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PURISM

Second helping

*Papers from the conference on
'Purism in the age of globalisation'
Bremen, September 2001*

Edited by
Dónall ó Riagáin &
Thomas Stolz

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The role of purism in language development – historical and political aspects[*]

Purism is the conscious rejection from a language of elements that are regarded by the speech-making community as undesirable. This is a general phnomenon, but if, how or when it appears is something that is different for each language community. Purism is more than just the rejection of **foreign** elements – words or grammatical elements borrowed from other languages – although that is what attention is usually focused on. It is a fact that all languages contain foreign, borrowed, elements: there is no language that is completely isolated from other languages, though the degree of isolation may differ per language – and languages spoken on islands, for instance, have far fewer contacts and hence have far fewer loanwords than the languages of the European Continent.

Purism by definition is encountered only in languages that have been standardized or are searching for a standard, since it has to be established first what the norm or standard is or should be before it can be determined what is a deviation from that norm – and that is what purism is all about. As a rule, norms for the written language come first and only after that do we get those for the spoken language. The search for norms for the written language was begun in Western Europe during the Renaissance, and all European languages have, roughly, passed through the same development (see below). The gap between the written and the spoken form in some languages may have been caused by purism, but it can also be reduced by it.

Purism is closely connected with constitutional development – the birth of new nations led to the emergence of national languages (and minority languages) on the one hand, and on the other to a growing feeling of nationalism that was accompanied by purism. In large-scale political revolutions, purism is sometimes used as one of the instruments with which to break with the past. The difference between national languages and minority languages can lead to language politics, either to protect the minority language or to promote the dominant national language.

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[*] This article is based on the introductory article to the volume *Taaltrots. Purisme in een veertigtal talen* (Language pride. Purism in 40 languages), edited by NICOLINE VAN DER SIJS, 1999, Amsterdam: Contact, with bibliographical references. The translation of the present article is by PIET VERHOEFF.

In section 1 I shall present a chronological survey of the role of purism since the Renaissance, in section 2 I will discuss the relation between purism and (language)politics; section 3 is about aims and ways of purism, and I conclude, in section 4, with a discussion of the effect of purism.

1. Chronological survey

1.1. Standardization of the written language

In the Middle Ages, there were no standard languages yet, and the spoken languages differed per region, city and even village. Latin was used everywhere in Europe as the universal language of art and science and as the language of the church. By the end of the Middle Ages, French played an important role as the language of the courts and as the language of the highest circles. In this period, some clerical and literary texts were already written in the vernacular, and then, therefore, always in a local variant.

In the sixteenth century, Humanism and Renaissance spread from Italy over the rest of Europe. The Renaissance was accompanied by an idealization of the "classical" culture of the Greeks and the Romans. Scholars all over Europe in this period were opposed to Medieval Latin, arguing that it had strayed too far from classical Latin. A new, purer form of Latin came into use, which harked back to the classical model – this is called Humanist Latin or Neolatin.

Reflecting on forms of Latin led people to reflect also on the vernaculars (Dutch, German, Frisian, French, Catalan, etc.). In this period, regional consciousness flourished, people beginning to realize the importance of their own language. More and more literary and scientific works came to be written in the vernacular, i.e. in the authors' own dialect or in a closely related influential dialect. The dialect differences appeared to hinder communication, now that the vernaculars came to be used more frequently, for more purposes and on a larger scale. The need came to be felt for a standardized written language.

The need for standardization was intensified by the Reformation, which wanted to make the Bible more generally known. For this purpose, one or more Bible translations were made for most languages, not all of them adequate. Eventually, authoritative translations were produced for many languages – in Germany, LUTHER wrote his Bible translation in 1522/1534, the Dutch Authorized Version was published in 1637. In English, Finnish, Swedish, Icelandic and Lithuanian, too, Bible translations greatly influenced the process of standardization.

The need for standardization led to manuals being written for many languages, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in which spelling,

vocabulary and grammatical rules were discussed. What was aimed at especially was a supra-regional spelling. Until then, Latin had been used as the language of history, science and theology – now that there was a shift towards the vernacular, large numbers of scientific and theological terms had to be created in these vernacular languages. Sometimes, Latin words were borrowed as loans, but this practice caused a good deal of opposition. Just as humanistic Latin was purged of foreign influences, the vernacular, too, would have to be purified, "adorned", and built up. People were proud of their own language, not wanting it to be defiled by other languages. Latin terms were translated, or new compounds and derivations were constructed.

In this period, then, purism went hand in hand with standardization, and it had a constructive character. People's awareness of their own language led to it being standardized and regulated, with the idea of the language and vocabulary being extended and adapted to the demands of written communication in all fields. Rules were devised to determine which words and forms conformed to the norm and which did not.

1.2. National languages

After the period of standardization and language development, lasting all of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in most European countries, the nature of purism changed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – it came to be concentrated more on the protection of the language as it had by then developed. This is linked up with the formation of states and the accompanying nationalistic feelings that began to manifest themselves in this period. In the states, usually one specific language form had gained the upper hand as the standardized written language, developing from dominant written language to national language. French is now the language of France, German that of Germany, Dutch that of the Netherlands. The "minor" languages or dialects continued to be used as spoken languages, but seldom served as written languages and were never or only much later standardized (thus, the standard written languages of Catalan and Faeroese were not established before the nineteenth century, and that of Breton not before the twentieth century). Some non-dominant languages developed into regional languages which, officially recognized or not, featured by the side of the national language (Catalan, Frisian), some still developed in a later period into national languages (Czech, Bulgarian, Polish), and some continued to exist as dialects by the side of the standard languages (Groningen, Occitan). Others died out.

When the national borders had become more or less fixed, complicated relations between nations began to develop, with some nations feeling politically, economically or culturally threatened by others. As one ele-

ment in the struggle for life of the nation, as proof of the individual powers of expression, the "threatened" nation came to reject words from the language of a more dominant nation. Such defensive purism is found in various countries in this period, often (e.g. in the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy) directed against French, which was very influential all over the Continent. Nationalism, i.e. pride in the individual character of one's country and its inhabitants, and pride in one's language, leading to purism, now go hand in hand.

