

**State, national, regional, ethnic and pseudo-dialectalised sister languages:
a socio-linguistic typology of language-characterising discourses**

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1. Comparing regional languages: Towards a framework for a meaningful comparison

Regional and minority languages are generally considered to be a clearly identifiable configurational type of societal multilingualism and, as such, have always been an important object of sociolinguistic research. However, the vast majority of research undertaken in this field has tended to focus on analysing individual cases, while the actual notion of Regional Language as such has as yet received little to no attention from the scientific community, apparently under the impression that the concept is largely undisputed and self-evident.¹ Moreover, while it seems to be generally accepted that a comparison between minority languages promises insights that may be difficult to gain from the mere addition of individual case studies, actual systematic and structured comparisons are surprisingly rare. This paper is based on the conviction that, in the case of research into regional languages, 1.) a systematic typological comparison should be undertaken, and that 2.) this should be done within a clearly defined areal type such as to guarantee that apples are not compared with pears.

In order to maximise the expected yield of such a comparison, two pre-selections should be made beforehand: Firstly, the relationship between the concepts of “minority language” and “regional language” ought to be defined and differentiated as exactly as possible (which will be undertaken in part 1 of this paper). It will be argued, that ‘Regional Language’ is best used to define a highly specific sub-case of ‘Minority Language’. As for the comparison, a suitable method will have to be established. If we simply tried to compare a single given case directly with multiple other cases, this endeavour would threaten to catapult the resulting complexity of the multiple interconnected descriptions to dimensions that would no longer be manageable, thus impeding rather than promoting the advancement of knowledge. In order to address this problem, we suggest to extrapolate a hypothetical type of configuration which we will call an ‘Areal Type of Societal Multilingualism’, a prototype gained from the common properties observed in a group of cases with a similar historical, cultural, religious or political background. Once established by comparison and extrapolation, this Areal Type may then be used as a template, against which individual cases may be analysed. This method is inspired by the use of reconstructed (and therefore hypothetical) “Proto-Indo-European” in the field of Indo-European linguistics, where individual IE languages are compared using reconstructed Proto-Indo-European as a *tertium comparationis*. As the second pre-selection, we suggest for the time being to limit our typological comparisons to language configurations within the same areal types, instead of comparing cases freely chosen from all of the world’s regional languages. Arguing this case will be the subject of part 2. To resume, our proposal consists primarily in

¹ A good indication of this is the absence of both key words in the prestigious handbook on sociolinguistics belonging to the series entitled Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science (HSK; Ammon et al. ¹1987, ²2006), published by De Gruyter, and its compilation of fundamental and key terms.

founding an Areal Typology of Regional and Minority Languages as a solid base for future large scale comparisons.

All Western European Regional Languages – albeit not under this name – have been studied in depth from various angles, including sociolinguistics, sociology, politics and the identitarian discourses associated to them. However, until now there has been no generally accepted terminological framework tailored to the needs of languages like Catalan, Welsh, Frisian or Ladin (as opposed to, say, Pirahã in Brazil or Turkish in Berlin). In what follows, we shall try to devise such a terminological framework, which will be designed as a tool for the systematic categorization of the cases to be compared. The resulting categorization is informed by the overall goal of achieving maximum comparability. In its first and more global layer of analysis, the proposal follows the Aristotelian type of categorization yielding clear-cut boundaries of the yes/no-type. As the analysis goes deeper, the resulting subcategorizations will increasingly drift towards prototype-oriented descriptions of the more/less-type. We propose to make explicit the criteria by which various cases might be grouped together in one category as opposed to other configurations of societal bilingualism. This will be done by proposing a sequence of dichotomies designed to narrow down the scope of the investigation.

