors that label a language variety as a dialect. Even more, he argues that “there are two clearly distinct dimensions involved in the usage of ‘language’ and ‘dialect’” (Haugen, 1972, pp. 500-501). The first one is *structural*, i.e., it identifies two languages that are connected to one another through genetic derivation, where the variety that comes from another variety is referred to as the ‘dialect’ of a language. The second dimension is *functional*, i.e., it depends on the function that the speakers attribute to the language varieties that they use:

> This dimension of functional superiority and inferiority is usually disregarded by linguists, but it is an essential part of the sociolinguist’s concern. It becomes his [sic] special and complex task to define the social functions of each language or dialect and the prestige that attaches to each of these (Haugen, 1972, p. 501).

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8 Fishman (1991, p. 44) defines a domain as one “of the major institutions of society: e.g., the family, the work sphere, education, religion, entertainment and the mass media”.
Another linguistic criterion that is often claimed to determine the status of ‘language’ or ‘dialect’ is mutual intelligibility. Not even inter-comprehension, though, is enough to determine this hierarchical subordination. On the one hand, there are languages, such as Norwegian, Swedish and Danish, that are mutually intelligible and yet considered separate languages (May, 2012, p. 160); on the other hand, there are language varieties that are not mutually intelligible and yet are considered dialects of the same language, such as the languages of China (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015, p. 38). Even the often non-mutually intelligible languages of Italy, which will be discussed at length in later chapters, are normally referred to as ‘dialects’ or, in the case of the twelve varieties recognised by Italian law, ‘minority languages’, a term that further demotes the remaining ‘dialectal’ varieties.

What the case of Italy shows is that, by introducing the expression minority language, the hierarchical system becomes even more entangled. The term ‘minority language’ defines groups that are non-dominant or non-majority within a polity, and its use is therefore equally related to language hierarchies. As underlined by May (2012, p. 84 ff.), the dominant groups develop a set of socio-cultural and political features that inevitably favour their hegemony and create minorities that do not share those features. The language varieties spoken by those groups, especially if different or otherwise distinguishable from the one used by the majority group, become therefore themselves ‘minority’. At this point, another distinction is needed. Under the terminological umbrella provided by ‘minority language’, we can distinguish further additional partitions: the indigenous, the established, the historical, the new language minorities, and the minimised languages. Indigenous minority languages are the varieties spoken by those groups who are autochthonous to the area of interest and who also belong to a different, often native, ethnic group compared to the one that is dominant in that area (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015, p. 65). These groups often have different uses and customs compared to the dominant groups, which can see them as “archaic” (Churchill, 1986, p. 6). The indigenous minorities can be also described as “aboriginal groups who are politically non-dominant and who are not, or are only partially, integrated into the nation-state” (May, 2012, p. 88). As noted by May (2012) and Eriksen (2010, p. 18), the term is potentially confusing as it actually also defines groups such as Catalans, Welsh and Basque who are generally not referred to as ‘indigenous’. The other term used for these latter groups is, instead, established or historical minorities. Established minorities, similarly to indigenous ones, are autochthonous to the area, but their culture is considered more similar or already assimilated to the dominant one (Churchill, 1986, p. 6). Similarly, the expression ‘historical minorities’ identifies those communities that, due to migrations which occurred in non-recent or even ancient times, are now completely and permanently settled in an area but still speak a language variety that is different from the majority language of the area. Orioles (2003, p. 19) calls these minorities “endogenous”, because they have occupied that area for so long that they are no longer considered ‘migrants’. New minorities, instead, are those groups that, due to relatively recent migrations, are not yet perceived as integrated in a particular society (Churchill, 1986, p. 6). Finally, Telmon (2016, p. 20) defines as lingue di minimanza, translatable in English as minimised languages, those language varieties that are not recognised as minority languages either officially or unofficially by institutions and scholars because, for example, they are spoken in very small or particularly isolated areas.
In this context, the involvement of official institutions becomes crucial to understand the nature of multilingual practices. If we transfer the definitions offered by Bartlett and Garcia (2011, p. 14) about bilingualism to multilingualism, then multilingualism can become subtractive or additive (see also Annamalai, 2003). Multilingualism is subtractive when, as languages are added, others are gradually abandoned. On the contrary, multilingualism becomes additive when the languages are added in the repertoire of a polity and they all remain in use. In this context, the role played by public institutions is crucial for the way multilingualism is managed and language hierarchies developed. Unless the Political Society7 is publicly opposing the use of a certain minority language, as we will discuss in the following chapters, languages can be conceived as a social subject with their own rights. This language rights approach thus aims at ensuring “that minority rights speakers are able to continue to speak their language(s) for the foreseeable future” (May, 2012, p. 2). Within this framework8, there are two different approaches that can be followed: the promotion-oriented initiatives and the tolerance-oriented ones. Promotion-oriented approaches are those in which the public institutions actively support the minority language(s) of their polity, and allow their use in the public domains. Kloss (1971, p. 260) specifies that this type of intervention can occur only in certain circumstances:

To attain promotion-oriented rights an ethnic group must prove that its desire to keep its language alive is more than a fleeting sentiment which understandably flares up in any host country but perhaps only to fade out after roughly a generation. Only after the group has managed to keep the language and a feeling for the language alive among the grandchildren of the immigrants, only after the language can be held to have taken root, can the state be requested to promote the language.

When these conditions are not met, or simply when public institutions are not willing to actively promote a minority language, but yet they are not opposing its use, then tolerance-oriented, or “acquiescent” (Kloss, 1971, p. 259), approaches are employed. This second way of conceiving minority language rights generally guarantees that minority languages can be freely used in non-official, Civil-Society contexts (Kymlicka & Patten, 2003, pp. 26-27). Tolerance-oriented approaches are also the most common solutions employed by modern nation-states in dealing with language diversity (May, 2014, p. 387). In this sense, it will appear clear that the spiral-like development of language hierarchies is substantially caused by socio-political reasons within a multilingual context. This statement, however, leaves us with two key questions that still need to be answered: why are language hierarchies formed? What is the role of national(ist) ideologies in relation to language hierarchies? In the next chapter, we will provide the answer.

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7 On Political and Civil Society, see chapter seven.
8 For a comprehensive discussion of language rights, see May (2012).
CHAPTER THREE
LANGUAGE HIERARCHIES AND NATIONALISM

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we provided a working definition for ‘language hierarchies’, and we examined how language hierarchies develop in multilingual contexts: indeed, whenever only one language variety is present, there is no possibility of comparing the prestige of one language to another. We have also seen that, for this reason, language hierarchies can be considered ‘hierarchies of prestige’, and develop for external, non-linguistic factors rather than linguistic ones. The aim of this chapter is trying to outline why this happens by looking at the two-way relationship between language hierarchies and nationalism in a historical perspective. The most significant example of prestige-building and hierarchy-enhancing system applied to languages is nationalism, here analysed in its European dimension exported worldwide through colonisation and technical-scientific growth (for a discussion of nationalism in relation to early colonialism, see Anderson, 2006). Exploring the factors that have determined linguistic prestige and established linguistic hierarchies in Europe serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it is possible to look at multilingualism from a historical, social and political perspective, which, according to Edwards (1994, p. 10), is “essential in understanding multilingual matters”. Along these lines, focusing on linguistic prestige allows us to draw a first link between Gramsci and multilingualism, i.e., the fact that, as it will be discussed in chapter five, language matters are a symptom of a necessary reorganisation of cultural hegemony, and prestige and hegemony are thus concepts deeply related to one another. On the other hand, exploring multilingualism through the key thread of linguistic prestige allows us to provide an insight on another fundamental related link, i.e., the one existing between language and nationalism, which Gramsci summarises as follows:

La lingua [va Intesa] come elemento della cultura e quindi della storia generale e come manifestazione precipua della ‘nazionalità’ e ‘popolarità’ [...].

[Language [should be considered] as an element of culture and therefore of general history, and as a primary expression of ‘nationality’ and ‘popularity’ [...]}; (Q.3, §76)

This chapter will therefore start with the discussion of key terms such as nationalism, internationalism and cosmopolitanism in Gramsci, and in particular in the Prison Notebooks, and then in more general terms though the key contributions on language and nationalism by Gellner (2006),
Smith (1971), May (2012), Guibernau (1999, 2013) and Hobsbawm (1992). Far from being conclusive, the first part of this section will focus only on those passages from the *Prison Notebooks* in which we can find questions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism discussed in relation to language and culture. Likewise, the second part of the section only focuses on those authors who provide definitions that consider the role of language as part of the national(ist) question, and gradually develops the discussion through those contributions. Section three will be dedicated to tracing a historical and cultural overview of how language hierarchies developed in relation to specific cultural, political and ideological contexts in European nationalism. The aim of this section is not to anachronistically look for the features of modern nationalism in retrospect, in a way that traces nationalist attitudes in the past. Rather, I will try to identify the prelude of what will later be called ‘modern nationalism’, following some of nationalism’s distinctive features. For these reasons, this section is divided into three sub-sections, respectively dedicated to the three key factors that, I argue, contributed to the creation of language hierarchies in Europe: one-language ideology, eternal nationalism and extreme nationalism. The organisation of this core section tries to respect the chronological order as much as possible, but gives priority to the conceptual clusters that explain the development of language hierarchies. Finally, section four will conclude the discussion on the connection between national dimension and language hierarchies in a multi-dimensional and multi-lingual perspective. For these reasons, this chapter does not provide a full, complete discussion of the theories and the practical developments of nationalism, or of the role of language in shaping national identities: this would exceed the scope of this thesis, and has already been remarkably accomplished by May (2012), Wright (2016) and Phillipson (2003). As anticipated, the aim is rather to clarify why language hierarchies develop and how this development relates to nationalism.

### 3.2 The Multidimensional Nature of Nationalism and Prestige

#### 3.2.1 Gramsci, Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

In one of Gramsci’s numerous discussions of the social figure of the intellectuals, which will be addressed in chapter nine, the philosopher argues that the historical investigation of the formation of Italian intellectuals necessarily sends us back to Roman times, when Italy became the intellectual

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1 For an analysis of cosmopolitanism, the state and modernity in the Italian scholarship, see also Burgio (2014) and Izzo (2009).
2 Given the nature of this chapter, which has been developed in relation to socio-linguistic rather than socio-political theory, a full coverage of the various threads existing in the literature on nationalism is outside the scope of this work. This explains also my undoubtedly partial engagement with Anderson (2006) and his unique exegesis and problematisation of nationalism.
centre for the whole Empire. When the focus is on the intellectuals of that time, Gramsci notes that the ruling classes became progressively more imperial and less Latin: they became “cosmopolitan” (Q.3, §88). On the other side of the spectrum, when he looks at the Italian intellectuals at later chronological stages, he argues that

C’è dunque una linea unitaria nello sviluppo delle classi intellettuali italiane (operanti nel territorio italiano) ma questa linea di sviluppo è tutt’altro che nazionale: il fatto porta a uno squilibrio interno nella composizione della popolazione che vive in Italia.

[There is therefore a uniform thread in the development of Italian intellectual classes (working in the Italian territories), but this line of development is far from being national: this fact brings an internal imbalance in the composition of the population who lives in Italy].

This passage is interesting for two reasons. First, by recommending a study of the Italian intellectuals that starts with the Roman Empire, Gramsci legitimises the employment of a historical-cultural approach that pivots on the role of the nation in order to analyse social factors, which is also the option that I chose to apply here. In addition, it introduces the two key terms of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, which provide an interesting background discussion to some of the key themes we will explore in this thesis.

In the analysis of socio-historical factors, and with the nation(-state) as a fundamental unit, Gramsci identifies four key dimensions: nationalism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism and provincialism. In relation to nationalism, Gramsci substantially uses the term nation and its related lexical family in two main ways. In the first case, nation refers to the State and its people: it indicates a unity of shared culture and traditions that Gramsci describes in either positive or neutral terms. The second approach connects to a nationalism conceived as a chauvinistic, individualistic or extremist set of attitudes that Gramsci rejects as he similarly does with cosmopolitanism (Q.2, §25), as we will see shortly. The national dimension, especially as far as culture is concerned, is not a negative element, but it can be characterised by negative features. A negative connotation of the national, for example, comes from the self-declared nationalists and their form of nationalism, which in fact shows “such a strong group-based cultural cosmopolitanism that it can be considered an actual governmental tool, whose passions are not immediate, but subjected to the possession of power” (Q10.1, §1). The key element that categorises the national dimension, therefore, is the type of approach that a power institution seems to pursue (Q.6, §170). In particular, the action of a government can be expansive or repressive: it is expansive when it fosters a bottom-up development which elevates the level of national-popular culture on a large scale, and it is repressive when it does not, employing a top-down approach instead. The governmental actions can be completely or partially expansive/repressive, or be repressive in some respects and expansive in others. This composite nature, though, is not free of risks:

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3 On the differences between the empire and the nation-state as institutions in relation to language policy and multilingualism, see May (2016).
È questo spesso il paradosso più stridente per molte tendenze monopolistiche di carattere nazionalistico e repressivo: che mentre si costruiscono piani grandiosi di egemonia, non ci si accorge di essere oggetto di egemonie straniere; così come, mentre si fanno piani imperialistici, in realtà si è oggetto di altri imperialismi.

[This is often the most jarring paradox for many monopolistic tendencies that are nationalistic and repressive: while they build magnificent plans of hegemony, they do not realise that they are themselves subjected to foreign hegemonies; similarly, when they make imperialistic plans, they are in fact subjected to other imperialisms]. (Q.23, §57)

We can therefore appreciate how even an apparently self-sufficient dimension such as the nation is in fact related to a broader context: hence its connection with cosmopolitanism and internationalism. For Gramsci, cosmopolitanism implies a world conceived as a unique boundless universe, while internationalism specifically indicates a dimension that goes beyond national borders, but acknowledges their existence, and in fact implies the centrality of the nation and the cooperation between all levels4 (Gramsci, 1968, but see also Q.3, §46). Unlike internationalism, cosmopolitanism is described mainly in negative terms. In particular, Gramsci refers to it as “superficially national and superficially occidentalist or European” (Q.7, §16), “a-national” (Q.2, §116) and “a-patriotic” (Q.2, §25). Cosmopolitanism can also be a form of “subversion”, especially when it is so “universalist” that it lacks a proper “national spirit” (Q.3, §46). In this sense, the adjective ‘cosmopolitan’ can be usefully associated with ‘artificial’ and ‘global’, particularly in relation to the current role of English, to which we will return in chapters five and six. Similarly to nationalism, however, cosmopolitanism can be a prominent feature, or characterise only certain elements of society, such as politics, economics, customs or culture (Q.6, §125). State life, for example, develops according to nationalism, but economy is international, or, more often, cosmopolitan (Q.15, §5). Likewise, the national sentiment can pivot on different state-related concepts, such as homeland, army and religion, even though religious sentiment tends to be more cosmopolitan than national, because it transcends the national dimension and in fact absorbs elements of multiple nations, going beyond their borders (Q.6, §62). The main difference between internationalism and cosmopolitanism is that, while they both go beyond the national dimension, internationalism maintains the links with that dimension, whereas cosmopolitanism does not have, or never had, connections to national life (Q.3, §141). In this sense, relying on the nation as a unit of measurement from a cosmopolitan perspective clashes with the very nature of cosmopolitanism, which witnesses an absence of the national nature of culture, and exerts its influence from above, adjusting according to multiple nations’ contexts rather than to a single national one (Q.5, §123; Q.10.II, §61; Q.26, §6). Gramsci examines the case of China to show that, in order to ensure the emergence of national forces, it is necessary to break the cosmopolitan unity with the help of the people. In particular, as we will see also in chapter five, the Chinese universal writing system is considered a symptom of a rooted cosmopolitanism, which can only be overcome by the

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4 This is an understandable position especially when interpreted within the frame of the (Communist) International. On Gramsci and the international dimension, see Ives & Short (2013) and Robinson (2005), but also Ives and Lacorte (Eds., 2010) and Guibernau (1996).
rise of Chinese popular languages with the support of new groups of intellectuals and of the people (Q.5, §23).

As far as European history is concerned, Gramsci identifies two key cosmopolitan institutions: the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. The Roman Empire, with its universalistic nature, is one of the greatest examples of cosmopolitanism (Q.5, §55). The nature of Greek intellectuals was generally cosmopolitan, but the Roman intellectuals became increasingly cosmopolitan with the passage from the Republic to the Empire (Q.8, §22). This occurred because the various groups of intellectuals became progressively centralised, gradually moving to Rome from all the conquered territories (Q.19, §1). This centralisation had a twofold effect: on the one hand, it initiated a process of “de-nationalisation” of Rome (Q.17, §21); on the other, it generated a category of cosmopolitan intellectuals that, at least in Italy, had significant ramifications throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, as we will see below (Q.8, §22). As for the Catholic Church, despite its location on Italian soil, it had no exclusively national politics or history, and it was always projected towards a wider, European and global context (Q.3, §46). Both the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church are more or less directly related to the cosmopolitan language par excellence, Latin, particularly in its Medieval form (Q.3, §76). With the fall of the Roman Empire, at the beginning of the Middle Ages, the language of the Romans steadily evolved following two routes. On the one hand, Vulgar Latin split into the various regions of Europe, gradually generating the Neo-Latin/Romance languages. On the other, literary Latin became a crystallised language of culture, the so-called Medieval Latin, which

Non può essere in nessun modo paragonato a una lingua parlata, nazionale, storicamente vivente, quantunque non sia neppure da confondersi con un gergo o con una lingua artificiale come l’Esperanto.

[Cannot be compared in any way to a spoken, national language, historically living, even though it should not be mistaken either for a jargon or an artificial language such as Esperanto5]. (Q.3, §76)

Latin remained one of the few connections between the Roman imperial age and subsequent historical developments (Q.3, §86). In parallel, though, the various Neo-Latin languages continued to evolve, and their use became more and more prominent with time. Gramsci argues that their importance (i.e., their prestige) was largely determined by the rediscovered centrality of the people and their sovereignty over the world around them. He reports the case of the Oaths of Strasbourg, pledged in 842 CE (Current Era) between two of Charlemagne grandsons, Charles the Bald and Louis the German. In order to make the oaths official and understandable to everyone, including the people (in this case represented by the armies of the two monarchs), the document was written in three languages: Medieval Latin, Old French and Old German (see also Q.5, §123). This represents one of a long series of occasions in which Neo-Latin languages were used for official purposes together with, or instead of, Medieval Latin, which remained nevertheless the cosmopolitan language of culture and religion in the European context. Such a tendency, in Italy, generated a form of

5 On Gramsci’s positions on Esperanto, see chapter five.
illustrious vulgar, largely Tuscan-Florentine-based, which characterised a significant part of the Communal history of Italy⁶ and signalled that the masses were initiating a process of nationalisation (Q.15, §64). When the state organisation of the Medieval Communes was overcome by nobility-based governments, social elites became progressively more detached from the people. This transformed the Illustrious Vulgar into another type of restricted, non-popular language, alongside Latin: Italian became once again “a written, non-spoken language, the language of the literates, not of the people” (Q.3, §76).

The history of the Illustrious Vulgar and that of Medieval Latin became, in this way, even more entangled as they both gained prestige as languages of the intellectuals. Noting this connection also helps our discussion on how language hierarchies are formed. Indeed, Gramsci starts with the premise that a language is an “integral conception of the world and not just a dress that indistinctly shapes any content” (Q.5, §123). This means that the coexistence of two literary languages (Medieval Latin and the Illustrious Vulgar) within a plethora of local and regional languages generates a “struggle between conceptions of the world” that, in this case, find its roots in Roman times. The Medieval cosmopolitanism of Latin, which clearly enhanced the prestige of the language, had therefore an impact on the entire intellectual class for centuries, particularly in Italy. With this linguistic transformation, those intellectuals that previously developed a connection with the people were reabsorbed into a more traditional group, characterised by elitism and cosmopolitanism, far from national and popular elements. What Gramsci points out, though, is that the Illustrious Vulgar was not as widespread and common in the peninsula as it might appear. In strongly independent centres such as Venice and Genoa, Vulgar worked as a literary language, but only in a form that was enriched with Latin traits, and was never used in its pure Tuscan-Florentine form. Especially during the fourteenth-century Humanism, when the renaissance of classical cultures began, this particular situation generated a substantial diglossia of the intellectual groups:

Il volgare, per gli umanisti, era come un dialetto, cioè non aveva carattere nazionale e […] pertanto gli umanisti erano i continuatori dell’universalismo medioevale […] e non un elemento nazionale – erano una “casta cosmopolita”, per i quali l’Italia rappresentava forse ciò che è la regione nella cornice nazionale moderna, ma nulla di più e di meglio: essi erano apolitici e anazionali.

For Humanists, Vulgar was like a dialect, i.e., it did not have a national function, and […] therefore Humanists continued the medieval universalism […], not the national element. They were a ‘cosmopolitan cast’, for whom Italy represented perhaps what a region is in modern society, but nothing more: they were a-political and a-national. (Q.5, §123)

At this point it will appear clear that Italian intellectuals were never truly national, and they were rather characterised by a European cosmopolitanism for a long part of their history. Gramsci argues that Italian intellectuals were always projected towards the rest of Europe because of their Roman and medieval heritage (Q.5, §55). This historical imprint was enhanced by their activity of knowledge-

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⁶ The Communal period developed around the twelfth century and was characterised by the presence of largely independent towns and cities.
sharing, and by the fact that a significant part of the cosmopolitan Catholic elite was Italian (Q.3, §118). The peak of their cosmopolitanism occurred between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century, when Italy reached a considerable literary hegemony (Q.4, §91). Gramsci, though, specifies that it was not an exact hegemony, because Italian intellectuals never operated together as a group, and were always exerting their influence individually. Moreover, even when the Italian territory lost its function as the international centre of culture, there was never a process of nationalisation of the country, but rather the enhancement of the cosmopolitan function of its intellectuals (Q.5, §100):

La 'funzione cosmopolita degli intellettuali italiani' […] è ben altra cosa che non 'dominio culturale' di carattere nazionale: è invece proprio testimonianza di assenza del carattere nazionale della cultura.

[The 'cosmopolitan function of Italian intellectuals' [...] is very different from a national 'cultural dominance': in fact, it is proof of the lack of national features of culture]. (Q.5, §123)

The great contradiction thus generated is that, for centuries, the only manifestation of a 'national' spirit, in Italy, was a cosmopolitan culture that carried the heritage of an empire and a church that had only their geographical location in Italy (Q.10.II, §61): this is both “cause and effect of the fragmentation that characterised the peninsula from the fall of the Roman Empire until 1870” (Q.12, §1). Indeed, according to Gramsci’s analysis, Italian intellectuals started to focus on their own territory only around the eighteenth century, mainly thanks to the French Revolution, and this shift towards the national gradually occurred not only in the arts, but also via military and technical-scientific activities (Q.3, §115). And yet, with a past that is still forming (Q.23, §57), the autochthonous intellectual component can be perceived as more foreign than an actual foreign influence, even after the creation of the Italian State (Q.21, §5). It is from this perspective that we must interpret the Language Question that we will examine in the upcoming chapters:

Anche la quistione della lingua posta dal Manzoni riflette questo problema, il problema della unità intellettuale e morale della nazione e dello Stato, ricercato nell'unità della lingua. Ma l'unità della lingua è uno dei modi esterni e non esclusivamente necessario dell'unità nazionale: in ogni caso è un effetto e non una causa.

[Even the language question raised by Manzoni\(^7\) reflects this issue around the intellectual and moral unity of the State and the nation, sought in the unity of the language. However, language unity is one of the external ways of national unity, and not an exclusive or necessary one: in any case, it is an effect, and not a cause]. (Q.21, §5)

The reasons why this separation between intellectuals and the nation exists are multiple. First, the fact itself that such a question arises in the first place indicates how the gap between the intellectuals and the national dimension developed historically (Q.8, §145). Second, every national dominant group is closer to other equivalent groups elsewhere rather than to local subaltern groups,

\(^7\) Alessandro Manzoni, on which we will return in chapter four, was a literati and a politician in the nineteenth-century Italy. He supported a language policy that promoted a unique national language largely based on a centuries-old literary variety of the Tuscan-Florentine language.
even when the latter are intentionally or historically cosmopolitan: hence the gap naturally existing between nationalism and cosmopolitanism beyond the mere intellectual sphere (Q.6, §125). Third, intellectuals tend to be scattered or divided into groups, a fact that reflects the nature of their activity, often significantly detached from the experiences of the common people or masses (Q.8, §145). The only way to make an intellectual movement ‘national’ is to ensure its connection with the people: without a return to the popular dimension, there cannot be a national sentiment. In Italy, not even religion managed to ensure a connection between the intellectuals and the national because, as we have seen, the Catholic Church in Italy was never only the national church, but always a cosmopolitan institution, and the connection with religion brought the intellectuals instantly related to an a-national dimension (Q.9, §55). This separation between the intellectual-cultural sphere and the national one in Italy and elsewhere left traces, once again, in the language, which can also further clarify the meaning of ‘nation’:

In molte lingue, ‘nazionale’ e ‘popolare’ sono sinonimi o quasi (così in russo, così in tedesco in cui ‘volkisch’ ha un significato ancora più intimo, di razza, così nelle lingue slave in generale; in francese ‘nazionale’ ha un significato in cui il termine ‘popolare’ è già più elaborato politicamente, perché legato al concetto di ‘sovranità’, sovranità nazionale e sovranità popolare hanno uguale valore o l’hanno avuto). In Italia il termine ‘nazionale’ ha un significato molto ristretto ideologicamente e in ogni caso non coincide con ‘popolare’.

[In many languages, ‘national’ and ‘popular’ are (almost) synonyms: so it is in Russian; in German, where ‘volkisch’ has a more intimate, racial meaning; so it is in Slavic languages in general; in French ‘national’ has a meaning in which the term ‘popular’ is more politically elaborated, as it is related to the concept of ‘sovereignty’, and national sovereignty and popular sovereignty have, or used to have, the same meaning. In Italy, the term ‘national’ has, ideologically, a much more limited meaning, and in any case it does not coincide with ‘popular’]. (Q.21, §5)

Another element involved in the discussion of nationalism and cosmopolitanism is related to the local dimension. In particular, a concept that Gramsci opposes as a negative alternative to the (inter)national and the cosmopolitan is provincialism. Provincialism is described as what remains of a past full of moral and political dismemberment (Q.10.II, §41.IV). Alternatively, it can refer to a particular situation that mirrors the altogether absence of a national and cultural unity among the people (Q.14, §21). Even more, provincialism can be the symptom of a lack of social mechanisms to reach the national or the European contexts from the local. For Gramsci, the key question is to distinguish between ‘national’ and ‘folkloric8’, and the best way to do so is to associate the latter with provincialism (Q.14, §7). In particular, folklore, in its more negative connotation, and provincialism share three main features: they both refer to the small, particular dimension; they often imply an anachronistic worldview; and they can describe a social group that does not have generalisable traits, which are in fact necessary to ensure an (inter)national imprint. Regional literature, for example, is generally considered folkloric and picturesque, especially if analysed from a wider perspective (Q.21, §1). Provincialism, for Gramsci, should be overcome by exchanging ideas with the international level, and not with cosmopolitanism, because it is important to maintain the national component (Q.10.II,

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8 On folklore, see chapter eight.
Interestingly, one of the ways in which Gramsci recommends to go beyond provincialism is through the translation of foreign texts (Q.24, §7). Translation is unnecessary in non-textual languages such as art and music: those languages are primarily the production of an individual, but they rapidly become cosmopolitan languages that absorb all the national elements. Conversely, the nature of written texts is deeply national, as it develops slowly and molecularly according to the people, and changes according to the language of the various social groups (Q.6, §62).

From this Gramscian account, we can identify a series of useful starting points for our discussion on language hierarchies and the national dimension. The first one is a key element to which we will return, i.e., the role that Latin had both in Rome and in the Catholic Church as a generator of prestige. Latin was the language, first, of a strong imperial organisation, and then of a powerful political and religious institution. This central position transferred the privilege of those institutions to the language that represented them, which became also the language of literature, law and religion for centuries and in many different European countries. The prestige of Latin, which Gramsci explored mainly in the Italian context, had two major outcomes. On the one hand, it had a paramount impact on a significant part of European culture, which was shaped according to similar ideologies. On the other hand, it determined the matrix of the hierarchical systems of language categorisation that henceforth developed in Europe and affected the areas of the world that came in contact with it, as we will discuss further in the following sections. The second key point is that Gramsci’s analysis offers the opportunity to provide clarifications to some key working definitions: it is to this important outcome that the next section is dedicated.

3.2.2 Nation, Nationalism and Other Definitions

We have seen that, for Gramsci, nation can assume both positive and negative connotations according to the way its centrality is perceived and pursued. We have also seen how a language, in order to be prestigious, does not have to necessarily be a national language: on the one hand, Latin was a cosmopolitan language and it was unanimously recognised as the most prestigious language variety in Europe and beyond for centuries; on the other, the Tuscan-Florentine Illustrious Vulgar, as developed in the Communal Italy, was a local-based idiom that gained its prestige with its subsequent employment as a language of literature. If we associate these two key postulates with our discussion of language hierarchies, and we investigate its compatibility with the national dimension, we can argue that “language maintenance is not a necessary condition for nationalism” (Edwards, 1994, p. 129). In other words, “language may or may not be a key focus on national identity” (May, 2012, p. 64), because there is no sole factor that alone explains nationalism, and, consequently, “no single distinguishing feature fits all national contexts”. Anderson, too, argues that “in a world in which the

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§41.IV). Interestingly, one of the ways in which Gramsci recommends to go beyond provincialism is through the translation of foreign texts (Q.24, §7). Translation is unnecessary in non-textual languages such as art and music: those languages are primarily the production of an individual, but they rapidly become cosmopolitan languages that absorb all the national elements. Conversely, the nature of written texts is deeply national, as it develops slowly and molecularly according to the people, and changes according to the language of the various social groups (Q.6, §62).

From this Gramscian account, we can identify a series of useful starting points for our discussion on language hierarchies and the national dimension. The first one is a key element to which we will return, i.e., the role that Latin had both in Rome and in the Catholic Church as a generator of prestige. Latin was the language, first, of a strong imperial organisation, and then of a powerful political and religious institution. This central position transferred the privilege of those institutions to the language that represented them, which became also the language of literature, law and religion for centuries and in many different European countries. The prestige of Latin, which Gramsci explored mainly in the Italian context, had two major outcomes. On the one hand, it had a paramount impact on a significant part of European culture, which was shaped according to similar ideologies. On the other hand, it determined the matrix of the hierarchical systems of language categorisation that henceforth developed in Europe and affected the areas of the world that came in contact with it, as we will discuss further in the following sections. The second key point is that Gramsci’s analysis offers the opportunity to provide clarifications to some key working definitions: it is to this important outcome that the next section is dedicated.

3.2.2 Nation, Nationalism and Other Definitions

We have seen that, for Gramsci, nation can assume both positive and negative connotations according to the way its centrality is perceived and pursued. We have also seen how a language, in order to be prestigious, does not have to necessarily be a national language: on the one hand, Latin was a cosmopolitan language and it was unanimously recognised as the most prestigious language variety in Europe and beyond for centuries; on the other, the Tuscan-Florentine Illustrious Vulgar, as developed in the Communal Italy, was a local-based idiom that gained its prestige with its subsequent employment as a language of literature. If we associate these two key postulates with our discussion of language hierarchies, and we investigate its compatibility with the national dimension, we can argue that “language maintenance is not a necessary condition for nationalism” (Edwards, 1994, p. 129). In other words, “language may or may not be a key focus on national identity” (May, 2012, p. 64), because there is no sole factor that alone explains nationalism, and, consequently, “no single distinguishing feature fits all national contexts”. Anderson, too, argues that “in a world in which the
national state is the overwhelmingly norm, [...] the nation can now be imagined without linguistic communality” (2006, p. 135, my emphasis). This does not mean that language does not offer a means of national identification, but rather that the question is whether or not a language alone is enough to identify potential nations (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 51). In light of our argument, this means that, if a language does not need to be national, or the only language, in order to be prestigious, as long as its people recognise its importance, then, similarly, even multilingualism has the potential to become prestigious within national borders, and eventually become itself a marker of national identity. Indeed, as pointed out by Hobsbawm (1992, p. 57),

Where there are no other languages within earshot, one’s own idiom is not so much a group criterion as something that all people have, like legs. Where several languages coexist, multilingualism may be so normal as to make an exclusive identification with any one idiom quite arbitrary.

Why is multilingualism so hard to normalise, then, especially in a national(ist) perspective?

In order to answer this question, we first need to understand what nationalism is. Smith (1971, p. 171) defines nationalism as “an ideological movement, for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’ like others”. Gellner (2006, pp. 1-7) describes nationalism as “a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones”. Nationalism can also be described as “a political ideology and a sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life, and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny” (Guibernau i Berdún, 2013, p. 368). Guibernau, however, similarly to what Gramsci does, identifies a double meaning of nationalism:

It is very important to acknowledge the Janus-faced nature of nationalism as a doctrine sometimes associated with xenophobia, racism, ethnic cleansing and discrimination of the different, and which in some other circumstances stands up as a political ideology defending the right of nations to exist and evolve culturally and politically while vigorously promoting a democratic outlook and complying with human rights. Thus, nationalism, on some occasions, is associated with backward ethnic political discourses, whereas in others, it stands as a new progressive social movement in favour of the emancipation of peoples (Guibernau i Berdún, 2013, p. 368).

Nationalism can therefore become either a tool for social recognition, or a means of oppression, and we will return to this distinction shortly. For now, it will suffice to say that, either way, nationalism ultimately implies that there should be a recognised correspondence between cultural/ethnic identity and political establishment: ideally, nation and state need to coincide in a nation-state unity.

But what is a state, and what is a nation? Chapter seven is dedicated to the State in Gramsci and in relation to languages, therefore I leave a more detailed discussion on the topic to that stage. At this point, a useful working definition of the state can be found in Weber (1976, pp. 16-17), where the Western state is described as “a political association with a rational, written constitution, rationally ordained law, and administration bound to rational rules or laws, administered by trained officials”. In
more general terms, Gellner describes the state as an elaboration of society characterised by “the specialisation and concentration of order maintenance” (Gellner, 2006, p. 4). Defining nation is a more complex matter, and most renowned scholars in different disciplines agree on the elusiveness of the concept (Gellner, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1992; May, 2012, to name but a few). A clear definition of nation can be found in Smith (1971, p. 175), who writes that

The nation is a large, vertically integrated and territorially mobile group featuring common citizenship rights and collective sentiment together with one (or more) common characteristic(s) which differentiate its members from those similar groups with whom they stand in relations of alliance or conflict.

In Guibernau (2013, p. 368) nation is defined as “a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future, and claiming the right to rule itself”. The cultural component and the aware/voluntary sense of belonging are elements recognised by Gellner as being key to justifying the very existence of a national(ist) sentiment (2006, p. 7). Another important feature of the nation is that it is “a contingency, and not a universal necessity” (Gellner, 2006, p. 6): it is not an “unchanging social entity” but rather an element “of artefact, invention and social engineering” (Hobsbawm, 1992, pp. 9-10). Hobsbawm clarifies also that “the first meaning of the word ‘nation’ indicated origin or descent” (1992, p. 15), even though “the primary meaning of ‘nation’ […] was political” (1992, p. 18). In other words, nation is not only political, but also ethnic in origin\(^\text{11}\), as clarified by May:

The ‘nation’ […] has distinct echoes of the notion of ethnie […], although the two are not one and the same, not least because not all ethnies become nations […]. However […] the two terms may be regarded as broadly comparable, or at least complementary (May, 2012, p. 57).

As far as the political and public dimensions of the nation are concerned, it is important to note that nationalism-related questions emerge when state and nation do not match. In this sense, Gellner argues that “the problem of nationalism does not arise when there is no state” (2006, p. 5). Hobsbawm, building on Gellner, specifies that “nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around” (1992, p. 10). The relationship between nation, state and nationalism, however, is not a mere matter of reciprocity, and it cannot be simplified by saying that if certain conditions are met, then the outcome is necessarily predictable. For example, as highlighted by Smith (1971, p. 175), nation, state and nationalism do not inevitably imply one another, and “just as there are many nations without nationalism, so there are as many nationalisms without nations”, or nations without states (Guibernau i Berdún, 1999). Kymlicka & Patten (2003, p. 41), for their part, argue that nation-building has more chances to succeed if there is an active nationalist movement that supports it. In addition, May (2012, pp. 78-79) notes that not only are the

\(^{11}\) Ethnic/ethnie comes from the Greek word ἔθνος (éthnos), which identifies a specific people/group sharing specific features. For a detailed discussion of the role of ethnie in relation to nationalism and language, see May (2012), Smith (1971), Hobsbawm (1992, p. 63 ff.) and Kaufmann (Ed., 2004).
concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘state’ not reducible to one another, but the basic homogeneous construction of the nation-state is “directly contradicted by demographic and political reality”. The ambivalence of nation-state construction can be mitigated by stressing, case by case, whether the political confirmation arrived before or after the establishment of a complete national identity. For this reason, Wright (2016, pp. 21-22) distinguishes between state-nations and nation-states. State-nations identify those cases in which the polity was established first, and the nation-building process developed from that political core. Conversely, nation-states are characterised by the presence of a shared cultural and linguistic identity, which becomes the base to claim subsequent political representation. In this perspective, Hobsbawm, similarly to what Gramsci does, looks at the languages of the area where the national phenomenon developed in the first place, i.e., Europe. If “in Romance languages the word ‘nation’ is indigenous”, in other languages “it is a foreign loan” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 16): hence the significant linguistic overlapping, noted by both Marxist philosophers, between ‘nation’ and ‘people’, exemplified, for both Gramsci and Hobsbawm, particularly with the German word and adjective volk/volkisch (people/popular).

The role of people is indeed crucial in defining a nation, as it depends on the people’s beliefs whether a nation becomes a reality or not, and in what way. Wright clarifies this connection in light of language, and argues that

We could also say that communities exist because they have the linguistic means to do so. In other words, language is the means by which we conduct our social lives and is foremost among the factors that allow us to construct human communities (Wright, 2016, p. 2)

As demonstrated by Anderson, the idea of nation can change even within the same society, and vary for different social groups, so that the common people’s idea of nation may differ from the one of the elites (2006, pp. 102-103). Likewise, the language associated with a certain idea of nationalism may or may not be homogeneous within society (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 116). Nevertheless, in Anderson’s interpretation of nationalism, communities are ‘imagined’ because their members imply the existence of one another, even if they may never meet personally. The way in which an imagined community comes into existence is through an intricate system of history, politics, culture and scientific/technological development that eventually creates the idea of a nation way before concretising it. This view implies two key themes. On the one hand, the ultimate picture that Anderson provides is that of a society gradually divided in imagined national communities that can be detected all over the world. In this sense we can say that, beyond any judgment of fairness, justice or appropriateness, nations still represent a significant point of reference for any sociolinguistic discussion of language policy and of the people affected by it. On the other hand, society appears as generated by elusive and liquid elements that combine in unique pathways, and that follow the multiple combinations of factors responsible for the idea of nation. Language, as a fundamentally human, and therefore societal, feature, is one of these elements. As such, language enhances or reduces its potential when associated with specific contexts, which determine its prestige and role in society.
3.3 Nationalism and Language Hierarchies

Going back to our key questions, then, what is the historical role of nationalism in the formation of language hierarchies? How does prestige affect a language on a national/state level, to the point that the everyday reality of multilingualism can be perceived as abnormal? The answer to these questions can be articulated following three key points that explain the creation of language hierarchies at an official/political level: one language ideology, eternal nationalism and extreme nationalism. These three elements, that have characterised the history of Europe since its Greek-Roman roots, can explain why monolingualism is still more or less consciously preferred to multilingualism, at least in public domains.

3.3.1 One Language Ideology

It will be clear by now that language is often entangled with the process of nation building, and its role can be both as a foundational element and as a cultural consequence of the very formation of a nation. Indeed, as we will see in chapter five and six, Gramsci clearly states that every language question is a symptom of a deeper restructuring at a state and cultural level. This deep connection assumes its most evident form in the nationalist ideology of ‘one nation, one language, one territory’ (Wright, 2016, p. 305). This is a fundamental indicator that, ideally, a nation recognises one language spoken within one territory with which its people can identify12. The language, as the territory, is one because the tendency in nation-building processes is towards unification, which, even etymologically, means making/becoming one (see also Anderson, 2006, p. 44). It is not surprising, then, that national unity has a very strong appeal on people (Kloss, 1971, p. 257). In addition, as clarified by Wright (2016, p. 9), the main concern for state powers is the need to govern. If we go back to the definitions of ‘state’ discussed earlier, we can argue that governing is a basic need for any state, and this basic need, for nationalists, is best fulfilled when the population is homogeneous. If the nation-state is a common social construct, and its aim has been to create unity of culture, people and language, then we can easily understand how language questions can become crucial, how the formation of a national language is perceived as essential and how this, automatically, generates a hierarchical system in which all those languages that are not national inevitably lose their prestige over time. As noted by Smith (1971, p. 172)

The ‘right’ to have one’s own language taught in one’s own schools, courts manned by one’s own judges, newspapers produced by one’s own co-nationals and for them, an

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12 On the principle of territorial unilingualism, see Réaume (2003, p. 276 ff.).
indigenous literature and art, one’s own local institutions such as churches, and one’s own customs, has immediate political consequences.

This expectation of unity, however, must always be kept in perspective in relation to the equally inevitable linguistic diversity that has characterised humanity: “particular languages can die or be wiped out, but there was and there is no possibility of humankind’s general linguistic unification” (Anderson, 2006, p. 43). In this sense, we can once again take Latin as an example. As we have seen, the language of the Romans maintained its prestige even significantly after the collapse of its original polity, and despite the actual lack of linguistic homogeneity in its territories. Nevertheless, initially, Latin itself was subjected to the prestige of another language and culture: the one coming from classical Greece, which created a form of hierarchy in relation to what was not Greek. For example, the name that the Greeks used to describe foreigners who spoke (for them) incomprehensible languages was βάρβαροι (bárbaroi), which comes from an Indo-European word that can be found as well in Old Indo-Aryan, and that means “those who stutter” (Rochette, 2010, p. 282; Treccani, 2017). Greek maintained its prestige over other neighbouring languages, including Latin, at least until the second century BCE (Before the Common Era), when the Romans finalised the conquest of Greece, and Latin was introduced as the language of the new political power (see also Edwards, 1994). Despite the evident political supremacy coming from the Italian peninsula, however, the Romans recognised the cultural superiority of Greece. Greek ended up influencing Latin to the point that the poet Horace (65-8 BCE) wrote in one of his letters (II, 1, 156-157), Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit, “the conquered Greece conquered the savage victor [Rome]” (see also Rochette, 2010, p. 283). Roman elites introduced Greek slaves as private educators in their families and Greek became an everyday language for anybody who had access to education. This, however, did not mean that the Romans were unaware of their culture and language or that they tried to replace it with Greek. During the second and first century BCE, Rome produced a flourishing literature in Latin that was kept in high regards for centuries. In addition, the exclusive use of Latin for public and official purposes was clearly prescribed, and Latin was the language of Rome’s diplomacy even in Greece. In light of this scenario, we could read the situation of Republican and Early/Middle Imperial Rome as a case of substantial diglossia. However, this diglossia must be problematised, as it worked more as a “bilateral unilingualism”: Greek and Latin had indeed equal status, but the fact that people could officially use one language or the other did not imply that they actually used both (Rochette, 2010, pp. 288-289). As soon as Greek started losing the favour of the Emperors, it started also declining in the general society. In parallel, that was also the time when Latin had established itself as a prestigious language of an Empire, with its own institutions, culture, literature and religion, and it was precisely through a religious dispute that Latin gained even more prestige.

As we have seen, the other institution responsible for Latin’s prestige and, consequently, for the development of linguistic and cultural hierarchies in Europe, was the Church. Once the emperor Constantine enforced the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, which accepted Christianity as a state religion (Ferguson, 2003, p. 593), Latin was transformed into the official and prestigious language of a newly developed cultural setting. In parallel, Romance Languages were progressively becoming different
from Latin, and all over Europe both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages were employed as the primary means of communication of the people (Wright, 2016, pp. 23-24). In this new cultural context, even though these languages were tracing the path of what we now call national sentiment, Latin was still the language of prestige, and culture, religion, bureaucracy and treatises were almost exclusively expressed in Latin. This particular situation of linguistic unity without a political system to support it (Anderson, 2006, p. 40) was possible because, as noted by Wright (2016, pp. 27, 30), “Medieval Europeans saw themselves as members of Christendom”, and “religious unity was the first preoccupation of European leaders”. The idea of Christian unity as the only conceivable way of seeing the world automatically meant that Christianity was considered as the only, eternal conception of the world, and that the language(s) used to express it had a prestige no other language could reach.

3.3.2 Eternal Nationalism

This last consideration brings us to the second factor that explains why language hierarchies can develop: the sentiment of inevitability and a-temporality that nations have in the eyes of their people. This a-temporality does not imply a dimension without the historical component, but rather that the national component has been and will always be part of history. May (2012, p. 60) argues that “for many nationalists, nations are perennial; they have always existed in one form or another. […]. Nationalists thus regularly invoke both primordial ties and the weight of history in their assertions of (and for) nationhood”. Similarly, as pointed out by Anderson (2006, p. 11), “If nation-states are widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical’, the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of memorial past”. This deep connection with history can also be explained if we highlight the holistic impact that nationalism can have on people. Guibernau (1996, p. 43), for example, describes nationalism as a sentiment connected to the attachment to the homeland, a common language, ideals, values and traditions, and also with the identification of a group with symbols. […]. The attachment to all these signs creates an identity, and the appeal to that identity has had in the past, and still has today, the power to mobilise people.