From the end of the eighteenth century, nationalism was fostered by an interest in popular poetry and the national past, that had its roots in Romanticism. In Germany, HERDER published works on German poetry, folk songs and the German language. As for the Czech, who had for some centuries led a slumbering existence under German rule, the period of Romanticism brought with it a renewed interest in their own language – they harked back to the time when Czech flourished, the sixteenth century. Croats, Finns, Armenians, Swedes and Bulgarians, too, showed an interest in their national past as they were working on the formation of their language. The Bulgarians managed to liberate themselves from Turkish domination in 1878, and proclaimed Bulgarian, which had until then had only rustic status, to be their national language. Often, a specific period from the country's history was idealized, and specific literary works were held up as examples because of their "pure" diction and style. For Icelandic, the tenth century, when the famous sagas were written, became the shining example. In Italy, the language of fourteenth-century poets such as DANTE, BOCCACCIO and PETRARCA, was for a long time held up as an ideal which was never to be improved on and which had to be taken as an example.

In the early part of the twentieth century, in Europe a great many new states were created. These states took as their official language a vernacular language that had so far functioned mainly as the spoken language by the side of a dominant less indigenous language. When after the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Soviet Union was created, Poland, Finland and the three Baltic States Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became independent. In these new states, Polish, Finnish (beside Swedish), Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian became the official national languages – till that time they had been dominated by German or Russian. After World War I, in 1918, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was dissolved, and there was a large-scale redivision of Europe, based as much as possible on the nationality principle. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Hungary became independent countries that took for their national languages those that had hitherto functioned mainly as spoken languages: Czech and Slovak, Serbo-Croatian and Hungarian. In 1923, the Turkish Republic was proclaimed – it broke with the past in every respect, also in linguistic matters.

The new national languages that were proclaimed towards the end of the nineteenth and in the early part of the twentieth century, had often, then, been used for centuries exclusively or mainly as spoken languages. In those languages often a great many loanwords from the dominant languages had been incorporated, moreover, they did not yet have a vocabulary that could cope with the new age and function. In most cases, they had not been taught in the schools and there was often not much literature that had been written in them. These languages now entered on a period of development comparable to that of Dutch, German, French, English etc. in the sixteenth century. In many cases, the languages were purified – thus, following the independence of Finland in 1917, there was immediately a purist period, while the Poles in 1918 started an inventarization and reformation of the spelling rules.

For the three Baltic States, independence was short-lived: in 1939, they were occupied by the Soviets. After World War II, Europe was divided up anew, with a Western and an Eastern bloc, separated by the Iron Curtain. The Soviet Union acquired the hegemony over Central Europe, instituting communist regimes in East Germany, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The linguistic situation remained unaffected: the national languages continued relatively unchanged, with only the vocabularies being enriched by a completely new communistic jargon.

When, in 1948, Denmark granted the Faeroe Islands self-rule, Faeroese took over the function of Danish, becoming the official language and the language of education and legislation. Till now, most Faeroese have been bi-lingual.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a new situation arose in Eastern and Central Europe. Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian were painfully separated. The independent Russia that was left of the former Soviet Union decreed constitutionally that in the 21 internal republics, Russian was the official language (in the Soviet union, all languages were equal on paper, and there was no official national language), and that in addition, a second language could be accepted as the official language – which is what most republics have done. The former Union Republics have become independent – Georgia, Armenia, Moldavia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the Baltic states; here, Georgian, Armenian, Moldavian(-Romanian), Ukrainian, Kazakh, Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian have become the national language.

1.3. Standardization of the spoken language

In the second half of the nineteenth century, all teaching had to be conducted in the official national language. As a result, the influence of dialects was reduced, the spoken and written languages began to grow

towards each other, and a "cultivated" pronunciation was born that came to be used as the general standard for the spoken language, beside the earlier standard for the written language. The position of dialects and minority languages was weakened through the compulsory education, everyone learning the written and spoken standard of the dominant language from an early age, and the use of dialect or of another language being stopped or at least discouraged. Besides, dialects and minority languages often develop in the direction of the official national language by frequently borrowing loanwords and grammatical constructions.

Teaching in minority languages (Frisian, Catalan, Breton) is a thing of the recent past, and is not found everywhere. Dialects are not usually taught in the schools: they have not as a rule been standardized, and there are no teaching materials. That is why some dialects – perhaps all of them in the long run! – run the risk of disappearing altogether. That can only be stopped if they resist the influence of the standard language, and that in its turn can only be achieved if the will to survive is strong enough, if people are proud of their dialect, if they are sure that a knowledge of it means a surplus value (in whatever sense – economical, philosophical) and therefore pass it on to their children.

Because the standard languages had become fixed and the use of dialects decreased, state boundaries increasingly became language boundaries in the course of the twentieth century. Take for instance the boundary between Germany and the Netherlands. Dutch and German are closely related languages that have always been spoken in neighbouring regions, forming a continuum – there is no clear-cut boundary between the two languages as there is in Belgium between Dutch and French. In the Middle Ages, Dutch and German were not clearly differentiated. Only when, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a written standard language had developed, did written Dutch and German become clearly distinct. Things were different for the (Low Saxonian) dialects that were spoken in the border regions of the Netherlands and Germany. Since 1648, there has been a state boundary between the Netherlands and the German states, but only between World Wars I and II did it become more clearly a culture and a language boundary, as a result of the increasing influence of the standard languages Dutch and German on either side of the border.

One important aspect of education was and is that people come to use the spoken and written language that they had once been taught, as a fixed norm to which they stick more or less rigorously for the rest of their lives. The school system and the government profiting by it elevate the norms to the status of law, thus obstructing normal language change. That every new generation should use their language in a way different from that used by the preceding generation, is something that language users often will not accept. Some people who were taught at school that, e.g., *last year there were less accidents* instead of *fewer accidents* is wrong, keep agitating against this "error" for the rest of their lives.