We will contend that the historical and sociocultural context is an important parameter in such a typology. It is not the same, if a language of several 100.000 speakers is situated in a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual country like Afghanistan or Cameroon, in traditionally centralized countries like China, or in Western Europe. It is not the same, if the minority language is up against a fully standardized traditional state language which is conceived of as the main identifying cultural element of the country's nationhood (cf. France and French) or if it is just one vernacular among others. Our typology will therefore be an *Areal Sociolinguistic Typology of Minority and Regional Languages*. In the end, the type we will undertake to establish is the areal type of configuration which is found in Western European regional languages as listed above and which we propose to call Western European Regional Language (WERL). As a first step, we will begin by narrowing down the sample of configurations to be compared:

1.1. Societal vs. individual

In investigating multilingualism, the first division to be made is the one between individual multilingualism on the one hand – the investigation of which relies mainly on techniques from psychology and psycholinguistics –, and societal multilingualism on the other – which will be investigated using descriptive tools devised by sociology, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. The differentiation between these two labels must be made on two levels: On the level of the observed, there may be individual multilingualism with or without societal multilingualism. These would be two separate fields of investigation. On the level of the observer, the difference between societal and individual is mainly one of the chosen perspective. Thus, speakers may be individually bilingual in a monolingual society, or else the whole society may be bilingual; linguists may either choose to focus on individuals or on societies as a whole. For the purpose of this paper, we shall henceforth only concentrate on societal multilingualism, a subject that is conventionally treated under the headings of 'Minority Languages and Linguistic Minorities'. The notion of 'Regional Languages' appears to be used more or less alternatively and no generally accepted, clear-cut distinction between the two seems to be available. We would argue that this lack of terminological precision is detrimental to a meaningful comparison of cases.

1.2. Minority vs. Majority Languages

The notion of ‘Linguistic Minority’ is inherently problematic because it tends to take for granted the criterion, by which the relevant “majority” of the case was established in the first place. This may be unproblematic in clear-cut cases, where a few thousand speakers stand against tens of millions and the country in question is a highly organized and industrialized western country, where the state effectively organizes everyday life down to the last recess of the territory, but already less so if eg. 8 million Catalan speakers are potentially pitched against a total population of 47 million or if the country is inherently multilingual like, eg. Côte d’Ivoire or India. Problems arise, if the relationship between minority and titular nation is strained and there are conflicting views as to the relationship between the two. If the so-called minority does not associate itself with the titular nation and doesn’t see itself as a minority on its territory, calling it a “minority” amounts to taking sides, where professional neutrality would be more appropriate (see Eichinger 2006, 2479).

These conflicts can take various forms: Pirahã (Brazil) and Catalan (Spain and France) are both non-state languages in their respective countries. Furthermore, both represent, in terms of the total population of each country, linguistic minorities. However, the Pirahã are an indigenous people of hunters and gatherers numbering a mere 350 people, almost all of which are practically monolingual maintaining next to no contact with the outside world. Catalan, on the other hand, is a regional official language in Europe with more than 8 million speakers, its speakers being able to choose between several translations of Kant’s “Critique of Pure Reason” as well as write a dissertation in chemistry or find advertisements for Coca-Cola, all in Catalan. Using the same term to cover both a tiny ethnic language as well as a medium-sized European official language thus reduces the usefulness of such terminology significantly. To resume: The concept Minority Language is so broad as to be virtually meaningless.

1.3. Minority Languages vs. languages of Linguistic Minorities²

The notion ‘Minority Language’ has been used very loosely in the literature. The only common denominator appears to be that Minority Languages are not national or state languages. However, if we think that the approximately 6500 languages spoken on our planet are currently spread across a mere 193 states, it becomes clear that almost all human languages are, according to this definition, “Minority Languages.” In various contexts, Pirahã may be treated as a Minority Language in Brazil, Catalan as a minority language in Spain, but also Spanish as a Minority Language in the US. It is obvious, that we have to be careful here not to confuse the notions of Linguistic Minority, which might be applicable to all three cases, and Minority Language, which clearly is not. I suggest, therefore, that the term Minority Language should not be applied automatically to any variety as used by a minority. Rather, we might wish to limit it to those languages that are non-state languages on a worldwide scale. Only these languages characteristically lack the state infrastructure necessary for creating a relevant group of literate speakers capable of sustaining a school system and a literary language. I suggest that this criterion be the common denominator and defining feature for a Minority Language in a sociolinguistically meaningful sense. To resume, the first criterion for my proposed definition of the concept Minority Language would read: A Minority Language is a language that is not a State Language (= obligatory) anywhere in the world.

² The following discussion is largely based on Radatz (2013).