In relation to language, this implies that “the forces that would aid linguistic convergence did already exist”, even though their effect on the process of nation building may not have been predominant right from the start (Wright, 2016, p. 28). Indeed, if we look at the Modern Enlightened / Romantic conceptualisations of nationalism, crystallised particularly in Germany towards the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century, language was not always regarded as a key element in the formation of a nation (Smith, 1971, p. 18). When it was, such as in the cases of the so-

13 Phillipson (2003, p. 39) points out how this peculiar situation could be compared to the current role of English as a global language, to which we will return in chapter six.
called ‘German Romantics’ Herder, Humboldt and Fichte (see May, 2012, pp. 60-62), the lens through which it was analysed was already affected by language hierarchies (Mignolo, 2000, pp. 197-198). And yet, the eventual definition of the very national identity that Romanticism strongly promoted was possible because of the presence of a commonly recognised prestigious language in the previous centuries. In other words, it was also through Latin, its history, its culture and the religious superiority attached to it that European powers developed over time the belief of their absolute cultural supremacy (see also Ricento, 2014, p. 362). The intensity of this ideology varied over the centuries, and assumed different forms (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 51 ff.). In the pre-modern world before the eighteenth century, for example, proto-nationalism was already forming, but it was processed within the framework offered by Latin-based Christendom:

This separated the world of ‘high’ Latin speaking culture, concerned with recovering the glory of the Roman Empire under the guise of Christianity, from the ocean of ‘low’ oral cultures of the peasant populations, who communicated through a multitude of unstandardised and often mutually incomprehensible vernaculars (Malešević, 2006, p. 89).

As highlighted by Wright, the idea of national identity started to consolidate “particularly after the Reformation and the Wars of Religion in the sixteenth century, concluded with treaties that encouraged national homogeneity” (2016, p. 29). As we can see, therefore, European powers kept their identity in high regard, to the point that, when they discovered new territories and initiated the worldwide phenomenon of colonialism, they forcefully exported and inculcated their worldview in the territories overseas, rarely, if ever, questioning their underlying nationalist principles (Hutton, 2010; Seed, 1993).

Colonialism is a complex matter, and because of the state-specific organisation of the single colonial enterprises, it is also very difficult to attempt too many generalisations in relation to it. As shown by Mignolo (2003, pp. vii-ix), but also by Lange, Mahoney and vom Hau (2006), the comparison of the main models of European colonialism, in this case the Spanish and the British, can reveal significant differences. Not only were the territories occupied by those two powers geographically dissimilar, thus offering different products and methods of exploitation, the monarchical systems that supported these colonial enterprises developed their peak of colonial activity in different historical moments. In addition, Spain, unlike England, was a Catholic country, and this determined a different bond to the political-spiritual authority of Rome, as outlined above. Despite these differences, colonialism was such a broad phenomenon that it is possible to identify some common features, especially in relation to culture and language (Thomas, 1994, p. 66). Colonialism is indeed “an ancient practice propelled by different forces and motivations, and resulting in varying linguistic impact patterns” (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015, p. 95). In our case, beyond their political, religious and linguistic differences, what all European powers had in common was the more or less explicit identification of Christianity and Christendom with the Latin language and Roman- and Early Christian-generated culture. Therefore, the bases of the European self-centred Weltanschauung were to be found, on the one hand, in the biblical myth of the single language before Babel evoked by the
Christian theologian Saint Augustine, and, on the other, in the great prestige of the Ancient Greek and Latin literature (Mignolo, 1992a, pp. 308, 320; Phillipson, 2003, pp. 25-26).

In addition, the second half of the sixteenth century witnessed the massive success of printing: books became the vehicle of rational knowledge, the cradle of historical accounts, and the ultimate symbol of civilisation (Anderson, 2006, pp. 9-36; Mignolo, 1992a, pp. 311-326; Sṭavans & Hoffmann, 2015, pp. 19-21). As a result, the Renaissance-generated deep-rooted belief at the time was that a language was prestigious if it was standardised, written in books, and with a Latin alphabet, which was considered the "universal linguistic system" (Mignolo, 1992a, p. 305). Consequently, all the cultural and linguistic studies managed by the European missionaries and intellectuals in the colonies tried to fit the indigenous languages they encountered, and the content they conveyed, into the idealised perfection of the Latin model (Mignolo, 2003, pp. 45-46). What could not be incorporated into this linguistically hierarchical framework was, by definition, less prestigious, unimportant, and barbarous. It is from this perspective that we should interpret the apparently normalising interests towards the indigenous languages developed by the Europeans. These indigenous languages were often organised in grammars and learnt, but mainly as tools to facilitate Christianisation, and not because they were believed to be on the same level as European languages, or Latin (Mignolo, 2003, pp. 53-54). Eventually, the aim was inevitably to convert the barbarous both religiously and linguistically. Occasionally, the prolonged contact between Europeans and native populations generated new languages, such as the pidgins and creoles that we will discuss in chapter nine. Nevertheless, in the view of European colonisers, the study of all those different cultures and languages never really undermined the solidity of the eternal magnificence of Latin and the other European languages that more or less directly represented it. On the contrary, it served the purpose of questioning even more the acceptability of the indigenous or local languages not only at the early stages of colonial conquest, but also later on, as shown by the cases of the Mapuche of Chile and the Māori of Aotearoa/New Zealand that we will examine respectively in chapters six and seven.

### 3.3.3 Extreme Nationalism

The sense of inevitable superiority that linguistic prestige brings in relation to nationalism takes us to the third reason that explains the historical formation of language hierarchies, i.e., the possible extremist drift that the national sentiment can take. Especially if its roots developed in opposition to what is not national, nationalism can present affinities with racism (but on the topic, see Anderson, 2006, p. 141). Even more, we could argue that, whenever questions of nationalism arise, it is very difficult not to think of the serious implications connected to extreme nationalism that characterised modernity. Indeed, as argued by Malešević (2006, p. 204),

*it was the arrival of modernity - and its most enduring creation, the Enlightenment inspired nation-state - which generated an environment for the systematic mass*
extermination of human beings. Not only did ethnic cleansing appear on the historical stage with the birth of a modern nation-state, but mass scale violence is also often unwittingly triggered by the processes of democratisation, liberalisation and modernisation.

The examples of nationalism’s extremist drifts can still be found all over the world, and are often generated by the restructuring occurred after World War II, the end of the (modern) colonial period and the end of the Cold War. Regardless of their previous individual histories, though, numerous countries affected by the historical events of the second half of the twentieth century experienced, and to some extent still do, the effects of extreme nationalism. This occurs because, as noted by Wright (2016, pp. 78-79), the ideology of the homogeneous nation-state was exported to the territories once colonised by the Europeans, and if the lack of coincidence between nations and states in Europe was endemic, “what was already fiction in Europe became doubly so in postcolonial Africa and Asia”. The tragic events that occurred during and after the two World Wars, then, are only the most macroscopic example of the long list of atrocities carried out in history in the name of nationalism. It is interesting to note, for example, that all the three major dictatorships developed in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s in Germany, Italy and Spain, were generated from three political parties that had national in their name: the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei - NSDAP), the National Fascist Party (Partito Nazionale Fascista - PNF), and the Spanish Phalanx (Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista - Falange Española de las JONS). It is also not incidental that two of these parties had in their name explicit reminders to Greek and Roman history: the (hoplite) phalanx was a military formation famous in Ancient Greece, while the fasces (fasci littori) were weapons carried by a special militia in Ancient Rome. In all three cases, the nationalist ideology was never questioned, and Gellner, attributing the quote to Mussolini, described this sentiment as the sacred egoism of nationalism (Gellner, 2006, p. 2).

This egoism, once again, brings the attention back to the single, unique nature of the nation, which cannot accept diversity and multiplicity, and can only culminate in the ghettoisation of minority-language communities (Kymlicka & Patten, 2003, p. 39). As a consequence, extreme nationalism generally develops together with racism and xenophobia, as we will see in chapter ten in the case of Veneto. This type of nationalism can also degenerate, in the worst cases, to ethnic cleansing and genocide (Guibernau i Berdún, 1996; Malešević, 2006). In such a context, the same principles applied to people are applied also to languages:

Whatever the reasons that made nationalism such a potent mobilising force, the linguistic outcome is clear. Ideologically, the use of the national language became a patriotic act, and the process was circular: as the linguistic community developed so too did the feeling of belonging, which was necessary for patriotism. Practically, defence of the nation gave the reason and the opportunity to use the national standard rather than the local dialect (Wright, 2016, p. 43).

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14 For example, see the cases of Rwanda and Bosnia examined by Malešević (2006, p. 204 ff.)
This generates forms of linguistic purism, a topic to which we will return in chapter eight. As defined by George Thomas (1991, p. 12),

Purism is the manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community\(^\text{15}\) (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable (including those originating in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language). […] Above all, purism is an aspect of the codification, cultivation and planning of standard languages.

In the cases of extreme nationalism, the efforts to maintain the ‘pure’ national language can follow multiple paths. For example, there can be an organised effort to cleanse the language from all the borrowings from other languages, such as in Italy under Mussolini’s regime (1922-1943). There can be the public denial of the very existence of internal indigenous or historical minorities, such as in Franco’s Spain (1939-1975) with the Catalans and other minorities, or in Pinochet’s Chile (1973-1990) with the Mapuche and other indigenous groups. Linguistic purism naturally generates language hierarchies, and, even when it develops outside contexts of repressive dictatorships, it can still convey them, as shown in the case of Iceland examined in chapter eight. Indeed, one of the most deep-rooted outcomes generated by extreme nationalism brings us back to the one language ideology mentioned before. In this perspective, monolingualism is identified with a pure and high language regime, while bilingualism and multilingualism are associated with low(er) socio-economic status, immigration and poverty (Wardhaugh, 2015, p. 85): hence the perceived abnormality of multilingualism in a national(ist) context.

Can we say that the risk of extreme nationalism is over? Not exactly. The situation of several political parties in Europe currently unmistakably indicates a new dawn for extreme nationalist movements, despite, but perhaps precisely because of, the multilingual and multinational imprint of the European Union, as we will see in chapters six and seven. The countries in which the nationalistic tendencies are currently more prominent are France, Austria, The Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, to name but a few (Forster, 2016; Gusterson, 2017). The very case of Brexit, the voted decision of the United Kingdom in 2016 to leave the European Union, to which we will return in chapters six and seven, could be read as a problematisation of nationalism. If, on the one hand, Brexit seems an attempt to reconstruct a uniquely British national identity, on the other, this return to British nationalism also inevitably implies the elision of the multinational identity of the United Kingdom, which in fact comprises England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. In this sense, another phenomenon that has been attracting more and more attention is the plethora of European minorities seeking total or partial independence from their respective nation-states\(^\text{16}\) (GeoPolitical Futures, 2016; Wright, 2012). The socio-political movements underpinning these claims are often labelled as ‘separatist’, ‘secessionist’ or

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\(^{15}\) The concept of *speech community* is a key notion in sociolinguistics. It generally identifies “a group of speakers […] who share the same norms in regard to language” (Labov, 1973, p. 158). For a more detailed discussion on the implications of the term, and the differences between speech community, language community and domain, we send the reader back to Spolsky (2009a, pp. 2-3).

\(^{16}\) In the following chapters we will focus in particular on four of them, namely Catalonia, Scotland, Wales, and Veneto, but others include Flanders, the Basque Country, and Ireland, to name but a few.
‘independentist’, and ultimately ‘nationalist’ – although, ironically, all existing nation-states are also inevitably ‘nationalist’. This contradiction indicates once again the deep ambivalence of the phenomenon of nationalism outlined both by Gramsci and Guibernau, and calls for appropriate measures to address the multiple dimensions related to it.

3.4 Multi-dimensional Language Hierarchies

It will appear clear now that the ambivalence of nationalism is also inevitably linked to its role as the crossroads between international and local dimensions. Its connection with language hierarchies, therefore, cannot be limited to nationalism at the nation-state level. In this sense, one mistake that should not be made is to believe that language hierarchies are not relevant because nationalism is “weakening, if not yet disappearing” (Wright, 2016, p. 227). On the contrary, their socio-political component is crucial because “nationalism, for all its essential irrationality – and probably because of it – remains potent” (Edwards, 1994, p. 133). Although it is undeniable that the sadly famous ‘golden age’ of nationalism is no longer the main “historical force”, nationalism is still “inescapable” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 169). We have seen that, even as a powerful international (and global) dimension has entered the picture, this does in no way mean that the national one has lost its potential. Rather, in line with what Wright (2016, p. 227) also argues, the return to the local dimension, in such a wide and potentially dispersive context, can be considered a “psychological necessity”. As discussed by Guibernau (1999, p. 13; but see also 2013), nationalism can thus be seen as a form of self-determination that cannot, in turn, be denied to minorities. We have highlighted how the national identity is determined in relation to that of others. If social reality is conceived exclusively as a global, cosmopolitan dimension, then the national identity no longer has a structure that supports it. In this sense, we should remember Gramsci’s position, where provincial does not coincide with local, and the cosmopolitan cannot substitute for the international because the national dimension is ultimately necessary to understand the current socio-political scenario. Nation-states have naturally developed heterogeneously, given that “there were many parts of Europe and much of the rest of the world where nationalities were so obviously mixed up on the same territory” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 33). As noted by Marx and Engels (2001 [1849], pp. 157-158, Vol. 20):

> There is no country in Europe where there are not different nationalities under the same government. The Highland Gaels and the Welsh are undoubtedly of different nationalities to what the English are, although nobody will give to these remnants of peoples long gone by the title of nations, any more than to the Celtic inhabitants of Brittany in France. Moreover, no state boundary coincides with the natural boundary of nationality, that of language. [...] And after all, it is no slight advantage that the various nations, as politically constituted, have most of them some foreign elements within themselves, which form connecting links with their neighbours, and vary the otherwise too monotonous uniformity of the national character (my emphasis).
Indeed, in the national dimension we can find a unique example of how matters of identity, language and politics can be the result of *unsteady equilibriums*, to use one of Gramsci’s expressions that we will see again in chapter six. So, how can we effectively challenge the language hierarchies that history has generated without failing to acknowledge the interconnected system of local, national and international dimensions? To find the answer to this question, as anticipated, we must engage with Gramsci’s socio-political theories, and connect them with language policy. In order to fully appreciate this connection, though, we must first look at how these themes are already present in Gramsci’s own life, and are reflected in his ideas on language. As we will see, local, national and international dimensions were entangled with language hierarchies and bi/multilingualism in the socio-political and cultural contexts in which Gramsci grew up. In the next two chapters, we will see how the ways in which language hierarchies work as a subtext in Gramsci’s life and theories shows why Gramsci, possibly more than any other thinker, can help us understand and support multilingual matters in a multidimensional perspective.
CHAPTER FOUR
LANGUAGE HIERARCHIES IN GRAMSCI’S LIFE

4.1 Introduction

To this point, we have clarified the wider socio-historical and socio-political context within which language hierarchies should be considered. Now, in order to provide a general introduction as to why Gramsci is particularly relevant in this sense, and to clarify his role in, and contribution to, a multilingual perspective, it is important to analyse how his life developed in relation to the multidimensional tensions generated by the language hierarchies existing in Italy during his life (1891-1937). Indeed, Gramsci’s life and writings, characterised by an intense cultural and political activity, also reflect the unique mutating cultural and linguistic background that Italy was experiencing at that time (Gramsci, 1982b, 1987). In this sense, Carlucci (2013, pp. 2-4), even without labelling Gramsci as a linguist, argues that it is not possible to employ Gramsci in any context, and specifically in relation to languages, without looking at his biographical connections to languages and linguistics.

In this chapter, I will thus provide a contextualised biography of Antonio Gramsci, aimed at clarifying how his life was characterised by multiple contacts with different languages, and how the peculiar linguistic situation of Italy affected his immediate social and cultural experiences. The questions I will try to answer in this chapter are: What were the language hierarchies in Gramsci’s times? What was the development of Gramsci’s interest in languages through his life in relation to Italy’s peculiar linguistic situation? My aim, then, is not to write a complete biography, which has already been well trailed elsewhere (see for example Fiori, 1970; Gramsci, 1994), and would exceed the purpose of this thesis. Nor do I want to offer a thorough linguistic reinterpretation of Gramsci’s life and ideas, as it is a work that Carlucci (2013) has already remarkably accomplished. Rather, I will discuss those life events that can provide significant insight on Gramsci’s linguistic and cultural development as a function of my argument around language hierarchies and multilingualism. In particular, I will look at those facts that highlight the linguistic background Gramsci grew up in, justify the wide applicability of his ideas and explain their subsequent relevance in sociolinguistics, especially in relation to multilingualism. Ultimately, it is interesting to note how Gramsci’s own life and

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1 For a detailed analysis of Gramsci’s life as a journalist and socio-political activist, see two not so recent but nevertheless interesting volumes. In the first one, Proletarian Order (1975), Gwyn Williams follows Gramsci’s involvement in the factory council and in the development of Communism in Italy. In the second one, Martin Clark (1977) focuses on the role that Gramsci played within the workers movements in the 1910s-1920s.
linguistic formation maintains the bi/multilingual dimensions despite the sociolinguistic hierarchies predominant at the time, and with only apparent contradictions, as we will see in the next chapter.

In the first part of this chapter, I will provide a brief introduction to the linguistic situation of Italy in historical perspective, followed by that of Sardinia, Gramsci’s home region. I will focus particularly on the period at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, in order to contextualise the linguistic conditions of the country and the region in which Gramsci grew up. The main sources for this section are the prestigious *Storia della Lingua Italiana* (History of the Italian Language) by Bruno Migliorini (1963) and *Storia linguistica dell’Italia Unita* (Linguistic History of the United Italy) by Tullio De Mauro (1974). For practical reasons, in this section I will use citations only if the sources are different from these two texts. Section three will be dedicated to how Gramsci, through his own life, experienced the existence of different written and spoken language varieties associated with different levels of prestige. This part provides the background for section four, dedicated to the long-term influence of Gramsci’s linguistic background, which triggers further discussions on language education and the activity of translation. These elements not only reflect some of the pivotal ideas of his philosophy, they are also key features of the discussion that will be developed in the following chapters. In this perspective, the linguistic turn offered by Gramscian production becomes particularly interesting as a way of showing the numerous links to the world of culture, education and, above all, language(s) that he developed during his life. The ultimate purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to show that Gramsci was not accidentally interested in languages, and certainly it is not accidental to employ this interest as a useful theoretical framework in the analysis of sociolinguistic matters. In fact, Gramsci seems an ideal source for a discussion on language hierarchies and multilingualism as he considers languages as a fundamental part of cultural life, and as a tool to give meaning to the historical development and shape to the way people see the world:

Una “razza” che ha dimenticato la sua lingua antica significa già che ha perso la maggior parte dell’eredità del passato, della primitiva concezione del mondo, e che ha assorbito la cultura (con la lingua) di un popolo conquistatore.

*[A ‘race’ that forgets its ancient language has already lost the main part of its heritage from the past, of its ancestral worldview. It has already absorbed the culture (and the language) of the conquerors]* (Gramsci, Letter to his sister-in-law Tatiana, 12 October 1931).

### 4.2 The Country of the Thousand Bell Towers

The country of the thousand bell towers is how Italy is often called as far as cultural and linguistic matters are concerned. The ‘thousand bell towers’ represent the thousands of towns, cities and local languages with which many Italians identify themselves. The reason behind the development of this local dimension comes from the endemic division that has affected the Italian peninsula since the end
of the Roman Empire. This division was not only geographical and political, but also cultural and linguistic, as anticipated in the previous chapter. For centuries, the peninsula was divided into fully independent state-cities, republics, kingdoms, duchies and principalities, all of which had their own language varieties for official and daily use. What brought this endemic division to an end, at least in its geo-political dimension, was the long process of the Unification of Italy. Beginning in 1861 with the creation of the Kingdom of Italy, the Unification developed through several decades: Venice and Veneto were annexed in 1866, Rome (without the State of the Church/current Vatican City) in 1870, and the current Northern territories of Trentino Alto Adige/Süd Tyrol and Friuli Venezia Giulia only after World War I. Similarly, the proclamation of a unified country did not immediately reflect a homogeneous cultural and linguistic unity. Using Wright’s terminology seen in the previous chapter, we could say that Italy was a state-nation, more than a nation-state (Wright, 2016, pp. 21-22), to the point that, after the Unification, the Italian patriot Massimo D’Azeglio notably stated “We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians”. The idea attached to it is that, after its political unification, Italy had to be promoted as a nation-state, and the national language had to be automatically exalted as the one and only ‘real’ language. As a consequence, all the regional and local varieties spoken in the peninsula were downgraded to the status of ‘dialects’, and associated with marginalised, lower socio-economic groups.

The linguistic situation in relation to the formation of Italy in 1861 was definitely challenging. In Italy there were (and are) three major language groups, which share some phonetic and lexical similarities: the Northern, Central and Southern varieties, with Sardinian, despite being geographically closer to the Southern varieties, constituting a separate group among the Romance languages (Coluzzi, 2008, p. 216). Even with some internal similarities, the differences both between and within these groups were, and still remain, significant. Particularly before the unification of Italy, when the regional languages were not yet influenced by the hegemony of a national language, intercomprehension was difficult. In pre-Roman times, Northern, Central and Southern Italy had a number of different languages spoken in the respective areas. If the North-West had Celtic languages, and most of the North-East spoke Venetic, Central Italy had Etruscan, Latin, Oscan, Umbrian and other Sabellian languages, which were also present in the South together with Greek (Clivio, Danesi, & Maida-Nicol, 2011; Parry & Maiden, 1997). With the rise of the power of Rome, Latin heavily shaped these vernaculars, whose role, albeit limited, persisted as a substratum, i.e., a background influence. The outcome of this process was a series of Latin-based languages carrying the features of the previous varieties. With the already discussed fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE, Latin maintained its supremacy, but it independently evolved in the various areas previously occupied by the Romans, and Italy was no exception. Because of this significant linguistic heterogeneity, for many centuries there were two common languages used in the Peninsula: Latin, the language of culture and religion, and a literary language, the Illustrious Vulgar seen before, that ended up becoming Italian as we know it today. This particular variety was chosen as Italy’s literary language because the most important authors of early Italian literature, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Francesco

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2 In linguistic terms, Italian is a Romance/Neo-Latin language that comes from a standardised version of a Tuscan-Florentine language variety belonging to the Central group.
Petrarca (1304-1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), wrote their masterpieces in their native language, a Tuscan variety heavily influenced by Florentine traits. The popularity of these authors, the so-called “Three Crowns”, had a significant impact on the linguistic choices of the subsequent literates, who fostered the cultural superiority of Tuscan varieties. In particular, the sixteenth century saw the development of the *Questione della lingua* (*Language Question*). The core issue of this *Question* was related to which language variety was supposed to be adopted in Italy as a common language of literature. The debate started when the intellectual Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), in his text *Le Prose della Volgar Lingua* (“Proses on the Popular Language”), suggested Petrarcha as a model for the language of poetry, and Boccaccio as a model for prose. This choice was dictated by the fact that the language used by those two authors was considered noble, pure, in other words, prestigious, and therefore appropriate to represent the literary language of the Peninsula. This literary hierarchy was very strict, and even Dante, a Florentine who wrote in a Tuscan-Florentine language, and whose cultural and literary pre-eminence was unanimously acknowledged, suffered alternate fortune in this debate. The style of his Florentine, throughout his production, was not constant enough to be considered a pure literary model: if he had a refined and lyric style in his treatises, poems and in *Comedy’s Paradiso* and *Purgatorio*, he also employed an intentionally low and vulgar lexicon whenever required by the topic, such as in some passages of the *Comedy’s Inferno*.

The debate on the Language Question continued intermittently until the nineteenth century, when it saw new life: this time, though, it was not the literary language that was at stake, but the language of the people of Italy. While the illustrious literary language was still endorsed as a viable option, the Milanese writer and politician Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) argued for the necessity of a national language that, in his plan, had to be based on the Tuscan variety so far used in literature, but updated with the traits of the nineteenth-century Florentine. He invested considerable effort into this project of language purification, and ended up re-writing his masterpiece *I Promessi Sposi* (*The Betrothed*) three times (1821, 1827, 1840-42) in order to offer a unique sample of what Italian had to be. He adjusted his vocabulary and sentence structure to Florentine, and made his overall prose more ‘Tuscan’. His views of a language artificially created and imposed from above were in contrast with those of the linguist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1829-1907), who invented the first journal dedicated to glottology. Ascoli agreed with the necessity of a common language for Italy, but highlighted the importance of the socio-cultural context and the active role of the speakers in the creation of a “national” language. The answer, for him, was not to promote a pre-made standardised language, but rather to work with the whole society to make people more involved and aware of their linguistic needs. Despite this debate, what we now call Italian remained for decades almost exclusively the language of literature and of the upper classes (based on the Tuscan-Florentine variety), and middle and lower social groups continued having their local languages as their native tongue, with the difference that, at this stage, these varieties were receiving significant pressure also from the common literary language. The fact itself that a language issue developed and continued for centuries is the clearest example of the ongoing complexity of the linguistic conditions of the Italian peninsula (see Coluzzi, 2007). When Italy became a Republic in 1946, Italian did not appear as the official language in the Constitution of 1948, even though the constitution itself was written in Italian and the language
was, by then, used in all the public and formal domains. The official recognition of Italian, together with 12 languages as national minorities, arrived only in 1999, when the question of the languages of Italy was finally, even though inadequately, addressed (see also Toso, 2008). The implementation of Law 482/1999 offered an official protection and a rather arbitrary classification of Italian minority languages, which, according to this law, are Albanian, Catalan, Croatian, Franco-Provençal, French, Friulan, German, Greek, Ladin, Occitan, Sardinian and Slovene. Only two regional languages are recognised by this law, i.e., Friulan and Sardinian, and the exclusive legal value is in any case reserved for Italian alone. As a consequence, the language hierarchies thus developed in Italy clearly promote the prestige of the nationally constructed/implemented language based on the Tuscan-Florentine literary tradition. While some minority languages, considered prestigious enough to be regulated by a law, were partially acknowledged, other so-called regional languages have been entirely ignored.

4.3 The Island of the Four Moors and Gramsci’s Linguistic Biography

Given these premises, Gramsci’s times saw a language situation in transition. Between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the endorsement of a standardised Tuscan variety as a national “Italian” language was largely felt as a necessary aftermath of Italian Unification. This project, however, was difficult to put into practice. First, Italian as a spoken variety was a recent practice, and the standardisation in the form and use of the language was still uncertain. Second, because of the literary nature of Italian, the national language could offer words for the public and formal domains, but struggled to replace the local dimensions of family and work lexicons. Finally, the fact that Italian was Tuscan-based advantaged the people living in Central Italy, because their local varieties were structurally and lexically similar to the official language. In Northern and Southern Italy, however, the regional varieties were considerably different. This made the transition to Italian as a national language less smooth, and prolonged the coexistence of separate linguistic systems. In those areas, the regional variety was still predominant, and when the national language was spoken, it was, and to some extent still is, significantly influenced by the local language variety: this fact contributed to the spontaneous formation of multiple regional varieties of Italian, which are still employed all over Italy on a daily basis.

Sardinia, the South-Western island where Gramsci was born in 1891, had (and still has) a peculiar situation. The island was part of the first political entity that generated the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Before becoming part of Italy, however, it fell under the control of several European and Italian forces. Among these, the most important was the Spanish dominance, still visible on the Sardinian flag: with a red cross on white background and the heads of four Moors, the official symbol of Sardinia.
represents the victory of Spain over the invaders from North Africa. The Iberians left significant traces also in the linguistic varieties of the island. Not only was the Sardinian language influenced by Castilian, the continual presence of the Spaniards in the island was so significant that, in the North-Western area of the region, a Catalan-speaking area has existed ever since. Together with Catalan, Sardinian is one of the twelve minority languages recognised by the Italian legislation after 1999. In Gramsci’s times, though, the language was already associated with a very strong regional culture, and many islanders were either bilingual or monolingual Sardinian speakers 3.

Bearing the Italian and Sardinian contexts in mind clarifies why the situation in which Gramsci grew up was so distinctive when compared to that of his Sardinian contemporaries. As he specifies in a prison letter to his sister-in-law Tatiana dated 12 October 1931, his mother was Sardinian, his grandmother had Sardinian-Spanish descent, and his father was Albanian but born in Campania, a region in Southern Italy on the other side of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Because of this peculiar background, both the national and the local dimensions of Italy at the time were prominent in shaping Gramsci’s life. In relation to this two-fold imprint, in particular, he writes that he has “no race [...] but my culture is fundamentally Italian, and this is my world: I have never felt lacerated between two worlds”. Despite the background hierarchies, his Italian nature seems to peacefully coexist with the Sardinian one, even though the first often dominates the latter. In a letter dated 12 September 1927, Gramsci tells his brother Carlo “do not let yourself be submerged by the local Sardinian environment: we must always be greater than the environment we live in, without despising it”. His “Sardinian shell” (letter to Tatiana, 14 November 1932), however, is always present, even if only in the background. In a letter to his wife Giulia (5 January 1937) he recalls someone writing that, if Sardinia is an island, then every Sardinian is an island within the island. This idea that being Sardinian means being something different and potentially isolating emerges also from a letter to his sister-in-law dated 19 December 1926, sent from the island of Ustica (Sicily) where he was sent shortly after his arrest in the same year. He categorises the various inmates of the prison, and he identifies four groups: Northerners, Centrals, Southerners with Sicilians, and Sardinians, because “the Sardinians live absolutely separated from the others”. Interestingly, the passage that introduces this geo-cultural categorisation is a very deep reflection on psychology and folklore 4:

Tutto ciò che di elementare sopravvive nell'uomo moderno, rigalleggia irresistibilmente: queste molecole polverizzate si raggruppano secondo principi che corrispondono a ciò che di essenziale esiste ancora negli strati popolari più sommersi.

[All the basic components that survive in the modern man, inevitably re-float: these pulverised molecules gather together according to some principles that correspond to all the essential elements that still exist in the most submerged popular strata].

3 Sardinian is the only Romance language that generally maintained the Latin velar consonants [k] and [g] even when followed by [e] and [i] (Toso, 2008, p. 104). An example is Lat. centum (a hundred) that becomes It. cento, Sp. cien, Fr. cent, but Sard. kentu.
4 On folklore and the following ‘conception of the world’, see chapter eight.
As we can see, Gramsci uses the term ‘submerge’ twice to describe the process of embracing a local nature. It seems that being Sardinian, for him, represents an undefinable and variable conception of the world, a way of being in a liquid form: ultimately, an imagined community, à la Anderson. In another passage from a letter to his sister-in-law Tatiana dated 5 October 1931, he shares a specific reflection on this topic:

A quante società appartiene ogni individuo? E ognuno di noi non fa continui sforzi per unificare la propria concezione del mondo, in cui continuano a sussistere frantumi eterogenei di mondi culturali fossilizzati? E non esiste un processo storico generale che tenda a unificare continuamente tutto il genere umano? […] E ogni gruppo o partito, o setta, o religione, non tende a creare un proprio “conformismo” (non inteso in senso gregario e passivo)?

[How many societies does an individual belong to? And is it not true that every one of us constantly struggles to unify their conception of the world, in which heterogeneous fragments of a fossilised cultural world continue to exist? And is it not true that a general historical process exists and tends to constantly unify the whole mankind? […] And is it not true that every group, or party, or sect, or religion tends to create a personal “conformism” (without it being interpreted in a gregarious and passive way)?]

The idea that emerges from this passage is that every aspect of the socio-historical reality of a person is in fact multidimensional, and each person’s conception of the world is the result of a long process of sedimentation. People reflect the particular moment in which they live, but because society is not homogeneous, they naturally reflect different dimensions in relation to which they redefine themselves, adjusting to the surroundings and to the group to which they belong. For Gramsci, this readjustment naturally occurs not only socio-culturally, but also in relation to language identification and use.

What language(s) did Gramsci speak? We have seen that his father was born in Campania and had Albanian heritage, which means that he did not speak Sardinian as a first language, and came in contact with this language variety only in later times. Gramsci’s mother, though, together with all the people around him, was fluent in the local Sardinian language. In Gramsci’s family, therefore, both Italian and Sardinian were spoken. However, because of the strong pressure of the immediate Sardinian-speaking environment, the language actually used was probably a regional variety of the national language, with Sardinian traits and imprecise Italian features (Matt, 2008, p. 56). In that socio-cultural hierarchy, having access, albeit limited, to the national language immediately gave a person a higher sociolinguistic prestige. In a letter from prison to his brother Carlo, dated 31 December 1928, Gramsci talks about his niece Edmea, who had a position of “superiority” at school because she spoke Italian at home, even though imprecisely. In rural Sardinia, where the large majority of people spoke only Sardinian, Italian was almost exclusively studied at school as a foreign language. Therefore, using the “national” language at home was a great advantage for acquiring a level of proficiency in that language. Despite the generational gap between Edmea and Gramsci, we can easily assume that this situation was similar to the one Gramsci himself experienced in his early
years\(^5\). We can therefore also assume that he was spontaneously in regular contact with two different language systems from an early age. For all these reasons, Luigi Matt (2008, p. 56) argues that Gramsci did not have Sardinian as a mother tongue and Italian as a second language, but rather that he grew up substantially acquiring both languages simultaneously, the norm for bi/multilingual speakers. Evidence for this argument can be found in the use he made of Italian, with the minor but recurring presence of Sardinian, as we can appreciate particularly from his epistolary production throughout his life. He wrote letters in Italian both to his father and his mother from his secondary school years, and his language consistently improved with time and use (Matt, 2008). Sardinian, though, often emerges in emotional passages in many letters, especially to his mother, written during the prison years. For example, in an intense prison letter to his mother, written on 26 February 1927, Gramsci recalls some childhood memories in an attempt at consoling and reassuring her about his prison conditions. The letter is in Italian, but he uses several Sardinian expressions, mainly to describe Sardinian traditions and local cuisine. A similar mixture of Italian and Sardinian appears also in another letter to his mother dated 3 October 1927, in which, interestingly, he writes a whole sentence in Sardinian, but ends it in Italian, showing a case of code mixing\(^6\). Sardinian is also mentioned in the description of an episode he had in prison because of his unstable health conditions. In a letter to his sister-in-law Tatiana, dated 3 April 1933, he reports that, while he was delirious, he "spoke for a long time in a language that nobody understood, and that was certainly the Sardinian dialect [sic]. Up to a few days ago, I realised that I was mixing Italian with words and sentences in Sardinian".

### 4.4 Language, Education and Translation

Gramsci's proficiency in both Italian and Sardinian also played an important role in the short but meaningful period he spent at the University of Turin studying modern humanities. At the university Gramsci met his academic mentor, the linguist Matteo Bartoli\(^7\). After following Bartoli’s course on glottology, he became the professor’s research assistant. This role suggests that Gramsci was responsible for editing Bartoli’s course material for the academic year 1912-1913 (Gramsci, 2016, p.

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\(^5\) During his childhood, Gramsci’s father was sent to prison. The family did not have enough money to let young Antonio continue his studies immediately after he finished primary school, and therefore his education was delayed (Gramsci, 1994).

\(^6\) Code mixing is the phenomenon in which two or more languages are mixed together in a sentence (Berruto, 2009; Stockwell, 2002, pp. 9-10).

\(^7\) Professor Matteo Bartoli (1873-1946) was an important Italian linguist, famous for his opposition to the Neogrammarian approach to languages. Neogrammarians saw languages in a purely positivistic and scientific way. In contrast, the so-called “Neolinguists”, championed by Bartoli, contextualized languages in a social and historical framework, and highlighted their numerous nuances. Important Neolinguists were the previously mentioned Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, Matteo Bartoli and Gramsci himself. On Gramsci and Bartoli, see also Ives (2004a, pp. 24-30) and Boothman (2012).
XII). These notes are divided into two parts: the first one explains the Gallic-romance morphology, and the second examines the ethnography of the Balkan region (Gramsci, 1912). In this early example of Gramsci’s linguistic interests, we already find references to what the sociolinguistic tradition defines as the ‘prestige’ of a language, but which Gramsci calls influence, dominance, attraction, supremacy, and, ultimately, hegemony. In this context, Gramsci’s Sardinian origins were particularly appealing to Bartoli, who asked his student to collect data from the various Sardinian “dialects”. These assignments generated an epistolary exchange between Gramsci and his family, particularly during the period January-November 1912. These letters, from Gramsci’s part, were mainly focused on requesting fieldwork activities of his family members, as he was looking either for translations of specific Sardinian words, or for specific expressions in the different Sardinian varieties.

The relationship between Gramsci and Bartoli left traces after Gramsci left university to dedicate his life to socio-political activism. In one of his letters from prison, sent to his sister-in-law Tatiana on 19 March 1927, Gramsci discusses his project for developing an analysis of the various manifestations of “the popular creative spirit”. This analysis, in its first conceptualisation, included four stages: a work on Italian intellectuals, whose traces were in part addressed in the previous chapter; one on comparative linguistics; one on theatre; and one on popular literature. While outlining this project, to be carried out in prison, Gramsci makes a heartfelt reference to this relationship with his mentor:

Uno dei maggiori “rimorsi” intellettuali della mia vita è il dolore profondo che ho procurato al mio buon professor Bartoli dell’Università di Torino, il quale era persuaso essere io l’arcangelo destinato a profligare definitivamente i “neogrammatici”.

[One of the biggest intellectual ‘regrets’ of my life is the profound sorrow that I caused to my good Professor Bartoli at the University of Turin. He was sure that I was the archangel destined to finally defeat the ‘Neogrammarians’].

This mentoring relationship, however, should not be idealised. Gramsci’s socio-political commitment was so strong that he left university to become a full-time journalist and activist. As we have seen, he contributed to the creation of the Communist Party of Italy, which later became the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano - PCI). He travelled around Europe as a spokesman for his party, and he was sent to the Communist International in Moscow in 1922-1923, where he also met his wife Giulia, a Russian polyglot and Communist activist. He spent some months in Vienna as a representative of the party, until he was elected to the Italian parliament in 1924. Despite his parliamentary immunity, Gramsci was arrested in 1926 by Mussolini’s Fascist regime (Germino, 1990). On the other side, Bartoli was a supporter of the Fascist regime and ideology. It is

See also chapter five. I consulted the notes on glottology at the Gramsci Institute in Roma in November 2015, when they were still an unpublished manuscript. They have since been published in an edition edited by Giancarlo Schirru (Gramsci, 2016).

For a discussion of the use of hegemony in the Course Notes, see chapter six.

Canfora (2008) problematises the role of the executive of the PCI during Gramsci’s arrest. He argues that the lack of communication between Gramsci’s family and his fellow party members delayed the support from the party, and explains why the PCI executive did not reach out to Gramsci immediately after his arrest.
thus not a coincidence that in Bartoli’s archives there are no traces of his connection with Gramsci, as Carlucci (2008, p. 212) interestingly points out. Carlucci argues that Bartoli’s acceptance of Fascism probably led him to delete any evidence of his early relationship with Gramsci.

For Gramsci, however, language matters remained a significant interest that he connects also to education, both for adults and children. In terms of adult education, the letter to his friend, the scholar Piero Sraffa, dated 2 January 1927, provides an interesting example. In the island of Ustica, where, as we have seen, Gramsci was sent after his arrest, prisoners from all over Italy and with different linguistic backgrounds could interact with the local population. In such a context, Gramsci, with the help of other fellow political prisoners, managed to organise a small school for the education of adults. They planned different classes, likely held in Italian, that covered various topics, including mathematics, geography, and history and literature, for which Gramsci was responsible. This activity, unfortunately, lasted only a few weeks, as Gramsci was soon transferred to another prison in Milan.

Gramsci shared his thoughts about the education of his sons in several other letters to his wife, and he tried to maintain a relatively regular epistolary exchange also with both his sons. Language, however, soon became an obstacle, and created immense difficulties in their subsequent correspondence. In the letters that Gramsci wrote to his sons, for example, he often signed the messages with “Папа” (papa), or “Твой Папа” (tvoy papa), respectively “dad” and “your dad” in Russian. On two occasions Gramsci also closed the letter to his younger son Giuliano with “целую” (cepuyu), “I kiss you”. However, in a letter to Giulia, dated 1 October 1933, Gramsci expresses his frustration after receiving a letter that his second born unexpectedly sent him. The issue was related to the fact that Giuliano wrote in Russian. As Gramsci explains to his wife, letters written in languages other than Italian were held by the ministry for a control translation, a fact that delayed the entire process of delivery. Most importantly, he could not fully understand the content of the message because, while in prison, he had little chance of maintaining his proficiency in Russian. These two reasons led him to ask his wife to provide a translation of anything sent to him from his sons.

Gramsci’s linguistic plans, however, were different. During the early stages of his imprisonment, albeit with irregular intensity, he showed his interest in learning and translating other languages. In a letter written on 23 May 1927 to his sister-in-law Tatiana, he gives account of his difficulties in sustaining long and focused intellectual commitments. The only exception was in relation to languages, which he was studying systematically: “I am really committed to make the study of languages my predominant activity”. He intended to focus mainly on German, Russian, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, all languages that, for either political reasons or academic interests, were particularly fascinating to him. Even though this project was never entirely fulfilled, four of his Prison Notebooks (30-33) were dedicated to translations from English, Latin and especially German. He translated into Italian some passages from Goethe and a selection of the Grimm

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11 Most of Gramsci’s letters to his sons were attached to other letters that he wrote to his wife. As reported by Santucci (Gramsci, 1996, p. 801), because it is difficult to associate them with the respective main letters, it is equally complicated to date them with accuracy. This is why they appear without a specific date.

12 On the role of ‘translation’ and ‘translatability’ in Gramsci, see next chapter.
Brothers’ short stories and letters. Most importantly, he also translated *Die Spracstämme des Erdreises* (The Linguistic families of the world), a manual on linguistics written by the German philologist Franz Nicholas Finck in 1909. The translations - according to what is reported in the letters - started only in January 1929, when he was finally granted the permission of having ink and paper in his cell (letter dated 9 February 1929 to his sister-in-law Tatiana), and continued until 1932. The prison rules, though, did not allow him to have any regular access to a dictionary. This aspect, together with the fragmentary nature of the entire prison production, helps to explain the unfortunate fate of these four notebooks. The translation notebooks have been left out from all the main editions of the *Prison Notebooks* in any language. The only complete critical edition of these pages is in the Italian National Edition of the works of Antonio Gramsci, published by Treccani (Gramsci, 2007). Nevertheless, the importance of translation as an intellectually relevant activity appears clearly if we consider that the translations occupy more than 700 pages out of the approximately 3000 pages of the Notebooks.

### 4.5 Conclusion

As we can see, Gramsci’s sociolinguistic biography is an interesting example of how national and local dimensions coexist and contribute to the creation of language hierarchies, and how these hierarchies affect the languages and their speakers. In particular, moving from the general Italian context of the time to Gramsci’s own experiences provides a helpful insight on how relevant language hierarchies were for Gramsci’s personal development. His father was not Sardinian, and this gave Gramsci the chance to keep a stable contact with the national language without limiting himself to the local Sardinian dimension. His wife Giulia was a Russian polyglot, which similarly kept Gramsci in a more open linguistic situation and in close contact with multiple languages. Gramsci himself was substantially bilingual in Sardinian and Italian, and supported the idea of providing bilingual education to young children. He was also interested in translation, and learned and translated from several languages during his life, including German and Russian.

These key concepts of bi/multilingualism, translation, and language education are strong indicators of Gramsci’s *de facto* connections to our discussion on multilingualism, and they provide also some of the main elements of his theories that we will see in the next chapter. Deciding whether Gramsci’s particular multilingual extended family was the cause of his broad interests in languages, or if it was just an added incentive, is not only difficult but also pointless in light of our discussion. It would also raise a series of thorny issues similar to those around the sources of the concept of hegemony that we will see in chapter six. I believe, therefore, that all these connections to the world of languages should be considered different facets of the same figure, i.e., the significant interests that Gramsci had in language in relation to other numerous cultural, social, political and economic
matters. Looking for the sources, the influences and the explanations of Gramsci’s life events and notions, albeit undoubtedly interesting, seems to limit the complexity of this historic figure. On the contrary, accepting the multiple layers offered by Gramsci both with his life and his ideas seems to be the only way in which we can fully appreciate his life experiences, how these experiences substantially reflect the depth of his theories, and how his theories can provide unique insight on multilingual matters.
CHAPTER FIVE
LANGUAGES AND MULTILINGUALISM IN GRAMSCI’S THEORIES

5.1 Introduction

After looking at how bi/multilingual language matters were entangled in Gramsci’s life, it is now possible to focus on how Gramsci develops his discussion of languages, and how this theory of language relates to other pivotal concepts that I will discuss in the following chapters. In this section, I want to answer the following questions: What are the main themes of Gramsci’s theory of languages? How are they relevant for our discussion of multilingualism and the importance of language diversity? I will therefore provide an insight on the most significant aspects of Gramsci’s ideas involving language(s). The twofold goal sought here is, on the one hand, to show the relevance of Gramscian linguistic perspectives in relation to language hierarchies and multilingualism, with the idea that his theories, not just his life, reflect their existence. On the other hand, I argue that an approach to linguistic matters that focuses also on the wider context, such as the Contextual Approach I am outlining here, can be drawn directly from Gramsci’s language theory, which connects together local, national and international dimensions. In so doing, I want to clarify the importance of the context particularly in the understanding of the socio-political dynamics that affect languages, in the same way Gramsci did with his own intellectual and linguistic interests.