In various European countries, among them the Netherlands, Finland and England, the edges of purism were blunted somewhat in the second half of the twentieth century, attention shifting from purism to language care; thanks to the teaching system, but also to the media and to government involvement. It came to be generally recognized that repressing foreign words has its limitations, that language is a living and a changing phenomenon, and that loan words are either accepted and naturalized or rejected and replaced by translations or new words. People realized that this is a natural process, which can not or hardly at all be controlled. People recognize that standardized language, too, needs maintenance, and their attention shifted gradually from purism to conservation – writing and speaking good, understandable language, of which the use of "plain" words is only a part. This means that loanwords can be adopted with moderation, where necessary, and that a moderate pursuit of replacement is acceptable, especially for foreign words that cause misunderstanding. Purism thus becomes a stable component of language conservation. Language users with that attitude do not feel threatened – they are proud of their language and are only too willing to take care of its maintenance.

1.4. Gap between written language and spoken language

The same norms do not apply to the written language and the spoken language. Thanks to education, radio and TV, mobility etc., they have clearly grown towards each other in the course of the century, but differences remain. The written language is often more official, more archaic, and contains more loanwords that are old and are felt to be dignified – for English, we can think of French or Latin loans such as *deficit, desiderata, frequently, to involve, to facilitate, to opt, preliminary*. In the spoken language, a "cultivated" pronunciation becomes more and more generally accepted (fewer people speak dialect).

Of many western languages, it can be said that during and after the sixties of the twentieth century, the gap between written and spoken language was definitively reduced in favour of the spoken language. This was caused by social changes – there was a growing resistance to the established order, and this manifested itself in a freer, less official use of language. More loanwords, words taken from the spoken language and slang words penetrated into the written language, while archaic loanwords were rejected from the written language. On the other hand, the spoken language adopted more scientific, technical and international terms (just listen to a discussion about diseases by laymen on television). What we do still find frequently is a difference between generations: the spoken language of young people contains more recent, English loanwords, slang terms etc. than that of their elders. After the fall of the Wall,

we witnessed the same thing: the difference between spoken and written language is decreasing, and the language used by the younger generation has become much freer.

In several languages, there is still a difference between spoken and written language, with the spoken language containing considerably more new loanwords than the written language. This is what we find in Afrikaans, Frisian, Catalan, Faroese, Icelandic, Welsh and Greek. In French, there is a difference between public officials (in which Anglo-American words are banned) and private and commercial language (in which those words do occur). One of the differences between Croatian and Serbian is the gap between spoken and written language. In Croatian, this gap is greater than in Serbian, because the Croatian spoken language contains more loanwords than the written language. In Serbian, loanwords are found in both the spoken and the written language.

1.4.1. Diglossia

In certain periods and in certain languages, the gap between spoken and written language or between standard language and spoken dialect can be so big that we talk of a situation of diglossia or bilingualism. This means that within one language community there are two language versions – in this case: the spoken and the written language – with totally different norms each. A situation of diglossia existed, for example, in nineteenth-century Czech, in Chinese and Turkish in the early part of the twentieth century, and in Greek with the division between the written language, based on classical Greek (*katharévousa*) and the spoken *dimotiki*. This diglossia was caused by purism, or is being sustained by it.

There is a tendency towards doing away with such forms of bilingualism, because they interfere with communication, and because they bring about a dichotomy in society between those who are proficient in the written language and those who are not and who are therefore deprived of information and can less easily succeed in life. Abolishing diglossia is, again, effected by language manipulation, either gradually by having the two variants grow towards each other (Czech) or abruptly by the promotion of one of the two variants (Chinese, Turkish, accompanied by a political revolution: see below).

Arabic is a special case. As we have seen, the normal tendency is for languages and language norms to change in the course of time, and for the norms of the spoken and the written language to grow towards each other. In Arabic, however, this is not the case at all. That is because of the native speakers' very special notions about language and writing, linked up with their religion. According to the Islam, the Koran is the word of God and hence a sacred text. In the thirteen centuries after the revelation, every effort has been made to obstruct the normal development of the language, and to purge the written and the spoken language

of all foreign influence, only to preserve the sacred Arabic of the Koran. As for written Arabic, this has been largely successful – new technical, scientific and economic developments did force people to coin new words, but that was done in accordance with the classical principles. Because of the neologisms, this written language is called Modern Standard Arabic, which means: classical Arabic augmented by neologisms. Changes in the spoken language could not be prevented, and thus a situation of diglossia developed that is unique in the world. The mother tongue of the children is an Arabic dialect that is in every way excluded from public life and is used only in private. At school, the children are taught Modern Standard Arabic, which is far removed from the language they speak in daily life and which is in fact a dead language. For spoken Arabic, no norm has been developed, as it is regarded exclusively as a corruption of the pure Arabic. The spoken language has gone its own natural way and has developed in the various Arabic countries into Moroccan Arabic, Egyptian Arabic etc. The diglossia in the Arabic world is aggravated by the difficult writing system (with consonants only – the vowels are left for the reader to supply), which seriously impedes alphabetization – it can, however, not be tampered with, for the script, too, is sacrosanct.

In Armenian, diglossia has resulted in the development of two Armenian dialects. Armenian had been spoken from the sixteenth century both in the Caucasus and in colonies in the important cultural centres of Europe and the Middle East. In the nineteenth century, a conflict arose round the question of what was going to be accepted as the standard written language. One group wanted to revert to the classical language, the other would prefer to use the spoken language as a base and to adapt it to the requirements of the modern world. Around 1870, two variants of Modern Armenian had developed: East Armenian in present-day Armenia, based on the spoken language, and West Armenian in the Diaspora, based on the classical language. In the eastern parts, the standard was propagated through the teaching system. For nearly a century, East Armenian and West Armenian went their separate ways, becoming more and more different, among other things because in Soviet Armenia a spelling reform was realized which was rejected in West Armenian as "communist". After Armenia had become independent, there was a change: people now want to integrate the two variants into one standard eventually, thus strengthening the position of Armenian as a whole.

A special instance of diglossia is found in Norwegian. For a long time, Danish was the official written language of Norway. The Bokmål 'book language' is predominantly based on Danish and is written and spoken by most of the population. The Nynorsk 'New Norse' is a constructed and purified form of Norwegian with little Danish influence, based on Norwegian dialects.

2. Purism and politics

2.1. Purism and political revolutions

If one really wants to thoroughly work on or renovate a language, it appears that that can be done well during or directly after a great political revolution. Language renovation is then one of the means to formulate and accentuate the changes. In a revolutionary situation, an (often totalitarian) government is apparently powerful enough to impose changes, or there is (in the case of more democratic governments) sufficient support among the citizens for language changes.