1.4. Autochthonous vs. migrant

The above definition of a Minority Language implies, that almost all migrant languages fall outside the scope of this concept. Migrants may be Linguistic Minorities in their receiving societies, but in most cases their languages remain State Languages, which just happen to be circumstantially spoken by a minority. Migrant languages are not perceived as autochthonous to the receiving country – not even by their speakers. Spanish in the US or Turkish in Germany are majority languages in their own territories and only circumstantially become minoritized for their speakers, when they emigrate and become a minority in the receiving country. In this, their situation is radically different from “real” Minority Languages as defined above, like Basque, Welsh or Catalan. We can therefore add another element to the characterization of a prototypical Minority Languages by adding that they are autochthonous rather than migrant languages. There are, of course, examples of Minority Languages spoken by autochthonous minorities: German in South Tyrol, Slovene in Carinthia, French on the Channel Islands etc. We can gather from these examples that the above rule only holds in one direction: According to our definition, all Minority Languages are autochthonous but not all languages as spoken by autochthonous minorities may be considered Minority Languages! To resume, the second criterion for a more meaningful definition should therefore be: A Minority Language proper is always autochthonous; if it is not, it is most probably just the language of a minority.

1.5. Regional (Minority) Languages vs. Ethnic (Minority) Languages

We have now narrowed down the notion of Minority Language to a more meaningful concept. However, we still have to account for an extremely relevant distinction within these Minority Languages, which splits this notion into at least two relevant sub-types. Consider the following European Minority Languages: Plattdeutsch (Low German), Welsh, Catalan, Franco-Provençal, Kashubian, Basque etc. These languages fall into two groups in function of the societal discourses that accompany them. Plattdeutsch, Franco-Provençal and Kashubian may be considered languages by linguists, but they are usually not by their speakers. Rather, they are what Heinz Kloss (1967) has described as “pseudo-dialectalised languages.” I will here tentatively call them ‘Ethnic Languages’ in order to highlight the fact that their speakers have no further claims to them than the simple genolectal use. The classification as an Ethnic Language is based on a prototypical behaviour of speakers with respect to their autochthonous variety: when the speakers happily accept diglossia and therefore see no potential conflict with the titular nation on linguistic grounds, a central defining criterion is fulfilled. We thus suggest to call those languages Ethnic, whose speakers do not consider their native Minority Language as a defining element of a hypothetical stateless nation of their own and consequently see no use for its standardization. As a result, Ethnic Languages as defined here tend to be strongly fragmented into dialects; the state language is probably encroaching on all levels of the language system; the typical speaker today is a semi-speaker; and the languages are not passed on to the next generation. Examples for the Ethnic-Language-configuration would be Plattdeutsch, Franco-Provençal, Occitan or “Valencian”, i.e. Catalan spoken by illiterate native speakers in the Spanish *Comunitat Valenciana*.

Welsh, Catalan, and Basque, on the other hand are the exact opposite in their accompanying discourses. They all went through a historical phase of diglossia but have since had important movements of cultural and language activism, (re-)claiming full language status. Important parts of the regional population see their language as a defining element of a stateless linguistic nation. Prototypically, this entails political demands ranging from varying degrees of regional autonomy up to a secession into an

own national state. A central defining element for a Regional-Language-configuration as proposed here is the speakers' claim to a separate national identity centrally based on the autochthonous language. They therefore see the standardization of their language as an essential aspect of their cultural needs and political demands. Their claim to nationhood tends to pit the regional language against the state language, which it challenges with a project of "linguistic normalization", i.e. a large-scale societal process directed at reintroducing the Regional Language to all the higher domains that had previously been occupied by the State Language (acting as the High variety in a Ferguson-type diglossia). The language is typically passed on to the next generation; there are strong neo-speaker communities. Although these languages are usually considered "national languages without a state" by their advocates, we will, within the realm of sociolinguistics, call this particular type of Minority Languages 'Regional Languages'. The prototypical Regional Language is characterized by the following traits:

- The speakers consider it a language rather than a dialect.
- They consequently reject diglossia.
- There is a tendency to construe regional identity according to the prototype of a stateless linguistic nation.

To resume: A Regional Language is a language construed as the central identitarian symbol of a stateless linguistic nation; an Ethnic Language is not.