In this chapter, therefore, I will focus on the key elements that form Gramsci’s theory of language. These pivotal concepts are language, national language versus local languages/dialects, Esperanto, translation/translatability, language education and grammar. For these reasons, the presence of other related terms, such as hegemony, philosophy (of praxis), common sense, ideology, conception of the world, bloc, intellectuals and language practice, is mainly functional to demonstrate a constant in Gramsci’s theories, i.e., the fact that, in his conceptualisation of society, everything is interconnected, and it is therefore impossible to look at one concept without mentioning the others. Indeed, one of the main lessons that we can learn from Gramsci is how social theory is deeply intermingled with the

1 For a contextualisation of Gramsci’s language theories in relation to Marxist linguistics and the theories of Benedetto Croce – a philosopher Gramsci dedicated many words to - see Ives (2004a, 2004b), Ives and Lacorte (Eds., 2010) and Rosiello (1986).
5.2 A Linguist in Disguise

5.2.1 Language and Society

Gramsci’s discussion of languages appears a veiled but omnipresent matter that unravels throughout his philosophy. According to Buey (2001, pp. 200-207), it is possible to identify three main themes within Gramscian discussions of language. The first one includes specific considerations on language, history, grammar and the formation of a new culture; the second one focuses on language as a means of communication; and the third one connects language with the development of a political theory. This subdivision, albeit mechanical and not suitable for the structure of this chapter, is nevertheless helpful to clarify a crucial premise: for Gramsci, language is never conceived on its own, as a monad, nor is it a purely lexical element (Q.3, §156). When dealing with the world of language(s), Gramsci starts from the essential statement that language equals history, not an arbitrary act (Q.6, §71). Language, therefore, assumes its meaning and can be understood only if analysed in its historical dimension. Using a discussion on the available research on Etruscan as a pretext, Gramsci argues that even a simple lexical examination requires particular attention to the history of the examined language. Linguistic forms need to be analysed “through homogeneous historical phases”, both in terms of phonology and semantics, so as to be able to compare the various phases with one another (Q.3, §156).

This historical perspective is further developed also in relation to metaphors. For Gramsci, language re-elaborates its ideological component through its historical evolution, thus becoming metaphorical by definition:

Il linguaggio attuale è metaforico per rispetto ai significati e al contenuto ideologico che le parole hanno avuto nei precedenti periodi di civiltà. […] Il linguaggio si trasforma col trasformarsi di tutta la civiltà, per l’affiorare di nuove classi alla cultura, per l’egemonia esercitata da una lingua nazionale sulle altre ecc., e precisamente assume metaforicamente la parola delle civiltà e culture precedenti.

[The current language is metaphorical in relation to the meanings and the ideological content that the words had in previous moments of civilisation. […] Language evolves with the development of the whole civilisation, because of the participation of new classes to culture, because of the hegemony exerted by one national language on the others etc. It is in this way that language metaphorically adopts the words of previous civilisations and cultures] (Q.11, §24).
In this perspective, language not only appears to be affected by hegemony and linguistic hierarchies, it also becomes a means through which ideology is expressed. In addition, language assumes its (metaphorical) meaning through the natural historical evolution of its traits. Such a perspective implies that languages cannot be indiscriminately created, nor can they be independently produced through another language, as through parthenogenesis (Q.6, §71). Rather, linguistic innovations come from molecular interferences with external factors and other cultures. Those innovations are organically related to the speakers’ traditions and they substantially depend on them, as they occur in various domains, such as school, mass media, literature and cinema (Q.29, §3).

In order to better embrace the nature of Gramsci’s ideas in this sense, we need to look at a significant passage from Notebook 29, which is entirely dedicated to language and grammar:

Poiché il processo di formazione, di diffusione e di sviluppo di una lingua nazionale unitaria avviene attraverso tutto un complesso di processi molecolari, è utile avere consapevolezza di tutto il processo nel suo complesso, per essere in grado di intervente attivamente in esso col massimo risultato […]. Si otterrà una lingua unitaria, se essa è una necessità, e l'intervento organizzato accellererà i tempi del processo già esistente.

[Since the process of formation, circulation and development of a unitary national language occurs through a series of molecular processes, it is useful to understand the process in its entirety, in order to be able to intervene actively and effectively […]. We will have a unitary language if this is necessary; and an organised intervention will speed up the timeframe of the already existing process.] (Q.29, §3, my emphasis)

From Gramsci’s perspective, molecular linguistic innovations are changes that gradually affect languages, without any abrupt overturning of the linguistic situation of a society. These molecular innovations are effective only if the historical context of the group that speaks that language variety is propitious for such changes to happen. These changes cannot be forced, because “this process can only occur freely and spontaneously”. Linguistic forces occur only from the bottom up” (Gramsci, 1982c, p. 672).

This line of thought can be detected in other passages of Gramsci’s ever-changing written production. If we look at his early writings, for example, we find a similar approach:

Occorrerebbe che la vita generale fosse più fervida, che essa investisse un numero sempre maggiore di cittadini, e così facesse nascere autonomamente il senso del bisogno, della necessità, dell’alfabeto e della lingua.

[It would be necessary for community life to be more active, so as to involve an increasing number of citizens, and to autonomously develop the sense of need, necessity, alphabet and language] (Gramsci, 1982a, p. 17, my emphasis).

In other words, it is the context that must be shaped so that languages can fully represent their speakers’ needs, as the linguistic needs of a society must come from the people, not governments.

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2 On the concept of spontaneity in Gramsci, see chapter six. Here, the word is used in its traditional sense.
This, translated into sociolinguistic terms, does not necessarily imply the invalidity of language policy *per se*. It rather highlights the importance of the context of a language community, and the necessary conditions without which language policy and planning have no meaning. When the group does not demand interventions, or even when it does, but the social, political and cultural features are not in line with the group, then language policy and planning interventions can potentially become meaningless if they focus on the language or the community alone without addressing the related social, political and cultural framework. In this perspective, language policy needs to be focused on the context, so as to ensure that the interventions are measured on what that group or area really needs. In short, we need to move the focus from the individuals to the whole society, at a *national* level. This, however, does not undermine the importance of the people and their role in language matters. In fact, within this perspective, and as we will see in chapter nine, speakers are ultimately responsible for the use of a language and, since they reflect the surrounding socio-political context, they represent a key element in the processes of language use and transmission. As such, they can work both in favour and against a specific language, depending on the type of society they live in. If society is shaped in a way that encourages a certain linguistic practice, then the speakers themselves will naturally ensure that such practice is promoted.

### 5.2.2 Artificial Languages and Esperanto

This holistic approach, in light of our earlier discussion of cosmopolitanism, explains the reasons why Gramsci, especially in his early production, positions himself against the implementation of *Esperanto*, the artificial language invented by Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof (1859-1917) at the end of the nineteenth century. For Gramsci, imposing mechanic and artificial means of communication on the people is counterproductive, it goes against the historical dimension of language, and it fails the purpose of working together with both people and society. This attitude leads towards a “bourgeois cosmopolitanism” rather than a “workers internationalism” (Gramsci, 1968, p. 129). As we have seen in chapter three, for Gramsci, *cosmopolitanism* refers to the world conceived as a unique boundless universe, while *internationalism* relates specifically to a dimension that goes beyond national borders, but still implies its importance (see also Q.3, §46). Cosmopolitanism is thus seen as the heritage of an old and medieval ideological construction: in this way Esperanto, as an auxiliary language, becomes an “illusion” related to the utopia of the “happy colonies” during colonialism:

> Ogni strato nuovo sociale che affiora alla storia, che s’organizza per la buona battaglia immette nella lingua correnti nuove, usi nuovi, e fa scoppiare gli schemi fissi che i grammatici hanno stabilito per comodità occasionale d’insegnamento.

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3 Esperanto was increasingly expanding its domains of use by the time Gramsci started talking about it in 1918 (Edwards, 1994, pp. 43-47; Forster, 1982).
Every new social layer that appears through history, organised for a good struggle, releases into language new trends, new uses, and unsettles the fixed schemes that grammarians have planned for the only sake of a comfortable teaching (Gramsci, 1982c, p. 672).

Another parallel that can be drawn between Esperanto and its deceptive and mythical use as an auxiliary language is the one between English and its current role as a global language that we will discuss in the next chapter. What Gramsci’s position on Esperanto is hinting at, in short, is that, whether artificial or natural, a language needs a living source to refer to, something that brings cultural meaning and expressive richness. An artificial language such as Esperanto, arbitrarily created by specialists and not by the historical need of the people, does not experience this mutual exchange of meaning with its speakers, and becomes therefore detached from historical reality.

In the Notebooks, Gramsci uses the artificiality of Esperanto also to talk about the value of language scripts, and how certain types of script can work as discouraging examples for the use of artificial languages. In particular, he looks at Chinese language and its complex system of ideograms (Q.5, §23). Not only are Chinese ideograms numerous and conveyors of multiple functions, but they also represent a script that is independent from any specific language variety. Chinese script is actually used to express all the languages that are normally spoken by the Chinese elites. Due to these particular features, “the ideogram has an Esperantistic value”, because it represents a “universal writing system (within a specific cultural world)”. As such, ideograms can also prove the disadvantages of the “Esperantistic infatuations”:

Le cosiddette lingue universali convenzionali, in quanto non sono l'espressione storica di condizioni adeguate e necessarie, diventano elemento di stratificazione sociale e fossilizzazione di alcuni strati.

[The so-called conventional universal languages, as they are not the historical expression of appropriate and necessary conditions, become an element of social stratification and fossilisation of certain strata] (Q.5, §23).

As we have also anticipated in chapter three, the concrete effects of this socio-cultural stiffness generated by universal language systems, for Gramsci, are clear:

In queste condizioni non può esistere, in Cina, una cultura popolare di larga diffusione. […] Sparita la scrittura ‘universale’, affioreranno le lingue popolari e quindi nuovi gruppi di intellettuali su questa nuova base. Ciò si romperebbe l'unità attuale di tipo ‘cosmopolitico’ e ci sarebbe un pullulare di forze ‘nazionali’ in senso stretto.

[In these conditions, a widespread popular culture cannot exist in China. […] Once the ‘universal’ writing system is gone, the popular languages, and therefore the new groups of intellectuals, will emerge from this new base. In other words, it will be possible to break the current ‘cosmopolitan’ unity, and to see the real ‘national’ forces proliferating] (Q.5, §23).

In this sense, the project of a unique language, with its lack of historical contingencies and its natural rigidity, becomes a utopia, because in history and in society nothing is fixed, stiffened or
decisive (Gramsci, 1982c, p. 672). In other words, as Gramsci translates from Finck's manual on the languages of the world that we saw in the previous chapter, "the hypothesis of an autonomous language, independent from men, is an illusion" (Gramsci, 2007, p. 286). The fuel for the cultural development of a social group, then, comes from

Nuove curiosità intellettuali e morali [che] pungono lo spirito e lo obbligano a rinnovarsi, a migliorarsi, a mutare le forme linguistiche di espressione, prendendone da lingue straniere, facendo rivivere forme trapassate, cambiando significato e funzioni grammaticali.

[New intellectual and moral curiosities [that] stimulate the spirit and force it to renovate itself, to improve itself, to mutate the linguistic forms of expression, taking them from other languages, revitalising ancient forms, changing their meanings and grammatical functions] (Gramsci, 1982c, pp. 672-673).

5.2.3 National, Local Languages, and Dialects

In this view, the natural progression for every society seems to be the development of a national language to provide its people with a common form of communication. Showing some affinities with the Sapir-Whorf theory of linguistic relativity seen before, Gramsci argues that every language carries in itself the elements of a specific culture and worldview, and if it is not always possible to learn more than one foreign language, it is at least necessary to learn very well the national language (Q.11, §12). Within this context, Italy works as a particularly effective example. We have seen the linguistic situation of the Italian peninsula, and how people generally use(d) the local language variety in their everyday communications. According to Gramsci, this particular situation is generated by the gap existing between the educated classes and the people, which created a separation between the language of the people and the literary language (Q.23, §40). As examined in chapter three, the masses heavily rely on their local language varieties, and their almost exclusive connection to the national language occurs through "an Italianising jargon which is basically a mechanical translation from dialect [sic]". This consistent influence of the local varieties on the national language, however, is not limited only to the lower classes. Gramsci notes that the educated groups use the national language only in certain situations, and the local varieties in other informal and family-related contexts. In this way, Gramsci indirectly describes a situation of substantial diglossia⁴, with a High variety used for official and literary purposes, and a Low variety that is employed in non-official and familiar contexts. In this diglossic context, local languages are the living varieties that reflect reality, while the national language becomes "fossilised and swampy", and maintains its popular dimension only when "shattered in multiple dialectal reflections". Gramsci argues that the real popular languages, in Italy, are the regional varieties, as they are the languages used to convey collective

⁴The "standard with dialects" type of diglossia, which describes the current linguistic situation of Italy, cannot be used to interpret the linguistic conditions of 1920s and 1930s Italy.
feelings and emotions (Q. 23, §39). On the other side of the spectrum, the national language appears as “a cosmopolitan language, a sort of ‘Esperanto’”, because it only allows the expression of limited feelings and partial notions. Therefore, the idea that a literary language provides a greater variety of expressive means is actually “equivocal and ambiguous”, because:

si confonde la ricchezza espressiva ‘possibile’ registrata nel vocabolario o contenuta inerte negli ‘autori’, con la ricchezza individuale, che si può spendere individualmente; ma è quest’ultima la sola ricchezza reale e concreta ed è su di essa che si può misurare il grado di unità linguistica nazionale che è data dalla vivente parlata del popolo, dal grado di nazionalizzazione del patrimonio linguistico.

[the ‘possible’ expressive richness, usually noted down in dictionaries or inactively recorded by the ‘authors’, is mistaken for individual richness, which can be used independently. However, the latter is the only real and concrete richness, and it is thanks to it that we can measure the degree of national linguistic unity, which is determined by the living language variety of the people and by the degree of nationalisation of the linguistic heritage] (Q.23, §39, my emphasis).

In this way, local varieties not only appear as the real languages of the masses, but they also play a pivotal role in determining the strength of the linguistic unity of a society.

Despite this apparently positive conceptualisation of the regional varieties as collective representations of the people, Gramsci sees local languages, which he systematically calls “dialects”, as a limitation to socioeconomic and cultural growth. He argues that local varieties convey only a rigid and provincial vision of the world, unable to create new cultures and to translate other cultures expressed through the main national languages:

Se è vero che ogni linguaggio contiene gli elementi di una concezione del mondo e di una cultura, sarà anche vero che dal linguaggio di ognuno si può giudicare la maggiore o minore complessità della sua concezione del mondo. Chi parla solo il dialetto o comprende la lingua nazionale in gradi diversi, partecipa necessariamente di una intuizione del mondo più o meno ristretta e provinciale, fossilizzata, anacronistica in confronto delle grandi correnti di pensiero che dominano la storia mondiale. I suoi interessi saranno ristretti, più o meno corporativi o economici, non universali. […] Una grande cultura può tradursi nella lingua di un’altra grande cultura, cioè una grande lingua nazionale, storicamente ricca e complessa, può tradurre qualsiasi altra grande cultura, cioè essere une espressione mondiale. Ma un dialetto non può fare la stessa cosa.

[If it is true that every language contains the elements of a culture and a conception of the world, then it is true that from the language of a person we can judge the complexity of their conception of the world. The person who only speaks dialect, or understands the national language only to some extent, is necessarily part of a perception of the world that is relatively limited, provincial, fossilised, and anachronistic compared to the great cultural trends that dominate world history. This person’s interests will necessarily be limited, more or less factional or economic, and not universal. […] A great culture can be translated into the language of another great culture, and a great national language, historically rich and complex, can translate any other great culture, becoming a world-wide means of expression. A dialect, though, cannot do the same thing] (Q.11, §12, Note III, my emphasis).

This incapacity of monolingual local language speakers to fully understand and interpret a more complex reality derives from the fact that, for Gramsci, creating a new culture is not an individual task,
but rather a collective social process (Q.11, §12, Note IV). These significant limitations that Gramsci imposes on the local languages are the reason why Pasolini argues that it is impossible to use Gramsci as an example of (linguistic) emancipation (Pasolini, 1987, pp. 52-53). Pasolini believes, nevertheless, that Gramsci was determined to save those local cultures because they were the epitome of proletarians, farmers and workers. This is a key factor in interpreting Gramsci’s point of view on languages without making it an incoherent paradox. How could Gramsci be against the use of local languages when he dedicated all his life to support those people who expressed themselves almost exclusively in those varieties, and when he himself spoke Sardinian? The answer is quite simple. Gramsci wants to give to the lower classes the means for their socio-political progress. This struggle for hegemony is the pivotal purpose of many Gramscian theoretical discussions, from education to politics. Those means are aimed at placing proletarians and workers in a condition of cultural and economic development, and these tools become effective only from the perspective of a movement towards the international, not the local. Gramsci wants to put people in the condition of realising that learning the national language is more convenient than maintaining a monolingual local communication. At the same time, even though he often refers to it as a ‘dialect’, he considers Sardinian a ‘language’ (Letter to his sister Teresina, 26 March 1927), and we have seen that he was proficient, or at least interested, in many other languages. The strategic factor of Gramsci’s discourse on local languages, therefore, as pointed out also by Carlucci (2005, p. 84; 2013, p. 62), is that local varieties alone are not enough. In this Gramscian perspective, where local and (inter)national dimensions meet, it is necessary to learn more than one language: if the local language alone is not enough, neither is a national language such as Italian alone (Carlucci, 2005, p. 85). Moving from these premises, we can argue that, if Gramsci was focusing exclusively on a monolingual national level, or if he did not accept – at least implicitly – the possibility of language preservation in a multilingual perspective, it would have become meaningless for him to consider translation as a pivotal term in his analysis of culture and society.

5.2.4 Translation and Translatability

The key, therefore, is the opposition between monolingualism and bi/multilingualism, and the idea of translation that bi/multilingualism necessarily conveys. The way in which Gramsci conceives the concepts of translation and translatability, i.e., the possibility of translation, goes beyond the mere transfer of words from one language to the other. Cultural and socio-political factors are equally important in this process and, due to this complex set of influences intervening in translation, translatability cannot be perfect: “which language is exactly translatable into another? Which single word is exactly translatable into another language?” (Q.11, §48). Despite the impossibility of perfection, however, Gramsci considers the concept of translatability as “fundamentally essential”.

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5 Carlucci significantly defines this apparent paradox as a tension between linguistic diversity and unification (Carlucci, 2013, pp. 15-18).
because the real progress of civilisation occurs through a form of translation, conceived as a form of cooperation of all peoples for specific cultural activities in a specific historical moment. As pointed out by Boothman (Liguori & Voza, 2009, sub vocis ‘traducibilità’ and ‘traduzione’), Gramsci operates two main distinctions in his theory of translation and translatability. On the one hand, he articulates the possibility of translation in two moments: a translatability of languages and culture, and a translatability of scientific and philosophical languages. In this context, translatability presupposes that a specific historical moment has a fundamental, unique cultural expression, even though the language that expresses it is different and determined by different national traditions, philosophical systems, and intellectual and practical activities (Q.11, §47). Gramsci exemplifies this idea by explaining that two scientists, coming from the same cultural background, can believe that their “truths” are different because they use a different language. In the same way, two national cultures can be the expressions of similar civilisations, but consider themselves profoundly different or even incompatible because they use different languages to express them. However, in both cases, these “truths” and these civilisations are historically and mutually translatable because of their essentially identical cultural core (Q.11, §48). It is within this idea of translation that the concept of language appears in relation to the philosophy of praxis, as translation becomes “organic and deep” only thanks to the philosophy of praxis, on which we will return in chapter eight (Q.11, §47). Once again, we find another resonance with the aforementioned theory of linguistic relativity as developed by Sapir and Whorf. This parallel is particularly interesting especially when we look at Wright’s comments on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in relation to translation. If, for Sapir, a language was the exclusive means to convey the content of its particular group because it is the product of that unique worldview, then this ultimately implies that translation is impossible (Wright, 2016, p. 274). Conversely, Gramsci argues that translation is the key to convey a truth expressed in one language so that speakers of another variety can understand it.

On the other hand, Gramsci considers translation both as a linguistic act carried out by individuals, and as a collective social process. When he argues that translatability functions both for language and culture and for scientific and philosophical languages, he necessarily assumes that human activities become a form of language when there is the intention of communicating a content and making it understandable. For Gramsci, therefore, the term ‘language’ refers to a collective reality that cannot be reduced to a unique temporal or spatial phenomenon (Q.10.II, §44). Language, then, can be understood both as culture and philosophy in its dimension of common sense, because language as a collective tool implies the creation of the same cultural atmosphere for the whole society. As a result,

il fatto ‘linguaggio’ è in realtà una molteplicità di fatti più o meno organicamente coerenti e coordinati: al limite si può dire che ogni essere parlante ha un proprio linguaggio personale, cioè un proprio modo di parlare e sentire

['Language' as a fact, in reality, is a variety of facts more or less organically coherent and coordinated with one another: to some extent, we can say that every speaking being has its own personal language, i.e., its own way of talking and listening].
In this way, translation becomes a form of cultural convergence, in which the whole society takes part (Liguori & Voza, 2009, sub vocis ‘traducibilità’ and ‘traduzione’). In a letter to his wife Giulia, dated 5 September 1932, Gramsci suggests that his wife become a “qualified translator”. He develops the argument by describing what, in his opinion, makes a good translator. In particular, he states that

un […] traduttore dovrebbe conoscere criticamente due civiltà ed essere in grado di far conoscere l’una all’altra servendosi del linguaggio storicamente determinato di quella civiltà alla quale fornisce il materiale d’informazione

[a […] translator should be critically familiar with two different civilisations. He [sic] should also be able to introduce one civilisation to the other through the historically determined language developed by the culture to which he offers informative material].

Similarly, in the Notebooks, Gramsci argues that a good translator

sa tradurre un mondo culturale nel linguaggio di un altro mondo culturale, perché sa trovare le somiglianze anche dove esse pare non esistano, e sa trovare le differenze anche dove pare ci siano solo somiglianze.

[can translate a cultural world into the language of another cultural world, because he [sic] can find similarities even where there seems to be none, and is able to find differences even when it seems that there are only similarities] (Q.7, §81).

In this perspective, translation is regarded as a socio-political choice that finds its dimension in the process of connection between different world views, and its tools in language as a social microcosm6. This is the reason why Boothman (Liguori & Voza, 2009, sub vocis ‘traducibilità’ and ‘traduzione’) argues that Gramsci anticipates the sociolinguistic approaches to translation when he conceives it as an activity that needs to take social factors into account. If we look at the nature of Gramsci’s translations, we find the concrete exemplification of these threads. Apparently neutral texts, such as the Grimm brothers’ short stories, are culturally and politically transformed by Gramsci according to the historical period he was living in, and adapted to his potential readers from Sardinia. Borghese (1981, pp. 653-655) observes how the word choice often reveals a special attention for Sardinian-influenced Italian words. She also notes other stylistic features that reflect Gramsci’s personal beliefs and education. Two examples will suffice: first, the red flag indicating danger in Grimm’s stories, in Gramsci becomes black, the colour of Mussolini’s militia; second, all the references to supernatural deities are secularised, and when the word ‘God’ occurs, it is always written in lowercase. In this sense, if we draw a parallel between Gramsci and Venuti’s theory of translation seen in chapter two, we can argue that Gramsci’s style of translation leans more towards the foreignising rather than the domesticising dimension.

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6 For the expression ‘language as a social microcosm’ in relation to Gramsci, see Borghese (1981, p. 636).
5.2.5 Education and Grammar

Another context in which languages become important within Gramscian philosophy is in relation to education. In a passage from Notebook 12, §2, Gramsci discusses the “deep crisis” and “progressive degeneration” of the schools of his times. Professional schools, designed to satisfy immediate and practical needs, seem to have prevailed over the educational schools, whose purpose is impartial and less immediate. This second type of school aims at providing disciplinary guidelines to the students, so as to educate them both externally and internally, both culturally and mentally. In this context, a pivotal role is played by dead languages, in particular by Latin and Greek. In a joint experience of grammar, literature and cultural history, studying these two idioms respects an educational principle that is also a humanistic ideal (Q.12, §2). According to Gramsci, Latin is not studied in order to learn Latin. In fact, it is conceived as a psychological and pedagogical tool to teach students how to think, how to study, how to move throughout history, and from the abstract to the concrete. This particular educational process develops year by year in schools, growing together with the students, and it is carried out through the meticulous analysis of every single element of the language. Such a thorough mechanical examination is possible only thanks to the very nature of dead languages, that Gramsci describes as historical bodies treated as corpses and constantly brought back to life:

La lingua è morta, è analizzata come una cosa inerte, come un cadavere sul tavolo anatomico, ma rivive continuamente negli esempi, nelle narrazioni. […] Nessuna lingua viva potrebbe essere studiata come il latino.

[The language is dead, it is analysed as a lifeless thing, as a corpse on the anatomic table, but it revives continuously in examples and narrations. […] No living language could be studied like Latin] (Q.12, §2).

This perspective does not intend to provide Latin and Greek with intrinsic miraculous qualities. It is rather a way to highlight the importance of the wider cultural tradition that lives also outside the schools. Gramsci notes that society and, consequently, schools are always evolving. He suggests then to provide a substitute to Latin, since dead languages are no longer able to serve their purpose in a modern and rapidly changing environment (Manacorda, 1970, p. 333). Once again, everything is a historical product, and everything has to be updated, when the time comes, in order to match the new requirements of society:

In questo continuo sforzo di perfezione, in questo fluire di materia vulcanica liquefatta, bruciano e si annichilano le utopie, gli atti arbitrari, le vane illusioni, come quello dell’attuale lingua unica e l’Esperanto.

[In this continuous struggle for perfection, in this flowing of liquefied volcanic matter, utopias, arbitrary acts and vain illusions burn and annihilate, including the unique languages and Esperanto] (Gramsci, 1982c, p. 675).
Education, language and history are connected also in another milestone in Gramsci’s linguistic theory: grammar. For Gramsci, grammar is not a mere set of rules written in a book and supported by dictionaries. On the contrary, grammar is rather a form of “history”, a “historical document”, because “it is the photo of a specific phase of a collective national language (historically formed and constantly developing)” (Q.29, §1). In Gramsci, we can identify three main types of grammar: immanent/spontaneous, normative, and historical. First, there is an immanent grammar that is intrinsic in language, which means that we use it unaware of its existence: it is, in other words, spontaneous. This is the grammar according to which we naturally speak whenever we use a language. There is also a normative grammar, which works as a set of more or less explicit rules that determine if we can communicate correctly and clearly with others (Q.29, §2). It is a form of ‘reciprocal’ grammar because the interlocutors, with their instant feedback, can guide a speaker towards the most correct use of the language. This type of grammar is not necessarily written, but it is always connected to the linguistic dimension of reality. It also tends to be spread nationwide, as it aims at levelling language according to an “exemplary phase” that should become common language. In these terms, normative grammars can easily be related to the standardisation attempts that language policy and planning often supports as part of the process to nationalise or officialise a language, as the case of Italian discussed earlier clearly shows. As such, there is no doubt that normative grammar is “a political act” (Q.29, §2). For these reasons, normative grammars are generally included in the national school curricula (Q.29, §6). When they are not part of national school curricula, this exclusion does not affect the concrete nature of the language, because “with parents, […] in everyday conversation […], during all our lives we always study grammar”. This exclusion, however, means that the language lacks an organised system of teaching and learning that supports it. This aspect ultimately prevents the large masses of the population from accessing that standardises educational language, which will eventually remain available only for the higher social classes.

Because of its deeply political nature, normative grammars are in opposition with a last type of grammar: historical grammars. Historical grammars embody the idea that it is impossible to ignore the history of a language, and therefore it is necessary to focus on one phase of that language and analyse how this phase is related to the socio-cultural context (Q.29, §2). In its historical dimension, grammar cannot be “national”, as it is always “comparative”: it always assumes its meaning in relation to a larger framework of other languages that influence one another in multiple and uncontrollable ways. The fact that the historical grammar is different from the normative/political one mirrors the distinction existing between history and politics (Q.29, §5). However, even though they are seen as opposing sides, these two types of grammar cannot be conceived without one another. They are different but necessarily inter-dependent:

Poiché lo studio delle lingue come fenomeno culturale è nato da bisogni politici (più o meno consapevoli e consapevolmente espressi), le necessità della grammatica normativa hanno influito sulla grammatica storica e sulle “concezioni legislative” di essa.

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7 On the idea of spontaneity in Gramsci, see chapter six.
[Since the study of languages as a cultural phenomenon was generated from political needs (more or less conscious and consciously expressed), the necessities of normative grammars have influenced historical grammar and its ‘legal conceptions’) (Q.29, §5).

5.3 Conclusion

We have seen how articulated Gramsci’s analysis of language is. He connects history, language, translation and society, cosmopolitanism and Esperanto, artificial and natural languages, and national and local language varieties. In this way, we can appreciate how these themes effectively mirror the discussion that we had in chapters two and three about multilingualism, language hierarchies, national dimension and the key features they entail. We have also been able to demonstrate the socio-political nature of language in Gramsci: if using historical grammars as a framework allows us to understand the historical dimension of a language, normative grammars highlight its political component. Associating these considerations with sociolinguistics seems the natural progression of our discussion. But how can we connect these ideas on language, apparently far from policy planning, to what we are trying to achieve here, i.e., a discussion on how to redefine language hierarchies through the promotion of multilingualism, which ultimately implies the employment of language policy? The answer, as anticipated, can be found in Notebook 29, §3:

Ogni volta che affiora, in un modo o nell’altro, la quistione della lingua, significa che si sta imponendo una serie di altri problemi: la formazione e l’allargamento della classe dirigente, la necessità di stabilire rapporti più intimi e sicuri tra i gruppi dirigenti e la massa popolare-nazionale, cioè di riorganizzare l’egemonia culturale.

[In one way or another, every time we are presented with a language question, it means that a series of other problems needs to be addressed: the formation and the expansion of the ruling class, the necessity of establishing safer and more intimate relations between the ruling groups and the national-popular mass. In other words, it becomes a matter of reorganisation of cultural hegemony] (my emphasis).

In other words, whenever a question around language matures in a society, that language question has to be considered a symptom of something else: something deeper, related to the conditions of the ruling class, the stability of social relations, the type of connection between the dominant groups and the subaltern ones, and so on. When those symptoms appear, it is necessary to reorganise the cultural hegemony, which implies an intervention in society as a whole. It is not possible or sufficient, then, to isolate linguistic matters as solely related to speech or culture. On the contrary, they must be read as a wake-up call for an ongoing process of overarching changes within a certain society. It is in this sense that we must read Gramsci’s conceptualisation of languages as a “historically material” phenomenon that becomes also cultural and philosophical (Ives, 2004b, pp. 34-35). In addition, we must remember that normative grammar always represents a choice, a cultural
orientation (Q.29, §2), and that a language should always be treated as the expression of a
conception of the world (Q.5, §131). Most importantly, we have seen how language hierarchies are
always a historical product, and have to be adjusted in order to match the new requirements of
society. In this perspective, then, it is important to encourage the speakers and the wider Social and
Political Society to form a renovated reality where multilingualism is seen as the norm: and, as we
have seen, with more than seven thousand languages spoken around the world, multilingualism is
clearly the everyday norm for the majority of the world’s population. For these reasons, it is essential
to promote language diversity through all the aspects entangled with languages and society, such as
economy, history, politics, and culture. Each one of these elements, or combination of them, creates a
specific context, which can in turn be associated with a specific concept covered by Gramsci. In the
next chapter, I will start with the most prominent of all Gramscian concepts, hegemony, which relates
to the Socio-Economic Context of languages.
CHAPTER SIX
HEGEMONY, LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM AND EFFECTIVENESS: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

6.1 Introduction

With a *de facto* multilingual reality that surrounds us, then, it is not difficult to find a society in which more than one language variety is present. When this occurs, a question around prestige and language hierarchy naturally arises, and this, in turn, requires a discussion on the hegemony of the languages of the given area. Hegemony, conceived in its Gramscian sense, is the result of a particular convergence of social, economic and cultural factors that affects a group (or a language, in our case), and makes it acknowledged and accepted as prestigious within and by society. In this sense, we can consider hegemony as a form of consciously recognised prestige. Therefore, four key questions require our attention: *What does this question of hegemony consists of? How do we analyse social forces so as to understand the ways in which they affect languages? How do socio-economic power relations impact language use? How can we address language hierarchies so that they promote a multilingualism that is ‘Gramscianly’ hegemonic?*

In order to provide answers to these questions, as outlined in the first chapter, I will first introduce the concept of hegemony according to Gramsci’s conceptualisation. I will develop the connections that this term has with the other key concepts of state, ideology and intellectuals only when functional to our discussion, leaving a more detailed analysis of these terms in the following chapters. In addition, because the concept of hegemony is, among the various notions employed by Gramsci, “probably the most studied and misconceived” (Maltese, 2013, p. 181), I will also enrich this initial general discussion with selected literature that supports the theory of hegemony to its fullest. The supporting literature, as anticipated, includes those authors that provide deeply insightful interpretations of Gramsci’s theories without distorting them or shaping them into something different. Therefore, for example, I will not focus on the famous but controversial interpretation of Gramsci’s hegemony offered by Laclau and Mouffe (1985)¹, since, in that case, Gramsci’s hegemony is replaced by Laclau and Mouffe’s own interpretation of the term.

¹ A lot has been written on Laclau and Mouffe’s interpretation of hegemony: see for example Bocock (1986), Ives (2004b) and Hill (2007). On other interpretations of hegemony, see also Worth (2015).
In the following section, I will cover the sociolinguistic literature that uses hegemony, particularly in its Gramscian sense, in relation to languages and especially language policy. In so doing, I will focus on one of the main topics in the current sociolinguistic debate, i.e., the global role of English, its *hegemonic* but also *imperialistic* influence and its employment as a lingua franca, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, can be related to Gramsci’s discussion of the role of Esperanto as a language of wider communication. However, providing a comprehensive account of the literature in this area will be out of the scope of this chapter. Therefore, I will only focus on those authors, such as Ives, Sonntag and Holborow, who explicitly engage with Gramsci’s conceptualisation of the term to discuss the hegemony of English. Finally, in sections four and five, I will relate (linguistic) hegemony to other relevant theories in the literature: respectively, Phillipson’s linguistic imperialism, and the role of effectiveness and fairness in economic linguistics (or language economy) 2, as developed by Gazzola and Grin. A third fundamental element identified by Gazzola and Grin that does not find space in this chapter is Cost. The reasons behind this choice are twofold. The first one is that cost, as it is conceived by these authors, has strictly economic and financial implications that will exceed the scope of this thesis. In addition, cost does not seem in line with Gramsci’s conceptualisation of hegemony. Even though the connections between hegemony and economics are undoubtedly present, Gramsci’s hegemony does not refer to something strictly *economic* that can be *quantified* or *measured*. Effectiveness and Fairness alone, by still implying matters of cost, but more in subtext, show the significant socio-economic implications related to hegemony, and how these factors ultimately influence language hierarchies, without involving financial calculations. This chapter will finally consider the case of the Mapuche of Chile, in order to show that hegemony can assume various forms, and can indeed be employed as a theoretical framework far beyond the global role of English.

### 6.2 Hegemony

Explaining Gramsci’s hegemony is not a straightforward process of providing a definition of a term. Hegemony, similarly to what we will see for ideology in chapter eight, seems to be best described in relation to or in opposition with other terms. This explains why I have introduced hegemony as a form of ‘recognised prestige’. Lo Piparo (1979, 1987) argues that the original source for Gramsci’s ideas on hegemony comes directly from Gramsci’s university formation in philology and linguistics, and that, therefore, prestige is the main terminological referent. Lo Piparo’s thesis, on the one hand, tends to take the linguistic component of hegemony to the extreme, and, on the other, it detaches Gramsci’s hegemony from its Marxist roots (Ives, 2004a, pp. 18-19): as such, this position has been criticised by other commentators (see for example De Mauro, 2010; Rosiello, 1986). I agree

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2 For a complete bibliography on this area of study, see Gazzola, Grin and Wickström (2015).
with Ives (2004a, p. 18) when he points out that the focus, in this case, should not be “to locate the sole, or even the most important, source of Gramsci’s hegemony at the expense of other influences”, but rather the acknowledgment of the complexity of the term itself. What is undeniable, and already demonstrated (Ives, 2004a; 2004b, Carlucci, 2013), is the relevance that linguistics had in the development of Gramsci’s thinking together with other political and cultural references. It is in this sense that I believe that, when hegemony is applied to the world of languages, the concept of prestige becomes a useful tool to clarify its meaning. As we have anticipated, prestige is a key concept in sociolinguistics, and a term that Gramsci himself uses in relation to and in substitution of hegemony.

Within the linguistic framework, in the previous chapter we have seen that hegemony appears in the *Course Notes on Glottology* (Dispense di Glottologia) (Gramsci, 1912, 2016). If we look at these *Notes*, we can appreciate that hegemony can be effectively explained in connection with other associated terms, with which Gramsci himself came in contact during his university years. In this early example of the concept, in particular, hegemony is associated or substituted by several other terms used with the same meaning that hegemony will assume in the *Prison Notebooks*:

_Eppure [Roma] in Italia distrusse le antiche nazionalità e le antiche lingue e impose la propria egemonia in tutte le attività dello spirito._

>[And yet, in Italy, [Rome] destroyed the ancient nationalities and the ancient languages and imposed its own hegemony in all the activities of the spirit] (Gramsci, 1912, p. 47, my emphasis).

Interestingly, not only does Rome return as an example of hegemony, but also, more generally, we find what we can consider synonyms of hegemony used to describe the particular relation of power exerted by certain (language) groups over others. These terms are: _influence_ (Section 1, p.80; section 2, p.46), _common conscience_ (Section 2, p. 19), _special force_ (Section 2, p. 48), _particular attraction_ (Section 2, p. 48), _superiority_ (Section 2, p. 48), _assimilating power_ (Section 2, p. 52), _supremacy but not direct dominance_ (Section 2, pp. 22, 62). It is also interesting to note that these terms are almost entirely detectable in the second section of the *Notes* dedicated to the Balkans, where the intersection between social, political, cultural and linguistic factors was (and still is) a huge component of the conflicts in the region.

This relation between hegemony and language persists also in the *Prison Notebooks*. In the previous chapter we have seen that, in Notebook 11, §24, Gramsci writes that “language evolves with the evolution of the whole civilisation, when new classes emerge into culture, when hegemony is exerted by one language on the others”. Gramsci finds the exemplification of how hegemony works in a linguistic context in the Italian _Questione della Lingua* (the Language Question), already discussed

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3 For the different pathways detectable both in Gramsci’s work and in his cultural and political formation, see Liguori (2006), Cospito (2016) and especially Carlucci (2013) for the implications of these influences on Gramsci’s interests in languages.

4 The two sections of the *Course Notes*, in the manuscript, are numbered separately.

5 The Balkan Wars occurred in the years 1912-1913, which are also the years when Gramsci wrote the *Course Notes*. 
in chapters three and four. The fact that Florentine became a point of reference for the literary production of the Italian peninsula up to the sixteenth century is justified by the cultural, commercial and financial hegemony of the city of Florence. This hegemonic imprint determined a “unique linguistic development from below, from the common people up to the cultured groups, reinforced by the great Florentine and Tuscan writers” (Q.23, §40). Once Florence lost its hegemony in the seventeenth century, the language increasingly became an exclusive tool of a closed elite, who progressively lost contact with the living historical varieties. When Manzoni suggested a Florentine-based idiom as a national language, that regional language was by that time not even spoken outside Tuscany or in the middle-lower strata of society. The critique that the Sardinian philosopher expresses to Manzoni’s approach is based on the fact that, for Gramsci, it was not possible to force a Florentine hegemony through state tools. In line with what Ascoli said at the time, Gramsci believed that cultural hegemonies cannot be determined by decree, without a “deeper and more necessary national function” (Q.23, §40). In other terms, once again, hegemony is a matter of recognised prestige.

What is hegemony, then? On a general basis, for Gramsci, hegemony refers to the status of predominance\(^6\) of a social class, as acknowledged by others. In particular, he describes hegemony as “a combination of force and consensus in equilibrium” (Q.13, §37). In spite of what is often believed, especially in the English-speaking literature\(^7\) (see for example Apple, 2012; Srivastava & Bhattacharya, 2012), the term does not have a negative connotation \textit{per se}. In fact, it conveys ideas of moral and intellectual guidance, based on the consensus of the masses and in opposition to brutal domination. Hegemony, therefore, does not coincide either with charisma, or with coercion. \textit{Charisma} heavily relies on the power of attraction of one individual who wants to maintain an exclusive relationship with the masses, whatever the cost (Q.6, §97). That is to say, the concept brings a nebula of incoherent ideas, which needs an infallible interpreter able to explain them (Q.2, §75). Charismatic direction, therefore, is a form of demagogy that generates “the immediate suggestion of a ‘hero’” (Q.7, §12), but only creates unreliable connections because they depend on “phantasmagorical choreographies” (Q.6, §97). This type of ruling force is also strictly related to the deep enthusiasm of its interpreter, and its political dynamism varies according to the intensity of such ephemeral feeling (Q.2, §75). This relative instability implies that charisma often offers a very unstable basis for the establishment of political power. On the other hand, hegemony is also in conflict with exclusive \textit{coercive dominance}. Dictatorship, in fact, is a condition that could cause the crisis of the hegemony of the ruling class (Q.13, §23). Whenever a dominant group imposes its consensus over the masses, rather than offering them moral and political guidance, a crisis of hegemony occurs. Hegemony, then, becomes the most concrete and realistic meaning of democracy (Q.8, §191). Indeed, within the hegemonic system, democracy does exist between the ruling classes and the ruled groups, to the extent that the development of economy and law allows the molecular passage between the two parts. Even more, hegemony presupposes that the ruling group become aware of the needs of the

\(^6\) The word ‘predominance’ is used also by Raymond Williams (2011), the British philosopher and renowned commentator of Gramsci, in one of his definitions of hegemony. For another key discussion of the definition of Gramsci’s hegemony, see Femia (1981), who describes hegemony as “ideological ascendancy”.

\(^7\) As noted by James Martin, within the English-speaking tradition, Gramscian hegemony has been regularly employed as the “theory of ideological domination” (Martin, 1998, p. 114).
other social groups, so that a compromise in equilibrium is reached (Q.13, §18). Therefore, hegemony should be the result of the balanced combination of authority and consensus, where the first one, at least superficially, depends on the second (Q.13, §37). Gramsci reiterates that, for a group, it is necessary to have a certain degree of hegemonic influence from the start in order to effectively succeed in directing others (Q.19, §24). Consequently, hegemony, far from being a solely destructive force, as sometimes constructed, becomes a sort of condicio sine qua non for the acquisition of power.

For these reasons, hegemony is essential within the state. In this context, it represents the stage of state development characterised by the active consensus towards the dominant group (Q.11, §53). Even more, as we will see in the next chapter, what keeps the state together is the combination of hegemony and dictatorship (Q.6, §155), to the extent that, when Civil Society and Political Society are separated from each other, a new issue around hegemony appears, because the historical basis of the state has changed (Q.7, §28). If we consider that, as we will see in the next chapter, economy is the basic structure of society, then hegemony, in its state dimension, is not only ethical-political, but also economic, because it is a necessary part of the dominant group’s activity (Q.13, §18). The degree and the intensity of hegemony, therefore, determines the “element of ‘internal tranquillity’, which in turn influences the degree of power owned by the state (Q.13, §15). If we consider that the hegemonic apparatus of a state works as the base for the very existence of the state itself, conceived as a governing-coercive force (Q.6, §136), then we can foresee the meaning of Gramsci’s famous equation, that we will discuss in the next chapter: “State = Political Society + Civil Society, i.e., hegemony armoured with coercion” (Q.6, §88).

In light of what we have seen so far, can we consider hegemony a form of spontaneous consensus? The answer needs some clarification. If we use ‘spontaneous’ in its current English meaning, the answer is positive, but if we look at the meaning that Gramsci gives to the term, the situation changes significantly. It is true that Gramsci wrote that

[il] consenso ‘spontaneo’ […] nasce “storicamente” dal prestigio (e quindi dalla fiducia) derivante al gruppo dominante

[the ‘spontaneous’ consensus of the masses derives, ‘historically’, from the prestige (and therefore the trust) generated by the role of the dominant class] (Q.12, §1, my emphasis).

In this passage, the resemblance of the term ‘prestige’, seen before, with hegemony appears evident. We have also seen, in chapter five, that spontaneous is a type of grammar, that we naturally use whenever we speak, unaware of its existence. Spontaneity in Gramsci, however, is a term that needs to be explained, as it is another word that Gramsci takes from the common language and enriches with new meanings (Showstack Sassoon, 2010 (1990), pp. 244-245). The term ‘spontaneous’ is opposed to arbitrary and mechanical phenomena or other forms of forced educational processes (Q.12, §2). It refers to those (re)actions that are developed through the
everyday experience of the masses guided by common sense\(^8\), without the educational direction of the ruling classes (Q.3, §48). The term specifically characterises the subaltern\(^9\) groups, as they have not yet developed the conscience of their role as a social group in history: as such, they generally lack conscious guidance. Conscious guidance can be considered a synonym of discipline and political education of the masses. Its connection with spontaneity is crucial, to the point that spontaneity and conscious guidance, together, form "the real political action of the subaltern classes" (Q.3, §48).