Frequently when political revolutions are taking place, one of the first items to be tackled is the script or the spelling, perhaps because a change in the outward appearance of a language shows the break with the past most quickly and most strikingly. The usual argument then is that the script had to be simplified because of the high degree of difficulty, which obstructed the process of alphabetization among the population – script reforms are then coupled with a large-scale alphabetization campaign intended to educate the population. An additional advantage is that the new government can get through to and influence its citizens more easily. In the case of very drastic changes in script and language, it is a disadvantage for the citizens (and perhaps an advantage for the new regime) that books from before the revolution can no longer be read without special instruction. This is what we find in Turkey, North Vietnam and China.

In the next few paragraphs, I shall give a survey of important changes in script, to be followed by a survey of other language changes caused by political revolutions.

2.1.1. Script or alphabet reforms

A total alphabet change took place in Turkey. In the early part of the twentieth century, there was a diglossia situation in Turkish: the Turkish written language – with the Arabic script – was full of prestigious Persian and Arabic loan words. The spoken language contained far fewer loans. The new Turkish Republic, proclaimed in 1923, took the spoken language as a model. In 1928, the Turkish leader ATATÜRK forbade the use of the Arabic script, replacing it by an adapted Latin alphabet. This was easier to learn, but a convenient additional advantage was that this script was less suitable to render the many Arabic and Persian loanwords in. Through the introduction of the Latin script, all age-old connections were severed in one fell swoop, and the language was automatically cleansed of part of its foreign elements.

In North Vietnam, the Chinese-based character script was, after the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in 1945, replaced by an extended Latin alphabet with many diacritical marks.

In China, there had been, from the days of yore, a great difference between the written language (classical Chinese) and the spoken language. After the republic was proclaimed in 1912, the classical written language was abandoned and replaced by a "national language", closer to the spoken language – Mandarin Chinese. Although the People's Republic, proclaimed in 1949, gave this language a different name, it remained based on Mandarin Chinese, and was propagated at the expense of the dialects. In addition, the People's Republic introduced a simplified script in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century.

When Communism was introduced in Eastern Europe, it brought script reforms in its train. The Cyrillic alphabets of Russian and Bulgarian were simplified. Automatically, everything that had been written before became antiquated. For non-Slavonic languages in the Soviet Union, there was a policy of differences. These languages had been written – if at all! – in various alphabets, depending on the various religions: Muslim peoples used the Arabic script, Buddhist peoples used the Mongolian script. In the mid-twenties of last century, scripts were developed for most of the newly written languages that were based on the Latin alphabet – partly to avoid suggestions of a russification, and partly to loosen the tie between religion and writing. In the thirties, however, it was decided by the Central government that the time had come for a general change to the Cyrillic alphabet. As a result, speakers of minority languages became estranged from their own language. At the same time, the vocabularies of the newly-written languages were expanded and adapted to the modern age, which was done with the aid of Russian loanwords, which were easier to borrow in the Cyrillic alphabet. Thus, the differences between these languages and Russian decreased substantially. Now, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, some nations are beginning to re-adopt a non-Cyrillic alphabet. Moldavian, for example, is nowadays written in the Latin alphabet again, just like Rumanian, of which it is a dialect.[1]

In Soviet Armenia, a reformation of the Armenian alphabet was introduced in 1922. This was not taken over by the Armenians outside the Soviet Union, with the result that an extra gap was created between East and West Armenian.

In Japan, the American occupation after World War II has had a democratizing effect: the script was reformed and the great differences between the spoken and the written language have disappeared.

In Nazi Germany, though people were opposed to "Jewish and Western European influences that spoiled de German language", they refrained from any form of purism, because, within the pursuit of a uni-

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[1] After the fall of Communism, Romanian implemented a spelling change: in certain positions î was changed into â to emphasize the Latin and Romance origin of the language. For instance, the spelling of *pîine* 'bread', deriving from Latin *panis*, was changed into *pâine*.

fication of the Abendland against communism, they wanted to emphasize that Europe formed one unity. Consequently, the two scripts by which Germany differed from the rest of Europe, the Gothic block script and the Sütterlin script, were abandoned.

2.1.2. Other language changes in times of revolution

It takes longer to realize a change in the vocabulary and phraseology than a script reform. And yet, many (totalitarian) regimes have succeeded in perpetrating such a change. Totalitarian regimes use language as a means to manipulate social life. They ban foreign or unwanted elements from the language, supposing that when words are banned, the notions indicated by them would cease to be accepted in social life, to die out even tually. The utmost consequence that could lead to was depicted by ORWELL in his *1984*.

In the erstwhile communist countries, a completely unique idiomatic system came into being. In the totalitarian system, everything was regulated by the authorities, including the language. Unacceptable notions and words such as "homosexual", terms of abuse and obscene words were removed from the dictionaries or redefined, censorship was introduced and the standard language was strongly promoted, with the spoken language, dialects and minority languages coming to be neglected. Fixed slogans and cliché expressions or platitudes were used, such as the Polish *pokojowa walka* 'peaceful fight'.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet language disappeared fast. Obscene words, terms of abuse and jargon have come to be used more and more, both in the spoken and in the written language. The differences between the spoken and the written language have decreased. All one-time communist countries eagerly and frequently borrow English loanwords, partly because they want to reduce their economic backlog with English being the language of the international business world and the world of science, and partly to show how emphatically they belong to the West, to Europe, and certainly not to the East. But conservative voices can already be heard advising restraint in borrowing words, pointing out the importance of polished speech.