1.6. State Languages vs. everything else: facultative vs. obligatory

Alongside the other suggested types, we must introduce further distinction based on the criterion whether a given language *may* or *must* be used. We can find at least three strictly different main cases as exemplified by languages like Franco-Provençal, Catalan and Spanish, namely between Ethnic, Regional, and State Languages:

- Ethnic Languages [- state, - official, - standardized, -obligatory]
- Regional Languages [- state, +/- official, + standardized, -obligatory]
- State Languages [+ state, + official, + standardized, +obligatory]

The prototype of an Ethnic Language has been defined as non-conflictive, not standardized and coexisting in a stable diglossic situation with the State Language. Actual cases may resemble this prototype more or less closely. The term Regional Language, on the other hand, has been proposed for non-obligatory standardized languages that are defended as a regional alternative to the State Language with all the conflictive potential this may entail. State Languages are standardized and obligatory. The expression 'State Language' – rather than 'Official Language' or 'National Language' – is used deliberately here, because defenders of Regional Languages typically consider their languages to be "national languages without a state." If such a differentiation between "state" and "nation" is an important element of the characteristic discourse that accompanies these conflict configurations, the sociolinguistic theory devised to describe them should allow for the same distinction. The attribute "official" is typically not only applicable to the state languages but also to the WERL themselves which may enjoy varying degrees of (co-)officiality with the state language on their territory. Welsh, Catalan, Galician and Basque are official in their respective territories, but they are not the national language of any state; neither are they formally obligatory, not even on their own territories. Past research has tended to over-emphasize the importance of officiality while under-emphasizing that of obligatoriness.

In a modern European context, the main problem of a Regional Language is typically no longer one of having or not having an official status; their problem is, that

at any given moment the use of the State Language may be enforced while the co-official Regional Language will ultimately always be facultative. WERLs show the typical intermediate traits of a Regional Language: They offer an ‘alternative standard variety’, which may be used regionally instead of the State Language. However, the State Language is obligatory, while the Regional Language is not (= ‘asymmetrical societal bilingualism’). As opposed to Ethnic Languages, Regional Languages have surmounted the state of diglossia without, however, reaching the status of a full-fledged State Language. For WERLs, diglossia is supplanted by asymmetrical societal bilingualism with two alternative standard languages. To resume, I propose to use the notion Regional Language for cases approaching the following prototypical definition: A Regional Language is a non-obligatory alternative standard language.

1.7. Regional Languages – symbolic centre of a conflictive identitarian discourse

Seen in such a way, Regional Languages represent a very specific and both interesting and relevant type of configuration of societal multilingualism. The reasons for this can be found in the particular identitarian and conflictive potential of the discourse that accompanies them.

- Regional Languages are an economical anachronism. Due to their mere existence, they are swimming against the global tendency of simplifying globalized communication and orientating towards criteria based on market economy efficiency. Thus, Regional Languages should not even exist anymore and typically have to fight for their survival.
- Regional Languages are the spanner in the works of the state. Unlike pseudo-dialectal Minority Languages, Regional Languages create conflicts, because they challenge the State Language in its claim for universal validity. Because of this conflictiveness, Regional Languages receive much more visibility in the public eye than any other kind of Minority Languages.
- Regional Languages are always “alternative languages” because they have to co-exist with a State Language. The use of Regional Languages may be prohibited, permitted, or sometimes even welcomed – but it is never obligatory. These linguistic configurations are therefore characterised by asymmetric bilingualism, with speakers of Regional Languages all being bilingual, compared to the rest of the state’s citizens who are monolingual speakers of the State Language.
- Regional Languages have a high identity potential. If a region is able to stave off both open opposition by the rest of the state as well as the general attempts to make its language a pseudo-dialect, this language – at the very latest in connection with the political and cultural struggle brought about – will have become a central feature of the speaker’s own identity.

Our subject has now moved from the realm of classical sociolinguistics into an area, where language attitudes and societal discourse become the focal points of interest.

- Regional Languages as defined here are what they are by virtue of what the speakers want them to be.
- They only survive, because their speakers deliberately – and against all odds – have remained faithful to them.
- This, on the other hand, they do only because of an effective societal and identitarian discourse that motivates them to do so.