Conscious guidance, as a form of direction, is the highest form of legislative intervention that can be achieved by a society, at least ideally, as it implies that the masses fully embody these directions and act accordingly so as to pursue them (Q.14, §13). When Gramsci wonders whether sincerity/spontaneity is always a quality or not, he ultimately argues that it is the conscious guidance that ensures the positive influence of spontaneity (Q.14, §61). Even more, ‘spontaneous’ is the term that Gramsci uses to describe the actions of a social group that concretely works for the development of political, economic and social forces (Q.19, §24). When the dominant group no longer has a function in society, ‘the ideological bloc\(^10\) tends to crumble, and ‘spontaneity’ is replaced by ‘constriction’”. Therefore, hegemony can be described as a form of spontaneous consensus only if we consider ‘spontaneous’ as a natural reaction dictated by a previously established conscious guidance.

Consequently, a key point for understanding Gramsci’s hegemony is to appreciate its connections with ideology. In particular, political ideologies work as “practical instrument[s] of social dominance and hegemony” (Q.10.I, §10). If we consider that a social group can achieve political and cultural hegemony thanks to its political and ideological organisation, then ideology ultimately allows for the very existence of hegemony (Q.6, §85, §168). The importance of this aspect is developed in another key passage of the Notebooks (Q.10.II, §41.XII) that we will discuss more in depth in chapter eight. In this section, Gramsci points out that when ideologies become real historical facts, they work as instruments of dominance, and they should be interpreted as such “in order to make the ruled intellectually independent from the rulers, and to destroy one hegemony to make a new one”. For these reasons, analysing the hegemony of a social group necessarily implies the study of the ideologies behind it, because

\[\text{Chiunque abbia più importanza dal punto di vista dell’egemonia, [lavora] come ordinatore dell’ideologia che dà il cemento più intimo alla società civile e quindi allo Stato.}\]

[Who[ever] has the greatest importance in terms of hegemony, [works] as the organiser of the ideology that gives the most intimate cement to Civil Society, and therefore to the State] (Q.10.II, §41.IV).

The best way to analyse ideologies in this sense is to look at the intellectual groups, because knowing their ideologies leads to a better understanding of the “organisation of the moral and cultural hegemony” aimed at destroying or absorbing it (Q.7, §71).

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\(^8\) For a detailed discussion on the concept of common sense, and the following ideology, see chapter eight.

\(^9\) On the concept of subalternity, see chapter nine.

\(^10\) On the concept of (historical) bloc, see chapters eight and nine.
This thread that connects hegemony, ideology and intellectuals eventually finds its way to culture and education. While discussing the pedagogical ideas of the moderates in Italy, Gramsci argues that the “hegemony of an executive centre on the intellectuals” follows two main directions. On the one hand, it leads to a general conception of life able to offer “intellectual dignity” in order to overcome the old dominating and coercive ideologies; on the other hand, it looks at an educational programme able to offer an original pedagogical activity (Q.19, §27). In this sense, hegemony is also described as a way of “endorsing the cultural factor, the cultural activity, the necessary cultural frontline as opposed to purely economic and political ones” (Q.10.I, §7). The intellectual direction is thus a function of hegemony (Q.8, §22), especially because the intellectuals have the potential to influence and control the cultural system of a country (Q.3, §118). For example, the choice of a national language, as we have seen, is always a symptom of an ongoing process of reorganisation of cultural hegemony (Q.29, §3). Gramsci argues that, in order to fully understand the importance of a language question in the creation of a common cultural frame, it is important to connect it with pedagogical practice (Q.10.II, §44). In this sense, intellectual direction has a hegemonic function (Q.8, §22), because the struggle for the intellectual leadership is the struggle for the hegemony in the education of the masses, aimed at the development of a collective culture (Q.7, §104). Gramsci suggests that pedagogical connections can occur in the entire society, and that every social interaction is fundamentally an exchange of experiences and traditions. In the same way, the teacher/pupil relationship is made of reciprocal relations, where the teacher is always a pupil and vice versa:

Ogni rapporto di ‘egemonia’ è necessariamente un rapporto pedagogico e si verifica non solo nell’interno di una nazione, tra le diverse forze che la compongono, ma nell’intero campo internazionale e mondiale, tra complessi di civiltà nazionali e continentali

[every ‘hegemonic’ relation is necessarily a pedagogic relation, and it occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces that constitute it, but also at an international and world-wide dimension, between the complex systems of national and continental cultures] (Q.10.II, §44).

Gramsci also believes that cultural transformations are naturally complex, and occur slowly because they follow an intense formative work. Even more, it is precisely this educational activity that sets the basis for any subsequent elaboration of a critical conscience (Q.24, §3). It would indeed be a mistake not to realise that this connection between hegemony and pedagogy affects the entire social system, at all its levels (Maltese, 2008, p. 111). Broccoli (1972, p. 95), in particular, argues that, in Gramsci, the “problem of hegemony” appears as a methodological framework, where dominated and dominating forces enter in conflict with one another, and then they intertwine together in a context of reciprocal assimilation, which necessarily becomes a pedagogical relation. Benedetto Fontana, for example, in order to clarify this point, suggests another equation “educational relation = hegemonic relation = political relation”, where action and thought are unified in a unique combination of knowledge and social reality, and where the intellectual and moral components of hegemony are put in relation with the political one (1993, p. 108). This equation assumes full meaning if we conceive hegemony as the convergence of politics, philosophy and history in a particular chronological and
spatial context, where the leadership of the ruling class is developed through consent and persuasion (1993, p. 140).

Because of its complex conceptualisation, Gramsci’s hegemony can be helpfully deconstructed and analysed via its components. Peter D. Thomas (2013), for example, suggests a scheme\(^{11}\) that splits the Gramscian concept into four levels. The first one, ***hegemony as a social and political leadership***, implies both the leadership that preserves a gap between the social forces, and the one that, on the contrary, allows the socio-political mobility of the masses. Secondly, ***hegemony as a political project*** entails not strict political agendas, but rather a complex conjuncture of political, economic, social and cultural projects. The third level is the ***hegemonic apparatus***, which embodies the realization of concrete institutions and organisations through forces developed both from ‘above’ and ‘below’. According to Buci-Glucksman (1980, pp. 20, 48, 63), this is an underexplored feature of hegemony, even though it is precisely this conceptualisation of the term that gives hegemony a greater precision, because it pivots on educational, cultural and public forces. The fourth level identified by Thomas, the ***hegemony of the workers’ movement***, relates to the role of work, which Gramsci valued as a form of education and social relation. In view of this analysing process we can also read Raymond Williams’s words, when he observed:

> We have to emphasise that hegemony is not singular; indeed that its own internal structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended; and by the same token, that they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified (Williams, 1980, p. 38).

Without adequate care, then, hegemony may be difficult to understand in its fullest. Deb J. Hill, for example, describes Gramsci’s hegemony as “‘slippery’, because it is a concept calculated to restore to vision the totality\(^{12}\) within which all particulars exist internal to it” (Hill, 2007, p. 46). In this way, hegemony becomes a two-folded notion that both encourages the formation of a dialectical Weltanschauung and allows interventions aimed at counteracting the ruling socio-political forces, in that continuous process of ideological transformation that we will see in chapter seven. In line with Gramsci’s view, Hill argues that hegemony must therefore be understood also as the way in which we can better conceive democracy. It is hegemony, in her view, that provides socio-political mobility to the subaltern groups, and connects the various elements within society. Similarly, one of the most notable Italian commentators of Gramsci, Giuseppe Vacca, points out that, without hegemony, there cannot be a state. He highlights that it is hegemony that makes a class aware “of its historical goals by going beyond its narrow economic-corporative interest” (Vacca, 1982, p. 58). Even more, in order for a class to become a ruling group, developing “a complete culture” and “hegemonic apparatuses” becomes “essential”.

Hegemony, therefore, appears to have multiple relations with all levels of society. Maltese argues that hegemony is actually “omnipresent” in every aspect of social life (2013, p. 184). The nature of this

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\(^{11}\) This is not the only attempt in this sense: see for example Joseph Femia (1981, pp. 46-47).

\(^{12}\) For the concept of totality in relation to hegemony, see Raymond Williams (1980).
ubiquity can be interpreted in different ways. First, hegemony is *chronological*, since, as noted by Norberto Bobbio, it naturally evolves in time (1990, p. 60). In the pre-prison writings, Gramsci uses hegemony mainly in the classic sense of political leadership. In the prison writings, however, the term assumes *also* the meaning of cultural leadership, which complete – and does not exclude – the other. Following another interpretation, hegemony’s ubiquity is also *spatial*. Peter D. Thomas, in this sense, specifies that Gramsci expanded the idea of hegemony so that it becomes inclusive of all social forces, from bourgeoisie to the proletariat (2009a, p. 160). Finally, Gramsci’s theoretical and methodological conceptualisation of hegemony is *bipolar* (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, p. 58), because there cannot be a theory of hegemony that does not imply, at some point, a (potential) crisis of hegemony.

The fact that hegemony expands its applicability to both space and time emphasises its relevance in socio-political terms. While arguing that it is Gramsci’s conceptualisation of the State that allows the full appreciation of the whole set of concepts of the *Prison Notebooks*, Showstack-Sassoon (1980, pp. 110-111) outlines the deep interconnections existing between this theory of the State and hegemony, especially through the concept of historical bloc, that we will discuss in chapters eight and nine. In particular, she argues that understanding hegemony means understanding the State, but understanding the State from a Gramscian perspective means to transform what is normally considered only political into something more. In this sense, Hobsbawn’s views on hegemony appear the best way to summarise the implications of this concept. The great Marxist historian points out that “the struggle for hegemony […] remains crucial, all the more so because the political struggle […] is not concluded with the mere […] seizure of power” (1974, p. 11). This happens because “power, alone, even revolutionary power, cannot replace [hegemony]” (1982, p. 30). Hegemony, then, with its relevance over space and time, takes the analysis of social influences to new and more complex levels of discussion.

How can we summarise hegemony, then? Hegemony is prestige given with conscious spontaneity, and it is a form of intellectual and moral guidance united with economic and political leadership. Even if it is often paired with ideas of dominance, it is not violent or brutal, and in fact it pivots on the consensus of society. It is structured through ideology, and in turn it gives structure to the State, with the help of the intellectuals. Through this peculiar nature, hegemony allows the appreciation of how the various social forces work within society: even more, the hegemonic relations are actually indicative of how these social forces are connected to one another. Therefore, the struggle for hegemony and the evolution of the ideological base behind it engage with society in an educational way, because challenging the existing hegemony is a form of historical development. Its multifaceted conceptualisation thus makes hegemony a rather adaptable idea that can be employed to better understand various contexts. In particular, the chronological and spatial applications of hegemony allow the analysis of how and by whom hegemony itself is exerted in a society. This approach offers the possibility of significant insight on language matters, especially in relation to the (re)definition of language hierarchies, since, as we have seen, it is prestige, i.e., hegemony, that
determines the hierarchical value of languages. This is particularly true in relation to multilingualism, as the various languages may be, more or less explicitly, trying to affirm or maintain their hegemony.

6.3 Hegemony in Language Policy: the Global Role of English

Understanding the applicability of the concept of hegemony in sociolinguistics is a key aspect for an effective use of the term in language policy research. It should appear clear, by now, that the use of this concept in relation to languages is supported in the first instance by Gramsci’s life experiences and his interests in languages, as we have seen in the previous chapters. Secondly, we have seen that hegemony can be usefully associated with the concept of prestige, which is a key concept in sociolinguistics. Even more, according to Carlucci (2013, p. 17), it is precisely Gramsci’s concept of hegemony that indicates “that there can – and probably will – be diversity in a culturally and linguistically unified world”. Hegemony and its sociolinguistic potential has consequently been explored in sociolinguistic literature, especially in relation to the current global rise and role of English, the clearest example of a prestigious language in a hierarchical formation since Latin. The contributions by Macedo (2003), Holborow (1999, 2012), Sonntag (2003, 2008, 2009), and Ives (2004b, 2006, 2009a, 2010), to name but a few, confirm the high efficiency of the connection between hegemony and English. But why is this connection so productive?

Despite their individual peculiarities, all these authors seem to agree on at least three important points. First, reading English as a hegemonic language implies a clear hierarchy, where a certain degree of subalternity of the other languages can effectively explain the choices of the speakers towards an increased use of English. In other words, hegemony allows for an outline of the language hierarchies generated by English. Second, describing the role of English through Gramsci’s notion of hegemony offers multiple layers of interpretation, an effect of the very complexity of the concept itself. Third, and consequently, hegemony enhances the versatility of the phenomenon itself, as “a Gramscian analysis calls for detailed, situated, historical and political analyses” (Sonntag, 2008, p. 9). In this sense Ives (2010, p. 517) argues that “[Gramsci’s] theorisation of language politics embodies the type of interdisciplinarity required to understand the importance of ‘global English’. The discussion, therefore, should pivot on the role of English and its socio-political implications. Holborow (1999) legitimises this approach, using Gramsci’s statement that language questions are “a matter of reorganisation of cultural hegemony” (Q.29, §3). In particular, she believes that “the controversies surrounding Standard English […] betoken the ideological unease in periods of political upheaval observed so accurately by Gramsci” (1999, p. 149). Along similar lines, Ives (2006, p. 136) argues that “the very political nature of ‘global English’ is directly connected to broader changes in global politics”. For him, this is “part of a larger project of constructing a Gramscian approach to language that does not bifurcate language, communication or symbolic action from labour” (Ives, 2005, p. 456).
In other words, there is no opposition between the ‘linguistic’ and the ‘non-linguistic’ spheres. Language can be found in many different types of human activities, as too does hegemony (Ives, 1997, p. 92; 2009b, p. 367).

But is this approach in line with Gramsci’s own ideas on languages? Ives argues that, undoubtedly, “the historical context concerning language use worldwide has changed dramatically since Gramsci raised these issues” (2010, p. 524). Therefore, at first glance, Gramsci’s support for a national language for Italy, for example, could appear in contrast with a problematisation of the hegemonic role of English, which, as such, naturally implies a certain degree of consensus from the speakers (Ives, 2009a, p. 663, but see also below). Ives, however, points out that the global influence of English “prevents subaltern social group consciousness from developing and creating critical and counter-hegemonic responses”: this, in fact, legitimises the use of hegemony to analyse English and its role as lingua franca. Despite the underlying potential of hegemony in this direction, however, Ives notes that

these debates around ‘global English’ and related ones around minority language rights have never been related to Gramsci’s discussions of language, education, a national language in Italy, or his specific integration of language politics within his better known cultural and political theory (2009a, p. 663).

Ives argues that using hegemony as a framework to analyse this phenomenon brings two inevitable implications (Ives, 2009a). First, because of the very nature of Gramscian hegemony, viewing ‘global English’ from this angle determines that the language shift towards English should be read according to the presence/absence of speakers’ consent. Second, the agency of the masses becomes a crucial part of the process, because language policy is a decision that ultimately relies on what people want to do: hegemony equals established consensus.

The role of consensus, though, needs to be problematised. We have seen the connections between hegemony, spontaneity and conscious guidance. In light of this discussion, Ives argues that we can detect

a dichotomy between ‘free’ and ‘spontaneous’ grammar that is separate from power relations, and those ‘normative’ grammars that are the vehicle for coercion and dominant ideologies and cultures being imposed on subaltern or oppressed classes (2006, p. 674).

As such, spontaneity does not equal aware consensus, but rather a lack of conscious guidance that the subaltern group experiences in relation to a dominant power. Therefore, as noted by Sonntag (2003, p. 25), language minorities tend to see the assimilation to the dominant idiom as an expected and unavoidable outcome. In this sense, looking at Gramsci’s hegemony proves to be an effective practice because it can “deconstruct what is accepted as inevitable, natural and progressive”

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13 Even though the idea is definitely present in Gramsci’s theories, Gramsci does not talk about counter-hegemony per se. The introduction of this term comes from Raymond Williams (1977).

14 For a detailed discussion of the positions in favour of English, in light of Gramsci’s hegemony, see Ives (2006).
If we compare Sonntag’s view to other antagonising approaches, such as the neoliberal and positivistic theories explored respectively by Holborow (2015) and Macedo (2003), we notice that they tend to neglect the social side effects of asymmetric power relations and the impact of indirect dominant ideologies on society: neoliberalism pivots on the imposition of state power as to respond to the logic of the market, while positivistic theories focus too much on the objectivity and the rigour of the methodologies, rather than on their ideological situatedness. In this sense, Sonntag argues that Gramscian analysis does a much better job of taking into account the historical contingencies operating in both the dominant and minority societies that impinge on the freedom of choice so fundamental to liberals (Sonntag, 2008, p. 4).

Macedo (2003, p. 17), for his part, defines the focus on the neutrality of language as an obsession over a condition that is falsely pursued and that often reveals hidden inequalities. Consensus, in short, is a myth, as it is often subconscious, or the result of beliefs coaxed into the minority language communities (see also Corfield, 1991, p. 23). Wiley (1995), along similar lines, distinguishes between explicit language planning and implicit language planning. The first one includes official language policies, while the second one involves tacit or hidden institutionalised linguistic practices. When he distinguishes between explicit or institutionalised language planning and implicit language planning, he implies that accidental policies may be considered “dubious”. Wiley, therefore, talks about linguistic hegemony by pointing out that implicit policies can also become hegemonic whenever dominant groups exercise their influence through either coercion or consent:

Linguistic hegemony is achieved when dominant groups create a consensus by convincing others to accept their language norm and usage as standards or paradigmatic. Hegemony is ensured when they can convince those who fail to meet those standards to view their failure as being the result of the inadequacy of their own language (1995, p. 113).

Hegemony, then, becomes a useful tool to analyse the power relations between dominant and minority languages. Suarez (2002, p. 514), for example, considers linguistic hegemony a legitimating force: it presents the dominant language as an appealing instrument, while deceptively and dangerously neutralising the political and social implications of its influence. Linguistic hegemony, in this perspective, also carries a paradox. It can occur only when language minorities are already playing a subordinate role and the dominant language has already become the variety most commonly used. As we have seen in chapter two for the role of English in academia, the key point lies precisely in the fact that the minority groups have to learn the dominant language in order to be able to contrast their subordination:

The paradox, then, of linguistic hegemony is that one must ‘buy into it’, or acquiesce on some level in order to resist it. Resistance is not through monolingualism in the minority

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15 On the role of explicit/implicit language policies, see also chapter nine.
language, but rather through bilingualism. Proficiency in both languages is the successful strategy of resistance (Suarez, 2002, p. 515).

Linguistic hegemony is presented as an important point of reference also by Tollefson and his Historical Structural Approach, on which we will return in the next chapter. He defines the concept as the “successful production and reproduction of ideology”, which can be achieved both through spontaneous consent and coercive state power (Tollefson, 1991, p. 12). Hegemony can describe a situation where it becomes ‘natural’ to use a certain language as an established communication tool to the detriment of other varieties. Tollefson, however, specifies that

The survival of minority languages is not simply a function of the internal vitality of minority groups, but rather the strength of the dominant group and the historical consequences of hegemony (Tollefson, 1991, p. 75).

It does not come as a surprise that hegemony plays a key role in the work environment. According to Tollefson, this is where dominant languages more naturally overcome minority languages. Employing the most commonly used language appears natural, because being proficient in that language can determine whether a person can have access to a job or not. In this context, hegemony appears in co-occurrence with ideology as a tool for (linguistic) legitimation:

Language policy at work is perhaps the most important means for establishing state hegemony. Excluding the workplace from debates over language rights means that minority groups cannot legitimise the use of their languages at work (Tollefson, 1991, p. 208).

It is also interesting to note a parallel between Tollefson and Gramsci. Tollefson employs Yugoslavia as one of his case studies in relation to hegemony. Similarly, as we have seen, (linguistic) hegemony is mentioned, especially in relation to the Balkans, in the Course Notes on Glottology. Tollefson, in particular, uses the establishment of Serbian hegemony as evidence to prove that “power is the foundation for winning and sustaining language rights” (Tollefson, 1991, p. 194). However, he references Gramsci in relation to hegemony only in works published after Planning language, planning inequality (1991). In Tollefson (2006, p. 47), for example, he states that “Gramsci defines hegemonic practices as institutional practices that ensure that power remains in the hands of the few”. This covers the concept with an oligarchic and definitive layer that in fact does not belong to Gramsci, but rather to more recent misconceived interpretations of him, such as Laclau and Mouffe (1985), as noted earlier.
6.4 Linguistic Imperialism

If we keep in mind these negative connotations of hegemony, probably the most immediate connection between hegemony and the role of English is the notion of linguistic imperialism. One of the declared “theoretical foundations” of Robert Phillipson’s *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992) is, after all, hegemony (Ives, 2006, 2009a). Despite the great importance that Phillipson grants to the concept, we cannot describe his mind-set as ‘Gramscian’, since his conceptualisation of hegemony swings towards coercive dominance, which is one of the most popular (mis)interpretations of the term. Phillipson summarises hegemony as the set of “dominant ideas that we take for granted”. He acknowledges Gramsci as the main source for the term (1992, p. 72), but he relies mostly on Raymond Williams’ secondary interpretation, and on Williams’ view of hegemony as a highly complex term. Using Williams’ words, Phillipson points out that hegemony indicates “the relations of domination and subordination” (1992, p. 73). Despite this inclusion of both dominant and subordinate groups, Sonntag criticises Phillipson because he actually omits a critical discussion over the reactions of those who are subjected to imperialistic power (Sonntag, 2003, p. 5).

Phillipson, however, further expands his discussion by focusing specifically on English linguistic hegemony. He defines it as

The explicit and implicit values, beliefs, purposes, and activities which characterise the ELT [English Language Teaching] profession and which contribute to the maintenance of English as a dominant language (Phillipson, 1992, p. 73).

Hegemony, in this context, is compared to legitimation and ideology, similarly to what we have seen in Tollefson’s approach. Phillipson specifies that these concepts are connected to one another, but, ultimately, hegemony appears the most appropriate one to describe the role of English. Ideology seems to be too focused on the agent: for Phillipson, it implies a subject who manipulates and who needs to be identified. Legitimation, on the other hand, plays the role of being a remedy introduced *a posteriori* to provide justification for a certain policy. Hegemony, linked to all of them, provides for Phillipson the best description of the nature of English as a global language.

The reason why hegemony is a useful term for Phillipson to describe the situation of English, in particular, resides in Williams’ conceptualisation of its complexity. Phillipson argues that ELT as an activity is the result of a specific and complex conjunction of economic and institutional interests together with intellectual and professional practices accepted by the ELT community. The fact that this conjunction needs to be legitimated does not imply that hegemony necessitates overtly manipulative propaganda. On the contrary, hegemony requires a system of theoretical and practical references so that those occupying a ruling position can find material power and legitimation (Phillipson, 1992, p. 74). This legitimation, though, as fundamental as it is, must be considered in

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16 On this topic, see chapter nine.
constant progression. Following once again Raymond Williams, Phillipson specifies that hegemony is continuously challenged and transformed: it becomes “dominant” without being “total” or “exclusive”.

It will be clear by now that hegemony indeed tends to assume the meaning of dominance and coercion when used in a linguistic context. As Mühlhäusler (1996, p. 18) points out, focusing on concepts that imply a dominant agent, such as imperialism, allows one to “dispel the myth that the loss of linguistic diversity is a natural process”. In his view, a way to explain the supremacy of dominant languages in the name of “development” is to consider the different forms that imperialistic influence can take: from the ecological to the political, from the biological to the linguistic. Phillipson, however, invites us to be cautious with the use of such terminology. He argues that the concepts employed in the literature on language and imperialism are often “ideologically loaded” with Western stereotypical views (Phillipson, 1996, p. 38). Imperialism is referred to as “the structure which perpetuates inequality in the world” (p.46). It identifies also a certain tendency towards the patronising classification of what the dominant Eurocentric views perceive as ‘inferior’ idioms and cultures. This can occur in subtext, as part of the civilising action of “underlying structures which support (or counteract) individual efforts”.

In this context, language plays a pivotal role. By linguistic imperialism, Phillipson intends to describe the unequal conditions existing among the languages of the world in light of the dominance of English. He defines English linguistic imperialism as

The dominance of English […] asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47).

In this view, the “hegemonic” role that English has developed is maintained particularly through a multi-layered language teaching system, where the demand for ELT affects all level of society. Phillipson suggests that the ELT global network has been intentionally created by government-funded language academies, such as the British Council (Phillipson, 1992, pp. 137-138). Phillipson (2008) also points out that academia in general is significantly responsible for the global strengthening of the Anglo-American idiom (see also Holborow, 2012). University institutions tend to use “English, probably to the exclusion of all other languages, unlike […] industry and finance in continental Europe, who tend to be multilingual” (Phillipson, 2008, p. 6)17.

In this way, Phillipson positions himself alongside Ives in stating that it is a procedural mistake to consider the exponential rise of Global English as the outcome of solely individual choices. In particular, he believes that issues of power and ideology must be taken into account in order to explain this phenomenon as part of a wider political framework (Phillipson, 2008, p. 9). Phillipson also

17 Not all universities follow this approach. In Italy, for example, several professors of the Polytechnic of Milan appealed to the Regional Administrative Court (TAR) of Lombardy against a resolution of the Academic Senate dated 21st May 2012, which established the exclusive employment of English in all postgraduate courses of the university from 2014. The Court proclaimed the resolution invalid because “the respect for the role assigned to Italian by the national set of rules imposes that the choice between Italian and English teaching must be guaranteed” (TAR (Lombardy), 2013, my translation).
validates “Gramsci’s work on language hegemony”, because it ensures “that the study of ‘global’ English does not concentrate falsely on purely instrumental functions”. Despite this endorsement of the Gramscian version of hegemony, Marnie Holborow, from her Marxist socio-political conceptualisation of languages, distances herself from Robert Phillipson and his approach to linguistic imperialism. She emphasises Gramsci’s contribution to the definition of language as both an historical and social instrument, not differently as Phillipson does. However, she believes that, albeit undoubtedly ground-breaking, Phillipson’s theories are insufficient to describe the complexity of global linguistic phenomena (Holborow, 1999, pp. 76-79). She argues that Phillipson focuses on the dichotomy centre/periphery, without considering that it is necessary to “take adequate account of linguistic tensions within each camp” (p.78).

In order to explain the current phenomenon of English, therefore, we need to address it in its entirety and full complexity. Phillipson, following a historical approach, focuses mainly on the colonial heritage of the British Empire to explain its linguistic imperialism. He argues that:

> The decision to promote English language and thought needs to be seen in conjunction with accompanying political, economic, and social pressures, and not least the role assigned to indigenous education (Phillipson, 1992, p. 110).

The author clarifies that the approaches to indigenous peoples were quite diverse, and varied according to the different colonial powers, as we have noted in chapter two. What remained the same was the role of education in those contexts, which was always serving the colonising powers. In a modern context, though, the Catalan linguist Bastardas i Boada (2012b, pp. 43-46) argues that the particular situation of Global English is the result of technological, economic and scientific fields implicitly electing English as the language of communication. This, together with the introduction of English as a key subject in schools all over the world, creates considerable pressure around ELT, with a continuous request for appropriate structures and funds at all educational and social levels.

At this point, it will be evident that describing the role of English, or any other language, as ‘hegemonic’ is not the same as describing it as ‘imperialistic’, and vice versa. Imperialism implies an intentional plan to maintain a specific environment where language hierarchies are preserved and the unequal treatment of certain languages, and implicitly the peoples who speak them, is encouraged. Its conceptualisation focuses on all those instruments of power that the dominant group uses to ensure that linguistic imperialism is preserved: hence the focus on language teaching, language academies, cultural and economic international institutions. Hegemony, on the other hand, especially in its original Gramscian conceptualisation, necessarily involves both the dominant and the subaltern groups. In this sense, it can be used to describe both the motivated choice of the people who acknowledge the predominance of one language over the others, which enhances language hierarchies, and the predominance of multilingualism over monolingualism, which challenges those hierarchies. However, because hegemony reflects complex matters of ideology and socio-economic power relations

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18 See also Kaplan’s contribution in Ammon (Ed., 2001).
between the various social forces, the choice towards one solution rather than another is not dictated by mere communicative needs.

6.5 Effectiveness and Fairness

What makes a language ‘hegemonic’, then? If a language sees its hegemony recognised, it is not only because it is socially accepted, but also because its employment is effective and fair. The concepts of effectiveness and fairness\(^{19}\) come from linguistic (or language) economy, an interdisciplinary field that “aims to study the relations between economic and linguistic variables, and to apply typically economic theories and concepts to linguistic matters” (Gazzola, 2006a, p. 1; but see also Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997). In this perspective, languages are viewed as a “public good”, connected not only to economics, but also to politics and society as a whole, and as such they can be evaluated (Gazzola, 2014). Within this frame, effectiveness\(^{20}\) is defined as “the outcome achieved as a result of the use of a certain amount of resources” (Grin & Vaillancourt, 1999, p. 3). With specific reference to language policy, effectiveness indicates the capability of a given policy to guarantee effective communication in a multilingual context (Gazzola & Grin, 2013). The aim of an analysis of effectiveness in not to evaluate a language policy per se, or to prescribe a particular conduct: it is rather an analysis centred on people’s behaviours that offers a scenario with multiple alternatives, in order to show the most effective one(s) (Gazzola, 2014, 2016). Effectiveness, therefore, becomes a key aspect of language policy, to the point that Grin (2003, p. 99) argues that “effectiveness evaluation is the first and most fundamental question to consider when preparing a language policy plan”. Evaluating the goals of a certain policy, in the perspective of a cause-and-effect analysis, allows the prediction of the outcomes of that policy, at least on a general basis. Grin (2003, pp. 100-107) explains the steps of policy evaluation through the analysis of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, a treaty developed in 1992 by the Council of Europe to protect and promote the historical regional or minority languages of Europe\(^{21}\). Even though these strategies are, in my opinion, too mechanical to be helpful outside a purely economic perspective, they undoubtedly have the merit of providing useful guidelines, and of highlighting the economic role of languages in society. Grin starts from the Areas of implementation of the Charter to clarify the objectives of his analysis. The areas, in particular, are education, the judicial system, administration and public services, media, culture, economic and social life. From those areas, he identifies thirty-three outcome indicators,

\(^{19}\) For a more socio-political interpretation of effectiveness and fairness, see Stewart (2009).

\(^{20}\) Grin and Vaillancourt (1999, p. 3) replace effectiveness with efficiency, which becomes, for them, “the choice of the best solution among a set of effective solutions”. Gazzola (2012, p. 2) adds the fact that efficiency indicates the best possible solution achieved with the available means.

\(^{21}\) The Council of Europe is a supranational cultural institution for the defence of human rights in the continent. It includes forty-seven states, most of which are not part of the European Union (The Council of Europe, 2017). Thirty-three of its forty-seven member states signed European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, but only twenty-five countries made sure that this signature was followed by an actual ratification. Among the non-ratifying countries, are Italy, France and Russia.
which are defined as variables relevant for policy evaluation. The indicators are percentages and numbers of quantifiable elements such as the number of speakers, the percentage of signs written in a regional/minority language (RML), sales figures of sales of material in the RML. These indicators allow the development of alternative policies able, in turn, to choose the most time- and cost-effective ones.

Another evaluation of language policies in terms of effectiveness has been carried out by Gazzola (2006b, 2016) in relation to the European Union (EU) (The European Union, 2017). Gazzola evaluates the possible language regimes of the EU and the European Parliament, defined as the set of official regulations developed in order to manage the languages of the EU area (Gazzola, 2014, p. 4). In Gazzola (2016), in particular, four different scenarios are considered for the languages of the EU. The first one is the multilingual option, with all the official languages of the EU equally supported and employed; the second one is the hexalingual language regime, which includes the six languages with the highest number of speakers, i.e., English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish; the third option is a trilingual language regime, with only English, French and German; the fourth alternative is English monolingualism. His conclusions are that, even though the multilingual alternative is undoubtedly more costly and less flexible, it is also the only practicable option if the EU wants to guarantee a fair linguistic treatment of its people: “a multilingual, translation-based language regime is both more effective and more fair than a unilingual regime based on English – even if it is dressed up as ‘English as a Lingua Franca’” (Gazzola & Grin, 2013, p. 104; Phillipson, 2003).

Effectiveness alone, then, is not enough to provide a comprehensive evaluation of language policies. This is particularly true because even multilingualism alone can take multiple forms that are more or less linguistically diverse than others, and policy evaluations tend to neglect explicit issues of fairness (Grin & Gazzola, 2013, pp. 366, 370). Fairness, also referred to as distributive justice and equity, identifies “who loses, who gains, and (if possible) how much” (Gazzola & Grin, 2013, p. 98). If language is considered a “public good”, then “the principle of fairness would impose some obligations on those who are not contributing directly to its production” (Boran, 2003, p. 201). For these reasons, fairness is not conceived as an ethical or a moral matter, and the aim of its analysis is to determine the effects of certain policies on the people involved. The idea of fairness in language policy evaluation originates from the idea that those groups in disadvantaged socio-economic conditions are less likely to use languages that are not their native language(s) (Gazzola, 2016, pp. 3-4). For these reasons, they can be significantly affected by policies that limit or exclude those varieties. There are three ways in which fairness can be analysed in terms of communicative processes (Grin & Gazzola, 2013, pp. 374-375). Fairness can be assessed in terms of access to communication, in terms of participation in the communication, or in terms of effects of communication outside the actual communication process. This final point is critically important for our discussion as it moves beyond the sole communication process and looks at the outcomes of communication on a more or less

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22 Another attempt to discuss different scenarios for the European languages in light of the continent’s past and the current trends can be found in Phillipson (2003), but see also Kymlicka & Patten (2003, p. 9).

23 The European Union is a political institution that has its roots in the 1950s, when the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and the European Economic Community (1958) were established (Archer, 2008).
institutional policy level. According to Gazzola and Grin (2013, p. 99) there are three steps in the
analysis of language policy fairness: first, it is necessary to identify the various language groups and
their speakers; then, to understand through what means language resources are distributed; and
finally, to estimate the effects of this distribution. From this perspective, languages do not operate in a
vacuum, but develop in fact a constant interaction with one another, with the structural elements of
society, and with the people who speak it.

If we look at the case of English in this light, then, we can appreciate why this language and any
regime based on it have become such a massive international business. When we look at the data
reported by Gazzola and Grin (2013) of the EU before Brexit, we understand how the figures could
not support an English-only regime in the EU area without it being unfair:\footnote{For a discussion on the idea of privilege related to English and the inequality that it represents, see also May (2014).}

Native speakers of English represent 14% of the EU population; non-native speakers
make up 37% of the population. With respect to the total EU population, only 7% of EU
citizens report having a ‘very good’ level of English as a foreign language, 17% a ‘good’
level, and 12% a ‘basic’ level (these percentages are respectively, 8%, 20% and 14% if we
exclude European countries where English is an official language). This indicator shows that
fluency in English in Europe simply is not a universal ‘basic skill’ (Gazzola & Grin, 2013, pp.
102-103).

Indeed, implementing such a policy in order to reduce the costs related to multilingualism, such
as translations and interpretations, would simply shift the cost to all those countries and peoples who
do not have English as a native language. Gazzola’s evaluation (2009, p. 124; 2012, p. 5) of the total
profit coming directly from the teaching of English provides significant insight. He focused his analysis
within a European framework, and specifically on the United Kingdom alone, and yet the figures show
a profit of about €10-17 billion a year. These numbers are easily explained if we consider that an
increasing number of aspiring English speakers gravitates around English-speaking countries, and
that these countries save money for not having to systematically teach other foreign languages to
their citizens (see also Phillipson, 2003, p. 148). It is precisely because of this imbalance in the
benefits towards one side of the linguistic spectrum that Gazzola suggests an EU tax on English as a
possible solution. He believes that there should be more resources invested in order to safeguard
linguistic diversity, and that the financial support should come from a more substantial contribution
from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.
The Socio-Economic Context, Beyond the Role of English

We have seen that hegemony is a holistic concept that involves complex socio-political dynamics. This is the reason why the understandings of hegemony are so diverse, depending on the perspective that we adopt, moving from a neutral conceptualisation of power to a synonym of a negative and disruptive force. This versatility, albeit misleading, can be read as the symptom of how effective this concept can be in the interpretation of languages in modern societies. In particular, we have seen how hegemony can problematise the most famous and current example of language hierarchy, i.e., the role of English as a global language. The English case works as a particularly revealing example since it has inspired both the concept of linguistic imperialism and the analysis of linguistic effectiveness and fairness on a larger scale.

In this sense, another point that emerges from this chapter is the absolute predominance of English as a topic of investigation whenever questions of hegemony, imperialism, effectiveness and fairness are researched in relation to languages. However, English is not the only language working against language diversity, as any language can be imperialistic in relation to others. Consequently, the concept of hegemony can be effectively employed even beyond the realm of Global English, and it can offer insight on the other side of the spectrum of linguistic power relations and related language hierarchies. We can argue that, anywhere language matters emerge in relation to power-relations or language hierarchies, we can approach them through the concept of hegemony.

One of the most historically relevant examples of the (ab)use of power-relations, way beyond the linguistic realm, was the already mentioned colonial era, whose sociolinguistic effects on indigenous communities can be effectively explained through hegemony. We can take as an example the case of the Mapuche of Chile, and their sociolinguistic history in relation to the Spanish colonisers first, and then the nation-state of Chile. Unlike with other indigenous peoples of America, the Spanish conquest of the areas occupied by the Mapuche never fully succeeded until 1883, when the independent country of Chile promoted the forced “Pacification” of those territories (Calbucura, 2009, p. 66). During the Spanish colonial period, the Mapuche maintained a certain degree of autonomy and hegemony, acknowledged by the Spanish side. The socio-economic and political relations between the two parts were maintained through specific meetings called parlamentos, which were used as opportunities for negotiations and reciprocal control of power relations (Boccara, 1999). Because in the parlamentos the Mapuche refused to speak Spanish, it became necessary for the Spanish to have interpreters in Mapudungun, the language of the Mapuche. This shows that the colonisers were in fact interested in maintaining their communication and reciprocal socio-economic support with the Mapuche, despite

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25 A notable example of employment of Gramsci’s concepts to languages other than English is Smith (1997), dedicated to Māori language and education. We will return to the situation of Māori in the next chapter.

26 Even though I will focus here on the Mapuche of Chile, Mapuche communities are found in Argentina as well (Ray, 2007). In Chile, there are also seven other indigenous languages besides Mapudungun, Mapuche’s language: the others are Aymara, Quechua, Rapa Nui (Easter Island’s indigenous language), Likay Antai, Colla, Kawashkar/Alacaluf and Yámana/Yagán.
the parallel employment of the typical colonial tools of domination, such as mass conversions, land
exploitation, and employment of indigenous labour (Goicovich, 2007; Obregón Iturra & Zavala
Cepeda, 2012). When Chile became independent from Spain in 1818, the dynamics changed
significantly, and the ideological pressure that enhanced the hegemony of the nation-state became
stronger, at the expenses of the Mapuche’s hegemony. This shift of hegemony was so significant that
the government thought it was time to unify the Chilean land and its people once and for all: this
meant, in practical terms, to conquer the Mapuche lands, in the Southern lands known as Araucanía
(Collier & Sater, 1996, p. 96; Ray, 2007, p. 77). This military occupation, promoted as a ‘Pacification’,
had a terrible impact on the Mapuche, who were first distributed in reservations, and then directly
deprived of their lands in the name of profit and privatisation. In this way, they lost most of their lands,
and with that their cultural references and their socio-economic independence (Breid lid, 2013;
Calbucura, 2009).

The hegemony of the Mapuche plummeted together with their loss of cultural authenticity and
socio-economic independence as they became more and more subjected to the dominating power of
the Chilean state. This subalternity progressed during the twentieth century, when the association
between socio-economic disadvantage and Mapuche identity became stronger. This factor had a
disastrous impact on their language, to the point that the use of Mapudungun was opposed not only at
a state level, but also within the Mapuche families (Gallegos, Warwick, & Evans, 2010, p. 97). Even
the geographical distribution of the Mapuche has negatively impacted on their language: while, during
their centuries of independence, the Mapuche were in contact with the Spanish speaking
communities, but lived substantially separated from them, in modern Chile the Mapuche have been
living surrounded by them (Gundermann, Cani huan, Cla vería, & Faû ndez, 2009, p. 52). Positive
attempts to recover indigenous land and improve the general socio-economic conditions of the
Mapuche were carried out in the 1950s and 1960s, and especially during the government of Salvador
Allende, before it was ended by a coup in 1973 (Galeano, 1997, pp. 293-294). The following
dictatorial government of Augusto Pinochet halted these attempts of support to the indigenous
communities, and imposed instead ideologies of extreme nationalism and economic growth (Álvarez
San Martín, 2012, p. 7). These governmental plans, on the one hand, increased the privatisation of
lands and natural resources, and, on the other, denied the existence of indigenous peoples in the
name of the extreme nationalistic ideology of a unique and homogeneous Chilean, Spanish-speaking
nation. In this context, all indigenous peoples, including the Mapuche, were persecuted as political
opponents, several forcefully migrated, and various activists were incarcerated or killed in numerous

When the dictatorship of Pinochet came to an end in the early 1990s, a new political
establishment meant new laws in favour of the Mapuche, at least ideally (Vergara, Foerster, &
Gundermann, 2004). On the one hand, the Mapuche have gained more political visibility through the
establishment of several special commissions and corporations aimed at advising and supervising the
government in its activities that involved or affected the indigenous communities (Álvarez San Martín,
2012, pp. 9-10). On the other, their protests to regain their land, and thus, in a way, their socio-
economic hegemony, have still been treated as attacks on national stability (Álvarez San Martín, 2012). Despite the intentions of the current President, Bachelet, to officially apologise to the Mapuche communities on behalf of the Chilean state (Almarza & Aburto, 2017), this internal conflict has been so intense that the United Nations Office for Human Rights expressed their concerns about the way the Chilean government has been dealing with the Mapuche (Conosur, 2017). As for Mapuche language and culture, the indigenous languages of Chile have been recognised by law, although not by the constitution, and it seems that there is no real effort from subsequent Chilean governments to concretely address the conditions of the indigenous peoples, especially since the school systems continues to be heavily Spanish-centric (Breidlid, 2013, pp. 173-174). On the other side of the spectrum, though, the involvement of the Mapuche in social and linguistic campaigns has significantly increased, they have established their own newspapers and cultural associations, and they are organising their first schools (Álvarez San Martín, 2011; Millalikan, 2008; Moreno, 2013; País Mapuche, 2016; Werken, 2013). Despite these positive signs, however, Chile’s national language hierarchies are still quite solid, and the Mapuche appear split in their attitudes towards their language (Breidlid, 2013, pp. 190-191; Gallegos et al., 2010, pp. 100-101; Gundermann et al., 2009, p. 51). There is no real consensus from their part about the dominance of Spanish over Mapudungun, and yet, at the same time, people acknowledge the hegemony of Spanish as a tool towards socio-economic growth and more or less implicitly promote its use over Mapudungun. Spanish is undoubtedly effective, it is one of the most spoken languages in the world, both in terms of native speakers and second language learners. The dominance of Spanish in Chile as a prestigious language, however, is not fair, as it excludes the speakers of Mapudungun and other indigenous languages from many sectors of civil and public life. What the Mapuche should keep doing, together with Chile’s society, then, is to reconstruct their language hierarchies by (re)building a solid hegemony of their language, and increase the opportunities to use Spanish together with, not instead of, Mapudungun. In this way, they can finally reach that level of conscious guidance and necessary fairness to overcome the dominance of Spanish and its hierarchies, and promote a new multilingual system in which, by extension, all eight indigenous languages of Chile can be fairly and hegemonically represented.

If we look at the questions around hegemony, language hierarchies and power relations that we introduced at the beginning of the chapter, and we put the case of the Mapuche of Chile side by side with the status of dominance of languages such as Spanish and English, we can see once more how language hierarchies are fundamentally determined by broader socio-economic power relations. Indeed, power relations play a substantial role in determining language shift. Even though they are largely regulated by social and economic factors, they significantly impact languages and their use. We can detect their influence in many ways. For example, we can note that there are languages associated with high socio-economic status and others with a lower socio-economic status. We can also point out that, often, there are economic interests behind the promotion of a language to the detriment of others. We can say, finally, that speaking one language rather than another could determine successful access to the job market. We can therefore argue that socio-economic factors are undoubtedly responsible for determining new language hierarchies or strengthening existing ones.
In this sense, the concept of linguistic imperialism fits particularly well as part of this framework, since imperialistic languages such as English are the best example to prove how economic and social dynamics can influence language choices. If we recall the distinction between cosmopolitanism and internationalism discussed before, we can say that English, in short, has so far proved its cosmopolitan, but not so much its international, role, and its status is maintained thanks to its effectiveness in the current socioeconomic conditions. At the same time, though, we have seen that the dominance of a language such as English is not fair, and its acceptance may be spontaneous, but not necessarily conscious. This implies also that English can be effectively described through the lens of linguistic imperialism, but not through the one provided by Gramsci's hegemony, especially if we keep the concept of fairness in mind.