A very special situation is found in Croatian and Serbian. Although the vocabularies of the two languages are for more than 75% identical, there are also considerable differences caused by greatly different social and linguistic developments. In the course of history there have been periods when people tried to create a greater harmony between these two related forms of language, but the opposite also took place. After 1850, a desire came to be felt for a unification of Serbs and Croats, with one language. In 1918, Serbo-Croatian became the official language of the new state of Yugoslavia (additionally, Macedonian and Slovenian were recognized in the relevant territories), but in practice, Serbian only was used at all

official levels. After World War II, there was among the communist regime an official pursuance of a linguistic unity of Croatian and Serbian, but theory was out of step with practice, which showed that the languages were in fact developing along divergent lines. When Yugoslavia was dissolved, with Serbs and Croats fighting each other, there was in Croatia a strong movement to ban Serbian influences from Croatian. The independence of the Croatian language with regard to Serbo-Croatian was to serve as evidence of the independence of Croatia from Yugoslavia. The Croatians wanted a Croatian language that was directly distinguishable from Serbian. Not only Serbian but also many ordinary Croatian words were replaced, for it is by no means always clear whether a word is or is not a "Serbism". The ultimate criterion for the pureness of a word was whether or not "it exists in Serbian". This trend, which lasted only a short while and was not generally approved of, is now a thing of the past.

Some regimes have allied themselves explicitly with a purist movement: during the Greek civil war of 1946–1949, spoken Greek (*dimotiki*) was propagated, during the colonels' dictatorship; there was a reversion to archaic, classical Greek (*katharévousa*). The Italian fascists strove for an aggressive purification of their language in order to repress foreign influences and to strengthen Italian nationalistic feelings. In Turkey, someone using many Arabic/Persian words will be right-wing, and someone using purified Turkish left-wing.

2.2. Purism and language policy

Purism is often part and parcel of a deliberate language policy. In actual practice, this often involves preferential treatment of the standard language and suppression of minority languages, although official bodies such as the European Union try to give some sort of support to minority languages. The position of standard languages is by definition far stronger than that of minority languages, and quite a few minority languages (think of the dialects!) have in the course of time been absorbed by the national languages. Since all people are required by law to get their education in the standard language, the knowledge of that language is far more general than the knowledge of the minority language, especially when no education in that language is provided. A minority language that is not used for teaching purposes usually has no clearly defined standards and remains fragmentary. The fact that for a long time there was no teaching in Breton while there was teaching in Welsh has led to Breton now existing only in the form of numerous dialects, while Welsh is a unity. Minority language speakers usually being bilingual, they often use loanwords from the national standard language. Quite gradually, the difference between standard language and minority language thus becomes ever smaller.

2.2.1. Various equivalent national languages

Even when there are various officially equivalent languages within one nation that are recognized as national languages, in practice usually one of them has the upper hand. This goes for Finland, which is officially bilingual and where Swedish, by the side of Finnish, is an official national language. Until well into the twentieth century, Swedish was the language of the intelligentsia and of the upper classes; until the second half of the nineteenth century, all teaching was in Swedish, only after that do we begin to find schools where the teaching is in Finnish. Nowadays, Finnish is spoken everywhere, except for a few coastal areas that are inhabited by Swedes, and for some bilingual cities. The Swedish-speaking minority (nowadays about 6% of the population) has, however, the same rights in every respect as the Finnish-speaking majority, which means that they have teaching in Swedish (from kindergarten up to university), that all official documents are bilingual and that there is a broadcasting system in the Swedish language.

In Ireland, Irish is the first official language, while in addition, English is an official language. All inhabitants are taught in English and Irish, the Irish language is constitutionally adequately protected, and the number of Irish speakers has increased enormously since the nineteenth century. And yet, English has a particularly strong position, and it is the mother tongue of most children.

In South Africa, in the days of apartheid, English and Afrikaans were the official languages, while various indigenous languages were spoken besides. After the abolition of apartheid, the position of Afrikaans has changed. Eleven languages obtained the status of official, equivalent, languages: English, Afrikaans and nine languages of indigenous origin. In actual practice, this means that English is used generally in social life, whereby other languages, including Afrikaans, are being elbowed out. Most native speakers of Afrikaans are taught in English, not Afrikaans.

Only in countries where we find various official languages that are regionally delimited, we can (sometimes) speak of equivalent positions. This is true, for example, of Belgium, where three languages are officially recognized, namely Dutch in the Northern provinces, French in the southern provinces, and German in nine municipalities. The district of Brussels is officially bilingual, as is the national government.

2.2.2. Minority languages

Nations, but also regions, can be bilingual or multilingual. In some regions, the regional or minority language is recognized alongside the national language by the national government. Speakers of minority languages that are officially recognized, have certain rights, e.g. the right to be taught in their own language, thereby strengthening their position. Recognized minority languages are, for instance, Frisian in the Nether-

lands, Catalan and Basque in Spain. Teaching is done in these languages, but always alongside the national language: all Frisians, Catalans and Basques are therefore bilingual.

However, minority languages are by no means always officially recognized. Welsh, Gaelic and Cornish in Great Britain have no official status, albeit that Welsh is frequently used in the schools. In France, Basque, Breton, Catalan and Dutch are regional languages without official status. There is a possibility whereby people can be taught in these languages, but this is hardly supported by the French government.

From the examples of Catalan and Basque it appears that minority languages can be spoken in more than one country, and can be variously recognized in these countries. This weakens the position of the minority languages even more, and it leads to dialectal disintegration of languages that often have relatively few speakers as it is. For Basque, there is now a uniform written language, thanks to the Basque Academy.

In Europe, the European Council has a facilitating function in the recognition of minority languages – it has adopted a *Charter for regional languages or languages of minorities*. Under this charter, minority languages can acquire recognition. There are several gradations of recognition – thus, Frisian comes under article 3 of the charter, Low Saxonian and Limburg receive more global support by recognition under article 2 (but in Germany, Low Saxonian comes under 3); Zeeuws (the dialect spoken in Dutch Zeeland) has applied for recognition under article 2.

In the former Soviet Union there were more than a hundred minority languages, many more than in Western Europe. The situation of many of these languages was and is far from rosy, although often better than that of minority languages in Western Europe. On paper, all languages were equal and there was no national language. Under LENIN, the minority languages were promoted, from the underlying idea that all people are equal. But LENIN, too, assumed that in the new classless society there would be one colloquial language and that that would be Russian – chosen on the basis of voluntariness. STALIN did not fancy the minority languages much, and he favoured Russian. The Latin alphabets that had been devised for minority languages under LENIN were replaced by Cyrillic ones. From 1938, Russian was compulsory in all schools, and the educational programmes were the same everywhere in the immense territory. Attempts were made to have the various languages grow towards each other and towards Russian, by swamping them with Russian loanwords. That was useful for communication purposes, but it weakened the position of the minority languages. On the other hand, the authorities tried to have languages grow away from each other, thereby strengthening political borders. One example is Moldavia – in the regional republic of Moldavia, which from 1944 belonged to the Soviet Union, a Romanian dialect was spoken. However, to differentiate it from Romanian, Moldavian came to be written with the Cyrillic script, and a

great many Russian loanwords were introduced. After the fall of communism, Moldavian is again, like Romanian, written with the Latin alphabet.