The discourse is at the root of the immense persisting force behind Regional Languages and any study pretending to explain or only systematise the phenomenon of European Regional Languages will have to take into account these discourses. In fact,

any talk about “comparing regional languages” must always be understood not as actually comparing the languages themselves, but rather the whole conglomerate of factors that determine a complicated societal configuration of alternative – and potentially conflicting – standard languages. It might be argued that the underlying discourses are at the very heart of the entire phenomenon.

2. Areal typology: WERL (Western European Regional Languages)

The type we have dubbed Regional Language is sufficiently abstract to be – at least in theory – applicable to all countries and continents. However, it is very likely that the historical and cultural background, against which a regional language has developed, will largely define what this status will mean in actual everyday life. In many regions of this planet, religion, ethnicity or a common history may be more important factors for the national and regional identitarian discourses, than language. Thus, a Minority Language as e.g. Kurdish in Iran – a nation mainly defined by Persian ethnicity and Shia Islam – may not have the same identitarian importance as might have e.g. Basque in France – a nation very much centered on the French language. The last refinement of our definitory process will therefore contemplate the historical and socio-political background against which the Regional Language discourse unfolds. We will concentrate on one particular type of regional languages, namely those of Europe. Western European Regional Languages (WERL) represent a kind of constellation with which Europeans are perfectly familiar. Its tangibility and acceptance in academic discussions is reflected in many publications. Eichinger (1996, 49), for example, refers to a kind of “European linguistic minority”, meaning “linguistic minorities in Western and Middle Europe” (Eichinger 1996, 37). Bochmann is a survey of the “regional languages and languages of (ethnic) nation(alitie)s in France, Italy and Spain”; Poche 2000 is a monograph on the subject of “Les langues minoritaires en Europe” (which are called “langues régionales” in the subtitle), and many other publications – including the Euromosaic Project funded by the European Commission – also refer to “European” minorities yet almost exclusively or primarily deal with Western and Central Europe (e.g. Wirrer). We therefore already have a concept for such a type.

2.1. WERL: Stateless indigenous languages of the former Latin West

The type might be called “Western (and Central) European” regional languages. However, these designations would disguise the fact that historical, cultural and political factors, and not geographical reasons, are the main factors in making these languages a natural category. In fact, the best name for the category would be “the former Latin West” due to it encompassing a historical and cultural area with numerous common linguistical and historical factors for the languages it covers (see Haarmann 2002). Its millenary parallelism of relevant major cultural and historical dynamics has profoundly marked the languages of this cultural sphere, making them a tangible type. The intellectual, philosophical and linguistic parallelisms read like an abridged cultural history of the Christian (later secularised) West:

- Bodies and authorities (including its speakers) representing these languages were christianised by the Western Roman (Latin) church. Latin was therefore used by all of them as the language of culture, literacy and inter- or supra-regional communication for centuries. As Haarmann (2002) states, “Two of the Roman Catholic church’s key pillars were its monopoly of Latin as the language of liturgy and its priests’ monopoly on Biblical interpretation” (translated from Haarmann 2002, 100).

- Latin provided them with direct access to the culture of classical antiquity – unlike the Orthodox Slavs who made Old Church Slavonic, an indigenous language, the language of culture instead of (Ancient) Greek.
- The use of Medieval Latin as a common language of culture within the WERLs' sphere of influence led to a Fishman-style diglossia that lasted for centuries. This diglossia resulted in the respective languages of the people, the vernacular L varieties, being pitched against the one and only supra-regionally accepted variety, Latin. This gave rise to a parallel process of linguistic emancipation for the vernacular languages from Medieval Latin, leading to the newly created national and regional literary languages being modelled in every conceivable aspect (writing, text types, grammatical tradition, borrowings, to name but a few) on Latin as a common standard for all.
- An additional intellectual phenomenon, Humanism, common to all of Western Europe's linguistic communities, made the literature of Ancient Greece and Rome the region's common "canon" of culture, thus supplanting Medieval Latin as the language of use. Medieval Latin as well as the circumstances that eventually brought about its downfall were therefore the elements that united Western Europe culturally.
- The Protestant Reformation also affected the entire "West" – albeit to varying degrees and with different consequences. From a linguistic point of view, the aspect resulting in the most consequences was the break in the Roman Catholic priests' monopoly on interpreting the Bible:

"As far as the reformers in Western Europe were concerned, their main objective was to make the scriptures understandable to common people, which meant overcoming the linguistic barrier with Latin. On the other hand, a linguistic barrier to the same extent was non-existent in Eastern Europe and in Russia. Speakers of Old Russian were still able to understand Old Church Slavonic, the liturgical language of the Orthodox church. [...] The path to individual piety in Western Europe involved language as a crucial instrument for channelling each believer's understanding of the Bible" (translated from Haarmann 2002, 101).