How does this translate into a discussion on a hegemonic language policy/regime? A language policy/regime becomes *hegemonic* in the Gramscian sense if it fulfils its functions as an effective means of communication and goes beyond that by ensuring fairness of treatment to all the language varieties involved. Looking at it from the reverse side, a language policy becomes hegemonic (once again in the Gramscian sense) if it allows the people affected by it to use their language(s) effectively and fairly, with the adequate support of other factors, such as the state, the ideological system and the social agents. The implementation of such a policy or regime implies also that its status of hegemony can be accepted *consciously*, not just spontaneously. In this way, there is a clear distinction between imperialism and hegemony as it is the latter that, when in balance, can facilitate a less hierarchical, more inclusive, and more multilingual approach to language policy. If we look at languages from this perspective, we can appreciate how socio-economic factors play a fundamental role in creating and ensuring this hegemony. The conceptualisation of hegemony that derives from this context highlights the intricate network of influences existing within modern reality in relation to language hierarchies: the dominant and the dominated varieties must both be analysed, as one cannot be understood without the other, in the same way as hegemony cannot be understood without its supporting and defying forces. Thus conceived, hegemony also helps us to put power relations in a wider perspective that includes society as a whole: hegemony, as we have mentioned, works side by side with state, ideology and intellectuals, and it is through these elements that it will be possible to redefine language hierarchies.
CHAPTER SEVEN

STATE, STRUCTURE AND SOCIETY: THE HISTORICAL-POLITICAL CONTEXT

7.1 Introduction

Another fundamental aspect to ensure the hegemony of multilingualism is society as a whole. But how can we approach the analysis of something so complex? The answer can be found in Gramsci’s conceptualisation of the State, which, unlike the definitions of ‘state’ examined in chapter three, highlights the composite nature of society. By categorising social forces, Gramsci’s theory also strengthens the importance of a deep understanding of the framework within which social forces develop. In other words, the division into Civil Society and Political Society, together with the ongoing dynamics that relate the two, offer effective guidelines to explore the historical and political conditions of society in its entirety. This chapter starts from this premise, and in light of what we have discussed so far, tries to answer two main questions: How can we identify the historical and political power relations that affect languages? How can historical and political contingencies be relevant in reshaping language hierarchies?

To answer these questions, I will first introduce Gramsci’s State articulation in Civil and Political Society, and I will relate his ideas to the relevant literature on the State in its integral sense. I will then focus on two specific sociolinguistic approaches: the Historical-Structural Approach developed by Tollefson, and the system of Micro and Micro Variables suggested by Grenoble & Whaley. Similarly to Gramsci’s State theory, these two models stress the potential of the historical-political context in the analysis of minority languages and language revitalisation programmes. This approach can be particularly productive because, as noted by Réaume (2003, p. 292), “Macro or community-level thinking encourages us to think in terms of long-term planning around language issues rather than short-term, and of intervening to influence the flow of general currents in language behaviour rather than prescribing discrete individual acts”. The discussion on the role of structures and variables in society will be supported by the analysis of two cases: the Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the language regime of the European Union. In the final section, Gramsci, Tollefson and Grenoble & Whaley’s approaches will be analysed in relation to one another, in order to obtain a thorough insight on the importance of the Historical-Political Context for languages. This will also show how Gramsci’s State theory can provide a unique approach for the restructuring of language hierarchies and of the
normalisation of multilingualism through the support of minority languages, as shown by the case of Catalonia.

Before starting the analysis of the State, though, it is important to clarify a point. A term that appears quite often in this chapter, both explicitly and in subtext, is structure. Because of the high risk of misinterpretation that such a concept can bring, it is necessary to provide a brief clarification. Even though the meaning that I give to the term generally refers to the fundamental constituent part of something, structure is indeed a complex term in social and political philosophy. The main definition of the term comes from Karl Marx (1970, pp. 20-21), who considers economy as the core structure of society, i.e., the fundamental basis of social activities. All the forms of social interactions necessarily derive from the structure, and they in turn constitute the superstructure, which includes social, political, legal and intellectual spheres. In Gramsci, structure is conceived in its traditional Marxist sense of economy. However, even though Marx believes that the structure/economy is the fundamental component of society, Gramsci focuses his attention on the superstructure as the most important element of social reality. While structure does not seem to play an important role in Grenoble and Whaley’s work, it certainly becomes a key point in Tollefson’s Historical-Structural Approach. In Tollefson, though, the term does not assume the Marxist meaning of economy and, in his approach, structure refers instead to the essential elements of society resulting from human interactions (Tollefson, 1991, p. 13).

7.2 Civil Society and Political Society

As previously mentioned, Gramsci divides society into two areas: Civil Society and Political Society. On the one hand, Civil Society includes private citizens, and represents the hegemonic function of the dominant group over the whole society. Civil Society is considered by Gramsci as a form of ‘self-government’, because it should not be managed by the political sphere (Q.8, §130). Political Society, on the other hand, refers to what is normally called the ‘state’, as discussed in chapter three. Political society indicates the direct dominance of the public apparatus expressed through governmental activities (Q.12, §1). Gramsci, however, clarifies that Political Society is the “government of public officials”, and does not necessarily identify with the state in its totality (Q.8, §130). Civil Society and Political Society, however, are not immediately identifiable. This occurs because “this distinction is purely methodological, and not organic: in the concrete historical reality, political society and civil society are the same thing” (Q.4, §38). The idea behind this methodological division is the creation of a new type of civilisation, where a complex and articulated Civil Society develops within the frame of the Political Society. In this way, citizens can reach a condition of self-government, without being in conflict with the Political Society because, at that point, they will become part of it. Even more, Civil Society should represent the “normal continuation” and the “organic
completion” of Political Society (Q.8, §130). In other words, within this Gramscian framework, State life becomes natural, because the initiatives of individuals and private groups are considered state-based even when they do not involve public officials.

This dualistic perception of political activity and state life is symbolised by the double nature of the Machiavellian Centaur. In Machiavelli’s The Prince, the mythological creature represents the two natures that a ruler (the prince) should embrace in the public activities, i.e., the man and the beast (1995, pp. 115-116, Ch. XVIII). The prince should use both natures, or his power cannot survive. Among the beastly features, in particular, the ruler should look at two symbols, the fox and the lion, in order to develop astuteness and strength to maintain leadership. In line with this Machiavellian design, the mythological centaur in Gramsci fuses together two sets of contrasting features (Q.13, §14). On one side, we find authority, violence, individuality, turmoil, strength and tactics, which constitute Political Society. On the other side, there are consensus, hegemony, civilisation, universality, propaganda and strategy, which identify with Civil Society. Gramsci summarises this vision with the equation that we saw in the previous chapter: “Stato = società politica + società civile, cioè egemonia corazzata di coercizione [State = political society + civil society, i.e., hegemony armoured with coercion]” (Q.6, §88). Consequently, the “integral meaning [of the State is] dictatorship + hegemony” (Q.6, §155).

Gramsci’s investigation leads him to identify different types of State. On the one hand, the “Policeman State”, or “Night Watchman State”, describes a state whose functions are only maintaining and enforcing law and order (Q.26, §6). This implies that the other areas of society, such as cultural direction and historical development, are managed entirely by private forces. Even though this type of state has existed so far only in theory, in these conditions Civil Society becomes the state itself. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Gramsci identifies the “Interventionist State” and the “Ethical State”. The “Interventionist State” is a type of state focused on economic issues. This connection to the economic world is developed both through supporting nationalistic protectionism, and through allowing the privileged elites to protect the working classes. The Ethical State, for its part, is a philosophy-based state in which relevance is given to the intellectual activity of the state, moving thus away from religious or private forms of cultural interferences and from cosmopolitanism. This type of state enforces its educational and moral nature by maintaining its autonomy from other social forces, similarly to what the Policeman/Night Watchman state does with law and order. Even more, the Ethical State aims at elevating the population to a cultural and moral level that matches the interests of the dominant classes, so as to ensure cultural and political hegemony (Q.8, §179). The main tools of this type of state are schools, as a form of positive educational function, and tribunals, as a type of repressive educational activity. However, an Ethical State can be created only if the social group pursues its own end and the end of the state as the highest achievement, i.e., if the ultimate aim of the activity of the state is cultural and economic development, even when this implies the very end of the state itself.

In light of this discussion, then, how can we analyse the State? In order to answer this question, we need to clarify the nature of the power relations that occur within it. Gramsci develops an analysis
of the forces that operate in history with the aim of clarifying the nature of their interaction (Q.13, §17). He argues that there are two basic principles to keep in mind. The first one is that, unless the necessary and sufficient conditions for the solution of certain tasks already exist, no society will ever create them in the first place. This is the principle that we previously mentioned, which implies that all that occurs in a society has its origins in that society, and can be managed through elements that already exist within that society. The second one states that no society can be dissolved or substituted if all the forms of living, implicit in its relations, have not yet been completely achieved. With these premises, if we want to distinguish the forces operating in a given historical moment, there are two types of phenomena we must examine. On the one hand, organic movements appear relatively permanent. They generate a socio-historical investigation on a large scale, which focuses on big social groups, and goes beyond the responsibilities of the individuals. On the other hand, circumstantial movements appear as occasional, almost accidental occurrences. They depend on organic phenomena, but their significance normally does not have historical relevance. Gramsci gives the example of a crisis that spreads in a certain society. When a crisis occurs, it continue for years, even decades, showing its organic nature. In line with the two basic principles outlined above, a situation of crisis also indicates that

Nella struttura si sono rivelate (sono venute a maturità) contraddizioni insanabili […] che le forze politiche operanti positivamente alla conservazione e difesa della struttura stessa si sforzano tuttavia di sanare entro certi limiti e di superare. Questi sforzi incessanti e perseveranti (poiché nessuna forma sociale verrà mai confessare di essere superata) formano il terreno dell’‘occasionale’ sul quale si organizzano le forze antagonistiche che tendono a dimostrare […] che esistono già le condizioni necessarie e sufficienti perché determinati compiti possano e quindi debbano essere risolti storicamente.

[Irreconcilable contradictions have been revealed (have matured) in the structure. The political forces that positively operate for the conservation and the defence of the structure itself strive to solve, to some extent, and to overcome, these contradictions. These continuous and tenacious attempts (as no social form will ever accept to be overcome) create the terrain of the ‘occasional’, on the basis of which the antagonising forces organise themselves. These forces tend to demonstrate […] that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist so that certain tasks can and therefore must be resolved historically] (Q.13, §17, my emphasis).

The demonstration that historical facts need to be resolved historically can succeed only if a new reality is created, and the antagonising forces succeed but, at the same time, other ideological, religious, philosophical, political and juridical forces develop and balance the situation (Q.13, §17). According to Gramsci, in this context, the biggest mistake would be failing to identify the correct ratio between the organic and the circumstantial movements, since this distinction is applicable to any type of historical occurrence, and its understanding allows a thorough examination of concrete historical facts. In light of this distinction, it is also possible to better understand the dynamics of a nation:

La forza espansiva, l’influsso storico di una nazione non può essere misurato dall’intervento individuale di singoli, ma dal fatto che questi singoli esprimono consapevolmente e organicamente un blocco sociale nazionale, Se così non è, si deve parlare solo di fenomeni di una certa portata culturale appartenenti a fenomeni storici più complessi.
[The expansive force and the historical influence of a nation cannot be measured through the single intervention of the individuals: rather, through the fact that these individuals express a social national bloc consciously and organically. If this is not the case, it is necessary to discuss only those phenomena that have a significant cultural relevance and that belong to more complex historical phenomena.] (Q.3, §118).

Following this line of reasoning, Gramsci also distinguishes three degrees of development of power relations in history. The first one is the moment of the social forces. This phase is deeply connected to the structure of society, and it explores the interactions between different social groups in relation to it. It also provides an understanding of whether a society has the necessary and sufficient conditions to change. In Gramsci’s words, it “allows to verify the degree of realism and applicability of the various ideologies developed within that same society” (Q.3, §118). The second moment is the moment of the political forces. At this stage, it is possible to evaluate the nature and the degree of organisation of the various social groups. The moment itself can be divided into the various moments of the collective political conscience, as follows. The economic-corporative moment describes a type of interest that develops only within small subsections of a social group for shared interests, but does not go beyond the small cluster. The example that Gramsci uses in this sense is the retailer that only helps other retailers, but won’t help a manufacturer, even though they both belong to the same workers’ group. Then, the conscience-solidarity moment arrives when the corporative interests involve the whole social group, but are still closely linked to economic interests. Finally, the last moment occurs when the group understand that its interests go beyond the mere economic sphere, and affect the interests of other similar social groups. This is a highly political phase, where “ideologies become ‘party’, and are forced to face each other until only one (or combination of ones) prevails” (Q.3, §118). In this way, the prevailing force can determine the economic, intellectual and moral unity, which in turn generates the hegemony of a social group over the others. In this passage Gramsci also provides a useful and clarifying definition of the State and the nature of its power relations:

Lo Stato è concepito sì come organismo proprio di un gruppo, destinato a creare le condizioni favorevoli alla massima espansione del gruppo stesso, ma questo sviluppo e questa espansione sono concepiti e presentati come la forza motrice di una espansione universale, di uno sviluppo di tutte le energie “nazionali”, cioè il gruppo dominante viene coordinato concretamente con gli interessi generali dei gruppi subordinati e la vita statale viene concepita come un continuo formarsi e superarsi di equilibri instabili […] tra gli interessi del gruppo fondamentale e quelli dei gruppi subordinati.

[The State is conceived as an organism belonging to a group, and destined to create the best conditions for the maximum expansion of the group itself. However, this development and this expansion are conceived and presented as the engine of a universal expansion, of the development of all ‘national’ forces. In other words, the dominant group is actually coordinated with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and State life becomes a continuous formation and evolution of unsteady equilibriums […] between the interests of the ruling and the interests of the ruled] (Q.13, §17, my emphasis).

The third historical moment of power relations is the moment of the military forces. At this stage, once again, two additional subdivisions are identified. There is a military moment strictu sensu, which involves the employment of military techniques, and a political-military moment. These two moments
occur in history in different measures and combinations. For Gramsci, however, the political-military moment is helpful to explain the oppression of one state over another that wishes to gain its own independence, since, in those situations, the power relations are never only military, but also political. Therefore, historical development occurs as the outcome of a continuous fluctuation between the first movement (Social forces) and the third movement (Military forces), with the mediation of the second (Political forces).

To answer our question on what the State is and how we can analyse it, then, we can say that the State comprises social forces that need to be categorised in order to be analysed. The way we conceive these social forces and their power relations is going to give us an insight into how historical mechanics work. In this view, the State is actually a moment of unsteady equilibriums of the various social forces developed within society, and the way these forces alternate is through their quest for hegemony. The State, consequently, can be defined as the complex system of theoretical and practical activities with which the ruling class maintains its dominance and active consensus over the wider society (Q.15, §10). This definition strengthens the connection between political science and both sociology and education. On the one hand, Gramsci argues that, if political science means science of the state, then the essential questions of sociology are the questions of political science. On the other hand, the state as a political entity can function only if there is the education of consensus from the governing organisation towards the ruled (Q1, §47). This educational/formative nature is expressed both through political associations and through schools (Q.27, §1).

The State, especially in its ethical conceptualisation, thus has an educational function: but what does it mean? For Gramsci, the State should be conceived as ‘educator’ because it attempts to create a new, higher level of civilisation. In order to do so, it tends to morally adjust the popular masses to the needs of the new economic situation, and “elaborate[s], even physically, new types of humanity” (Q.13, §7). The fact that the State operates mainly on the economic structure, however, does not mean that all the other non-economic social elements are left aside, and abandoned to their own casual and spontaneous evolution. In this sense, the State also becomes a punisher: its role is to rationalise the new type of civilisation, and to moralise and punish the deviations from this higher achievement (Q.13, §11). It is also important to note that:

Questa attività formativa dello Stato, che si esprime, oltre che nell’attività politica generale, specialmente nella scuola, non si svolge sul niente e dal niente: in realtà essa è in concorrenza e in contraddittorio con altre concezioni esplicite ed implicite.

[This formative activity of the State, expressed through the political activity, but most of all through schools, does not develop on nothing and for nothing: it is in fact in opposition and in competition with other explicit and implicit conceptualisations] (Q.27, §1).

These other ‘conceptions of the world’, to which I will return in the next chapter, must be surpassed, because it is the State that must create “the conditions according to which a certain way of living is ‘possible’” (Q.13, §11).
The picture of the State that we obtain from Gramsci, therefore, is highly complex, and allows the involvement of all the factors that contribute to the formation of the state itself. The Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio (1990), for example, analyses Gramsci’s theory of the State through a binomial approach that resembles the subdivision into Civil and Political Society. In particular, he connects Civil/Political Society to two additional binomials: necessity/freedom and force/consensus (1990, p. 56). These two further dichotomies can be in turn employed in two different ways. The first one is *historiographical*, which implies that Civil Society appears relevant to interpret and explain history. On the other hand, the concept can be used in a *practical-political* sense as a norm to regulate what is positive and what is negative in society. Bobbio sees Civil Society also as the middle stage between the economic base and the political institutions (1990, p. 23). Consequently, when Gramsci talks about the Political Society absorbed into the Civil sphere, we must consider that, at the same time, a transformation will occur in the economic structure, which is dialectically connected to Civil Society (1990, p. 65). In this context, the state becomes a tool, a transitory apparatus influenced by the subjected classes to the point that the fate of these groups can lead to the disappearance of the state itself (1990, p. 40).

Imposing new dichotomies in Gramsci’s discussion, however, albeit effective, is not in line with what Gramsci had in mind. Liguori (2006, p. 35), in particular, notes that added theoretical dichotomies such as Bobbio’s eventually force Gramsci’s thought into a further division. In so doing, they also neglect the most important aspect of the Gramscian theory of the State, i.e., the “*non-separation*”, the “dialectical unity” existing between politics and society, between economy and the State. Liguori specifically stresses the fact that, for Gramsci, the State is conceived as ‘enlarged’ and ‘integral’ (2009, sub voce ‘Stato’). This implies that unity, inclusion and distinction *all* define the State, and leave no room for bifurcation. As we have seen, Gramsci himself states that this Political/Civil Society is a *methodological*, not an *organic* categorisation, and that in “the concrete historical life” they are merged together in a unique entity (Q.4, §38, Q.13, §18). Within this frame, therefore, Civil Society and Political Society need to balance each other in order to reach the status of Integral State, where hegemony is “exercised through spontaneous consent” (Martin, 1998, p. 69). Balance, however, does not necessarily mean separation between the two spheres since, as pointed out by Femia, an “*interpenetration*” between Civil Society and Political Society is also possible (Femia, 1981, p. 27).

The analysis of Civil and Political Society becomes extremely productive if we look at the various forces that can be related to each of them. Buci-Glucksmann (1980), for example, outlines the opposition between the two spheres by dividing the Integral State into two groups (1980, p. 91-93). On one side, she places State/Political society together with dictatorship, government, domination and apparatuses of coercion (e.g., army) and power. On the other, we find Civil Society together with hegemony, hegemonic apparatuses (such as culture, politics and economics), leadership, State as the organiser of consent, and, interestingly, the Integral State itself. In this way, she can demonstrate the “*methodological duplication*” that Gramsci enacts when he identifies two articulating moments in State development. On the one hand, the strict/unilateral moment implies that the State is inseparable
from the coercive but educational power of the government. On the other, the broad/integral moment explicitly embraces the intellectual and moral guidance of society. This entanglement of elements may appear confusing, even contradictory. Burgio (2014, p. 213), in this regard, talks about “the apparent paradox of a private politicisation”: political elements and private elements are not opposed to one another, but rather interconnected, and they influence each other. In this sense, State life does not necessarily mean ‘public’ life, since institutions can be the expressions of private interests. The borderline between public and private, for example, is where Showstack Sassoon (1980) locates her interpretation of the concept of the State as elaborated by Gramsci. In her view, this discussion of the forces of Civil and Political society in relation to the quest for hegemony becomes the point of departure for the development of the revolutionary party. Indeed, as underlined by Joseph Buttigieg (1995, p. 19), the Gramscian understanding of political party is of “a collective intellectual that carries out its primary and most important functions in Civil Society”, which is the most ‘private’ dimension of the State. If we add that Civil Society is the site of hegemony (Buttigieg, 1995, pp. 25-26), then we can easily understand why Showstack Sassoon depicts Gramsci’s theory of the State as the only way in which it is possible to appreciate “the full range of concepts in the Notebooks” (1980, p. 110).

At this point it is clear that the idea of the State in Gramsci implies a dense conceptualisation of society. In this view, society is conceived as an integral whole, but examined via its structural elements, i.e., the Civil Society and the Political Society. Both elements are constituted by multiple forces, and the analysis of these forces is necessary to understand how they work and how they are combined with one another. In other words, in order to appreciate the structure of society, it is necessary to actually first de-construct it and disband its components. This process allows us to identify multiple sets of elements, such as the opposition between public and private forces, organic and circumstantial movements, and the various moments through which power relations are expressed in history. We can also appreciate that the State should always have an educational function, in that it should work to shape its citizens by providing both the theoretical and practical tools for them to become members of society. On the basis of the various possible combinations of these elements, we can obtain two important outcomes. On the one hand, depending on how and by whom Civil and Political Society are managed, we can identify different types of State and society. This aspect also relates to the different forces active in nationalism and cosmopolitanism discussed in chapter three. In turn, this implies that we can also identify the types of power relations occurring between public and private forces. On the other hand, transferring this combination of factors in sociolinguistic terms allows the analysis of the State both from a historical and a practical-political point of view, thus giving a deeper insight in the evolution of language hierarchies. Combining these perspectives ultimately generates a historical-political framework that makes us can better understand society: and society, after all, is the primary element within which languages naturally develop.
7.3 **Historical Structural Approach**

We have seen that Gramsci’s theory of the Integral State provides a unique insight on the ongoing processes that surround state life and its structures. If we look at other attempts to use a similar principle, but in a specifically language-related context, we find Tollefson’s Historical Structural Approach (henceforth HSA). This approach is developed as an attempt to move the focus of language planning research from the individual speaker’s attitudes, typical of the neoclassical approach (see below), to a broader socio-economic frame (see also Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). The neoclassical approach focuses on the individual as the independent engine of language acquisition. This model assumes that the keys to understand social systems are the individuals and their independent language decisions. From this perspective, political and social differences are the result of the sum of a series of individual choices (Tollefson, 1991, p. 28). Because of this particular assumption, the neoclassical approach appears to be unsuitable for the investigation of the role of language in relation to power and inequality. In particular, Tollefson identifies specific areas that this approach fails to explain satisfactorily, such as understanding how linguistic prestige is assigned, how language loss occurs, and what role is played in those contexts by cultural and linguistic identity.

This is where a historical-structural perspective becomes useful. HSA explicitly looks at “discover[ing] the historical and structural pressures that lead to particular policies and plans and that constrain individual choice” (p.32). This approach considers motivation towards language maintenance or language loss as the outcome of wider socio-political factors, rather than a variable based on the personal choice of individual learners. In the context that I am exploring here, i.e., the role of the State and its components in relation to language hierarchies, the most important element of HSA is the contextual framework conceived as a tool to explain language matters, from language planning to individual language choices. In practice, HSA aims at providing coordinates to the individual behaviours in relation to a wider social, political and economic framework, categorised according to class-based variables. This approach thus identifies the connections between the individual level and the broader level, and analyses how one affects the other. This step is of the outmost importance, because it is essential to recognise that social organisation may be compatible or in conflict with language-planning bodies and processes. People may not acquire a language or they may refuse to alter the structure of their language because the social relationships in which they are embedded constrain such action. A plan that aims to achieve such goals must transform existing social relationships. As a result, analysis of language planning cannot be analytically separated from historical processes of structural transformation (Tollefson, 1991, p.36-37, my emphasis).

In this context, the priority is to understand the role that language plays in structuring society. Only once we have clarified the nature of the connection existing between linguistic and socio-historical processes, are we able to fully appreciate the significance of language planning, since
“planning affects language change to the extent permitted by historical-structural factors, while planning itself is subject to the same historical-structural forces that shape language” (Tollefson, 1991, pp. 36-37).

If we take the case of the indigenous Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand as an example, we can appreciate how the structural components of history, society and language are deeply intermingled. Māori was the only language spoken in Aotearoa/New Zealand before the arrival of the British colonisers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In this initial stage, despite the foreign occupation, the structure of Māori society was still numerically in favour of the indigenous group, with a minority of approximately 2,000 British settlers accounted for in 1840, compared with around 70,000 Māori (King, 2003, pp. 150, 169). In the same year, the relations between the two parts were officialised through the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi)¹, signed by the British Crown and Māori chiefs (King, 2003). The Treaty can be regarded as the most important structural component of that society, as it became a fundamental tool to which all social forces, at least theoretically, were bound. New historical structural elements came into the picture as a result of the increased number of non-Māori population (Pākehā) settled in the area. If we consider that only eighteen years after the Treaty (1858) the settlers had grown to 59,000, with 56,000 Māori, and that by 1881 the Pākehā population was 500,000, we can easily understand how the power relations of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s society during the nineteenth century were becoming increasingly disadvantageous for the indigenous Māori population. These drastic demographic changes determined a progressive detachment from the obligations of the Treaty, and had a dramatic impact not only on Māori land ownership, but also on culture and language, as the case of education clearly indicates. In the first decades of occupation, education was provided in both Māori and English, and schools tried to combine traditional Māori knowledge with the British education system (May, 2012, p. 309). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, and for a substantial part of the twentieth century, the language hierarchies in Aotearoa/New Zealand changed significantly, as the policy promoted by the colonial authorities was to assimilate, amalgamate and annihilate Māori language and culture (Smith & Rapatahana, 2012, pp. 83-84). Māori language was excluded from school teaching and was maintained to some extent only in rural areas as part of “a biological and racial assumption that the ‘natural genius’ of Māori lay in manual labour” (May, 2012, pp. 310-311). This socio-cultural disruption, enhanced by the progressive urbanisation of the population, affected Māori language to the point that, by 1979, only 15% of the Māori population under the age of 15 could speak the language (Benton, 1979, p. 22). The reaction to this inequality developed in the 1970s, and was carried out “by Māori themselves” (Smith & Rapatahana, 2012, p. 90). A first significant step in the direction of Māori language revitalisation, for example, was the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal² in 1975. This Political Society-based process was completed in 1984-1985, when the

¹ For a more detailed discussion on the Treaty of Waitangi and its short- and long-term effects on Māori land sovereignty, culture, language and education, and on the Māori-Pākehā relations, see Ranginui Walker (2004) and Mason Durie (1998).

² The Waitangi Tribunal was established to control and assess any breach of the Treaty of Waitangi. As noted by King (2003, p. 487), the tribunal, at least initially, was not particularly praised by New Zealand society, even though it soon “became the focus of Māori resource claims against the Crown and the source of major settlements that would reinvigorate tribal activity over large parts of the country".

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Tribunal was given full retrospective powers to ensure that the Treaty of Waitangi was respected (King, 2003, p. 487). Because of the key role played by this institution, we can consider it another structural component that made a significant impact on the construction of contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand society. One of the outcomes of the activity of the Tribunal was that Māori language was declared a taonga (treasure) and therefore had to be considered under the protection of the Treaty of Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. Section 4.2.4). This decision led to the implementation, the following year, of the Māori Language Act, which declared Māori an official language of the country. In parallel, another element that contributed to structure the socio-cultural role of Māori language was the series of flax-roots initiatives, or grass-root activities, that triggered the educational projects of Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori. These originally private, Civil Society-based initiatives were introduced respectively in 1982 and 1985 by Māori parents who wanted to provide full-immersion Māori education for their children. Since the 1980s, the Māori language education movement has successfully involved all the other levels of the country’s educational system, and has since been officially recognised by the government while maintaining a good degree of independence (May, 2012, pp. 314-317). Despite these efforts, however, according to the last two censuses the number of Māori speakers has been decreasing in the last ten years, going from 157,110 in 2006 to 148,395 in 2013. In this context, the financial support provided by the Aotearoa/New Zealand government for “Māori development” (English, 2016) seems inadequate to effectively redefine the unequal linguistic and cultural hierarchies that still characterise the country. Nevertheless, the role of Māori education has been fundamental to the revitalisation and the maintenance of Māori language use and status: the bottom-up effort dedicated to the maintenance of Māori language has provided both balance and support to the top-down regulations, and has guaranteed the language a good degree of prestige (Spolsky, 2009b, p. 32).

In light of the Māori case, then, we can better understand how an educational system developed for the support of a minority language can be a key factor in determining whether or not that language will survive. Tollefson reminds us that the question is of the utmost importance, as he analyses language policies in language education through a structural lens that highlights the existing socioeconomic inequalities within wider society. In particular, the essential premise from which Tollefson starts is that language policy and education are the source of “the great linguistic paradox of our times” (p.7): regardless of the type of investments in language teaching, modern societies have failed to reverse the lack of social participation due to language barriers. Language education, therefore, plays a fundamental role since it is the institutionalised way to determine who has access to policy-making processes and, ultimately, power. Even more, for Tollefson, language education becomes the way to comprehend the structural elements of social organisation, such as labour force, ethno-linguistic conflicts, and distribution of resources. This explains why those groups that are.

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3 Te Kōhanga Reo (the language nest) and Kura Kaupapa Māori are schools based on Māori principles and practices, and taught using the medium of Māori. For more details on these programmes and their implications, see Durie (1998), Tocker (2015), Smith (1997) and Spolsky (2009b).
excluded from state decision-making will perceive policy interventions as a potentially damaging imposition: hence, the constant risk of planning inequality.

The best way to avoid this risk appears to be a critical understanding of the hierarchical relations within society which, as we have seen, can have a significant impact on language. According to Tollefson (2006), the key elements in this process are notions that we have already encountered, such as power, struggle, hegemony and ideology. These concepts take us back to critical theory, i.e., the conception of language policy research that guarantees the employment of structural categories together with a political and ethical lens (Tollefson, 2006, p. 45). Power, in particular, occupies a special role in HSA as it is considered intrinsic to all social interactions, and necessarily related to language policy (Tollefson, 2015, p. 142). Specifically:

When language policy is analysed with reference to relationships of power, then research must focus on the mechanism by which minority languages are restricted to specific domains. To restrict minority languages to specific domains is to legitimise the domination of specific groups and to institutionalise the marginal status of some members of the population […]. In contrast, the struggle to adopt minority languages within dominant institutions […] as well as the struggle over language rights, constitutes efforts to legitimise the minority group itself and to alter its relationship to the state. Thus while language planning reflects relationships of power, it can also be used to transform them (Tollefson, 1991, p. 202).

Two important threads derive from this passage. On the one hand, the restriction of languages to specific domains itself often determines that a language is considered ‘minority’, which can be related to our earlier discussions of diglossia and, more broadly, language hierarchies and prestige. On the other hand, if we consider the various domains of a society conceived in this way, i.e., as a dialectical interaction between minority and majority groups, another aspect naturally involved in HSA is the focus on both micro and macro level analysis. Tollefson (2015, p. 144) identifies a specific series of elements that contribute to the definition of each of those levels. He exemplifies the macro area through elements such as implicit ideologies in language policy; economic components in language plans; organisation of resources for the minority languages; and impact of linguistic stratification and planning on labour access, resources and power. As for the micro areas, he focuses on language use in the school environment and educational activities, language use in the various sociolinguistic domains, together with code-switching and intergenerational language use. Tollefson, though, problematises the way in which this division is often used in HSA. He believes that the two levels are actually constantly interconnected. As such, considering them as separate entities fails to provide an adequate analysis of complex, interrelated linguistic contexts, especially in light of Gramsci’s discussion of society. Concrete examples of historical-structural factors are detectable at all levels of language planning. Language planning, as a process, can be divided into three sections (Cooper, 1989, pp. 31-34). Status planning relates to the collective dimension of the language, and to the way in which public domains and the governments treat and acknowledge a certain idiom or language variety. Corpus planning describes that stage of language planning that includes standardising or choosing a script, creating new vocabulary forms/set of grammatical rules, and deleting or modifying old ones. Finally, acquisition planning is aimed at improving the teaching and learning of a language.
in order to increase its speakers and improve their proficiency. As possible historical-structural factors influencing status planning, Tollefson (2015, p. 146) lists historical colonialism, linguistic imperialism, identity and sociolinguistic stratification based on labour market and economic elites. As for corpus planning, HSA offers insights on how education can affect language standardisation, and on the role of socio-political and cultural movements supporting specific ethnic and linguistic identity. Finally, in terms of acquisition planning, through HSA it is possible to investigate the impact of colonial education on native language varieties, the instrumental role of English as a global language and its impact on national language policies, as well as what resources are available to obtain educational materials for minority language teaching.

At this point, the connecting themes existing in Tollefson’s HSA and Gramsci’s theory of the State appear easy to identify. First, despite the different meaning the authors give to the term ‘structure’, both their approaches start from the premise that structure is a functional tool in the analysis of state-related elements. This occurs because, in both cases, everything that is connected to the state can be associated with structures that constitute society. In addition, we know that, for Gramsci, the identification of (super)structural components is in fact a methodological and not an organic process, because they are singularly identifiable in society, but they are always interwoven and interdependent. We can develop a similar consideration for HSA since, within Tollefson’s view of Micro- and Macro-variables, the two levels are intertwined and not separable in reality. A third common point that emerges, therefore, is that both Tollefson and Gramsci conceive State and society as a whole, but they both argue that it is necessary to divide them into their various components in order to understand how they work. On the one hand, Gramsci identifies different types of State, the various forces that act in society and the different moments of state life that contribute to historical evolution. On the other hand, Tollefson categorises multiple active variables that have a significant impact on language both at a macro and a micro level, such as ideologies in language policy, distribution of resources, and language use. Finally, both Tollefson and Gramsci talk about education in relation to the State, albeit in different ways. In the case of HSA, education is a way to detect social inequalities, while in Gramsci education is a function of the State, whose aim should be to educate people. Despite appearances though, these two interpretations do not exclude one another, and can positively support our discussion on multilingualism. In particular, the fact that education conveys social inequality could be a symptom of a State that neglects its educational role, or that supports an ideology that works against this goal. Conversely, therefore, if a State actively promotes a type of education that supports language diversity, then education will indeed become an effective tool to redefine language hierarchies and support multilingualism. In order to better understand how state dynamics work, then, we must look at a more complex system of variables, such as the one suggested by Grenoble and Whaley (2006).
7.4 **Micro and Macro Variables**

We have seen that the micro-macro variables system is an outcome achieved by Tollefson in his definition of HSA. However, this is not the only holistic method that identifies two interacting levels in the analysis of language policy. Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley (2006), for example, develop a discussion of language revitalisation that focuses particularly on small communities and investigates their linguistic conditions through a two-folded set of Micro and Macro Variables. Grenoble and Whaley argue that, despite the simplistic and often inadequate partition of language assessment scales, they serve the purpose of providing an indicative system of reference on the conditions of minority languages. Therefore, the two authors start by combining the language vitality assessment system suggested by the UNESCO’s Ad Hoc Group on Endangered Languages (2003) with the assessment scale of intergenerational transmission proposed by Krauss (1997). UNESCO’s scale, in particular, focuses on nine factors that, by interacting with each other and influencing a speech community, can affect the vitality of a language. These factors are: 1) Intergenerational language transmission; 2) Absolute number of speakers; 3) Proportion of speakers within the total population; 4) Trends in existing language domains; 5) Response to new domains and media; 6) Materials for language education and literacy; 7) Governmental and institutional language policies; 8) Community members’ attitudes toward their own language; and 9) Amount and quality of documentation. As pointed out by the authors, the first factor, intergenerational transmission, remains the immediate indicator of language vitality. However, it would be too simplistic to consider it as an overall indicator, and that is why Krauss’ scale is also employed by the authors. This assessment system identifies 10 degrees of transmission, associated with letters of the alphabet. At level a, the variety is spoken by all generations, including younger ones. It is then followed by a-, b-, c-, c-, -d, d, and d-, all indicating different stages when the language is used only by progressively older generations. The last level, e, includes all those languages that no longer have speakers.

From this point of view, Grenoble and Whaley have the opportunity to develop their own theoretical framework. Moving from the assumption that “there are unique historical, economic, societal and political factors that have affected the manner in which language shift⁴ occurs” (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 21), and that those issues are necessarily interconnected, the authors develop an elaborated system of Macro and Micro Variables by which to analyse language shift and revitalisation (see also Grenoble & Whaley, 1998). These variables are defined as those “features of an endangerment situation” that are respectively external and internal to the group using the local language (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, pp. 22, and further). The *Macro Variables* are those operating at the extra-national, national and regional levels. At the *extra-national level*, the globalised system of communities, and the influence that a country can exert on other neighbouring states are among the factors that can cause or accelerate language shift. The factors listed as relevant at the *national level*

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are the types of language policy, language attitudes and education policies implemented by the central government, which is also responsible for the degree of regional autonomy granted to the regions/provinces, and any related federal support. Finally, at the regional level, the authors look at the regional languages and their density in terms of number of speakers and geographical distribution. On the other hand, the Micro-Variables identified by Grenoble and Whaley are language attitudes, religion, literacy, and human and financial resources. Language attitudes are important because they are generally not homogeneous, and, within the same community, there can be various degrees of positive and negative support towards the minority language. Both religion and literacy, also, convey and may foster regular language use. Finally, human and financial resources are key factors in assisting the minority, as the available economic support, the number of people involved in the project, and their skills are enough to determine the potential success of a revitalisation plan.

One of the best examples of contexts in which these two sets of variables appear evident and connected with one another is once again the case of the European Union (EU) that we have already discussed in the previous chapter. Not only is the EU an international institution, a fact that allows us to explore the multi-dimensional nature of its Political Society, it has also developed official language policy guidelines for its member states, which also gives us the chance to better understand how various levels work with one another in the presence of an explicit language intervention. To this point (June 2017), the EU counts 28 member states, because, even though the UK voted to leave the EU with a referendum on 23 June 2016, the country is still formally a member state. These 28 states have brought the count of the official languages of the EU to 24. The official linguistic policy of the EU starts with the premise that

Languages are an important priority for the EU. Language is an integral part of our identity and the most direct expression of culture. In Europe linguistic diversity is a fact of life. In an EU founded on ‘unity in diversity’, the ability to communicate in several languages is a must for individuals, organisations and companies alike (Györffy, 2016, p. 1).

The EU, then, developed a plan in order to endorse the multilingual and multicultural nature of Europe through language diversity, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. This strategy is aimed at supporting, both financially and ideologically, all the recognised languages of the EU area, and requires the member states to enforce adequate measures to promote multilingualism in their respective countries. The most important practical application of this plan for multilingualism is the compulsory study of at least two foreign languages at school, a practice that all the countries of the EU introduced in 2008. In this situation, we can identify Macro variables at two levels: the extra-national one, with the language policy of the EU, and the national level, whit all the member states implementing their individual policies in line with the EU guidelines. In terms of Micro variables, the fundamental ones in this context are language attitudes, literacy programmes and financial resources,

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5 On the role of language attitudes, and the following religion, see the next chapter.
6 In chapter nine we will return on the difference between explicit and implicit language policy.
7 The process of Brexit will require at least a couple of years, and will probably be effective only around 2019: there are no definitive dates, as the negotiations are still in progress at the time of writing.
all directed, at least theoretically, towards the promotion of multilingualism. In reality, however, there is another Macro variable that influences this language policy even at a Micro level, and it is determined by the hegemony and the effectiveness of the languages of the EU. If we look at the 2014 statistics on the languages taught and learned in the EU area in general secondary education, we find that not all member states ensure the teaching of at least two foreign languages, and some countries have a percentage of students involved in this practice often significantly below the EU average (51%): Hungary (48%), Denmark (46%), Lithuania (41%), Spain (26%), Italy (23%), Portugal (7%), Ireland (7%), the UK (5%) and Greece (2%) (Eurostat, 2016). What is possibly even more striking is the data on the most studied languages of the EU, a situation that is likely destined to change in the future, when the UK’s vote to leave the EU will be enforced (see also Gazzola, 2016, p. 20). Currently, despite the fact that English is an official language in only three of the 28 EU member states (the U.K., Ireland, and Malta), this language is at the top of the list, and the gap existing between English and the other languages is quite surprising. The statistics office of the EU (Eurostat, 2016) shows that 94% of students choose English, followed by French (23%), Spanish and German (both 19%), and Italian and Russian (both 3%), with all the other languages with percentages of 2% or lower. What these figures indicate is that both Macro and Micro variables can be influenced by other variables, even when they depend on official political forces. Other variables, determined by wider, external factors, can be powerful enough to alter the existing system, and the interference thus created has the potential to significantly affect the outcome of the measure.

In line with what we have discussed in chapter three about nationalism, this particular situation ultimately determines that language policies cannot be generalised or standardised, and a certain degree of customisation must be guaranteed in order to adjust the policy to the complexities of the various social forces. This aspect explains also why there can be a significant variety in the main models for language revitalisation. Grenoble and Whaley (2006), in particular, focus on seven of them, including community-based programmes, which vary according to the needs of the community, and total and partial immersion programmes, where the local language is employed respectively as the sole or as one of the teaching languages for all or many of the school subjects. Two other options are the programmes that teach the local language as a second/foreign language to adults or children, and the language documentation projects as forms of revitalisation. The last two models considered by Grenoble and Whaley are master-apprentice programmes, which work through language-learning teams, and language reclamation programmes for languages that are no longer used in daily communication. In this context, the authors also refer to other relevant topics for the revitalisation process, such as the questions of literacy and orthography. For the first one, Grenoble and Whaley clarify that literacy is a complex issue, since, if not well planned, it can actually have the opposite outcome of leading the minority language community to language shift towards the majority language. For these reasons, the authors point out that it is necessary to ensure literacy both in the minority and majority language, by creating specific domains in which each variety can be used. They also remind us that any attempt at guaranteeing literacy in the minority language would be nullified without the

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As mentioned in the previous chapter, for a complete analysis of EU language policy in terms of effectiveness and fairness, see Gazzola (2006b, 2016).
support of the local community. In relation to literacy, orthography occupies a key stage in the process of language standardisation, because it dictates how a variety is represented graphically, and determines the set of rules that prescribes what is right and what is wrong in that language. Hence the importance of ensuring that a particular standardisation process is in line with the needs of the community:

Beyond purely linguistic considerations, there are a range of social, psychological, economic, political, and historical issues involved in making decisions about how to write a language. [...] initial (and continued) acceptance [of an orthographic system] by the people for whom it is designed is critical in determining its eventual effectiveness and use (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 137).

Models of language revitalisation, literacy and orthography lead the authors to explain their guidelines for creating a language programme aimed at the revitalisation of minority languages. Grenoble and Whaley (2006, p. 160 ff.) divide the process into eight stages, that I have schematised as follows:

1) **Preliminaries.** The authors prescribe a five-stage assessment procedure aimed at guaranteeing that the preliminary conditions for language revitalisation exist. The first stage focuses on the assessment of the financial, linguistic, human, and emotional resources available for the project. After that, there should be an assessment of language vitality, language variation and language attitudes: this would indicate how much a language is spoken, how many varieties of that language people use, and what relation the community has with the language. Grenoble and Whaley recommend tools such as surveys as useful ways to collect these types of data. Finally, it is important to assess the goals and needs of the revitalisation process.

2) **Troubleshooting,** i.e., how to identify problems and find a solution. The problems can be internal: disagreements on the programme within the community, difficulties in finding people who want to be involved, continuity in leadership over the long run, and so on. External problems, such as unsupportive language education policies, or lack of financial resources, vary significantly from case to case, and cannot be easily predicted.

3) **Updating the lexicon.** It is important to create new words and to keep the vocabulary updated. This can be achieved through borrowings from other languages or through the creation of new words.

4) **Creating a literacy programme,** through tools such as the assessment of the community needs, the creation of supporting materials for the standardisation and the implementation of the language.

5) **Teacher training,** which can be achieved through the involvement of native speakers directly from the community.

6) **Employment of technology** as a helpful tool for promoting language use.

7) **The role of outsiders,** such as academics or missionaries, should be acknowledged and regulated according to the community needs.
8) *Evaluation and long-term prognosis* of the revitalisation process through surveys. In this way, it is possible to evaluate the conditions of language vitality, variation and attitudes, and to assess a series of elements such as the use of literacy in the community, the status of written languages, the range of attitudes towards literacy found in the community, and the general literacy outcomes.

This system of guidelines to create a language programme can be methodologically associated with Gramsci’s way of organising the analysis of society, especially for the first three steps. In particular, in the first one, the preliminaries, Grenoble and Whaley describe an evaluation process that will clarify whether the intervention is possible or not. This type of procedure can be associated with Gramsci’s theory of the State: if we consider that this preliminary analysis should investigate society and its dynamics, then the analysis can be actually conducted using the key Gramscian concepts that we have explored in this chapter, such as Civil and Political Society, and the types of State. Similarly, the second step in Grenoble & Whaley’s programme, troubleshooting, can once again be carried out using Gramscian tools, as the analysis of internal and external factors can be developed in line with Gramsci’s examination of socio-political forces. Finally, the third point, the update of the lexicon, can be connected to Gramsci’s ideas of language that we have seen in chapter five. The social conceptualisation of language developed by Gramsci can be considered a constant readjustment of the language to the society in which it is used. This readjustment needs to be constant as new social features require new ways to express and describe the sociolinguistic forces operating in a given context. At this point, if we consider that both Grenoble and Whaley’s approach and Gramsci’s theories pivot on the role of structural variables, then society and its historical-political features, as key structural components, become indeed fundamental terms of reference in language policy, and constitute a necessary context in perspective of the redefinition of language hierarchies and the endorsement of multilingualism.

### 7.5 The Historical-Political Context

In light of what we have discussed in this chapter, we can appreciate that, whether we use Tollefson’s ideas, Grenoble and Whaley’s approach, or Gramsci’s framework, the result is always a discussion that draws together threads of politics, social structure, economy, and history. Tollefson, through his HSA, covers the context of language planning, even though he focuses only on a small group of key concepts as guidelines. While this approach provides a concise method to follow in language education policies, it appears insufficient to include the multiple facets that society necessarily implies in its widest sense, beyond the sole focus on language education. Grenoble and Whaley, on the other hand, focus on a very articulated model that tries to predict the outcome of
language revitalisation projects by looking at multiple factors involved in the condition of minority languages. Paradoxically, though, despite the different layers into which they divide society, and the detailed eight-stage language programme, the process of revitalisation that the authors outline does not sufficiently stress how to explore the wider social and political context. In addition, it does not clarify the impact of the historical-political frame on minority communities and their languages.