The Soviet government stimulated young Russians to settle in newly developed industrial areas. They took their language with them, that way promoting russification. This was an age-old method, applied in the days of the Roman Empire: Hadrian, who was emperor from 117 to 138, consolidated his empire by giving his soldiers pieces of land far away in the provinces; this resulted in a consolidation of Roman language elements in many different areas, among them the Balkan, a factor still evident in the languages of Romania and Moldavia.

After the fall of communism, Russian became the national language of the independent Russia, also in the minority areas. Those regions, if they have the status of republic, are allowed to proclaim one or more of their local languages to be national language by the side of Russian, which they do. A number of states have become independent, like Georgia, Armenia, Moldavia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the Baltic States – these states have proclaimed their own languages their national languages. In Armenia, after it became independent in 1991, all Russian schools were closed down, since when all teaching is done in Armenian.

Some speakers of a minority language aim at living in their own country, where their own language is spoken. Thus, Basques dream of their own Basqueland, many Kurds want an independent Kurdistan, and there are Berbers who want to establish a Berber state in North Africa. The position of Kurdish and Berber is nowadays most awkward – the languages are spoken in many countries, but they are nowhere recognized. Kurdish is spoken in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The regimes in those countries have promoted Turkish, Persian and Arabic to the level of national languages, thereby relegating Kurdish to the level of private conversations. Until 1991, Turkey even forbade the use of Kurdish in public. Only in Iraq has Kurdish, since 1970, enjoyed official recognition, and may it be used in schools. It is significant that the Kurdish Institute, which is occupied with the standardization of the language, has its headquarters in Paris.

The Berbers live mainly in the Arab world, for a large part in Algeria and Morocco. In the Arab world, only Arabic – chosen by God – is recognized constitutionally as a national language. Berber, then, is forbidden in public life. The result is that there is no standard language and no standard script – three alphabets are used: one of their own making, the Latin and the Arabic – and there are no fixed spelling rules. What we do find are collaborating societies that aim to devise a standard, whereby the various dialects are gradually transformed into one standard. In Algeria, teaching in Berber is facultative. Outside the Arab world, Berber is better off: in Mali and Niger, for instance, it is supported by the Ministry of Education.

3. Aims and methods of purism

3.1. Aims

Purism is especially directed against the influence of foreign languages, in particular against the influence that is conspicuous as such – against new loanwords that have not yet become established. Naturally, which source languages are the targets of purism is something that differs per language; that depends on what countries and languages are or were influential, and how threatening the influence is considered to be. The point is not the real measure of influence, but the subjective opinions about that measure. Purism is as a rule not directed against all foreign influences. Certain foreign influences can even be used to replace unwanted foreigners from another language. Thus, Turkish, when it turned against Arabic and Persian, at first turned to the Western languages, especially French, for new words. When, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Bulgaria became independent, the authorities set out to remove Turkish and Greek words, while West-European words were acclaimed with applause and were regarded as tokens of civilization.

Purism is not directed against loanwords only, although these usually get most attention: foreign words are, after all, relatively easy to recognize. Sentence structure and grammar that derive from other languages are also disapproved of – if one can detect the influence, that is. In Turkey, the authorities have succeeded in getting the Arabic and Persian elements in grammar and syntax replaced by Turkish grammatical phenomena. But in Modern Standard Arabic, we do find western and dialectal influences on the syntax, and in Hebrew, too, English syntactic constructions can nowadays be detected.

There are also languages that fight against internal influences, focusing on vulgar notions and popular language – which is what Spanish and Portuguese try to suppress. Sometimes, the intention is to fight dialectisms – while some languages search their dialects to find neologisms to replace loanwords, other languages regard their dialects as dangerous for their standard norm. In the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, where there is for many people a great difference between the spoken language – the mother tongue is dialect – and the written language – the Standard Dutch that is taught in the schools – Northern Dutch is used as the norm and dialect influences are suppressed where possible. Russian repressed the dialects in the days of the Soviets, the propagation of Mandarin Chinese was carried out to the detriment of the dialects, but the situation is worst in the Arab world, where dialects have been considered "corruptions" of the standard language for over thirteen centuries.

Purists are also known to have rejected words simply because they resemble words from another, dominant language, while in actual fact they are simply related to them, having every right to exist. Not the

factual etymology, history or status is then decisive, but people's subjective opinion on the subject. Frisians prefer *úteinsette* to *begjinne* because the latter looks too much like Dutch *beginnen*, although both words are 'OK' Frisian. In the fight against Danish loanwords, many a native Faeroese word was lost because it looked too much like its Danish counterpart, and native Catalan words have sometimes had to pay for their likeness to Spanish. From the examples it becomes clear that we are always talking about closely related languages, since it is there that we find similar words that are related and not borrowed. Moreover, in the case of such a close relationship, there is a greater danger of the two languages merging into one, and to stop that and to increase the difference between the two languages, the language that feels threatened in its existence, uses purism as a weapon.

Sometimes, people begin to dig in the history of words to discover loanwords. In the seventeenth century, there were Germans who wanted to replace Latin loanwords that had long been established, even words that looked like Latin loanwords but weren't, such as *Nase* 'nose'.

Finally, we sometimes see indigenous language material being repressed because it does not come up to standard: at school we were taught to say *I shall be twenty tomorrow*, so *I will be twenty tomorrow* is wrong.

3.2. Ways of purism

Now, how can you purge language of foreign influence, or prevent foreign influences from penetrating into the language? Different language communities pursue the same aim – a pure language – in different ways. There are, however, a number of general methods, applied by most languages, the structure of their language permitting. You can adopt loanwords in such a way that their foreign origin is obscured, you can also replace them by your own verbal material. The latter is not always regarded as progress – in the Soviet Union it was regarded as progressive to adopt international words and as conservative and narrow-chauvinistic to replace them by indigenous words.