- The subsequent translations of the Bible into the vernacular languages and their dissemination made possible through the recently invented printing press changed reading from being an elite activity practised by professional writers to an ever-increasing popular activity of the masses, resulting in the promotion of literacy amongst the general population in the modern era.
- The diversity of regional writing systems resulted, in large part thanks to the commercial interests of the printing press industry, in the emergence of koine languages and subsequent unified proto-national languages lacking any diatopic connotation. Vulgar Humanism elevated these new literary languages to tools for uniting the nation.
- The events of 17th-century France were pioneering in this process: Louis XIV's absolutism made the consistent use of the state language the *raison d'État* (van Goethem, 170ff.). The founding of the *Académie française* in 1635 was as much a key political event as it was a cultural one. 17th-century France enforced its standardised and unified language brought about by a policy of deliberate language cultivation as the international language of diplomacy and science, ousting Latin from its last few domains (see Schröder, 347).

“Despite political interference in the language initially being an issue confined to internal cultural policy, i.e. an internal or domestic policy, the thrust behind it makes it a matter for external or foreign policy, French language policy being a clear example of this. One of the reasons why peace talks at Münster towards the end of the Thirty Years’ War dragged on so long was due to the French negotiators’ unwillingness to compromise when it came to language; whereas the German envoys pressed for the documents to be written in the traditional language of Latin as official language of the Holy Roman Empire, the French insisted on them being written in French. The French negotiators obviously knew Latin, and the representatives of the Holy Roman Empire certainly understood French, but it was more of a matter of principle: France was staking its claim at being the continent’s hegemonic power and in doing so, insisted on the use of its own language. The Germans’ insistence on Latin being used was to negate France’s claim whilst at the same time claiming supremacy themselves on the basis of the Holy Roman Empire’s historical hegemony, a role it de facto no longer had. The complete absence of the German language in the talks is very revealing, German only assuming the role as national language into the 19th century” (translated from van Goethem, 356).

- The other states eventually adopted France’s language policy and developed their own state languages in a similar fashion.
- The Age of Enlightenment perceived supra-regional languages to be the ideal tool for enforcing its goals. In contrast, regional languages were greeted with suspicion or open rejection.
- The French Revolution led to the development of the concept of the modern nation-state, encompassing the ideal of a homogenous (also in a linguistic way) national group; the dissemination of the national language was therefore no longer a mere *raison d’État*, but rather a civic duty for each individual of the state.
- The Industrial Revolution led to the urbanisation and “bourgeoisification” of Europe’s societies, as well as to the introduction of compulsory education. Efforts to spread mass literacy brought the standard variety of the state language to the most remote corners of the state.
- In response to the subsequent deindividualisation and perceived dislocation, Romanticism and its positive re-evaluation of indigenous culture was born.
- The birth and rise of nationalism, colonialism, socialism, fascism and the implementation of pluralistic liberal democracies in the second half of the 20th century were also important additional developments shared by the cultures of Western and Central Europe.

All of these historical developments relevant to language policy and language-in-culture have united Western Europe (and the catholic parts of Central Europe), resulting in the establishment of clear defining lines disassociating it from countries lying to the East, the languages of which have experienced completely different developments. In a European context, all Regional Languages dealt with here have been exposed to the same political, cultural, religious, economic and technological developments that have surfaced over the past one thousand years.