It seems appropriate, however, to investigate the historical and political influences as intrinsic features of the State, while taking into account broader economic and cultural elements à la Gramsci. In other words, even though it is necessary to maintain a connection with the regional/local level, we must also focus on those macro-variables at the national level that necessarily affect the other underlying strata. The most productive way to do so is via the employment of a framework that focuses on the Historical-Political Context. This approach is developed by employing Gramsci’s understanding of the integral State in light of Tollefson’s HSA and the Micro-Macro variables identified by Grenoble and Whaley. We have seen how HSA is substantially in line with Gramsci’s theory of the Integral State, in that structure is a functional tool in the analysis of state-related elements. HSA, however, focuses mainly on the impact that the socio-economic frame has on language education as a key element of language policy. This is where Grenoble and Whaley’s framework comes in useful. Their system of Macro and Micro variables goes beyond field-specific considerations, and includes a complex classification of elements coming from, and affecting, society in its whole. The fact that these forces are considered both at a national and local level implies also that this type of analysis can focus on language hierarchies even outside the educational sphere, which is their point of focus. In addition, if Tollefson highlights that restricting minority languages to specific domains does more harm than good because it institutionalises their subordinate conditions, Grenoble and Whaley argue that it is necessary to ensure that both minority and majority languages are monitored through the creation of particular domains for each variety. The approach followed by Grenoble and Whaley, then, is an attempt at being comprehensive by embracing several threads. These threads expand Tollefson’s HSA, and the system of Micro and Macro variables, together with the eight steps in the creation of a language programme, balance the national and the regional levels by making sure that they interact with one another. Grenoble and Whaley obtain a complex model that tries to predict some of the problems that language revitalisation can bring by discussing key points of the revitalisation process. These points, in line with what was discussed in chapter three, are multidimensional as they involve the local dimension but with a national coordination, together with the role of human and financial resources, and – above all – the attitude of the people towards minority languages.

In this way, by creating the basis for the support of minority and regional/local languages, we can ensure the redefinition of language hierarchies and the consequent normalisation of multilingualism. Even so, as the case of Catalan shows, a language can face several practical obstacles, despite having its hegemony recognised by its speakers and legal and political local systems in support of its use. In this sense, as suggested by the Grup d’Estudi de Llengües Amenaçades (The Group of Studies of Threatened Languages) of the University of Barcelona (2004), the solution can come from the active promotion of multilingualism. Ensuring Catalan a significant position in Catalonia will serve
the double purpose of contrasting the dominance of Spanish and of turning a phenomenon such as immigration, previously considered as an obstacle to the spread of Catalan, into a fruitful resource. Historically, Catalan was deeply ostracised by the extreme nationalism of Franco’s regime (1939-1975) and has been hindered by an enduring Spanish-centred national imprint that has rejected most of Catalonia’s claims for independence, including referendums (BBC News, 2014). Nevertheless, Catalan has also been constantly fostered by a strong regional identity and an equally strong nationalist movement, which has eventually encouraged several interventions in support of its use and prestige, such as constitutional recognition, political representation and dedicated language education (May, 2012, p. 258 ff.). Despite those encouraging premises, however, one of the major problems that the promotion of Catalan is facing is related to the significant migrations towards Catalonia (Bastardas i Boada, 2012b, p. 97). As the richest region in Spain, the area sees many migrants coming from other parts of Spain or from outside Spain’s borders. This implies that those migrants often have little or no proficiency in Catalan, and eventually opt for the more efficient Spanish, which is the official language of the country and one of the world’s most spoken languages. In terms of language use, this phenomenon unbalances the proportion of the number of speakers, and affects the frequency with which Spanish is chosen over Catalan for everyday communication (Bastardas i Boada, 2012a, pp. 82-83). What language specialists such as the Grup d’Estudi de Llengües Amenaçades and the linguist Albert Bastardas i Boada have suggested, therefore, is to endorse an effective use of bi/multilingualism through the promotion of Catalan in schools and everyday life. By making sure that Catalan is regularly employed as a means of teaching and learning, the new generations born or raised in Catalonia will have the chance to ensure their bi/multilingual proficiency in both Catalan and Spanish. As Bastardas i Boada argues (2012a, p. 85 ff.), however, the enforcement of a Catalan language education does not necessarily extend its influence into other social areas. For this reason, the crucial point should be to increase the occasions in which Catalan can be used both in public and private domains, because

Si ni la mateixa població d’origen no prefereix el català per conversar, per quins set sous l’han de parlar les altres poblacions d’origen immigrat?

(If not even the population originally from Catalonia prefers to use Catalan in conversation, why on earth would immigrant people have to speak it?) (Bastardas i Boada, 2012a, p. 85).

What is necessary, therefore, is to make sure that the available tools that a language such as Catalan has in its social structures are adequately supported by a type of language hierarchy that promotes bi/multilingualism both for the native population and new migrants. In this way, with the help of an adequate system of ideology, bi/multilingualism has the potential of acquiring enough hegemony

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9 On the role of immigration, see also the case studies of Iceland and Veneto respectively in chapter eight and ten.
10 On a detailed discussion on Catalonia and nationalism, see Keating (2001) and Guibernau (2013).
11 On the debate about the discrimination of Spanish in Catalonia, see May (2012, p. 264 ff.).
and fairness to maintain the use of Catalan active *together with* Spanish and other languages, redefining in this way the existing language hierarchies of the state.

If we look at what we discussed thus far in light of the questions we wanted to answer at the beginning of this chapter, i.e., how to identify the historical and political power relations that affect languages, and how historical and political contingencies are relevant in reshaping language hierarchies, where does Gramsci’s State theory fit, then? As we have mentioned, what remains overlooked in Grenoble and Whaley’s approach is a thorough set of guidelines for evaluating the wider context. The two authors do acknowledge as Macro variables the importance of the socio-political framework, and the existing differences in the historical, cultural and governmental contexts that minority languages can face. They also dedicate part of their case studies discussion to the Macro-level background of minority languages. However, Grenoble and Whaley’s revitalisation programme does not provide detailed answers on how to approach the assessment of these Macro variables in the first place. The nature of Gramsci’s concepts, though, is to be always entangled with other key terms, and this ensures the development of a complex lens through which we can analyse the whole societal frame surrounding a specific language hierarchy. When we look at the State in its Integral sense, then, we are forced to take into consideration not only the features and the nature of what creates the Civil and the Political Society in a specific context. We also need to understand why the various components are in that specific situation; why they are balanced/unbalanced in that way; what historical events determined such an outcome, and so on. Following these guidelines, the investigation of the wider societal context will be insightful and customised for that specific case. This, translated in sociolinguistic terms, implies that the approach thus created allows one to focus on multiple aspects related to language policy, because all the basic theoretical tools necessary to understand languages in their social dimension are provided by the complexity of the Integral State itself. This particular aspect is also in line with one of Gramsci’s principles mentioned earlier for the analysis of historical forces, i.e., that whatever happens in society has its origins in that society, and can be processed through elements that are already present in that society. For these reasons, Gramsci’s State theory encourages an in-depth inquiry on the historical-political context of a language, with two important outcomes: on the one hand, it allows a fundamental overview of the reasons why a particular set of language hierarchies developed in a given context; on the other, it gives the opportunity to evaluate the prestige of those language, and to suggest possible strategies to reconstruct those hierarchies. In this process, a key role is played by ideologies and their related Cultural context, on which the next chapter will focus.
CHAPTER EIGHT
IDEOLOGY, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS: THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw that ideologies and attitudes have a role in Grenoble and Whaley's model of language revitalisation. Undoubtedly, the way a certain language is seen both by speakers and non-speakers can deeply affect the way in which it is employed and supported. If the language is surrounded by negative attitudes, these can lead to language shift. On the contrary, if the language variety is supported by positive ideologies, speakers may encourage interventions to support their language, ensuring a multilingual environment. Language attitudes and beliefs, as sociolinguistic by-products of more or less explicit ideologies existing in society, become in this way a key tool to explore the formation of language hierarchies and what types of culture generate and are generated by them.

Despite the significant popularity of the concept of ideology per se, language ideology is rarely associated with Gramsci in the sociolinguistic literature, with Philips, Kroskrity and Ives among the most notable exceptions. I argue, however, that the complexity of Gramsci's conceptualisation of ideology is particularly useful as a base to explore the multi-dimensional nature of the ideological pre-assumptions towards languages. The term thus conceived has significant potential if employed as a lens through which to analyse the language attitudes and beliefs of a group. In exploring this idea, I will be guided by two main questions: How can we conceive, detect and analyse ideologies in society? How can we approach ideology so as to highlight the complex outcomes that a particular set of beliefs has for language hierarchies?

This chapter will thus provide an inquiry on how to conceptualise language ideologies from a cultural perspective stating from Gramsci's concept of ideology. In the first part, I will look at Gramsci's theory of ideology, with its connections to other key terms, such as philosophy, common sense, religion and folklore. As anticipated in our discussion on hegemony, it is helpful to explore Gramsci's ideology in connection with other terms, as all these concepts are interrelated and add value to one another. Even more, all the key terms used in this chapter can be considered different ways in which ideologies are expressed, and they will often appear in connection or in opposition with one another. In line with my approach in the previous chapters on hegemony and the State, I will support Gramsci's conceptualisation of ideology with the relevant literature that has subsequently interpreted it. I will
then explore the specific use of the concept of ideology in sociolinguistics, limiting my attention to the literature that refers specifically to Gramsci. I will then focus on two approaches that relate to language ideologies, but with a different terminology, i.e., language attitudes as conceived by Garret, Coupland and Williams, and Baker; and language beliefs as theorised by Bernard Spolsky. I will support the discussion in section four with an analysis of the cases of Iceland and Scotland through this lens. I will then conclude the chapter by summarising the connection between ideologies, attitudes and beliefs, and by discussing how ideologies build up the Cultural Context. With the Gramscian assumption that “the ‘cultural moment’” has great importance for collective practical activities (Q.10.II, §44), we can therefore prove how shaping ideologies with the appropriate cultural context can play a key role in restructuring language hierarchies in favour of multilingualism.

8.2 Ideology

For Gramsci, ideologies are described as conceptions of the world. As simple as it may sound, though, the term can be interpreted in multiple, even contradictory ways, similarly to what we have seen about the nation, to which ideology is naturally linked. Gramsci relates this ambivalence to the fact that the generic term ‘ideology’ actually refers to two main definitions. Historically organic ideologies are the most important and necessary form of ideology. They are naturally inclined to organise social masses and provide them with awareness of their role within society. Therefore, they implicitly connect all the individual and collective forms of social life. Historically arbitrary ideologies, on the other hand, are haphazard outcomes of individuals, and cannot make any significant change in society. They are useful only in the dialectical juxtaposition between mistakes (arbitrary ideologies) and truth (necessary ideologies) (Q.7, §19; Q.11, §12). All through the Notebooks, Gramsci uses the term ‘ideology’ alternatively with both meanings, and it is often only the context that can suggest the one to which he is referring. This distinction also explains why the term is subjected to various interpretations, and connected with a series of other key concepts, among which we find philosophy, common sense, religion and folklore.

It would be a mistake, for example, to confuse ideology with philosophy, as Gramsci differentiates the two terms. Ideologies are generally internal to a class, and represent particular worldviews aimed at the solution of immediate and defined issues (Q.10.I, §10). Philosophy, on the other hand, indicates a conception of the world that represents the intellectual and moral life of a specific social group in its historical evolution. A philosophy is never limited to the hic et nunc: it conceives the group not only in its immediate interests, but also in view of its future needs, representing the unity of history and nature (Q.11, §62). There can be many philosophies, and each social group has to make a choice, selecting the one(s) that can best represent it. Even more, Gramsci argues that all men are philosophers because they spontaneously follow a system of values that is provided by three key
conceptual clusters detectable in culture, namely common sense and good sense; religion and folklore; and language, which is "an ensemble of specific notions and concepts, and not a mere group of words grammatically lacking of any meaning" (Q.11, §12). This means that every person is an unbeknownst philosopher simply because they are able to produce some kind of intellectual activity, such as language. However, acknowledging this status of philosopher is but the first step in the process of thinking critically about one’s self and about society. What Gramsci calls for is to move away from a mere spontaneous participation to the “conception of the world mechanically imposed from the surroundings”, so as to realise each person’s role in the production of world’s history. In addition, since it is not possible to separate philosophy from politics, every choice in this sense will necessarily become a political matter (Q.11, §12, Note IV). In the previous chapter we have seen how history and politics both contribute to the definition of the status of a language. Now, if we consider philosophy as a conception of the world, and philosophical activities as “a cultural struggle to transform popular ‘mentality’ and to share philosophical innovations”, then “the question of language and languages, ‘technically’, has to be emphasised” (Q.10.II, §44), because sharing a philosophy necessarily requires a language that conveys it.

Philosophy, therefore, plays an essential role within this Gramscian framework. In general, what Gramsci calls philosophy is more or less explicitly referred to as philosophy of praxis, which is also a synonym for Marxism used to avoid prison censorship. It is the philosophy of praxis that “conceives the reality of human relations of knowledge as an element of political ‘hegemony’” (Q.10.II, §6). Particularly, the realisation of a hegemonic apparatus creates a new ideological terrain and therefore becomes a matter of knowledge, a philosophical fact itself (Q.10.II, §12). Gramsci clearly states that, within the framework of the philosophy of praxis, ideologies are never arbitrary acts, but always real historical facts. As such, they need to be politically challenged and exposed as instruments of dominance: this is the necessary way to make the masses intellectually independent from the ruling groups, and to destroy a type of hegemony to create a new one. In order to clarify this key point, it is helpful to directly look at a significant passage from Notebook 10.II, §41.XII:

La filosofia della praxis […] non tende a risolvere pacificamente le contraddizioni esistenti nella storia e nella società, anzi è la stessa teoria di tali contraddizioni; non è lo strumento di governo di gruppi dominanti per avere il consenso ed esercitare l’egemonia su classi subalterne; è l’espressione di queste classi subalterne che vogliono educare se stesse all’arte di governo e che hanno interesse a conoscere tutte le verità […]. La critica delle ideologie, nella filosofia della praxis, […] afferma la loro caducità rapida in quanto tendono a nascondere la realtà, cioè la lotta e la contraddizione.

[The philosophy of praxis […] does not help to peacefully solve the existing contradictions in history and society: on the contrary, it is the very theory of these contradictions. It is not the ruling tool of dominant groups to gain consensus and exert hegemony on the subaltern classes. On the contrary, it is the very expression of the subaltern classes who want to educate themselves on the art of governing, and who want to know all the truths […]. The critique of the ideologies, in the philosophy of praxis, […]

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1 On Gramsci’s use of ‘philosophy of praxis’ in relation to Marxism, and on how Marxism influenced Gramsci as a “philosophy of praxis”, see Thomas (2009b) and Green (2011).
underlines their rapid decay as they tend to hide reality, with its struggles and contradictions.

In this passage, we can also appreciate another conceptual association: the one between philosophy (of praxis) and history. In particular, the philosophy of praxis theorises that “every ‘truth’, believed eternal and absolute, actually has practical origins, and represented, at some point, a temporary value” (Q.11, §62). Philosophy of praxis therefore characterises the ‘historicity’ of every conception of the world. This, in turn, implies that every philosophy can become ideology in the arbitrary sense, including the very philosophy of praxis. In this perspective, philosophy identifies with history to the point that philosophies change according to the development of historical facts (Q.10.II, §31). In other words:

La filosofia di un’epoca storica non è dunque altro che la ‘storia’ di quella stessa epoca, non è altro che la massa di variazioni che il gruppo dirigente è riuscito a determinare nella realtà precedente: storia e filosofia sono inscindibili in questo senso, formano un blocco.

[The philosophy of a historical period is actually the history of that period, it is but the system of variations that the ruling group determined in the preceding period: history and philosophy are in this sense inseparable, they form a bloc.] (Q.10.II, §16, my emphasis).

As a result of this significant presence of philosophy in everyday life, another fundamental distinction developed by Gramsci is between philosophy and common sense. Gramsci distinguishes the Italian senso comune (literally ‘common sense’) from buon senso (literally ‘good sense’), even though the latter corresponds to what in English is actually called common sense. I will use the expression common sense to refer to ‘senso comune’, thus giving it the meaning that Gramsci employs. With this clarification, if philosophy is an intellectual order that represents the individual thought, common sense becomes a diffuse and generic worldview, specific to a certain historical moment and a specific popular environment (Q.11, §12). Common sense is the traditional worldview of the people that shapes everyday life and generates that spontaneity that we have seen in chapter six (Q.3, §48). In other words, common sense is the spontaneous philosophy of the masses (Q.11, §13). Therefore, because a philosophy can become the common sense of a group, even of its intellectuals, it is important to look for philosophies that are able to connect with practical life and to renovate common sense through coherence. Even more, the philosophy of praxis can only be conceived as an endless struggle, whose starting point is always common sense. This is the reason why, at least at the beginning, the philosophy of praxis necessarily appears in contrast with previous ways of thinking, even when they were concretely based on reality. The philosophy of praxis initially embodies the critique of common sense, and this relation is ensured by politics, which, as we have seen, cannot be separated from philosophy.

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2 For a detailed discussion on the problems related to the use and the English translation of the Italian ‘senso comune’, see Ives (2004b). See also Crehan (2016).
Gramsci also combines the two key terms of philosophy and common sense, and talks about the *philosophy of common sense*. In his definition, despite his statement that all men are philosophers, Gramsci considers the concept as the “philosophy of the non-philosophers”, because it represents a conception of the world uncritically absorbed by various socio-cultural groups in order to develop the morality of the average individual (Q.11, §13). The great systems of traditional philosophies, i.e., those belonging to the intellectual and cultural elites, undoubtedly influence the masses. However, these great systems often have a negative impact of the masses: instead of generating a positive reaction that enhances the desire of the popular groups for inner transformation, the dominant philosophy acts as a restricting agent for their thought. Even more, for the large masses of the population, the philosophy of the dominant group often appears as fanaticism and superstition. This occurs because masses rarely change their worldview, and when they do, they never adopt the new one in a pure version, but always in a partial, irregular way (Q.11, §12). For these reasons, the new conceptions of the world that the masses develop tend to be rather fragile, especially if they are clearly in contrast with the worldviews of the dominant group. The fracture between the masses and the intellectual elites tend to occur in contexts where the State does not have a unique and coherent conception of the world, and the intellectuals are scattered across all social strata.

Another definition of common sense can be given in connection with the related term of *good sense*. In Gramsci, the terms can be sometimes found together and used as synonyms of “the most common conception on life and humans” (Q.24, §4). However, if *common sense* is the naïve philosophy of the people that cannot accept the individual thought, *good sense* refers to the antagonism towards intricate and obscure scientific and philosophical theories. Specifically, in this binomial opposition, common sense appears as an “equivocal, contradictory and pluralistic concept”, and it would be “nonsensical to use it as the evidence of the truth” (Q.11, §13). Consequently, good sense can be associated with philosophy, as it represents the critique and the overcoming of common sense and religion, with which it is in opposition. It is *religion* that supplies the main features of common sense, and this explains why, unlike with philosophy, there is no fracture between religion and common sense (Q.11, §13). Religion as a concept, however, must never be considered as a unitary element, but rather as an ensemble of various and often contradictory religious views entangled together. Those views can vary from social group to social group, or even within the same group. Common sense is the result of external influences coming from the most unrefined among these different religious inputs, together with previously existing religions and scientific superstitions. Nevertheless, common sense intrinsically owns the ‘confidence’ of conveying external reality, i.e., of representing reality as it is. This specific feature derives directly from religion, which is described also as “an ideology, the most rooted and spread ideology, not a proof or a demonstration” (Q.11, §37).

Another element in Gramsci’s terminological spectrum on ideology is the concept of *folklore*. The term is described as “a relatively stiffened phase of the popular consciences in a specific time and place” (Q.24, §4). As we have seen in chapter three, folklore can overlap with provincialism, and it can also be associated with a “primitive and traditional” worldview that school systems try to transform into something “more modern” (Q.12, §2). This specific feature, however, does not imply that folklore...
is a bizarre oddity. In fact, it should be considered as a serious reflection of the cultural life of the people (Q.27, §1). In other words, folklore is a conception of the world and life, most often implicitly understood by certain social groups and in contrast with the ‘official’ conceptions of the world. The main feature that distinguishes folklore from other worldviews derives from its popular character, which generates its unsystematic and multifaceted nature. Even religion can have a popular nature, since we have seen that religious views can vary according to social groups. Gramsci specifies that all religions can be considered ‘folklore’ in relation to modern thought: therefore, common sense becomes ‘folklore’ in relation to philosophy.

Recapitulating, then, where does ideology stand in this conceptual cluster? According to Gramsci, every ruling class has an ideological structure. In other words, every dominating group tries to consolidate, defend and develop its theoretical and ideological organisation (Q. 3, §49). The tools that can maintain class ideology are those that directly or indirectly influence the wider public opinion. They vary from newspapers, libraries, schools and cultural associations, to architecture, street planning and place names. Gramsci, at this point, wonders:

Cosa si può contrapporre, da parte di una classe innovatrice, a questo complesso formidabile di trincee e fortificazioni della classe dominante? Lo spirito di scissione, cioè il progressivo acquisto della coscienza della propria personalità storica, spirito di scissione che deve tendere ad allargarsi dalla classe protagonista alle classi alleate potenziali: tutto ciò domanda un complesso lavoro ideologico, la prima condizione del quale è l’esatta conoscenza del campo da svuotare del suo elemento di massa umana.

What can an innovative class oppose to this remarkable system of trenches and fortifications of the dominant class? The spirit of division, i.e., the gradual acquisition of awareness of its own historical personality. The spirit of division needs to spread from the first innovative class to other potential allies: all this demands a complex ideological work, whose first condition is the precise knowledge of the area that must be emptied from its element of human mass] (Q.3, §49, my emphasis).

What emerges from this passage is that, once established, ideology can work as a system of trenches and fortifications. However, this ideological structure, developed and ensured by the dominant group, is not indestructible. As we have seen for hegemony and the State, there is no final or fixed situation, as everything is a matter of unsteady equilibriums: as with hegemony, ideology can be maintained, but this apparent stability can mutate at any time. In the specific case of ideology, in order to change the situation, the growing class needs to be willing to follow its own path, separating itself from the dominant one. A group needs then to become aware of its own historical role, and in so doing it has to consistently work on its ideology, so as to understand which areas of society need specific attention. However, when the ruling group becomes only dominant and no longer directing, it means that the masses no longer recognise the traditional ideologies, and therefore the hegemony of the ruling group (Q.3, §34). This generates a “crisis of authority”, because the masses de facto show the possibility or even the necessity of a new culture. This crisis of authority, which relates to the crisis of hegemony that we saw in chapter six, can also be inter- and intra- generational, causing a period of “interregnum”, when the old ideologies are dead but the new ones are not yet ready to be embraced.
The interconnections between the theory of the State and ideology thus appear quite revealing. For example, in the previous chapter we saw that no society will ever create problems for whose solutions there are not already certain necessary and sufficient conditions (Q.13, §17). This means that all that happens in society can be dealt with using tools that already exist within that society. Gramsci believes that the practical translation of this statement is the question of the formation of a collective will (Q.8, §195). This process occurs in time, and rarely displays itself in a sudden outburst. For this reason, it is fundamental to analyse the formation of historical and social movements in a very scrupulous way. Gramsci describes a molecular and meticulous process of analysis of those materials that can carry traces of a collective will, such as books, newspapers, public speeches and so on. These elements, taken together, should provide a certain degree of homogeneity, necessary and sufficient to guarantee a coordinated and simultaneous action in a specific geographical and historical moment. In this phase, then, the critical task is for the new representatives to critique the current ideological system. Through this assessment, it is possible to trigger a change in the importance of the old ideological features, where the new ideological complex starts distinguishing itself from the old ideological components by reclassifying their relevance.

Changes in social reality, however, can occur only in certain circumstances. We have seen that philosophy (of praxis) and history together are inseparable and form a bloc. In the previous chapter we have also seen that, for Marxism, reality is divided into structure (economic forces) and superstructure (other social, political and cultural forces). If these two elements are considered together as a complex and potentially contradictory ensemble, but where superstructures reflect the structure, we have a historical3 bloc (Q.8, §182). Only a totalitarian system of ideologies can represent the existing contradictions and allow the “reversal of the praxis”, because “if there is the development of a social group that is 100% homogeneous in terms of ideology, this means that there are the full premises for that reversal” (Q.8, §182). In other words, the expression historical bloc describes a situation where economic content and ethical-political form coincide (Q.10.I, §13), and this nexus is necessary and vital4 (Q.10.II, §41):

La concezione di ‘blocco storico’ [è quella] in cui appunto le forze materiali sono il contenuto e le ideologie la forma, distinzione di forma e contenuto meramente didascalica, perché le forze materiali non sarebbero concepibili storicamente senza forma, e le ideologie sarebbero ghiribizzi individuali senza le forze materiali.

[The conceptualisation of ‘historical bloc’ [is that] in which the material forces are the content, and the ideologies the form. This distinction between form and content is purely instructive, as the material forces would not be historically conceivable without form, and ideologies would be mere individual whims without material forces] (Q.7, §21).

Material forces, then, would not make sense without their ideologies. This postulation assumes particular strength if we consider that the struggle between two different hegemonic principles has

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3 Boothman (Gramsci, 1995, p. xi) notes that ‘historical’ should be preferred over ‘historic’ as a translation of the Italian storico, since the emphasis should be on the formation of the bloc through the historical process.

4 For a further discussion on the historical bloc, see next chapter.
always existed, and the expansion of one or the other needs to be historically determined (Q.10.I, §13). Even more, Gramsci explains that “the political development of the concept of hegemony” is the factor that actually allows the critical development of the conceptions of the world, which can evolve from being common sense into being philosophies (Q.11, §12, Note IV). Hegemony thus appears as another element of Gramsci’s theory of ideology, to the point that Maltese (2008, p. 164) talks about an ‘historical-ideological bloc’ as the condition to ensure hegemony over Civil Society. It is in this sense that we should read Showstack Sassoon’s reminder that the “concrete” historical bloc “exists in society at any point in time [and] is defined by the ‘moment of hegemony and consent’” (1980, p. 122).

The historical bloc represents therefore a composite concept. Showstack Sassoon (1980, pp. 120-121) identifies two ways in which the term can be interpreted and employed. The first one sees the historical block as the ensemble of the contradictory processes of reality. In this interpretation, ideologies are compared with material forces, and confirm the necessary connection between the complexities of the structure and superstructure. The second interpretation considers the historical bloc as the conjunction between two levels of analysis, one theoretical and one concrete. In this sense, it is possible to provide an investigation of the nature of structure and superstructure in real social environments. Showstack Sassoon, however, specifies also that we cannot consider the historical bloc as an ordinary political alliance, because the term naturally involves complex interactions that go beyond the mere political sphere.

Since the historical bloc functions as an ideological bloc, ideology assumes a peculiar role within the society. If ideology is “aware of its nature, which is not absolute or eternal” (Liguori, 2006, pp. 62-63), then it is thanks to ideology that the struggle for hegemony is possible, as it is ideology that allows a group to be conscious of itself and therefore able to oppose another hegemony. Because ideologies are something that “is impossible not to have”, they also exist before political choices, and define collective and individual subjectivities (Liguori, 2006, p. 66). Ideologies, in this Gramscian sense, can then be referred both to conscious and subconscious aspects of social and cultural norms. They become the “agents of social unification” (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, pp. 59-60), including both explicit and implicit conceptions of the world (Williams, 1981, p. 26).

It is within this peculiar conceptualisation that ideologies are best connected to religion and folklore. If religion is a fragmented component of common sense (Mayo, 2015, pp. 116-117), folklore too has a downgrading connotation, especially when compared with philosophy or organic ideologies. Cirese (1982), however, points out that Gramsci managed to elevate the nature of folklore, by describing folklore as a conception of the world, albeit contradictory and fragmentary. He believes that it is possible to detect a positive implication of folklore if we consider it not only as a subject of study, but also as a form of energy coming from real life. Gramsci undoubtedly acknowledges the importance of this concept, as much as he considers common sense an important element to explain society. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Liguori (2006, p. 62), the new conception of the world has to recognise the common sense only in order to overcome it. If we describe folklore as “a sort of museum where scattered rags and proofs of old conceptions of the world are preserved” (Schirru, 2008, p. 773), then overcoming common sense generates a spiral of conceptions of the world that
keep challenging one another. The spiral triggered by the examination of ideology is thus both
terminological and sequential. We can see that the ‘lexical family’ in which ideology is articulated
includes ideology itself, philosophy, vision or conception of the world, religion, common sense, folklore
and so on (Liguori, 2006, pp. 63-64). These terms, though, are more than just related to ideology.
They represent the phases of the cultural process. In particular, these key terms are seen as fluid
entities, where each one represents a “moment in the creative popular dynamics, which is not fixed or
definable” (Broccoli, 1972, p. 120). In this perspective, every stage of this cultural development
benefits from the others, constituting a global vision of social interactions. The process of overcoming
folklore assumes therefore a pedagogical intent. If the masses embody folklore and its effects, then
they should be educated to abandon this unsystematic and implicit view through a dialectical process.
The only way to surpass folklore is for the masses to become aware of the contradictions that their
folkloric worldview involuntarily carries, and to question the validity of what appears to be indisputable
(Maltese, 2008, p. 286). At the end of the process, a new conception of the world should be
embraced, and we know that the highest form of worldview is philosophy. We have also seen that
philosophy, especially in its historical dimension, is deeply related to politics. If we consider politics as
a continuous attempt to struggle for hegemony, and hegemony as a pedagogical instrument, then the
very conceptualisation of philosophy is ultimately educational (Maltese, 2008, p. 41).

As anticipated, at this point it will appear clear that, when we talk about ideologies, the set of
concepts and interpretations that we automatically recall is far more complex than a simple group of
“conceptions of the world”. The ways in which these conceptions of the world affect people and
influence social factors vary in intensity, duration and typology, and acknowledging these crucial
features becomes fundamental in understanding how ideologies work in the first place. Ideologies can
be generic and historically determined, as common sense; temporary and unsystematic, as folklore;
or composite and contradictory, as religion. On the other side of the spectrum, ideologies can be
characteristic of an era, thus working side by side with history and politics, as philosophy; or they can
become philosophy of praxis, which occurs when philosophy and hegemony intertwine at their highest
level, and subaltern groups become intellectually independent. Ideologies can therefore be organic,
i.e., they can provide structure and awareness to social groups; or they can be arbitrary, i.e., they can
be the outcome of a single situation, and as such they will represent only a phase in the evolution of
history, having no long-term impact on society. Regardless of their nature, however, ideologies can
become a unique “system of trenches and fortifications”, and their role in constructing language
hierarchies should appear obvious. When ideologies and historical forces work together to the point
that they coincide with the quest for hegemony, they form a historical bloc. Ideologies, though, despite
their undeniable influence, are not eternal, and can be overcome as part of the historical process,
which is a constant alternation of different moments in dialectical evolution. For these reasons,
whether the ideologies are in support or against a certain social fact, they can evolve and be shaped
according to the necessities of the social group they belong to, or according to the degree of
awareness that people develop in relation to their role in history. This, when transferred into a
specifically sociolinguistic perspective, means that ideologies are a pivotal element to generate, and
therefore regenerate, language hierarchies. In this sense, the potential of the analysis of ideologies
with reference to the (re)construction of language hierarchies and the creation of culture seems strikingly significant.

8.3 Language Ideologies

The presence of ideologies, therefore, appears in the structural elements of society, which include culture, education, and language. It is important to point out, however, that Gramsci “never explicitly relates his theory of ideology, common sense, and the role of intellectuals to his writings on grammar and language”, even though “the resonances are clearly there” (Ives, 2004a, p. 71). Language ideologies have obviously played a highly relevant role in sociolinguistics, and their conceptualisation and documentation has helped many scholars to explain linguistic behaviours (Philips, 1998). It is not easy, though, to find a comprehensive definition of the concept of language ideology. This occurs because the term ideology is often “associated with a confusing tangle of common-sense and semitechnical meanings” (Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998, p. 5). This implies also that the explanation of what is normally intended by the term is often taken for granted as general knowledge, and left to the reader to sort out. It is even more difficult to identify an explicit Gramscian imprint to the term, despite the fact that, as noted by Glyn Williams,

it is on ideology that one must concentrate with reference on the Marxist potential for sociolinguistics […]. The translation of Gramsci’s seminal work into English in 1971 was a tremendous boost to British developments in the study of ideology (1992, p. 247).

Interesting attempts in this sense have nevertheless been pursued. Kroskrity (2000), for example, following an anthropological perspective, analyses the socio-cultural impact of language ideologies on minority and indigenous communities. He suggests that we consider language ideologies as a “cluster of concepts consisting of a number of converging dimensions” (2000, p. 7). He focuses on four key points, the first of which is the definition of language ideologies as the representation of the perception of language as constructed in a particular social and cultural group. In this sense, it is not possible to conceive of language matters as ‘socio-politically disinterested’ or neutral. The second point is that language ideologies are naturally multifaceted because they represent the diversity within sociocultural groups and the consequent multiple perspectives on languages. It is within this frame that the author includes Gramsci’s voice, in particular through the struggle for hegemony, which makes sure that “even ‘dominant’ ideologies are dynamically responsive to every changing forms of opposition” (2000, p.13). The third element is related to the degree of awareness perceived in relation to language ideologies. Another component of this dimension concerns the sites in which the ideology is developed, since they can be more or less institutionalised. The fourth point made by Kroskrity is that language ideologies have their members, and their role is to mediate between social structures and language use. In so doing, language users produce their own ideologies by selecting the features
they are most willing to reproduce. Following this path, Philips (2000) looks at how language ideologies played a role in the creation of Tonga as a nation-state, with specific attention to what happens in court, where the Tongan and the British systems come together. In particular, even though she does not fully endorse a Gramscian linguistic reading of hegemony, she relates the multiple contexts in which ideologies can operate to Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony, ideology and the State. By joining the vertexes of this conceptual triangle, she obtains a framework that conceives ideologies as by-products of the hegemonic process. Because the struggle for hegemony is constant and involves the State in its entirety, then the ideological influence can be detected also outside the mere government’s area of influence, and include religious institutions and schools.

Educational spaces are therefore one of the key channels through which language ideologies are expressed. Apple (2012, p. 14) sees ideologies as ambivalent in their nature, as they can be both positive and negative. This is why it is necessary to acknowledge school and everyday life as the terrains in which ideologies are induced in the most subtle way (Apple, 2004). Aiming at ensuring the hegemony of the dominant group, ideologies are seen to become part of the “common sense practices and consciousness of our lives as well as by overt economic and political manipulation” (2004, p. 117). In this picture, however, it is culture that plays an important role in the processes of ideological reproduction. Structure and superstructure function together, and economy alone is not sufficient to maintain hegemony. Apple considers schools as ‘mechanisms of cultural distribution’ and, as such, capable of transmitting dominant ideologies (2004, p. 25). Even more so, the intellectual and cultural components of society are those that “give legitimacy to the [social] categories [and] make the ideological forms seem neutral” (2004, p. 9).

The concept of language ideology, however, seems often difficult to define, especially if we want to underline its relevance for the various social forces. Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity (1998) dedicate their volume to the analysis of language ideologies in society from an anthropological perspective. Woolard (1998, pp. 5-7), in particular, tries to put some order into the matter by identifying four meanings that scholarship has so far attributed to the term ideology. The first one identifies ideology as a conceptual phenomenon that the individual articulates through specific representations and ideas. These beliefs are not necessarily conscious, systematic or deliberately organised, and can be influential at a subconscious level. According to the authors, Gramsci’s interpretation of hegemony belongs to this group. The second and most common meaning given to ideology is a set of ideas rooted in society. Their effect is to reflect specific social positions while making them appear universal. In this way, ideologies cannot develop independently, and they are always responsive to a particular social moment. The third describes ideology as a representation of power. In this sense, ideology appears the condicio sine qua non to gain and maintain a position of social dominance. Finally, the fourth meaning considered by the authors is that of ideology as a form of distortion and manipulation of social and power relations. Within this framework, Philips (1998) focuses on the connection between language ideologies and power. In particular, she believes that this interdependence is better understood if we look at the role of hegemony in its Gramscian conceptualisation. In this way, hegemony and ideology together generate a consistent structure,
relevant not only for Gramsci, but also for Marxism and the scholarship inspired by it. For Philips, nation should be considered a sociocultural phenomenon, where language is “implicated ideologically in political rule” (1998, pp. 212-213). The connection between language ideologies and hegemony, then, is based on the fact that public institutions promulgate language ideologies as a strategy to constitute and maintain their hegemony. Both hegemony and ideology can be either implicit or explicit in social interactions, and it is the Marxist/Gramscian conceptualisation of the terms that allows this twofold interpretation.

The duality that appears to be intrinsic in language ideologies seems also a constant in other sociolinguistic understandings of the term. For example, in his discussion on language ideologies, hegemony and state development in Tanzania, Blommaert (2014) recognises the dual (and potentially confusing) nature of the concept of ideology. He identifies two common meanings attributed to the notion. The first one, that he substantially embraces, is ideology as a set of ideas conveyed through oral or written means. The second meaning is “the semiotic process of instilling ideas about society in the minds of members of that society” (Blommaert, 2014, p. 18). If for Philips the key binomial related to ideology is implicit/explicit, in Blommaert the focus is on the formal/informal nature of the concept. This implies that ideologies can be presented both in the official sources of state dogma and in the indirect representations of that dogma. Regardless of the type of interpretation given to the concept, however, the aim of ideologies is always to make sure that a specific worldview obtains enough hegemony to be successful. Hegemony, for the author, is understood in its Gramscian sense, and it is therefore conceived as a political and ideological dimension of consensual power.

Another way to read ideology in a linguistic context is to analyse it in relation to common sense. In his work on the power existing in and behind language, Fairclough (2014) starts from the assumption that economic power and the state, together, can support each other against the working class, creating in the process a “dominant bloc” (2014, p. 64). In this way, ideology becomes the “naturalising force” that ensures the legitimisation of the power of the dominant bloc. If the naturalising process is successful, ideologies become instilled as ‘common sense’. The author starts from the Gramscian definition of common sense, and conceives the term as an “‘implicit philosophy’ in the practical activities of social life” (2014, p. 107). Fairclough, though, rearranges Gramsci’s ideas, and talks of “ideological common sense”, defined as a “common sense in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power”. Once again, binomials are introduced to explore the interactions between the ideological and the social: this time, the binomials cover the direct/indirect and the visible/invisible effects of ideologies on society. Fairclough represents ideological common sense as a spectrum in which it is possible to detect various degrees of support for unequal power relations. Even though ideological common sense increases its efficacy when it is shared by the majority of people, this variation implies that, within a given society, any social group can have its own ideological struggle, and “ideological struggle pre-eminently takes place in language” (2014, p. 110).

Language ideologies, therefore, are generally seen as assumptions, ideas, preconceptions, manipulations or representations of reality that take root in society and affect the way certain linguistic phenomena are perceived by the people. Because of their intrinsically ambiguous nature, language
ideologies can be described through opposing traits, such as implicit/explicit, formal/informal, direct/indirect and visible/invisible. Similarly, Gramsci’s concept of ideology and the related terminological cluster represent diverse and often opposing features. It is this particularly composite nature of ideologies that allows us to fully appreciate the ramifications of their influence at all levels of society, and especially in the (re)creation of language hierarchies. In particular, the (super-)structural components of society, such as economy, politics, education, religion and culture, are also the main tools through which ideologies are conveyed both in Gramsci’s theories and in sociolinguistic theory. If we consider that ideological matters are economic, political, educational, religious and cultural, then we can understand why they often trigger sensitive frames of mind. This implies that (language) ideologies always have a significant psychological component, and thus can be expressed as attitudes and beliefs.

8.4 Language Attitudes and Beliefs

Language ideologies, then, as conceived in sociolinguistics, can be related to a broader conceptual cluster that involves the notions of language attitudes and beliefs, which, as we will see, are originally from other disciplines. This connection becomes relevant as it clarifies and extends the scope of ideology by focusing also on the individual representations of pre-existing ideological constructions. Similarly to what we outlined for ideology, attitudes and beliefs deserve to be explained, as their meaning can be easily misinterpreted. Despite the frequent use of the generic ‘attitude’ and ‘belief’, these terms present a “complex and rather elusive nature” (Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2003, p. 1). For this reason, there is no real agreement on the use of language attitudes in sociolinguistic research: it is the nature of the term itself that, with its psychological component, makes it difficult to pursue neutrality (Spolsky, 2004, p. ix). This explains also why there can be considerable confusion around the use of these terms, and why authors such as Colin Baker (1992) and Bernard Spolsky (2004) have decided to “venture definitions, present first efforts at a theory, attempt to do justice to other opinions and develop, where it seems needed, [their] own terminology” (Spolsky, 2004, p. ix).

Language attitude is a term that draws mainly from social and linguistic psychology. Attitudes are conceived as “latent [but relatively stable] elements” that represent “an evaluative orientation to a social object” (Garrett et al., 2003, pp. 2-3). Put in different terms, attitudes are “a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour” (Baker, 1992, p. 10). They constitute an essential element that is acquired through human interactions and sociocultural experiences. According to Baker (1992, pp. 14-15), attitudes, unlike ideologies, are able to acknowledge both the positions of the group and the individual. Attitudes, however, as happens with ideologies, assume different facets and can be defined through opposing traits. They can be
stable/ephemeral, context-dependent/context-independent and work as both inputs or outputs from social actions (Baker, 1992, p. 12; Garrett et al., 2003, p. 6). This abundance of applications is due to multiple reasons. Attitude is a term of common use, which allows the public to better understand what the specialists mean by that term (Baker, 1992, p. 9). This can increase the impact of language attitudes as a research tool, together with the fact that, when studied, attitudes can provide a useful insight into community beliefs. In particular, “the status, value and importance of a language is most often and mostly easily (though imperfectly) measured by attitudes to that language” (Baker, 1992, p. 10). The results are generally positive because language attitudes’ analysis can take into account a range of different factors, such as education, age, gender, cultural background and so on.

Attitudes, then, cannot be considered simple in their construction. In their study on language attitudes in Wales, to which we will return in the next chapter, Garret, Coupland and Williams (2003, pp. 3-9) recognise three structural components of attitudes: cognitive, because attitudes reflect beliefs about reality; affective, because attitudes are emotionally charged; and behavioural, because they determine certain (re)actions. Within this frame, language attitudes develop the cognitive component through the set of stereotypes existing in a given social group. Certain linguistic forms can trigger positive or negative reactions, which explains the affective component of attitudes. Regardless of their supportive or adverse nature, though, stereotypes have two significant effects in the relations between one group and the other. On one hand, their social-explanatory function strengthens the cohesion and enhances the similarities of vision within the group through the formation of ideologies. On the other, their opposite function of social differentiation preserves and heightens what distinguishes that particular group from others, thus enhancing the socio-cultural and linguistic hierarchies of that society. For these reasons, stereotypes function as a system of “collective cognitive needs”, and become a “repository of ‘common-sense’ beliefs or filters through which social life is transacted and interpreted” (2003, p. 4). As for the behavioural component, Garret et al. specify that a change in a person or group’s attitude does not necessarily imply also a change in their actual behaviour towards a language. This occurs because our behaviour is influenced by a series of external circumstances, guided by the desire of respecting mainstream social norms. Focusing on language attitudes, therefore, allows one to explore not only what types of attitude are present in a certain group and what effects they are having on the languages of that group, but also how these attitudes are produced and defined. In this sense, attitudes generally influence language hierarchies at various levels, including dialects, regional/local languages, minority languages, foreign/immigrant languages, language use, and language learning.

Another way to look at language ideologies is to look at language beliefs. Even though Edwards (1994, p. 97) argues that attitudes include beliefs, in Shohamy’s interpretation, language beliefs are seen as the “ideologies about a language that lie behind each policy” (2006, p. 52). This conceptualisation does not imply that an existing language policy necessarily endorses the dominant set of beliefs, as beliefs can in fact be opposed or neglected. The situation, therefore, is more complex than what it might superficially appear. Following Spolsky’s model of language policy analysis, then, we need to start from the assumption that
Language and language policy both exist in [...] highly complex, interacting and dynamic contexts, the modification of any part of which may have correlated effects (and causes) on any other part (Spolsky, 2004, p. 6)

From this perspective, Spolsky identifies three components of language policy in relation to a community: practices, beliefs and management (Spolsky, 2004, 2009a). Language practices are referred to as the set of observable behaviours that the speakers have when selecting specific language varieties. It helps with the establishment of a language model that can be transferred to language teaching and therefore furnish the basis for a language choice. Language management, as we will see in the next chapter, indicates the interventions of who has the authority to influence or regulate language choices and use, so that speakers can change their practices or beliefs. The notion of language beliefs, on which we are focusing here, is basically introduced as “the variety of beliefs expressed about the nature of language and its diverse usage” (Donaher, 2010, p. 1), then the connection between ideologies, attitudes and beliefs seems unmistakable.