3.2.1. Practical ways

3.2.1.1. Adaptation of loanwords

When a loanword is adapted to the spelling and pronunciation of the receiving language, the foreign origin of the word is no longer obvious. Such naturalization takes place *sowieso* in normal linguistic development and language change – after all, Latin *cellarium* and *mercatus* did become *cellar* and *market* eventually – but that may take ages, and education and the whole writing culture of today have a strongly conser-

vative influence on the foreign spelling – a conservative factor that is intensified by the existence of many international words.

In other countries and at other times, other choices have been made. In 1801, for instance, spelling rules were devised in Sweden that caused all loanwords – not only the established ones – to be straightaway Swedified in their spelling, with every *c* becoming a *k*, which made the loanword look much more autochthonous. In present-day Swedish, too, there is a tendency to Swedify the spelling of loanwords quickly.

Indonesians have no problems with loanwords; their attitude in this respect is very liberal; the reason is that loanwords are always adapted immediately to the phonology and grammar of this language.

Languages borrowing from a language with a different script, by definition have the advantage when adapting loanwords. Russian and Bulgarian, for example, both written with Cyrillic script, adopt a loanword for its sounds, so that it immediately looks familiar in its spelling, being much less conspicuous as a loan (except, of course, if sound and structure differ too much from Russian or Bulgarian). A new development in these languages is that particularly English (computer) terms, names, headings are wholly or partly written in the Latin script. In Greece, too, names of shops, brand names, publicity texts etc. are written in Latin script, which makes them stand out the better; in Greek lettering, however, they would become unrecognizable. (The use of the Latin alphabet is on the increase, then – one wonders if this might eventually lead to some script types being ousted by the Latin alphabet.)

Of Arabic and Hebrew, which are both written in a consonant script, it cannot be said that the conversion to this script has led to a blurring of the fact that a word is a loanword. On the contrary, because the language system and the script differ so fundamentally from those of the Indo-European languages, loanwords from those languages are the more conspicuous. The same goes for Chinese, which, with its character script, finds it difficult to transpose the sounds of loanwords.

Kurdish, spoken in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq, has been influenced strongly by the national languages of the countries where it is spoken, Turkish, Persian and Arabic. As a reaction, the desire was born among the Kurds to delimit the language clearly from the surrounding dominant languages, not only by purifying it from loanwords, but by creating a separate script. Kurdish is written with two alphabets. In Northern Kurdistan, an expanded Latin alphabet is used (in which loanwords from, e.g., Arabic are transposed into the Latin script and are hence less recognizable as Arabic loans).

This alphabet, like the Turkish alphabet, has the letters *ç* and *ş*, but for Turkish *ı*, *İ*, *ü* and *u*, the letters *i*, *î*, *u* and *û* were used, resulting in different-looking words. In Southern Kurdistan, notably in Iraq, an adapted Arabic script is used. To make, here, too, the Arabic loanwords less easily recognizable, people write them as they are pronounced in Kurdish, making the outward appearance almost unrecognizable.

3.2.1.2. Loan translations

In all languages, loan translations are made to replace loanwords, compare German *Fernsehen* for 'television', Afrikaans *binneversierder* for 'interior decorator'. Some languages use this method fairly systematically, for example Icelandic, Faeroese, Swedish, German, Armenian, Arabic, Finnish, Chinese and Vietnamese.

3.2.1.3. Semantic expansion

Also in all languages, we find semantic expansion – this means that existing words acquire a new meaning. Thus, Icelandic *sími* which originally meant 'wire' is used meaning 'telephone', and Faeroese *mýl*, originally 'pebble' now stands for 'molecule'. Here, too, the method is used more frequently in some languages than in others, especially in languages that deviate strongly from Indo-European languages, such as Turkish, Arabic, Berber, Hebrew and Chinese.

3.2.1.4. Compounds and derivations

To replace loanwords, new words or neologisms are often created by means of compounds or derivations made from existing words. The Icelandic word for 'engine', *hreyfill*, is derived from *hreyfa* 'move'; the Icelandic word for 'surgeon', *skurðlæknir* is a compound of *skurður* 'cut' and *læknir* 'doctor'. This, too, is found in all languages, but how frequently is a matter that often also depends on the individual language systems. Arabic, for instance, has few compounds and is likely to use this method less frequently for neologisms. Arabic, Berber and Hebrew do have many derivations from existing roots.

3.2.1.5. Native linguistic material

Some languages look for new word elements in their own native linguistic stock that is no longer used or that is not standard. German examples are *hehr* 'lofty' and *Minne* 'love' – antiquated words that got a new life in the Romantic period. Other languages that make use of earlier word material are, e.g., Icelandic, Humanistic Latin and Church Latin and Greek (several times in the course of its history). This is often accompanied by a search for dialect words – not in Icelandic, because it does not have dialects, and Latin and Greek often fall back on classical Latin and Greek, which have great status because of their long literary history. Languages using older words or non-standard words to replace loanwords are, e.g., Armenian, Kurdish, Berber and Finnish.

In doing so, some languages also consider related languages – thus, Turkish used linguistic material from its dialects, other Turkish languages, and from earlier stages of the language. The Kurds wish to emphasize that they speak an Indo-European language, creating neologisms

on the analogy of other Indo-European languages such as German or French.

Then there are languages which from sheer necessity fall back on the past, on related languages or on dialect words, simply because they had lain dormant for a long time, existing only as a spoken language under foreign occupation, and were then woken up from their sleep. When they were awake again, the existing vocabulary proved totally inadequate for modern times. This is true for languages such as Czech, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Irish and Catalan.

Some languages have been aroused, not from sleep but from death. This means that there was a period when there were no native speakers of the language. Cornish had disappeared as a result of English only being used in schools. Nowadays, it has a very special position: there are only 250 people that can speak it reasonably well, but there are three (!) standard forms of modern Cornish, two of them based on medieval Cornish (of which very few texts have been preserved!).

Hebrew had been used since the sixth century BC only as the language of religion and had degenerated into a dead language – it was revived by the coming of Zionism and by the creation of the State of Israel. For new words, recourse was had to the language of yore and to other Semitic languages, viz. Aramaic and Arabic, because the structure of these languages was comparable. Meanwhile it has, unlike Modern Standard Arabic, become a living language in full development, functioning excellently as mother tongue and as spoken language.

3.2.2. Theoretical method

So much for the practical ways to purge a language of foreign influences or to prevent foreign influences from penetrating into a language. Another way is to devise a theory that shows either that one's own language is the origin of all other languages or at any rate is related to all or many of the other languages. That would solve the problem of "foreign" versus "native", for loanwords now suddenly turn out to be native words!

During the Renaissance, all sorts of ideas about the origin of language were developed. In the Middle Ages, people believed that Hebrew was the oldest language, the mother of all other languages, spoken by God and the angels, and by all human beings until they wanted to build a tower to reach unto heaven, the Tower of Babel, and God punished them with the Babylonic confusion. The Antwerp medic JOHANNES GOROPIUS BECANUS (1518–1572) broke through the medieval theories. He made an elaborate attempt to prove that Dutch was the oldest language of the world (it was, after all, called Duyts or Douts = *d'oudste* 'the oldest'!) and the language spoken by Adam and Eve in Paradise. According to him, Dutch is older than Hebrew and is far superior to barbaric languages

like Latin and Greek. An anonymous German had, in the early part of the sixteenth century, proclaimed that Adam spoke German and that German had been brought to Europe by Adam's descendants before the Babylonic confusion of tongues. A seventeenth-century Swede, on the other hand, thought that God spoke Swedish, Adam Danish and the serpent French!

One might expect such theories to have become obsolete after the eighteenth century, when scientific etymology was developed. But that is not the case. In the nineteenth century, Basque was linked to the Creation according to the Christian tradition. Since Basque, like Hebrew, had very simple root forms, Basque was regarded as a very pure language.

The Sun-language theory from 1935–1936 claimed that Turkish ('the Sun') was closest to the original Central-Asian proto-language. It is the "Mother of all languages": all languages derive from the proto-language through Turkish. One useful aspect of this theory was that foreign words need no longer be replaced by Turkish neologisms, because ultimately they came from Turkish anyway. Furthermore, Turkish nationalistic linguists in this century have tried to show that Kurdish is a Turkish dialect, for which assumption Turkish loanwords from various periods were the crucial evidence.

In the Soviet Union, the linguistic theories of NIKOLAJ J. MARR (1865 –1934) were for some time very influential. MARR tried to establish the relationship between the Caucasian and Semitic languages and Basque, reaching the conclusion that all languages of the world date back to one mother tongue, and that languages were the products of socio-economical factors and hence were class-bound. This fitted in nicely with Marxist theories, and MARR's notions were considered to be "official" linguistic theory until 1950.

All the theories referred to above have meanwhile been discarded. That is not true of the theory about the Balto-Slavic unity: the notion that Baltic and Slavic went through a common stage in the third millennium before Christ. This theory was disgracefully misused when the Russians tried to justify STALIN's invasion of Lithuania and Latvia in June 1940, saying that a Russian occupation of the Baltic countries was legitimate because they had always been part of the Russian family.

4. The effect of purism

Does purism have any effect? Looking at the many instances, one can arrive at only one conclusion: yes. But the kind of effect differs from language to language and from period to period. The greatest effects are achieved when purism is accompanied with a political revolution, or if it is rooted in religion and constitution, as in the Arab world. And its

greatest effect is on the written language. Purism is a form of language manipulation which in certain periods and under certain circumstances can be a powerful controlling medium in the development of a language, having either a positive – edifying – or a negative – political function. Purism can work as an obstacle for normal language development by blocking undesired changes. Purism can also speed up language development.

Can purism "save" a language? In order to answer that question, we have to consider, first, when we can truthfully say that a language is in danger of disappearing. That cannot be due to the number of loanwords or other influences of other languages: the absorption powers of language are enormous; by adopting many loanwords a language does change, but it does not disappear. The example that is always mentioned in this connection is English: its vocabulary consists for over 60% of borrowed material. Nor is the number of native speakers relevant: look at Faeroese, which has very few native speakers and yet is a strong, living language. A language that is the only national language of a country is not likely (as long as that country is not occupied by a foreign power) to disappear in a hurry – at any rate, I cannot think of a single example. Even a war need not pose a real danger, indeed, the understanding of one's own language and the resistance against the language of the oppressor increase during a war.[2]

National languages do run the risk of disappearing in situations like that in South Africa, where they have a number of national languages together. The greatest danger, however, exists for minority languages and dialects, especially if they are not recognized, not standardized, if there is no teaching in them and if the dominant language is closely related to them. In such a situation, there is a great risk of them melting together with the dominant language. But this, too, need not happen: if the speakers of such a minority language are sufficiently proud of their language, they can make use of purism to curb the influence of the dominant language, having their own language grow away from the dominant language. They should then pass their language on to their children, since without mother tongue speakers their campaign will be short-lived. Letzebuergesch is interesting here: although the government does not support this language in any way, it is used on an ever-increasing scale, starting to differ from the German spoken in neighbouring regions, which is developing more and more in the direction of Standard German.

Everywhere in Europe, the European unification and the Americanization of society, felt by some as threatening, lead to the peoples'

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[2] See NICOLINE VAN DER SIJS (2001): *Chronologisch woordenboek. De ouderdom en herkomst van onze woorden en betekenissen.* [Chronological dictionary. The age and origin of our words and meanings]. Amsterdam: Veen, 228–234, 250–254, 261–264.

growing interest in their own language and culture, and to their desire to be different from the rest of the world. In the Netherlands, for instance, this has resulted in an increased number of folk songs being sung in Dutch and in Dutch dialects; regional languages (Frisian, Low Saxonian, Limburgian) get European recognition, the government appoints regional language officials, language is increasingly a centre of interest, and, finally, all kinds of small-scale puristic initiatives to fight the influence of English have been started. These initiatives will probably not result in fewer loanwords, but they symbolize the interest in, and the strength of, the language. Purism does not keep a language alive, language pride does.