Language beliefs, as conceived by Spolsky, are an interesting intersection between the theories of ideology and attitude that we have seen so far. Spolsky uses the term to describe “all the individual and group reactions to language, languages, language varieties, language variants and language users, whether attitudes, motivations, or values, or gathered into recognisable ideologies” (2014, pp. 410, my emphasis). Language beliefs can also be referred to as those sets of ideologies that determine the assignment of specific statuses and values to given languages, varieties or traits (2009a, p. 4), with ideologies defined as ultimate “expressions of moral judgement” (2009a, p. 28). The resulting status of a language is generally influenced by the number and the importance of the speakers of that certain language variety and by the types of socio-economic advantages that can be achieved with the use of that same language variety. On the other hand, the value of a language is largely determined by the personal experiences of the speaker(s), who will consider a given language variety positively or negatively charged, according to what they think about it and according to the language hierarchies present in that context. Since language beliefs are not practices, the way speakers feel about a certain language is always detectable in theory, but not necessarily in the actual use, as they may stigmatise that variety, but still speak it more or less regularly. This is a key point in understanding language shift, as it explains why, in the family domain, some speakers still use a minority language among themselves, without passing it on to the younger generations.

Practice, beliefs and management, together, can explain the reasons behind the choice of using one language variety rather than another, which ultimately contributes to the (re)definition of language hierarchies. Language beliefs, however, focus primarily on those ideologies that influence the individual choice (2009a, pp. 5-6). These ideologies are a general set of beliefs about appropriate language practices, sometimes forming a consensual ideology, assigning values and prestige to various aspects of the language varieties used (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14, my emphasis).
Language beliefs thus identify how to relate to a certain language, and they can work either for or against it. In so doing, they engage with actual language practices in a bi-directional process where beliefs both come from and have influence on practices, but where the two components do not necessarily coincide. Language beliefs can be as numerous as the speech communities of a certain area, and when more beliefs are active in the same place, there is normally one that is dominant: hence the resonance with Gramsci’s notions of ideology and hegemony. Even more, we can appreciate how Gramsci’s ideologies, language ideologies, attitudes and beliefs ultimately build on one another and explain the dynamics behind language hierarchies. Language attitudes, for example, are included as a Micro variable in Grenoble and Whaley’s model (2006) analysed in the previous chapter. Given the multiple ways in which ideologies can affect all the (super) structural elements of society, we can better understand how they are active at all levels and in all sociolinguistic contexts. This aspect makes ideologies, in fact, both a Micro and a Macro variable. Moreover, ideologies can take multiple forms, affect several socio-linguistic factors and develop in different contexts. For example, we have seen that language hierarchies develop in multilingual settings, where ideologies have a significant role in determining the prestige of the various languages in relation to one another. Nevertheless, we can detect actively operating ideologies even in substantially monolingual situations, especially if we consider the discussion of nationalism developed in chapter three. If we look at the cases of Iceland and Scotland, for example, we can see how language ideologies, even when they are similarly generated by widespread nationalist tendencies, can develop in different directions towards monolingualism or multilingualism

Iceland is a largely monolingual country with Icelandic as a de facto official language, no indigenous/regional languages, no dialects (only minor geographical differences in pronunciation), one minority language (Icelandic Sign Language) and a small number of migrants from other countries (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, pp. 208-209). This peculiar situation has been determined by a series of factors, such as the geographical isolation of the island and a widely supported national and cultural identity that finds its roots in Iceland’s early literature of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These elements triggered very protectionist attitudes towards Icelandic culture and language, which became stronger during the period of the domination of Denmark, started in the thirteenth century and ended only in 1944 (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, pp. 212-213). For these reasons, the romantic and nationalistic ideologies of language purism seen in chapter three played a key role in building Icelandic nationhood, and were a fundamental part of the political claims for the independence of Iceland from Denmark in the nineteenth and twentieth century (Vikør, 2000, pp. 124-125). These particular ideologies have determined a systematic employment of language policy and planning at a national level aimed at “the preservation and the cultivation of Icelandic” through the activities of the parliament in association with the various Icelandic

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5 For a thorough discussion of the sociolinguistic situation of Iceland in light of Spolsky’s language policy theory, see Albury (2016).

6 As a consequence of this purist approach, Icelandic preserves ancient vocabulary and grammar, and reduces to the minimum the employment of borrowings (which are entirely adapted to Icelandic phonology and morphology) by forming new words from others already existing (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, pp. 221-222).
language academies and planning agencies (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, p. 223). Iceland is now trying to balance these purist views with the wider, global linguistic context, since official language policy discourse, based on traditional ideologies about the language [...], seems to be in conflict with modern practices in Iceland, which are underpinned by different ideologies such as, for example, the belief in the necessity to compete in the modern world (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, p. 228).

This conflict of ideologies represents a key point in the understanding of Iceland’s current situation. As noted by Vikør (2000, p. 125), the influence of Anglo-American culture is perceived as a threat to national identity as it will necessarily determine an increased number of loan words and a progressive detachment from more traditional linguistic and cultural forms. The attitudes towards English seem consequently to be somewhat ambivalent, with most people supporting English as a second language, but not as a language of education (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, pp. 234-235). Moreover, similarly to what we have seen for Catalan with Spanish, another channel by which English affects Iceland is through migrants, who often have no proficiency in Icelandic, and therefore use English rather than Icelandic for everyday communication (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, pp. 241-256). For these reasons, Iceland’s legislation prescribes the exclusive use of Icelandic in many sociolinguistic domains, such a law, commerce, names, schools and media, and the few exceptions include aviation and international law (Vikør, 2000, p. 125).

In parallel, English is having a significant influence on Iceland’s linguistic purism not only within the country’s borders, but also in relation to the island’s partnership with the Nordic Council of Ministries (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, pp. 258-260). The initial agreement between the member-states (Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland) was to keep the communications in their respective languages thanks to their inter-intelligibility7. However, as problematised by Albury (2016, p. 364), the mutual intelligibility between the member-states is not always guaranteed, especially with the increased cooperation with the Baltic countries8. Therefore, after the initial employment of German, English has been increasingly appearing as a convenient lingua franca for all the member states of the Nordic Council of Ministries (Haugen, 1991, p. 39). In order to contest this trend, the Nordic Council is promoting the Scandinavian languages as formal working languages to be used in the official communications between the countries (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015, p. 196). In addition to that, the Nordic countries together are trying to neutralise the influence of English through various initiatives, such as school exchange programmes, aimed at the promotion of Nordic cultures and languages as equally viable options (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, p. 260). As for Iceland itself, the solution suggested by Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson, and by Iceland’s Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, comes from a reorganisation of the ideological system of the country, again similarly to what we have seen with Catalonia. In this case, if Icelanders maintain their positive

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7 The inter-intelligibility is guaranteed because Finland is formally bilingual Finnish/Swedish, therefore they use Swedish in the Nordic Council of Ministries’ meetings. With Finnish this would not be possible, as Finnish is a Uralic-Finnic language (and so is Sámi), while Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Icelandic are Northern-Germanic languages.

8 Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania speak respectively a Uralic-Finnish and two Balto-Slavic languages.
attitudes towards Icelandic, they can ensure Icelandic’s hegemony, and motivate migrants to learn the national language (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2010, p. 241). As noted by Albury (2016, pp. 365-368), though, this monolingual nationalist ideology of “Icelandic-ness” is built on language attitudes that move away from the inclusion of language diversity, and are rather directed towards the promotion of the primacy of Icelandic. In light of what we have discussed here and in chapter three, we can thus note that Iceland’s language ideologies are mainly expressed through specific attitudes and beliefs that prioritise the monolingual/ monocultural national identity in the name of a unique historical and cultural past, reflecting in this way the basic principles of the eternal nationalism.

Eternal nationalist tendencies, however, can result in significantly different language hierarchies, where language policy is informed by the inclusion of multilingual practices. If we look at the case of Scotland, in particular, we can appreciate how such apparently contrasting sets of ideologies can in fact merge and lay the foundations for a unique cultural identity. Scotland is a multilingual nation, with four main languages recognised to various extents: English, British Sign Language, Scottish Gaelic, and Scots. This particular situation is the heritage of a long history of multilingual influences: the introduction of the Gaelic language through the Irish settlers during the fifth and sixth centuries was followed by the influence of the Germanic language spoken in Northern England in the seventh century, which eventually developed as Scots. After that, the multilingual history of Scotland continued through the Viking occupation (seventh-thirteenth centuries), and the subsequent French and Latin influences (twelfth-sixteenth centuries) coming from mainland Europe (Hancock, 2014, p. 169). Because of the language hierarchies developed through the centuries, the various languages of Scotland, and especially Scottish Gaelic, were ostracised in the name of the more prestigious French and English language varieties (McConville, 2015, pp. 47-48). The situation became critical for Scots and Scottish Gaelic after the Acts of Union in 1707 signed between England and Scotland. As Scotland lost its independent sovereignty, the Act established English as the official language of power and education and consigned both Scots and Gaelic to private domains (Hancock, 2014, pp. 169-170). The first significant structural factor that determined a watershed for the two Scottish languages was the country’s political devolution from the UK, voted through a referendum in 1997, which also determined the establishment of an independent parliament in 1999 (Dunbar, 2006, p. 1; Phipps & Fassetta, 2015, p. 5). At that stage, the intergenerational transmission of Scottish Gaelic and Scots was not consistent, and their public presence was not encouraged (Dunbar, 2006, pp. 5-6). Therefore, in order to support those languages, both Civil Society and Political Society worked together for several initiatives aimed at the revitalisation of Scottish Gaelic and Scots, such as the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act in 2005, the Scots Language Centre and the Scots Language Working Group in 2010 (Hancock, 2014, p. 172). The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act, in particular, officialised the status of Scottish Gaelic, and initiated a National Gaelic Language Plan with the support of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the agency responsible for the language planning of Scottish Gaelic (McLeod, 2006, p. vii). Initiatives such as these have had the great merit of offering new opportunities to learn Gaelic to both Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers of all ages, even outside the traditional North-

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9 For a detailed analysis of the role of the Scottish parliament on Scottish Gaelic, see Marten (2009).
Western Gaelic-speaking areas: Gaelic-medium educational institutions and language courses for adults are increasing the number of new speakers of Gaelic (McLeod & O’Rourke, 2015, pp. 152-154).

Despite this strong, deep-rooted nationalism that constantly ignites Scotland’s campaigns for independence from the UK, both the Civil and the Political Society of Scotland acknowledge that their country’s intrinsic multilingualism is also enriched by the various languages spoken by its migrant communities (Phipps & Fassetta, 2015, pp. 10-12). This is a crucial aspect to explain why the case of Scotland moves away from Iceland’s monolingualism and shows, instead, how eternal nationalism and multilingualism can in fact enrich one another. In this sense, those ideologies of cultural and political independence, pivoting on the uniqueness of Scottish identity, are used as active incentives in the promotion of Scotland’s multilingualism. The current major party in the Scottish government is the Scottish National Party (SNP), which supports the independence of Scotland but has also increasingly supported both the Scottish languages and other European and non-European languages in the country’s schools and universities, in order to foster Scotland’s international presence (Hancock, 2014, p. 175; Phipps & Fassetta, 2015, p. 10). In addition, Scotland’s current First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, declared that

We are so much stronger for the diversity that shapes us. We are one Scotland and we are simply home to all of those who have chosen to live here, that is who and what we are (Glanfield, 2016).

Therefore, Scotland defies the extreme drifts discussed in chapter three, as the ideologies of national unity and independence develop side by side with those of cultural diversity, showing how multilingualism can effectively adjust nationalist tendencies towards language diversity. In light of this unique combination of ideologies, it will be clear why, unlike with Iceland, language diversity is a major focus for the literature on Scottish language policy, and why a holistic and multilingual approach to the matter is seen as a natural solution (Hancock, 2014, pp. 168-169; McConville, 2015, p. 52). Finally, we can also appreciate how different and even contrasting social and political ideologies, such as nationalism and multilingualism, can indeed shape a strong, considered language policy approach able to reorganise the cultural context of a society by being supportive of language diversity.

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10 On Scottish nationalism, see Keating (2001) and Laible (2008). The last referendum for the independence from the UK in 2014 was unsuccessful (55.3% vs 44.7% of the population voted to remain part of the UK) (The Scottish Parliament, 2014). Nevertheless, the British referendum of 2016 to leave the European Union, albeit eventually successful (51.9% vs 48.1%), showed that a striking majority of Scottish people are willing to remain in the EU (62% vs 38%). The results were so significant that the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon declared that she is considering promoting another referendum to leave the UK and remain in the EU (Carrell, 2016). On the phenomenon of the “independence in Europe” and its apparent paradox, see Laible (2008).
8.5 The Cultural Context

Situations such as the ones experienced by Iceland and Scotland show how the development of ideologies is intrinsically related to the historical and cultural background of a group, and does not allow for easy generalisations. The way these ideologies develop will inevitably shape the culture, and therefore the language hierarchies, of that society. In addition, we can see how ideologies, attitudes and beliefs are present in every society, regardless of its number of language varieties. If a substantially monolingual country such as Iceland acknowledges the paramount role of language ideologies as the key for the promotion of national monolingualism, then we can easily understand how contrasting the case of Scotland is in pursuing, instead, the promotion of multilingualism through, and not despite, nationalism.

In light of the questions that we posed at the beginning of the chapter, then, we can say that, whether we call them ideologies, attitudes, stereotypes or beliefs, the bias towards a certain language variety exists in all types of society\(^{11}\), and the hierarchies thus generated are always characterised by unsteady and contrasting features. Ideological preconceptions can assume opposing traits and be positive or negative, explicit or implicit, official and unofficial, and so on. Language ideologies are always highly influential on how the members of a community perceive a language: hence their importance in a multilingual context, especially in contrasting language hierarchies. As the references to ideology and culture encountered throughout this chapter demonstrate, pre-conceptions tend to have a cultural origin, and they are formed by the sedimentation of values and ideas that the community itself has experienced. Even religion and folklore, as fundamental parts of a people’s culture, can play a role in determining language hierarchies.

In order to be able to define the cultural context of a language, therefore, it will be beneficial to enrich Gramsci’s concept of ideology with the conceptualisations of language ideologies, attitudes and beliefs. First of all, associating ideology with attitudes underlines the psychological component that a pre-conception can have. Particularly, if we talk about attitudes in relation to stereotypes, we can appreciate how ideologies can more or less subtly influence people’s beliefs about a certain language variety. In addition, conceiving language beliefs as tools that can influence language choice helps us to understand their importance in our attempt to redefine language hierarchies in favour of multilingualism. As we have seen, in particular, beliefs do not necessarily translate into practice. Therefore, they can be understood as a subtle process that acts in the background, and that can have a consistent impact at any time in the history of a language. In other words, coming often from a complex entanglement of cultural experiences, the effect of ideologies can be described, using

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\(^{11}\) As a further example in this sense, *Endangered Languages* (Austin & Sallabank, 2014) collects several other cases in which ideologies and beliefs have been used in the analysis of the conditions of minority languages, including contributions by Lenore Grenoble and Bernard Spolsky.
Gramscian terminology, as a series of molecular changes that slowly but relentlessly impact on language use.

Attitudes towards a language are determined by various social, economic, political or cultural stigmas. Despite the fact that ideologies do not have a linguistic origin, their effect on languages can be nonetheless devastating. For example, as we have seen in chapter three, the Humanistic ideal of Latin and other European languages as the only noble written means of communication was the result of Eurocentric ideas of cultural, economic and technical-scientific superiority. This convergence of factors determined that all the oral languages encountered during the colonisation processes were automatically considered inferior and barbarous (Mignolo, 1992b). Religion played a paramount role, too, in this process, as indigenous and local languages were studied by missionaries only as a tool to convert native peoples to Christianity. In parallel, the process of conversion was helpful to teach English, Spanish, French and other European languages in order ultimately to dominate the conquered territories and cultures. Continuing the ideological spiral, the passage from an alleged cultural and religious superiority to a socio-political and economic stigmatisation of the indigenous peoples and languages was quick and often brutal.

But how can ideologies, thus conceived, fully define the Cultural Context of a language? Raymond Williams states that studies on culture often overlap those on ideology, because ideology is an "especially important and difficult part of the sociology of culture" (1981, p. 26). Even though "it is important to resist the temptation to fix on one [meaning] as the ‘correct one’" (Crehan, 2002, p. 41), we can say that

> culture is a set of beliefs or assumptions that a group of people share concerning how to see things, how to interpret events, what it is valid to question, what answers are acceptable, how to behave toward others, and how to do things (Stacey, 1992, p. 142).

This passage shows that culture, as a ‘set of beliefs’, is the collation of what is embedded in common sense, religion, folklore, language practice and social stereotypes. This ensemble of elements is what we call ideologies, and they define culture because they carry the beliefs and the perspectives of social groups. Multilingualism itself can become a key ideology in the process of structuring a new society, moving beyond any existing language hierarchies. In this sense, though, ideologies cannot be conceived as autonomous entities, as they always need agents who convey or contrast them. In the next chapter, therefore, I will discuss the executive context of languages, employing Gramsci’s theory of the intellectuals.
CHAPTER NINE
INTELLECTUALS, LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT AND
MECHANISMS: THE EXECUTIVE CONTEXT

9.1 Introduction

Looking at those who are responsible for determining the ideologies behind the status of a
language, and the language hierarchies thus generated, is another necessary stage in the analysis of
power relations to guarantee the hegemony of multilingualism. The final aspect we need to consider,
therefore, leads us to what I called the Executive Context, i.e., the ensemble of agents, such as
institutions, technicians and common people, who have the power of intervening into language
matters at any level. In order to describe this context and the nature of its agents, I will explore
Gramsci’s theory of intellectuals. The idea behind this choice is to move beyond the typical (but
limiting) correlation between intellectuals and the cultural world. Many commentators of Gramsci’s
work relate the key theory of intellectuals to education and culture (see for example Crehan, 2002;
Mayo, 1999, 2010b). This correlation is understandable and substantially in line with Gramsci’s own
ideas. However, I agree with Showstack Sassoon when she suggests that

While Gramsci’s interest in intellectuals may seem an obvious extension of an interest
in culture which goes back to his early political activities in Turin, his investigation of
intellectuals in prison is on a higher level of theoretical generalisation (1980, p. 134).

This choice serves the double purpose of re-categorising the concept of intellectuals (and of
agents in general) within a wider socio-linguistic context, and of associating Gramsci’s intellectuals
with a multilingual perspective that relates in particular to language policy-making processes. In this
perspective, after discussing the intellectuals as a social category, I will focus on two important
theories that shed light on the agents of socio-linguistic matters, i.e., Bernard Spolsky’s language
management and Elana Shohamy’s language mechanisms. In so doing, I will also provide some
examples of how these concepts can be usefully employed in the analysis of very diverse situations:
for Spolsky’s management, I will look at the sociolinguistic category of pidgin and creole languages;
for Shohamy’s mechanisms, I will briefly recall the role of Latin in Roman times, and then I will try to
conclude the discussion on the linguistic situation of Italy that we started in chapters three and four. I
will then look at the case of Wales before moving to the final section of the chapter, where I will
connect the concepts of intellectuals, management and mechanisms in order to outline the executive context.

The three guiding questions that will help me in developing this chapter are: Who is responsible for the enforcement of the interventions affecting languages? Who is involved in the creation of language hierarchies and how can they work for their reconstruction? How does this involvement represent ideology and practice? The role of ideology in this context is still paramount, as the nature and the degree of involvement of the agents is influenced by, and at the same time influences, the ideologies existing within society. Clarifying the connection between the agents and ideology is essential, because “being a conspiratorial entity, ideology is equated with rational and conscious actors who constitute ideology prior to action” (Williams, 1992, p. 244).

9.2 Intellectuals

The famous Gramscian theory of intellectuals covers a significant part of the Prison Notebooks. While we can recover references to intellectuals throughout Gramsci’s pre-prison production, in the prison writings there is a higher concentration of discussions on the intellectuals, with multiple references in many passages and at least two Notebooks (11 and 12) extensively focused on this topic. As it often happens in the Notebooks, however, despite this abundance of references, it is rather difficult to provide a generalised outlining of the term. The most complete definition of the concept is offered in Notebook 19, §26, where Gramsci writes

Per intellettuali occorre intendere non solo quei ceti comunemente intesi con questa denominazione, ma in generale tutto lo strato sociale che esercita funzioni organizzative in senso lato, sia nel campo della produzione, sia in quello della cultura, e in quello politico amministrativo.

[With ‘intellectuals’ we must intend not only those classes commonly referred to with this denomination, but in general the whole social stratum that, in a broad sense, exerts organisational skills in the field of production, in the area of culture and in the political and administrative spheres].

Within this frame, intellectuals perceive themselves as “the arbitrators and mediators of the real political struggles” (Q.10.I, §6), and indeed they are referred to as “the social element from which to take the governmental staff” (Q.10.II, §61). They are described also as “a stratum of people ‘specialised’ in conceptual and philosophical elaboration” (Q.11, Note IV, §12) developed through schools: the more complex the school system of a society is, the more articulated the cultural organisation of that society becomes, and the more specialised the various types of intellectuals result (Q.12, §1).
Gramsci initially distinguishes between traditional and organic intellectuals. Organic intellectuals are people of knowledge that become part of, or are created by, new social classes (Q.12, §1). They are intrinsic in every social group, and their fundamental function is to give “homogeneity” to the group itself and “awareness” of its function within society. These novel intellectuals often rely on already existing intellectual groups, which Gramsci defines as traditional. Examples of traditional intellectuals are ecclesiastics, scholars, philosophers and artists. They represent the continuity with the former historical and socio-economic structure, and they remain connected with the dominant social groups. Organic and traditional intellectuals are opposed to one another as, in order to become dominant, a social group needs to struggle

Per l’assimilazione e la conquista ‘ideologica’ degli intellettuali tradizionali, assimilazione e conquista che è tanto più rapida ed efficace quanto più il gruppo dato elabora simultaneamente i propri intellettuali organici.

[for the assimilation and the ‘ideological’ conquest of the traditional intellectuals, and the assimilation and the conquest are more rapid and effective if the group simultaneously develops its own organic intellectuals] (Q.12, §1).

The distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals is the most famous categorisation of the intellectuals that Gramsci develops, but it is certainly not the only one. Another distinction that Gramsci makes is between rural and urban intellectuals (Q.12, §1). Urban intellectuals are more related to the city and its industrial system, and they depend on it for their livelihood. Because they do not develop autonomous initiatives, and their role is mainly to connect the working masses with the entrepreneurs, they can be related to “army’s subaltern officials”. This associates the intellectuals with another famous concept that we have already mentioned, subalternity. Gramsci’s subalternity refers to social groups that, similarly to subaltern officials, have the potential to act or decide, but no power to do so because they are subjected to superior hierarchical powers. This connection is proposed more extensively in Notebook 19, §26, where the intellectuals as a general group are considered the equivalent of “non-commissioned officers and subaltern officers in the army, and partially of the senior officers with subaltern origins”. Rural intellectuals, on the other hand, are connected to the social masses in small towns and in the country. They are often also traditional intellectuals, and their role is to fill in the gap between the masses and the state¹. Their generally wealthy tenor of life makes their status appealing for the masses, which remain nevertheless in a situation of subalternity in relation to them. This “real subordination” of the lower classes to the intellectuals is crucial to understand collective life and social movements, to the point that “every organic development of the masses of farmers, to some extent, is linked to and depends on intellectual movements” (Q.12, §1).

A third distinction developed by Gramsci is that between pure intellectuals and practical intellectuals. Pure intellectuals are the leaders of the national intellectual groups, and their connection

¹ Gramsci covers the opposition between urban and rural intellectuals in relation to Italy’s social situation also in Alcuni temi della questione meridionale (Some themes on the Southern Question), an incomplete essay written in 1926 (Gramsci, 1971a).
to the philosophy of praxis is maintained on a theoretical level (Q.16, §9). Generally, they also elaborate the ideologies of the dominant classes. Practical intellectuals, on the other hand, have a stronger connection with history as a real fact, and therefore with the masses. Because they embrace the ideological struggle, which, as we have seen, is represented by the philosophy of practice, practical intellectuals can be also considered the “orthodox” intellectuals.

By including and categorising different types of intellectuals, Gramsci’s approach produces an extended version of the notion of intellectual itself. He believes that non-intellectuals do not exist, because every person is able to develop intellectual activity (Q.12, §1): “you cannot separate homo faber from homo sapiens” (Q.12, §3). However, not all men have the function of intellectuals, as there are what Gramsci calls skilled intellectuals (Q.24, §3). This type of intellectual generally develops in connection with the most significant social groups, and particularly the dominant ones (Q.12, §1). The apparent conflict between the two statements of “all men are intellectuals” and “the intellectuals are skilled specialists” can thus be resolved: the first idea implies that men are intellectuals by nature, while the second idea refers to men who specifically build on this innate feature and acquire additional abilities. Skilled intellectuals, then, are able to maintain their conceptions of the world, but, at the same time, adapt them according to various cultural traditions. In this way, they generate a “homogeneous centre of culture” that not only provides educational and formative support, but also elaborates a critical conscience on a specific historical base. Even though not everybody has the role of intellectual within society, every social group has its own group of intellectuals, or tends to create one (Q.19, §24). In order to become a new intellectual group, the intellectuals must avoid rhetoric and become directly involved in practical activities. In this way, they can build, organise and ultimately “rule” social life as both specialists and politicians (Q.12, §3). However, because social groups influence each other, intellectuals tend to be subordinated to the “power of attraction” (i.e., hegemony) of the progressive group (Q.19, §24).

The intellectuals are also necessary for the organisation and the innovation of ideas, and for establishing a specific cultural policy in cooperation with the people. They need to “rise directly from the masses while remaining in contact with them, in order to become the ‘ribs’ of their corset” (Q.11, §12). As we have discussed in chapter three, though, intellectuals are not necessarily representative of their country as a whole. This occurs for two main reasons. First, if the state does not embrace a coherent and homogeneous conception of the world, intellectuals may not be able to follow it, thus becoming scattered in various strata of society. Second, the cultural world often represents only an abstract level of the actual national and popular life, a fact that broadens the gap between intellectuals and the state they live in (Q.8, §145). In order to become representative on a national basis, intellectual movements should move towards the people and connect with them. It is through this practical connection that intellectuals can be successful in directing other people (Q.6, §10), because this is what “truly modifies the ideological landscape of an era” (Q.11, §12). Ensuring the connection between intellectuals and popular groups, though, can be a challenging task. For Gramsci, there are three main ways to “convert” the masses (Q.7, §71). It is possible to act molecularly on them, even

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2 In English in the original Italian text. Gramsci uses the term as the translation of “professionista” (Q.24, §3).
though the process will take a long time to thrive. It is also possible to work with the directing groups, i.e., the intellectuals, who should steadily maintain their position. In case this fails, a third option is to create a new group of intellectuals altogether. Eventually, the aim is always to create unity between masses and intellectuals, a task that should be pursued:

Non [...] per mantenere una unità al basso livello delle masse, ma appunto per costruire un **blocco intellettuale-morale** che renda politicamente possibile un progresso intellettuale di massa e non solo di scarsi gruppi di intellettuali.

[Not [...] to maintain unity at the low level of the masses, but in order to create an *intellectual-moral bloc* that makes politically possible the intellectual progress of the masses, and not just of small groups of intellectuals] (Q.11, §12, my emphasis).

As anticipated in the previous chapter, we can see that the theme of the *bloc* returns also in relation to intellectual activity. To provide a new definition of the historical bloc in this sense, we need to look at a significant passage from Notebook 11. Starting from the premise that it is impossible to make politics or history without a connection between the intellectuals and the people, Gramsci clarifies that

Se il rapporto tra intellettuali e popolo-nazione, tra dirigenti e diretti, tra governanti e governati, è dato da una adesione organica in cui il sentimento-passione diventa comprensione e quindi sapere (non meccanicamente ma in modo vivente), solo allora il rapporto è di rappresentanza, e avviene lo scambio di elementi individuali tra governati e governanti, tra diretti e dirigenti, cioè si realizza la via d’insieme che sola è la forza sociale, si crea il “blocco storico”.

[If the relationship between the intellectuals and the nation-people, the ruling and the ruled, is generated by an organic acceptance, where the passion-sentiment becomes understanding and therefore knowledge (not mechanically, though, but in a living way): only then that relationship is truly representative, and allows an exchange of individual elements between the governed and the governing, the ruled and the ruling. In other words, this connection generates the collective way, which is the only social force: it generates the ‘historical bloc’] (Q.11, §67).

Although they often believe otherwise, in this “collective way” intellectuals are not autonomous. Their alleged autonomy is a “social utopia” (Q.12, §1), because, as an active part of history and politics, they cannot be independent from society, and especially – as we have seen - from the masses. Rather, they are influenced by other major and more powerful groups, which are generally moved by economic interests (Q.3, §39). Gramsci thus defines the intellectuals as “the ‘commissioners’ of the dominant group for the subaltern activities related to social hegemony and political governance” (Q.12, §1). In other words, they are involved in the processes of both gaining the spontaneous consensus of the masses, and of aiming at ensuring the state-based coercive system. The only way in which intellectuals have to be independent is in relation to the old conceptions of the world, because this is the only way for them to be able to effectively educate the masses (Q.16, §9).

Gramsci believes that a connection between the intellectuals and the masses allows for an improvement of common sense. Through this connection, philosophies have the chance to spread.
and develop a connection to reality, becoming therefore a type of common sense, but with the strength of philosophy (Q.11, §12). Despite this apparently positive reconsideration, however, common sense is also defined as “stuffy-bourgeoisie-like deterioration of culture” that indicates a form of “degenerating intellectual laziness” (Q.8, §28). A downgrading type of intellectual activity, for example, occurs if the intellectuals act as a “crystallised social category”, i.e., when they consider themselves as a separate constant in the historical progression, with no connection to social struggles or dialectic processes (Q.11, §16, §67). In this case, the intellectual activity would become a bureaucratic and formal type of relation with the masses, and could simply restore a previous ideological and intellectual status, without forming a new one. The intellectuals involved in this type of activity cannot be considered a new social group: even though they are not the actual old intellectuals, they still represent them, thus contributing to reinstate an old intellectual condition through new people. A situation such as this becomes a clear indicator that society is not ready to create new superstructures. It is through this lens that Gramsci interprets the cosmopolitan past of Italian intellectuals discussed in chapter two. During the Communal period a new group of intellectuals developed, but their engagement was rapid and thus not able to fully absorb the old cosmopolitan intellectual class (Q.5, §31). This meant that, when the institution of the Communes declined, the old intellectuals, which included the clergy, were able to reinstate their cosmopolitanism to the detriment of their national imprint.

A lack of innovative participation from the intellectuals can therefore affect the whole society and its upcoming history. The intellectual struggle is fruitless if conducted without a real struggle supporting the change (Q.3, §2). This becomes especially true if we consider that the main instruments of scientific progress are not only historically determined, but also caused by methodological, political and intellectual influences (Q.11, §21). Even more, for a society “the elaboration of its own categories of intellectuals […] is interwoven with the formation of a new mode of production and the establishment of a new state” (Vacca, 1982, pp. 63-64): after all, the intellectuals are the officials of hegemony (Burgio, 2014, p. 207). A conscious intellectual leadership is therefore fundamental in determining the connections between the ruling class and the masses, and ensuring the practical skills to meet the needs of the group (Ives, 2004a, p. 148). It is nevertheless important to remember that

it is not a question of substituting one stratum of intellectuals for another […], but of creating the conditions for a new social organisation of knowledge to be elaborated from below (Vacca, 1982, p. 64)

The risk otherwise will be to maintain the “great disintegration” existing between the masses and the intellectuals as representatives of the dominant group (Broccoli, 1972, p. 106). Overcoming this disintegration requires a political intervention: in this way, an “alternative hegemony” can transform the society and its intellectuals, so that the organic intellectuals can overcome the traditional ones and modify their connection with the masses (Showstack Sassoon, 1980, p. 148).
This division of the intellectuals into two major categories, organic and traditional, can be employed for multiple purposes. First, this distinction is “fundamentally methodological and not prescriptive”, and it is determined by the different levels of awareness that intellectuals have in relation to their role within society (Maltese, 2008, p. 149). The oppositions organic/traditional and urban/rural generate a “multidimensional analysis”, necessary to explain the complexity of the role of intellectuals for social realities (Showstack Sassoon, 1980, p. 137). Second, identifying different types of intellectuals offers a tool to appreciate “the process by which power is produced and reproduced or transformed, and how intellectuals fit within it” (Crehan, 2002, p. 143). Hence, why the connection with Gramsci’s theory of ideology appears so productive:

La differenza tra intellettuali organici e tradizionali sarebbe […] la stessa che passa tra ideologie storicamente efficaci e quelle palesemente arbitrarie. Le prime sono il prodotto di un’attività intellettuale organicamente aderente alle evoluzioni della storicità, le seconde del fatuo procedere individuale di ceti intellectuali cristallizzati.

[The distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals […] is the same as the one between historically effective ideologies and explicitly arbitrary ones. The first ones are the product of an intellectual activity that is organically adherent to the evolution of historicity; the second ones are the effects of the vacuous and individual progress of crystallised intellectual groups] (Maltese, 2008, p. 158).

The formation of new intellectuals, then, can be thus summarised:

The new intellectual performs ideological and organisational functions based on a practical intervention to change the real world. It is this concrete activity which is the foundation of the elaboration of a philosophy which is a new and integral conception of the world (Showstack Sassoon, 1980, p. 140).

Showstack Sassoon considers the concept of historical bloc as fundamentally related to the organic/traditional categorisation in that the connection between base and superstructure becomes organic thanks to the activity of the intellectuals (1980, p. 141). In other words, it is a convergence of structure and superstructure, i.e., the historical bloc, that determines the role of the intellectuals (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, p. 28). Finally, the way Gramsci develops his theory of the intellectuals can be fractionated, and divided into diachronic and synchronic dimensions. If it is true that intellectuals can be examined through the evolution of their role in historical terms, “it is not the historical time […] but [the] function and its place in the superstructure”, in synchronic terms, that reveal the nature of that role (Showstack Sassoon, 1980, p. 139).

In this sense, Buci-Glucksmann clarifies a possible misunderstanding. The role of intellectuals changes according to the social class we look at: “with the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals play a direct role in the class’s constitution. With the proletariat, they play an essential role, but within a broader political process” because “the organic intellectual of the proletariat is not the person who considers himself as such […] but rather the person who becomes the proletariat's political intellectual” (1980, p. 31). This is an example of the “methodological and political bipolarity” existing in Gramsci’s theory of the intellectuals, as well as in that of hegemony, as we have seen in chapter six (1980, p. 36). From
one side, intellectuals, especially in the traditional sense, can form a ruling elite aiming at obtaining consent from society. They have the role of “superstructural functionaries’, [...] direct agents of the dominant group, who exercise the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (1980, p. 36). However, they also seem to be affected by the challenging ambiguities of the structure, which ultimately contradict their expected role within society. This is why it is up to the organic intellectuals of the proletariat, as a new and necessary type of intellectual, to resolve this “bipolar” conflict.

What emerges at this point is the internal complexity of the category of the intellectuals as outlined by Gramsci. His theory goes far beyond the idea of the typical humanist intellectuals, such as philosophers or scholars (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, p. 29), and “leaves the definition of teachers, at different levels of education, quite ambiguous” (Williams, 1981, p. 215). Peter Mayo, however, recovers this pristine role of the intellectuals as guiding figures of culture but with an educational lens shaped according to the Gramscian perspective (Mayo, 1999, p. 41). Mayo believes that those intellectuals who are organic to the subaltern group are also “adult educators” of the society, in that they are “politically committed to those they teach” (2010a, p. 28). He also focuses his attention on another categorisation that emerges from Gramsci’s work, particularly in relation to Italian history: the one between great and subaltern intellectuals (1999, p. 40; 2015, pp. 138-139). The first type supports the wealthy and privileged classes, keeping the dominated groups dependent on the ruling ones and maintaining the status quo. On the opposite side, subaltern intellectuals, such as teachers and priests, are those who act as functionaries and are in fact tied to the “prevailing political system”. They belong to what Mayo indicates as Gramsci’s broad notion of educators, together with public intellectuals in general, political activists, workers representatives and technicians (Mayo, 2014, pp. 386-387).

As a result, the Gramscian notion of intellectuals appears illustrative of what we can call a participatory group of people. Intellectuals can be considered those members of society whose function is to be involved – at various levels and at least to some extent – in the key processes of social development. Because of the diverse nature of intellectuals, this category is better understood when divided into types, and analysed according to their area of expertise, similarly to what we have seen for Gramsci’s theory of the State. If we go beyond the single peculiarities of all their possible categorisations, however, intellectuals can be seen also as those individuals who can play a role in redefining social and linguistic hierarchies, without belonging exclusively to the dominant group. It is in this precise way that we can associate this social category with language management and mechanisms.
9.3 Language Management

Language management, as we have anticipated in the previous chapter, is one of the elements that Spolsky identifies as responsible for determining language choice, together with language practices and language beliefs. Spolsky uses ‘management’ to refer to what sociolinguistic literature traditionally describes as ‘planning’. He clarifies that his choice is determined by the different perspectives that the two terms ultimately imply (Spolsky, 2009a, pp. 4-5). Language planning tends to be employed in a centralistic way, as part of specific socio-economic projects. This traditional language planning approach was particularly popular during its early years in the 1960s and 1970s (Nekvapil, 2006). Specific strategies were developed in post-colonial contexts at state level, and were aimed at solving linguistic situations considered problematic through top-down interventions. Minority languages were thus seen as a mere local diglossic means of communication, and perceived as something that had to be regulated so as to ensure national linguistic unity (May, 2006, p. 256). This focus, however, generally neglected the role of the socio-historical and political contexts in language matters, appearing therefore insufficient to explain the complexities that linguistic interactions present at all levels of society. Hence, the subsequent development of a language management theory appeared necessary. The term ‘management’, however, is not Spolsky’s invention, and he refers to Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) as the main sources for this terminology. These authors employ the expression ‘language management’ to describe the linguistic interactions occurring in and across the various social groups (1987, pp. 73-75). Language management as opposed to language planning, in other words, moves the main focus of analysis onto the role of the speakers rather than the actions of governments. Nekvapil (2006, p. 95) talks about simple language management, and clarifies also that

Language management may be illustrated by a situation where speaker X repeats with careful pronunciation a foreign word which his interlocutor Y failed to understand or by the standardisation of the pronunciation of foreign words carried out by an academic institution and authorised by a ministry.

Interestingly, the first situation represented here also echoes one of Gramsci’s exemplifications of normative grammar seen in chapter five, when he affirms that it is “constituted by reciprocal control, reciprocal teaching, reciprocal ‘censorship’, which are manifested through questions such as ‘What do you mean?’ or ‘Could you please clarify?’” (Q.29, §2).

The meaning that Spolsky gives to the concept, however, goes beyond this initial conceptualisation. Spolsky’s language management identifies the set of interventions on language use actualised by those who have the authority to influence or regulate it, so that speakers can change their practices or beliefs (2009a, p. 1). Language management can be articulated both at a micro and at a macro level, involving a large spectrum of domains, from the individual to the state. This presupposes two main assumptions: on the one hand, individuals are mobile elements of society, and as such they are at once also part of multiple sociolinguistic domains; on the other hand,
language interventions are equally able to depart from one level and affect the others. This organised language management (Spolsky, 2009a, p. 250) thus generates a multidimensional approach that overcomes those centralised analyses of language planning that focus only on the national sphere and neglect lower sociolinguistic levels. In so doing, Spolsky expands his inquiry in both directions, and follows language management from the family domain, where individuals and their families have to decide which language to use for everyday and intergenerational communication, up to the supranational level, where language management is expressed through international treaties and charters.

The presence of explicit language management, however, is not always guaranteed. This occurs because the complexity of non-linguistic factors impacts on “any attempt by persons or groups [who want] to intervene in the language practices and beliefs of other persons or groups, and [on] the subsequent changes that do or do not occur” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 6). This is a key point, since looking at language management allows the analysis of how linguistic and non-linguistic variables can influence each other. The main difference between a general covariation of factors affecting language and a specific language management is that, in the case of language management, there are conscious and direct efforts to manipulate a language operated by a single person or a group of people (2004, p. 8; 2009a, p. 1). These interventions can occur both explicitly and implicitly, and affect a wide range of levels, from single linguistic traits to the official language usage. This occurs because “given that languages […] are made up of conventionally agreed sets of choices of linguistic units, a policy-imposed change at one level necessarily is connected to all levels” (2004, p. 10).

In order to exemplify both a general covariation of factors affecting language and explicit language management we can look at the case of pidgins and creoles. This example seems particularly interesting for two reasons: on the one hand, pidgins and creoles are important sociolinguistic phenomena with a significant connection to the social-political, cultural, historical and economic contexts in which they develop, and as such they are connected to post-colonial language planning (Appel & Verhoeven, 1994). On the other hand, as languages developed as lingua francas, they fit well in our discourse on multilingualism as they develop in bi/multilingual contexts. In addition, their use is generally parallel to that of the languages from which pidgins and creole are generated, and with which they are generally in a subordinate hierarchical relationship (Edwards, 1994, pp. 41-43; Muysken & Smith, 1994, p. 5). Pidgins are languages with very few or no native speakers, and they develop in particular situations where people speaking two or more different languages need a common means of communication (Bakker, 1994, p. 25). These situations are generally dictated by nautical, trading and work-related needs, and the pidgins thus created often cease to exist when these particular conditions are no longer present. On the other hand, creoles are languages that, too, come into existence in particular circumstances at a relatively precise and identifiable moment in time, rather than as the result of a natural process of language evolution (Muysken & Smith, 1994, pp. 4-5). Unlike pidgins, though, creoles have native speakers, and are often the result of linguistic and social violence, occurring particularly in colonial contexts. Despite their differences, both pidgins and creoles can be connected to a covariation of factors that affect language as they are developed.
spontaneously by the speakers in specific socio-political circumstances. It is undeniable that, in pidgin and creole contexts, the influence exerted by the colonial powers and their economic interests are paramount, and that pidgins and creoles can be seen as the by-products of conscious socio-political activities. It is also equally indisputable that a group of speakers, at some point, starts using and transmitting these particular language varieties, becoming therefore an active conveyor of that particular linguistic behaviour. However, at least initially, there is no real conscious and direct effort from a group of people or a centralised institution to create or manipulate pidgin or creole languages as such, nor are they created through an explicit language intervention. What actually ignites the initial creation of pidgins and creoles, in short, is a convergence of particular circumstances, not a calculated language policy. In the long run, however, pidgins and creoles keep developing as oral languages, and their form or use may eventually become the object of explicit language interventions. This shows, therefore, that there is a transition between a co-variation of factors to a situation of language management. This transition, according to the contexts, can occur through missionaries, linguists or state institutions deciding to regulate the different language varieties, standardise them, institutionalise them or oppose them. In some cases, they can even become official languages, such as Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea and Bislama in Vanuatu. It is not accidental, then, that pidgins and especially creoles, as they are transmitted intergenerationally as mother tongues, have been the object of interest since the colonial era, but have been studied particularly during the post-colonial period of language planning interventions mentioned before (Appel & Verhoeven, 1994).

Regardless of their nature, or the historical time in which they occurred, all these language interventions show the existence of a person or a group, i.e., an agent, which consciously decides to regulate a certain language practice. This consideration brings us to another fundamental feature of language management: the presence of an agent. Spolsky clearly states that language management posits a figure that acts in order to influence language use, and it is in fact the identifiability of an agent that allows the existence of language management in the first place (Spolsky, 2009a, p. 6). This means that, together with the conscious influences on a linguistic context, we must also be able to identify a person, a group or an institution that is accountable for those influences and for any other intervention on a language variety. This is a peculiar trait that differentiates language management from other types of pressures coming from language practices and beliefs, as the latter may occur without an identifiable author. Naturally, the identity of the agent changes according to the nature of the domain we take into consideration. Spolsky focuses on eleven sociolinguistic contexts: family, religious institutions, workplace, public space, schools, legal and health institutions, military, governments, language activist groups, supranational institutions and language academies. This suggests that the agents of language management can be extremely variegated: parents, ministers, employers, common people both in everyday life and in the media, teachers and students, doctors and patients, judges and lawyers, military authorities, governments and regional/local political institutions, language activists, international organisations, and linguists. What all these language managers have in common is that they are all in a position of authority within their domain (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999, p. 36). These agents and their respective levels can also intersect one another, as
occurs in the cases of education and language academies, where school, family, public space and government domains are deeply entangled.

The identifiable role of an agent becomes therefore an essential component of Spolsky’s language policy analysis. It is the presence of a single person or a group of people, in more or less institutional positions, that distinguishes language policy from a general language practice (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999, p. 36). In addition, the inclusion of individuals in the picture is a reminder that “language policy is about language choice, and specifically about efforts to influence other people’s language choice”. Consequently, language policy occurs every time an agent is capable of influencing the speakers and their language use. Influence cannot occur, however, if the agent ignores the actual language practice of the speakers. This influence is also context-determined, and it can be triggered by linguistic, cultural, economic and political reasons. Spolsky summarises this complexity by stating that

Clearly language management requires a detailed understanding of multilingualism and social structure, as well as of multidimensional social and demographic space. We should be able to look at a specific situation, after a full study of its domains, and make relatively strong guesses about the likely short-term outcome of present or proposed language management plans (2009a, p. 260).

At this point, the similarities between Spolsky’s conceptualisation of language managers and Gramsci’s intellectuals appear quite striking. First of all, we have seen that intellectuals can be found in all social classes, in the same way as language managers appear in multiple sociolinguistic levels. Similarly, their typology is equally variegated, and both language managers and intellectuals can cover different roles within society. This means that they cannot be simply identified with what is normally considered as a language manager or an intellectual, i.e., respectively a linguist/language policy maker and a literate scholar. A third point of contact between Gramsci and Spolsky is constituted by the multiple intersections that can occur between the various types of managers/intellectuals. In Gramsci, for example, we have seen how rural intellectuals are often also traditional intellectuals, and how supposedly new intellectuals can in fact act as old intellectuals when they do not respect the needs of their society and its people. In the same way, agents in Spolsky can be active in different roles according to the areas they are occupying within the various sociolinguistic domains. In addition, even though Gramsci never explicitly discusses the identifiability of intellectuals, he argues that some kind of intellectual, or a group acting as such, always tends to be present in a society: this aspect makes the Gramscian category identifiable, at least virtually. Finally, and most importantly, the influence that a language manager can have on the language choices of others can be usefully associated with the role of the intellectuals as agents of hegemony. The consequences of this crucial connection are essential in their implications for multilingualism. If the intellectual/manager can influence the struggle for the hegemony of a language, then the speakers have indeed the power to challenge the existing language hierarchies and promote multilingualism, changing in this way the language beliefs of the society they live in. On the other side of the spectrum, this also implies that the intellectuals/managers belonging to the dominant group have major tools to affect the linguistic
situation of society. However, because of their prominent position, their tools are particularly powerful and potentially harmful. In order to better understand how these tools work, we need to look at Elana Shohamy’s mechanism.

9.4 Mechanisms and Hidden Agendas

Similarly to what we have seen for Spolsky, Elana Shohamy sees language policy as a terrain where complex social factors come together. In order to understand language policy, we need to look at a more comprehensive framework that takes account of “mechanisms, policies and practises, as well as the set of negotiations, conversations and battles that take place among them” (Shohamy, 2006, p. xv). These tools can be exerted explicitly through official channels such as laws and agreements, or implicitly through actual language practice (2006, p. 50). Shohamy links this partition with the one developed by Schiffman (1996, p. 2). Schiffman divides language policies into two major groups: the overt/de jure language policies, i.e., the official policies conceived in their written form; and the covert/de facto language policies, which refer to the way overt/de jure policies are actually applied in practice. This determines an expansion in the conceptualisation of language policy, which cannot simply refer to the implementation of political interventions, but must also focus on how these affect actual language practices (Shohamy, 2006, p. 54).

This specific conceptualisation responds to the need for analysing not only the official, recognisable policies, but also those often-hidden mechanisms that societies use to generate de facto language policies. By mechanisms, Shohamy indicates “overt and covert devices that are used as the means for affecting, creating and perpetuating de facto language policies” (2006, p. 54). Although the efficacy of these hidden devices is enhanced when coming from positions of power, their employment crosses multiple social groups and linguistic domains:

Mechanisms, or policy devices, are used by all groups in society, top-down and bottom-up, whenever they use language as a means of turning ideology into practice and of creating de facto policies (2006, p. 54, my emphasis).

Unlike Spolsky’s language management, these mechanisms can be conceived even without the explicit awareness of the speakers. This occurs because mechanisms necessarily imply an agent, but the agent is often concealed or difficult to identify. People may not even realise the existence of active tools, such as regulations, policies and ideologies, able to influence their language behaviour or daily practice: hence the denomination hidden agendas (2006, p. 46). Despite their often secretive influence, mechanisms are ideologically charged, and able to reveal the background of a language. In the case of Latin seen before, for example, the ideology of the centrality and superiority of Rome clearly emerged in the Romans’ conquests of both the Republican and the Imperial age (Clackson &
One of the outcomes of this ideology was their imposition of Latin, which was primarily functional to the exertion of power and the enforcement of Roman laws and institutions, rather than a mere deliberate plan of cultural and linguistic oppression (May, 2016, p. 37). The socio-cultural prestige of Latin occurred then under the cover of the political glory of Rome. In this sense, mechanisms ultimately reflect wider contexts determined by the culture, the history and the socio-political situations existing in a given society:

Since language is not neutral but is embedded in political, ideological, social and economic agendas, these mechanisms are not neutral either, and serve as vehicles for promoting and perpetuating agendas (Shohamy, 2006, p. 55).

The result of this conceptualisation is that mechanisms can both influence and be influenced by ideology, and, at the same time, determine and be determined by actual language practice.

Because of the composite nature of hidden agendas, it is helpful to categorise their scope. In particular, Shohamy (2006) identifies four types of mechanisms able to significantly affect de facto language policies. The first one includes official laws, regulations and language standardisation attempts. These mechanisms are applied through the official exertion of governmental power that spreads the dominant ideology, often with the support of language academies that, as we have seen, comprise a combination of domains. Language policies, in this way, can both regulate language use and impose the standardised version of a commonly used (most often, national) language. In so doing, the authorities implement laws to regulate, standardise or nationalise a language variety to the detriment of others, and they gain the power to legally bind people to the chosen language. This situation is reflected also by the use of good proficiency in the official language as a necessary criterion for obtaining citizenship (see also May, 2012). On the one hand, these interventions necessarily impact those parts of the population that speak a different variety, such as indigenous or historical minorities and immigrant groups. On the other hand, though, the efficacy of these interventions in not guaranteed. Bottom-up forms of resistance and actual language practice can continue the use of minority languages and of unstandardised/unofficial varieties, even in the face of centralised language policy initiatives.

A clear example of the ambivalent efficacy of de facto language policies can be found in the linguistic situation of Italy and its Language Question, as discussed in the previous chapters. We have seen that the language of the Three Crowns Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio was imitated by most intellectuals strictu sensu, and that a subsequent debate about which language to use for literary purposes occupied Italy’s cultural life for centuries. These two factors were never the expected outcomes of an official political agenda. Nevertheless, the promotion of a common language for a not-yet-existing nation’s literature was fostered by many members of the upper classes, especially in Central Italy, and legitimised by the language academy Accademia della Crusca (Academy of the Bran) (Migliorini, 1963). La Crusca, established in Florence at the end of the sixteenth century on the wave of the debate of the Language Question, is the first language academy in the world, and has been henceforth the highest authority on the Italian language. The position of the academy in regards
to the language question was to support the language of the Three Crowns in its pure Florentine form, with some more modern interferences of the high Florentine language of the sixteenth century. Their dictionary, whose first edition was printed in 1612, had a significant impact on the debate, and provided not only a linguistic statement, but also a new cultural tool. This was not the only option advanced in this debate, and in fact there was a plethora of opposing factions supporting other alternatives, from Latin as the main language to the exclusive use of local languages. Nevertheless, most literates at least attempted to write their texts in the common language, even though local languages were also used in literature (see Migliorini, 1963, pp. 507-508). On the other side of the spectrum, however, the language of education was still Latin, especially at University level, and local languages were still almost exclusively the common spoken varieties, even in official contexts. In these peculiar socio-cultural conditions, for centuries the debate on the Language Question was carried on as a de facto language policy in Italy. The explicit political endorsement of Italian as the national language arrived only in the late nineteenth century, and only then it was enforced through state policy, various means of communication, and education.

This consideration brings us to the second category identified by Shohamy, language education interventions. This category includes all those regulations that specifically affect education at all levels. Because school curricula are the main tools to convey “ideological and political agendas” (p. 80), the impact on language education affects both the teaching and the learning processes. The agents that spread the dominant ideology can be various, from teachers to ministry inspectors: they are rarely part of the policy making process per se, and their role is often to passively convey ideology. This lack of participation from below implies that the languages taught at schools and those used for teaching can be quite different from the ones actually used by students and teachers in their everyday practice. This aspect is connected to the third type of mechanism, which is represented by language tests used as policy devices. Shohamy (p. 93) defines them as “subtle” and “powerful” mechanisms as they are presented as pedagogical tools when in fact they are political instruments. They can coax people’s language choices towards dominant and powerful languages by signalling which ones should be studied and how. By promoting a standardised and official version of languages, those tests are able to regulate access to key roles of society. In this way, they have the ultimate effect of regulating language or hegemony, and of repressing, more or less indirectly, language diversity. Because of these de facto consequences, language tests affect or can even contradict overt education policies ostensibly promoting language diversity, and contribute to the exclusion of minority language speakers from certain areas of society.

The lack of representation that minority languages can experience relates to the fourth type of mechanism, which is connected to the use of language in the public space. By public space, Shohamy intends the ensemble of “all the language items that are displayed in a variety of contexts in the environment” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 110). This includes public and private signs, street names, newspapers, mobile phone’s languages and apps, and the language of the media in general. All these elements together form the linguistic landscape of a society (see also Spolsky, 2009a, pp. 66-67).
which pivots on the fundamental presence of ideologies. The essential premise of the concept of linguistic landscape is that

The display of language transmits symbolic messages as to the legitimacy, relevance, priority and standards of languages and the people and groups they represent (Shohamy, 2006, p. 110).

From this perspective, the public space becomes a place where de facto language policies and the ideologies behind them become evident and tangible. The presence (or the absence) of a certain language, or the script used to represent it, reveal the existing language practices and the role that society attributes to the speakers of that variety. Even more, the public space becomes “the arena where language battles are taking place”, and where top-down and bottom-up language policies can be found conflicting side by side (pp.123-124). It is in the public space that governments declare their official language choices, but it is also in the public space that single individuals can show their attitudes towards a certain language policy, even if it is just through the use of one language rather than another in a sign on a shop’s door.

At this point, we can identify significant connections between Shohamy’s concept of mechanisms and Gramsci’s theory of the intellectuals. A first interesting term of comparison between mechanisms and intellectual involves their role in relation to education. In Shohamy, education, through its enforcement of linguistic and political ideologies, is a key point in which mechanisms are enacted. We could say that, in this way, education becomes a function of mechanisms. In Gramsci, education is considered in its collective meaning of a tool that shapes society, and as such represents one of the functions of the intellectuals. Therefore, both perspectives recognise the functional role of educational systems in relation to the agents’ activity. Because of the importance of this functional role of mechanisms and intellectuals, a second interesting term of comparison is that both mechanisms and intellectuals need to undergo a process of categorisation in order to ensure that their functions are properly understood. If, for Gramsci, intellectuals show their versatility and influence through their typological differences, mechanisms can be categorised to show where they are most active and prominent. In this perspective, a third key point is related to the public role of mechanisms’ agents, which is compatible with the public role of the intellectuals as “the ribs of the masses’ corset” (Q.11, §12). This relationship with the public, though, is a problematic one for both these conceptualisations. If in Shohamy the public is the area of language conflict, likewise for Gramsci the intellectuals can be in conflict with the collective dimension of society, especially if they believe they are independent from it, when in fact they are not. Finally, and most importantly, the fact that the agents of mechanisms work as representatives of state ideology recalls Gramsci’s representation of intellectuals as agents of hegemony and ideology. In this sense, the mutual influence existing between agents and ideology that we see in Shohamy can be connected to the idea of the historical bloc in Gramsci, where every social element needs to converge towards the others to guarantee the very existence of the bloc and allow social change. Transferring this consideration to our discussion on languages means that we can talk about a sociolinguistic bloc. Following Gramsci’s and Shohamy’s guidelines, this bloc should
be the ideal condition to ensure that a certain equilibrium of hegemony and ideology is maintained as long as the appropriate socio-political conditions persist. The unsteady equilibrium thus created, to use a Gramscian expression, would also mean that intellectuals/agents are representative of a collective ideology and can therefore ensure that a specific mechanism, for example the promotion of multilingualism, is enforced.

All these elements together allow us to understand how the management of a language becomes a much more complex topic if we consider the visibility of language interventions and of the ways in which the underlying ideologies are exerted. If we briefly look at the linguistic situation of Wales, for example, we can see how, for a significant part of its history, Welsh was largely used in rural, private and unofficial domains, and it was tolerated only as such. The historical, socio-cultural and economic pressure coming from English, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, grew so strong that any attempt to give a public voice to Welsh was “greeted with hostility” (Davies, 2014, p. 117). With the appearance of Anglicised versions of public signage in the mid-twentieth century, this unequal condition was made even more explicit, and English ended up occupying large parts of Wales’ linguistic landscape, at least until the 1960s and 1970s. What changed the fate of the Welsh language in these two decades was a series of conjoint efforts of official institutional interventions, the activity of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society), and the Welsh speakers’ demands to have their language officially recognised (Davies, 2014, pp. 121-122). The first major outcome of this particular sociolinguistic bloc was the Language Act of 1967, which encouraged a positive counter-trend in “the reinstatiation of Welsh as a civic language over the last thirty years” (May, 2012, p. 279). This promotion-oriented approach ultimately gave Welsh a new Language Act in 1993, and the status of official language in 2011 (Davies, 2014, p. 123). Without any intention of idealisation, this example shows how a concurrence of different agents, both from the public and the private spheres, can effectively create a new sociolinguistic bloc, question the existing language hierarchies and therefore promote the revitalisation of a language, with a significant impact on the creation of a bi/multilingual society. With this in mind, we can finally outline the role of language agents in relation to multilingualism, and the executive context in which they operate.

9.5 The Executive Context

In light of what we have discussed so far, then, who are the agents, and what is their role in redefining language hierarchies and promoting multilingualism? If we consider language management and mechanisms together, we can see that any discussion of language policies and their effects necessarily presupposes the agency of an individual or a group that intervenes to various extents in the language policy-making processes. Agents can conceive, plan, implement and protect a policy, or, on the contrary, reject, oppose and challenge it, and they can do so either as public figures or as
private citizens (or both). If we consider the absence of language policy as a policy in itself, then the activity of the agent can be considered active as well as passive, and its role is pivotal in the development of those promotion-oriented and tolerance-oriented approaches that we discussed in chapter two. Consequently, whether the attitude is positive or negative, participatory or disengaged, the agent always plays a role within the linguistic landscape of a society and always determines a type of language hierarchy.

The ways to look at the role of the agents in this perspective are various. Spolsky's language management model assumes that the agent, or manager, is always identifiable, and its detectable presence is the *condicio sine qua non* for the existence of a language management regime in the first place. Shohamy's mechanisms, on the other hand, accept more or less intentionally concealed interventions that affect languages. This necessarily implies two points: on the one hand, the identification of an agent is not compulsory for the exploration of mechanisms within society; on the other, even if those able to impact language use are unidentifiable, we must still take them into account in our analysis. Shohamy's study focuses also on the means through which these linguistic/political tools are expressed, and it identifies selected areas in which the hidden agendas clearly manifest their influence. Meanwhile, Spolsky conceives society as a multidimensional entity, where every layer contributes to define one facet of language management. In so doing, he develops three key considerations: first, that the agents are detectable at every level of society; second, that an individual or a group can act as an agent in multiple domains simultaneously; and third, that a complex categorisation of linguistic realities is necessary to better understand society and its forces. Finally, if we look at Gramsci, we realise that the agents, i.e., the intellectuals, play the role of mediators within and between social groups. Their functions are so diverse that it is necessary to identify them and their nature in relation to other social groups in order to fully understand the role that they play within society. This specific conceptualisation, transferred to sociolinguistics, gives us an agent that is acknowledged as such, is present in different domains and is able to contribute to the (re)creation of language hierarchies without having to be a member of the dominant group or of the public sphere.

At this point it will be clear that a key passage in the reconstruction of language hierarchies in order to promote multilingualism is to look at those who are responsible for *both* public and private language practice. Endorsing a promotion-oriented approach, where the state officially supports the public use of minority languages so as to promote national multilingualism, is a key step in overtaking a tolerance-oriented approach, where minority languages are merely ‘tolerated’ as a private matter out of the scope of state interests (see Kloss, 1971; and May, 2016). It will appear understandable now why individual speakers and local levels cannot be the sole focus of investigation, in the same way as governments and nation(-states) alone cannot. Public and private domains, exactly as Civil and Political Society in Gramsci, are mutually dependant, and there are multiple agents that have the ability and the power to influence language use, with or without being aware of their potential. This ensemble of agents is what I call *Executive Context*. The agents can be policy makers and linguists, but also language teachers or simple speakers. What they all have in common is that they execute
the fundamental function of using (or not) a language. They can do so by choosing one language instead of another, thus establishing monolingual practices, or speaking as many languages as they can, promoting multilingualism instead. In this way, they make a choice that generates language hierarchies through all the possible tools that society has to offer: daily use, ideologically charged discourses, school activities, public and private stigmatisation, law implementation, and so on. It is the agents’ practice, which reflects deeper and more complex ideologies, that has the power to affect language use, to the point that the constant execution of these functions can significantly contribute to the revitalisation, or vice versa the abandonment, of a particular language. This aspect, ultimately, can determine the degree of accessibility and applicability of multilingualism. In other words, the agents thus conceived will be capable of creating a sociolinguistic bloc, where unequal language hierarchies are challenged and multilingualism maintained thanks to a concurrence of supportive state ideology, acknowledged hegemony of multilingual practices, and joint efforts of the language agents in all state domains.
CHAPTER TEN - CONCLUSION
THE CONTEXTUAL APPROACH AND THE WINGED LION OF ST. MARK

Nobody will venture to say that the map of Europe is definitively established. But any changes, if they are to endure, must increasingly tend by and large to give the big and viable European nations their real natural frontiers to be determined by language and fellow-feeling.
(Marx & Engels, 2001 [1849], p. 255, Vol. 16)

10.1 The Contextual Approach Revealed

The complexity of the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language hierarchies and its entanglement with the various aspects of society, especially in reference to the multiple dimensions of the nation-state, should now appear clear. We have examined how a socio-political and ideological structure such as the nation has played a primary role in the historical development and the consolidation of language hierarchies. After introducing this non-linguistic national(ist) framework, we have seen how the sociolinguistic and historical experience of Gramsci’s life and the peculiar nature of his philosophy both introduce and reflect key aspects of socio-political and socio-linguistic theory. Discussing the role of language in history and society, together with the theoretical implications of translation, education and grammar, has allowed us to describe the socio-political and historical components of language, which ultimately require socio-political lenses to be addressed. Therefore, we introduced four key Gramscian concepts that allow a thorough analysis of the social factors impacting on language matters and developing language hierarchies, namely: hegemony, State, ideology and intellectuals. To ground the socio-political nature of these theories within a more specifically sociolinguistic component, we have then connected each concept with other language policy theories that shed light on analogous aspects of language and society, i.e., socio-economic, historical-political, cultural and executive factors. The theories employed for each of those clusters are, respectively, linguistic hegemony and imperialism, effectiveness and fairness; the Historical Structural Approach and Micro and Macro variables in language revitalisation; language ideologies, attitudes and beliefs; and language management and mechanisms. Following Gramsci’s guidelines, we have also seen that examining a social context is the key to finding the tools to change that very context. In this sense,
understanding how language hierarchies develop also (re)designs the path that we should follow to challenge them. In other words, the dynamics that create language hierarchies are the same ones we have analysed to effectively redefine their structure. Each of the four clusters, through the related Gramscian concept and language policy theories, covers a specific section of the context that surrounds a language, and therefore determines its hierarchical position. An analysis that combines those social contexts, that is carried out through Gramsci’s concepts and language policy theory, and that aims at the reorganisation of language hierarchies is what I define as the Contextual Approach.

What does this Contextual Approach entail? In order to effectively assume a holistic, i.e., contextual, approach, we must focus on each of its four key structural components, with multiple aims: to identify the social forces active in society within a single context; to provide a better understanding of how and why the existing language hierarchies are formed; and, consequently, to trace the possible ways in which we can reorganise them to promote multilingualism. The first context that we have examined is the Socio-Economic Context, which pivots on the concept of hegemony. Hegemony, conceived in its Gramscian sense, does not coincide with imperialism, domination, or forceful imposition, which are normally employed to describe the well-known case of the global role of English. Instead, Gramsci’s hegemony is a form of recognised and conscious prestige and, as such, has the merit of including in the theoretical discussion both who holds the recognised authority, i.e., the hegemonic group, and who allows the existence of that recognised authority in the first place, i.e., the other social forces. For these reasons, hegemony effectively describes the ambivalent social and economic role that a language variety can play: in this sense, the presence, or the absence, of hegemony can determine whether a language is respectively associated with a high or a low socio-economic status, which in turns strengthens existing language hierarchies. For these reasons, including concepts such as effectiveness and fairness allows us to highlight the role played by hegemony within a language economy-inspired perspective.

The second context is the Historical-Political Context, embodied by Gramsci’s theory of the (integral) State. Investigating the two methodological, but not organic, structural components of the State, i.e., Civil Society and Political Society, allows us to have an overarching picture of the key historical and political elements that have played a role in the sociolinguistic situation we are interested in. In this way, we can better understand which factors have determined the existing linguistic hierarchisation. The association of this particular perspective with language policy connects our discussion to the Historical-Structural Approach in language education, and the systems of micro and macro variables employed in language revitalisation strategies. The combination of these theories allows us to understand more effectively the ways in which the historical and political background surrounding a language influences the status of that language, thus marking another fundamental step towards an effective strategy for redefining the linguistic hierarchies existing in a polity.

The third context that we have examined is the Cultural Context, represented by the key concept of ideology. The multifaceted forms that ideologies can take, from philosophy to religion, from folklore to common sense, provide a unique insight into what types of ideological forces are active in society,
and how those forces affect the other social elements, and above all language. By adding the concepts of attitudes and beliefs to the picture, we enhance also the psychological, deep-rooted nature of those ideologies. These peculiar traits, combined together, bring a series of useful outcomes: they explain why ideologies are often deeply embedded into all aspects of social life; they define the composite cultural heritage that determines the existing linguistic hierarchies; and they suggest the set of ideologies that should be addressed or promoted in order to redefine those hierarchies.

Finally, the fourth context that we have identified is the Executive Context, which is built around the role of the intellectuals, i.e., the functionaries of hegemony. In our case, they can be described as the sociolinguistic agents that have the power and capability to affect language use and therefore impact, either positively or negatively, on language hierarchies. This unique definition of intellectuals can be developed thanks to Gramsci’s holistic conceptualisation of this social category, which goes far beyond the scholarly hue that is generally attributed to the term. In this sense, associating the role of the intellectuals with language management and mechanisms has several advantages: to include both explicit and implicit attempts to affect language use; to show that the groups of people who affect languages are multiple; to highlight the operative role that these agents have in society, and their consequent responsibility in maintaining or challenging the language hierarchies of a polity by creating a sociolinguistic bloc that favours (or not) a certain language.

10.2 The Contextual Approach Applied and the Case of Veneto

Concretely, then, how can we reorganise language hierarchies through the Contextual Approach? I argue that operating via the implementation of a specific language policy, in its wider, Spolsky-inspired conceptualisation, is the most effective way to address language hierarchies. It is important to note, though, that a new policy must be implemented only once we have examined all the contexts of the language(s) we are interested in. The way to do so is via the application of the Contextual Approach through guiding questions that we can summarise as follows:

- **Socio-Economic Context**: Which language(s) has/have the highest recognised prestige in that society, and why? Is this prestige spontaneous and conscious? Is the language recognised as hegemonic or imperialistic? Is this situation effective and fair to the other language varieties?

- **Historical-Political Context**: What type of power relations are there between the Civil and the Political Society of that polity? Which historical-political forces can be identified in that society? What structural elements play(ed) a key role in shaping that society? What Macro
and Micro variables contribute(d) to that outcome?

- **Cultural Context**: What are the strongest ideologies operating in that society? Are they arbitrary ideologies, organic ideologies, philosophies, common sense, religion or folklore? Are they rooted in language practice? Can they be associated with existing attitudes and beliefs?

- **Executive Context**: Who are the intellectuals of that society? What role do they play? Is there any identifiable language management activity? Are there hidden mechanisms instead, or in addition to that? Who are the detectable agents that, more than others, seem to affect language practice?

We can answer these questions in multiple ways: by analysing primary and secondary sources, via direct observations of the linguistic landscape, through the analysis of policy documents, or through a combination of these. Once all the questions are answered, we can outline the full background of the language(s) we are interested in, and we can see which context(s) play(s) the most significant role in determining the language hierarchy of that particular society. This, in turn, indicates where we should direct language policy interventions in order to reconstruct effectively those existing hierarchies.

In order to support the last statement, we can look at a final case study: the situation of Veneto, the language spoken in the homonym region in the North-East of Italy. The reasons why we are examining this particular example are threefold. The first one is that Veneto is a case with which I am very familiar, and, despite the general lack of literature on the topic, I can corroborate the discussion with my own experience as a speaker of one of the Veneto language varieties. Second, this example can support our discussion with another type of language hierarchy, i.e., the one that involves a language referred to as ‘dialect’, thus concluding the set of the typologies of language hierarchies examined in chapter two. Finally, this case study offers the opportunity to summarise and exemplify the Contextual Approach, as the main themes we have covered so far will be all discussed in relation to this last case study. This does not mean that the way I have examined the case of Veneto is the only possible way to apply the Contextual Approach. On the contrary, this final case study moves away from the one-fits-all generalising interventions, on which we will return shortly, and shows one way to analyse a socio-linguistic situation through four key contexts, the existing social forces, and the power relations that characterise them.

As already mentioned, the regional/local languages of Italy officially recognised by the Italian state are only twelve, and all the other regional languages have been considered mere ‘dialects’, and stigmatised as such. As noted by Coluzzi (2008, p. 216)
All Italian regional languages in fact are fragmented into hundreds of dialects — in this sense and in this sense only the term ‘dialect’ could be considered appropriate — which their speakers consider different from those spoken in the nearby villages and towns.

The stigmatisation of the regional languages of Italy has been encouraged especially after the political unification of the peninsula started in 1861 (Trifone, 2010). Nevertheless, as we have already discussed, only a small percentage of the Italian population speaks ‘pure’ standard Italian: most people generally write in it, but almost everybody uses a regionally-influenced Italian, which is a variety of Italian characterised by more or less strong regional components that can range from pronunciation, to lexicon, to syntax. In particular, Veneto has one of the highest percentages of speakers of local languages, and two-thirds of the population still use the language regularly (Coluzzi, 2008, p. 219). In addition, the region of Veneto has been recognised as one of the most active European regions asking for independence (WorldAtlas, 2017).

Exploring the reasons why Veneto has developed these secessionist inclinations would be beyond the scope of this thesis. The question that is of interest here, rather, is how the revitalisation of the language of Veneto is related to the general socio-political context of the region. Perrino (2013, p. 574) argues that these revitalisation efforts must be read in a political way, because “the promotion of Veneto dialect [sic] is intimately related to Veneto speakers’ defence against migrants and the Italian state”. As Perrino demonstrates, these anti-immigrant attitudes have been fomented by the Region’s political establishment and fuelled by the mass migrations that have recently occurred in the Italian peninsula. The spread of this political ideology triggered a reaction in the local people, who eventually perceived as inevitable the separation between people of Veneto, Italians, and immigrants. It is in this sense that we must read Perrino’s argument that connects Veneto’s xenophobic tendencies with the Region’s claims for independence, typical of extreme nationalism. In particular, the cultural and linguistic revitalisation of Veneto has been part of the programmes of two popular right-wing, xenophobic separatist parties, i.e. Lega Nord/Liga Veneta (Northern/Veneto League) and Veneto Stato/Indipendenza Veneta (Veneto State/Independence). Both parties have been working at organising referendums for the independence of the Region. The first one occurred in 2014: it was organised by Veneto Stato/Indipendenza Veneta and was a successful, albeit non-legally binding, online consultation. The second one, scheduled for October 2017, will be legally valid, as it is organised by Veneto’s current administration, together with the governor of the region, Luca Zaia, a representative of Lega Nord. The reasons behind both these popular consultations are not only economic and political, but also cultural and linguistic, and they present, in parallel, the intentions of controlling the migration to the region (Lessi, 2016). Nevertheless, Perrino (2013, p. 584 ff.) also points out that Veneto’s cultural and linguistic claims are specifically open to all the people of Veneto, whether they live in the homeland or in any other part of the world, in light of the unique culture that

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1 For an introduction on the pro-independence movement in Veneto and in other areas of Northern Italy, see Rumiz (1997).

2 This referendum had the merit of revealing the general unhappiness of the people of Veneto with their socio-political situation. The number of people who participated to the online initiative was 2,360,235 (approximately half of the population of Veneto), 89.1% of which voted in support of the independence.
they all share and the language that many of them still speak. In this way, she highlights the contradiction, to which we will return shortly, of Veneto’s programmatic inclusion of the numerous migrants that left the Region years, decades or generations ago, alongside the current xenophobic inclinations against immigrants.

In this sense, we can understand why Perrino’s analysis outlines the strong historical-political component of Veneto’s claims, its potentially extreme drifts and, at the same time, its contradictory projections outside regional borders. This component, undoubtedly true, is only one aspect of the sociolinguistic situation of Veneto. What Perrino’s investigation fails to address is the overarching complexity of the whole context surrounding Veneto’s language matters. In the same way as a one-fits-all approach rarely works in the long term, likewise focusing on only one context fails to identify all the factors that necessarily play a role in sociolinguistic matters. In this sense, I argue that there are at least two other key factors that explain the current attention to the revitalisation of the language of Veneto, and the associated claim for the region’s independence. The first factor is related to the Cultural Context, and is connected to the Historical-Political one. The current territory of the Region roughly corresponds to the area occupied, from 697 until 1797 CE, by the independent Republic of Venice, the Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia. The Serenissima had its own government, trades, culture, flag (the winged lion of St. Mark) and language, Venetian, used for everyday communication, bureaucracy and literature. After the fall of the Republic in 1797, the Region was ruled by French and Austrians powers, which left traces of their languages in the language of the Region. Veneto was then annexed to Italy with a referendum in 1866, even though, on the wave of the current separatist movements, some historians advanced the hypothesis that the referendum was in fact a “fraud”, and that people were induced to vote in favour of the annexation (Beggiato, 1999). This “fraud”, combined with the glorious past of Venice, was one of the arguments used by a group of separatists that, in 1997, occupied the bell tower in St. Mark Square, the main square of Venice, to symbolically declare the independence of Veneto.

This last example shows that the ‘golden age of the Serenissima’ is widely considered the historical and cultural antecedent that justifies the current revitalisation of Veneto and the independence of the Region. Even the symbol used to represent Veneto’s claims for independence is not the official regional flag of Veneto, but rather the flag of the Republic of Venice. The ideology behind it, albeit inherently political, is also profoundly cultural, and is transversally used by all social forces as it triggers positive attitudes and beliefs towards the language. If, on the one hand, Venice’s past adds a strong, romantic flavour to the nationalist claim for independence, on the other hand, it provides evidence of how widespread the Venetian language used to be, and why it is important to preserve it. Venetian was the official language of the Republic, and was also employed in literature before and after the fall of the Serenissima. In parallel, even negative historical-structural elements, such as the fall of the Republic, the subsequent Austrian domination, and the difficult socio-economic conditions faced by many people after Italian unification, have contributed to create Veneto’s

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3 For example, the word for ‘money’ is schei, from Scheidemünze, written on the Austrian currency.
collective imagery. The ideological influence of this common background, projected as far as Veneto’s migrants around the world, culturally ties all the people of Veneto together.

The second factor relates to the Socio-Economic context, and involves a sad page of the contemporary history of Veneto. When the first claims for independence started in the 1980s, Veneto’s economy was flourishing, and a plethora of factories, companies and family-run businesses were developing all over the region (Rumiz, 1997). With the economic crisis of 2008-2009, however, many businesses all over Italy had to shut down. In Veneto, closing a business often meant that not only a commercial activity was gone, but also a whole family’s savings and life were deeply compromised. This deep interdependence explains why, in Veneto more than anywhere else in Italy, the recent economic crisis generated a spiral of social problems that often ended up in the devastating experience of suicide due to economic reasons. Between 2012 and 2015, 628 Italians ended their lives for reasons related to the economic crisis, of which 18.6% were in Veneto alone (LinkLab, 2016). This tragic page of Veneto’s history has increased the already existing separation between the people and the national Italian institutions, and has triggered a more intense rediscovery of the cultural and linguistic identity of the Region in opposition with the Italian national one. Hegemony, in this scenario, is almost exclusively recognised in relation to the regional institutions, and the central national authorities are increasingly mistrusted and perceived as an imperialistic imposition.

Summarising, if we look at the revitalisation of Veneto through the Contextual Approach, we can see that it has been triggered by the Cultural context, fuelled by the Historical-Political context and enhanced by the Socio-Economic one. From these premises, what can we say about the Executive context? In Veneto, the actors ideally responsible for the use of the language are multiple: politicians, everyday speakers, academics, and so on, even though they do not always actively promote the language. For example, as highlighted by Perrino (2013, pp. 581-584), many among the politicians who pivot on the cultural-linguistic cause seldom use the language themselves, especially in official contexts. They often play the card of Veneto linguistic identity only to increase people’s appreciation for their particular political party, as they are aware that the language of Veneto is embedded into the people’s cultural attitudes and beliefs. On the other side of the spectrum, the use of Veneto language varieties in the region reflects the diglossic hierarchy promoted in Italy since Unification, where no language other than Italian is accepted in official contexts, and the local languages are stigmatised. In Veneto, though, the boundaries between public and private language domains are often rather blurred, and individual interactions with strangers in shops and cafes, for example, can easily occur in the local variety, or, more often, in a code-mixing of Italian and local variety.

Nevertheless, if we examine what is currently being done in order to revitalise the language in terms of the agents involved, we can see that both Civil Society and Political Society play a significant role. As far as the Civil Society is concerned, there are numerous citizens who use the language in official and non-official domains. Several initiatives encourage the employment of Veneto in multiple ways, such as the promotion of traditional and modern music in the region’s language varieties, and the collection of stories of the elderly population which speaks almost exclusively the local language.
In addition, many websites, Facebook pages and YouTube channels promote the language even beyond exclusively political aims. Important activities are sponsored by associations such as the Institute of the Language of Veneto and the Veneto Language Academy. They both invest their time and effort into the teaching, the use and the spread of the language in multiple domains, without any political aim. In particular, the Language Academy, Academia de la Bona Creansa (The Academy of the Good Manner), is a very interesting example: not only does it have a website entirely in Veneto, but it also organised, in February 2017, the first international conference on the language of Veneto.

As for the Political Society, we must distinguish between the Political Society of Veneto and the Political Society of Italy. Indeed, even if we have seen that Veneto’s politicians irregularly use the language in their speeches, and some use it only with populist intentions, they have nevertheless produced some positive outcomes, such as the aforementioned referendum promoted by the current regional government. Another positive decision coming from Veneto’s Political Society is the regional law 8/2007 for “Protection, development and promotion of Veneto’s linguistic and cultural heritage”. This law covers initiatives related to the valorisation of Veneto’s culture and identity in schools, in the public sphere and on the media, and considers both the regional and the European framework, as discussed in chapter six in relation to the Council of Europe. Indeed, as noted by Coluzzi (2008, p. 222)

The absolute novelty of this law is that Venetan4 is called a regional language, not a dialect, which may allow its inclusion amongst the languages protected by the European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages at some point in the future.

On the other side of the spectrum, though, the Italian government never ratified the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages promoted by the Council of Europe, and publicly ostracises most initiatives promoted by the Political Society of the Region, with few apparent exceptions (Redazione ANSA, 2017). This disregard for regional and supranational activities aimed at the valorisation of local heritage is a constant of Italy’s Political Society, and regularly occurs in relation to all the other regions of Italy trying to obtain more independence (Coluzzi, 2008). This, in line with what May has noted (2012, pp. 245-246), is an example of a national power trying to subvert the regional/supranational axis, which emerges particularly in the context of the European Union examined in the previous chapters.

In parallel, both the Civil and the Political Society work to keep the connection with Veneto’s migrants all over the world, as mentioned before. Most of these migrants left Veneto several generations ago, due to the poor living conditions of the people after Unification and during the two World Wars. These migrants moved mainly to South America, but also to North America and Australia. Therefore, while they now speak almost exclusively the languages of the countries they live in, they still identify with the culture of the area where their ancestors originally came from, and sometimes remember the language of Veneto (Regione Veneto, 2017). The most notable case, in this

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4 The adjective ‘Venetan’ is used here to refer to what I have so far called Veneto language, the language of the homonym Italian region.
sense, is that of Veneto migrants in Brazil. The connection that they maintained with their language was so strong that they kept using Veneto over several generations. The language that they spoke when they first migrated gradually mixed with the local Brazilian Portuguese, and generated a new language variety that is now known as Talián5 (Müller, 2015, p. 250). Talián, currently spoken as a first or second language by approximately four million people in the Southern regions of Brazil (Ethnologue, 2017b), has been officially recognised as part of the cultural heritage of the South American country (Bolson, 2014). The constant attention that the Civil and Political Society of Veneto address to the language and culture of Veneto’s migrants in the wider world parallels the aforementioned overt disregard towards the current new migrants in the region, as we have seen with the cases of Catalonia and especially Iceland previously examined (see also May, 2012). This contradiction, which clearly characterises the ideology underpinning Veneto’s claims for independence, is generally not perceived as such. In this sense, the multilingualism of the old migrants that are willing to reconnect with their area of origin is considered significantly different from the multilingualism generated by the new immigrants.

What can be done about this? We have argued that, in order to reorganise the existing language hierarchies, we must start from what it is already present in that society. Therefore, in the case of Veneto, the crucial elements on which we should focus are precisely the xenophobic tendencies and their coexistence with the support of the multilingual migrant population that Veneto has all over the world. Veneto’s people believe that their culture and language are unique, and they are striving to make sure that these claims are officially acknowledged nation-wide. In this perspective, they perceive outsiders as a threat to this process of identity building, and the xenophobic component implicitly hinders any non-autochthonous multilingual option. At the same time, though, the people of Veneto recognise how their own culture was also shaped by the numerous migrations that their ancestors underwent. This awareness makes them very receptive to the current multilingualism of those who recognise themselves as ‘people of Veneto’. Therefore, starting from this de facto acceptance of multilingualism per se could be the key for Veneto to purposefully accept multilingualism altogether as a marker of national identity. In other words, it is important to promote, both in the Civil and in the Political Society, a positive ideology that includes all the languages that are connected to the region, and to show how the old and the new migrations are in fact intrinsically similar, and not incompatible. In this way, the revitalisation of Veneto can be used to reorganise the existing diglossic and xenophobic hierarchies so that they support, instead, a more inclusive language regime, where Veneto and Italian are accepted and used together with the languages of both old and new migrants.

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5 The word talián literally means ‘Italian’ in Veneto. In the region, the word is still used with the meaning of ‘true, comprehensible language’, and, as such, it often refers to Veneto, not Italian.
10.3 Reconstructing Language Hierarchies

The case of Veneto shows the significance of the customised language policy generated by the application of the Contextual Approach, as it represents the only way in which we can properly reconstruct language hierarchies. Through the Contextual Approach we can address the various regional/local and minority languages while taking into account their individual backgrounds and their relationship with the national/official language varieties. Suggesting that language policy should address one pre-determined element, for example status planning, corpus planning or acquisition planning, implies that the underpinning theory is ultimately that of a one-fits-all intervention. Such an intervention has higher chances of being unsuccessful, as it does not take into account the peculiarities of the context. Put in another way, the Contextual Approach allows us to promote a sociolinguistic analysis that has no prior assumptions in relation to what is actually causing the existing hierarchies, and thus to what interventions should be suggested to contrast them. By giving space to all the key structural elements of society, this approach provides a general picture of the sociolinguistic situation of an area, highlighting the historical, political, economic and cultural reasons that determined it. In this way, the policy promoted to redefine the existing language hierarchies and to include multilingual practices will necessarily be designed according to the outcome of the preliminary contextual analysis. For example, Weinstock (2003, p. 267) argues that the best language policy is the one where the state imposes the language of the majority only as far as the state can communicate effectively with its citizens. This would permit citizens in the least advantaged class to devote resources sufficient to acquiring working knowledge rather than full proficiency and identification, and thus to have resources left over for the realisation of the other values that languages bear from them.

As practical as this may sound, this argument ultimately entails one significant downside. Even though Weinstock leaves the options open in terms of what this policy would entail in practice, this scenario would ultimately imply that Political Society and Civil Society would speak two different language varieties, with two different degrees of hegemony, and that the language of the Political Society would become also the common language of public communication. In this sense, a policy intervention such as this would ultimately establish a form of diglossia rather than multilingualism, with the risks of perpetuating language hierarchies rather than challenging them (see also May, 2014).

How do we reconcile the need of the people to communicate and of the State to organise its forces with multilingualism? In line with Gramsci’s theories, I believe that a common (‘national’) means of communication is necessary, but that only one language may not be enough, and in fact rarely is, if we want to maintain language diversity. Certainly, as demonstrated by the case of the European Union, some working languages are necessary to guarantee intercommunication, but these working languages can be more than one at the time, and translations, albeit not economical, can be effectively and fairly employed. In other words, by ensuring that each social context is naturally open
to multilingual practices, via tolerance-oriented approaches if not via promotion-oriented ones, we can molecularly but relentlessly redefine the language hierarchies we choose to address. If multilingualism is accepted as a norm, ideally all the languages of a society can equally benefit from the State, without feeling oppressed or marginalised by it. In this way, there will be no need to continue the imposition of labels such as ‘minority language’, ‘dialect’, ‘national language’, which only perpetuate hierarchies and stigmatise both the languages and their speakers in multiple domains. This scenario is undoubtedly not easy to achieve, as it would call for considerable financial funding, and time and effort to rebuild the ideologies underpinning the existing hierarchies. Most of all, though, it would require the support of many, if not all, social and political actors. In this way, it will be possible to contribute to a new type of education, which is aware of multilingual practices and works to maintain them. Indeed, as Gramsci reminds us in an early article,

La cultura è […] organizzazione, disciplina del proprio io interiore, è presa di possesso della propria personalità, è conquista di coscienza superiore, per la quale si riesce a comprendere il proprio valore storico, la propria funzione nella vita, i propri diritti e i propri doveri. Ma tutto ciò non può avvenire per evoluzione spontanea, per azioni e reazioni indipendenti dalla propria volontà […]. E questa coscienza si è formata non sotto il pungolo brutale delle necessità fisiologiche, ma per la riflessione intelligente, prima di alcuni e poi di tutta una classe, sulle ragioni di certi fatti e sui mezzi migliori per convertirli da occasione di vassallaggio in segnacolo di ribellione e di ricostruzione sociale. Ciò vuol dire che ogni rivoluzione è stata preceduta da un intenso lavoro di critica, di penetrazione culturale, di permeazione di idee attraverso aggregati di uomini.

[Culture […] means organisation, discipline of the inner self, it means taking possession of each individual's personality, it means conquest of a superior conscience, thanks to which we can understand our historical value, our function in life, our rights and out duties. But all this cannot happen through a spontaneous evolution, through actions and reactions that are independent from our will. […] This conscience has not developed under the brutal goad of physiological necessities, but rather because of the intelligent thinking of some individuals first, and then of a whole class, who reflected on the reasons behind certain facts and on the best ways to transform them from situations of vassalage into signals of rebellion and social reconstruction. This means that every revolution has been anticipated by an intense critical activity, cultural penetration and permeation of ideas through various groups of human beings] (Gramsci, 1916).

Therefore, in order to redefine language hierarchies we must reconstruct the culture, but, in order to reconstruct the culture, we must trigger a series of changes that, moving through education, affect society as a whole. In this sense, and in line with what May (2012) suggests, we must reimagine the nation-state in relation to multilingual practices both in the public space and in educational practices. We must try to normalise the idea that national sentiment does not have to be necessarily monolingual: a nation can identify itself with multiple languages, as demonstrated by Scotland. Even more, the national identity can be in fact plurinational, as shown by the case of Bolivia. Paradoxically, as we have seen with the case of Veneto, even examples of extreme nationalism can lean towards multilingualism.

The case of Veneto is also a clear example of how a polity, a region or a nation can reconstruct the existing language hierarchies through tools provided by that very society’s context. In this sense, what emerges, once again, is the importance of a Gramscian imprint in the way we approach
language matters. Through Gramsci’s ideas of language, which, as we have seen, reflect specific personal and socio-political experiences, we can obtain multiple paramount outcomes: providing languages with a historical context; highlighting the molecular interferences that affect languages and keeping them constantly connected with the surroundings; identifying the connections between the various components of society; appreciating the multidimensional nature of those connections, and how they determine the creation of language hierarchies. From this Gramscian conceptualisation, local, national and supranational dimensions are inevitably linked, and guaranteeing the internationality, rather than the cosmopolitanism, of this link becomes the key to effectively and fairly address language hierarchies in today’s society. Within this frame, language hierarchies can be challenged both within regional borders and within the nation-state borders by including the international hegemony of multilingualism. In this way, we can see how multilingualism not only challenges the existing hierarchies, however they may be expressed, but it can also soften the potential extreme drifts deriving from protectionist and purist monolingual attitudes. Thanks to its adaptability, the multilingual option can ultimately renovate national hierarchies, and become an important component of any language policy aimed at the preservation of language diversity.
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APPENDIX I


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1) §47, page 56

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1) §25, page 181
2) §75, pages 233-234
3) §116, page 258

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1) §2, page 286
2) §34, pages 311-312
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5) §48, pages 328-331
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10) §115, page 383
11) §118, page 386
12) §141, page 399
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1) §38, page 460

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APPENDIX II
Gramsci's *Letters from Prison* Mentioned in the Thesis in Chronological Order

1) Pre-Prison: January-November 1912, to his family
2) Pre-Prison: 6 March 1924 to his wife, Giulia
3) 19 December 1926 to his sister-in-law Tatiana
4) 2 January 1927 to his friend, Piero Sraffa
5) 26 February 1927 to his mother, Giuseppina
6) 19 March 1927 to Tatiana
7) 26 March 1927 to his sister, Teresina
8) 23 May 1927 to Tatiana
9) 12 September 1927 to his brother, Carlo
10) 3 October 1927 to his mother
11) 31 December 1928 to Carlo
12) 9 February 1929 to Tatiana
13) 5 October 1931 to Tatiana
14) 12 October 1931 to Tatiana
15) 5 September 1932 to Giulia
16) 14 November 1932 to Tatiana
17) 3 April 1933 to Tatiana
18) 1 October 1933 to Giulia
19) 5 January 1937 to Giulia
20) 1926-1937, to his sons Delio and Giuliano