Therefore, the demand behind the establishment of such a sociolinguistic Areal Type is the recognition of the term Western European Regional Language as meaning more than just a geographical location; WERL represents a specific type of societal multilingualism. The most comprehensive terms for the cultural sphere depicted here

are undoubtedly those of “West” or “Occident”, making in a similar manner “regional languages of the European West” probably the most suitable term for the type of describing regional languages. When speaking about the Western European type of regional languages, I am therefore referring to not only Western Europe in a geographical sense but to a historically and culturally defined area of converging societies. WERLs may thus be classified in the following manner:

- As regional languages, WERLs are indigenous varieties (i.e. they are not languages recently introduced to the area by migrant groups and they are, typically, present in the toponymy).
- They are autochthonous to an area in which Medieval Latin was the only or predominant literary language in the Middle Ages.
- They have no external linguistic “roofing” (i.e. they are not externally located groups of large national languages).
- They are more or less standardised and are seen by their speakers as languages rather than dialects.
- Their *ausbau*, i.e. normativization and normalization, is promoted and supported by a relevant part of the population.
- They compete with one or several dominant state languages on their territory and jurisdiction as alternative standard languages.
- They are not obligatory and coexist with the state language in a situation of asymmetric societal bilingualism.

According to this characterisation, the following linguistic communities might be considered as cases for comparison: Galician, Asturian, Aragonese, Basque (Hegoalde and Iparralde), Catalan (Catalonia, Valencia, Balearic Islands), Breton, Welsh, (Scottish) Gaelic, Irish, (West) Frisian, Sorbian (Upper and Lower), Ladin, Friulian, Romansh and possibly Sardinian. It should be noted that the comparisons are not primarily concerned about the languages themselves but more importantly about the multilingual configurations and discourses associated with them.

2.2. WERL – a complementary phenomenon in the emergence of European State Languages

The concepts of “nation”, “nationalism” and the modern “nation-state” are essentially European developments in which language played a key role as the most important cohesive element of (national) identity, once religion and confession had ceased to play this role. Kloss (1969, 44) goes as far as interpreting 19th and 20th-century European nationalism as a movement of emancipation for linguistic communities, coining the term ‘Linguistic Nation’ (“Sprachnation”) in this regard. Although the concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’ first took on their modern form and political efficacy in the wake of the French Revolution, the

[...] basic roots of European linguistic nationalism [...] stretch far beyond the 18th century, dating back to antiquity: just as language has always been a political issue, so have assessments on one’s own language and that of others been a vital ingredient in intercultural relations between the peoples of Europe (translated from Haarmann 1993, 18).

The division of Europe into two cultural provinces has been evident since antiquity: the Latin sphere of influence in the west and the Hellenic East (see Haarmann 1993, 131).

When referring to “languages” in a European context and in the manner indicated above, we generally do not mean the spontaneous local native spoken varieties (“genolects”, see Kailuweit), i.e. those not perceived to be a necessary element in the discourse on national or regional identity but rather those supra-dialectal distance varieties and literary languages formed by culture (“grammolects”, see Kailuweit), i.e. those that constitute a key defining element of a Cultural or Linguistic Nation for their speakers. In that regard, languages should thus be considered historic and socio-cultural objects that, in their function as “politolects” (see Berschin; Berschin & Radatz), play an important role in the identity discourse of the groups in question. The following “linguistic type” is therefore not a “type of language” as understood in descriptive linguistics, but rather a socio-cultural phenomenon deriving from different discourses about the social integration of grammolects.

2.2.1. WESL – Western European State Languages

The emergence of Western European State Languages (WESLs) can thus be seen as a culturally closely integrated complex comprising of both parallel and often interacting individual processes. As the accompanying discourses inspired each other mutually, the formation of the individual State Languages was homogenous enough for them to be described as varieties of a joint abstract prototype (Janicki, 85-6), as is understood in cognitive linguistics (see Dirven, Hawkins & Sandikcioglu). The close cultural integration makes the concept Western European State Languages (WESL) sufficiently homogenous to define a common areal type. On the other hand, this type differs greatly in its cultural history from other cultural zones of influence such as Eastern Europe, Africa or Southeast Asia. Western Europe, i.e. in terms of the former Latin cultural province, is thus a natural framework for comparing the socio-cultural conditions for the emergence of standard languages.³ Parallels evident in the formation of WESLs are, amongst other things, their usage as L varieties in the Middle Ages in a situation of diglossia, with Medieval Latin as the H variety, their emancipation from Latin in the early modern era and their subsequent politicization *à la française* as state and national languages. WESL are, however, not the only type to be found in Europe.

2.2.2. WERL – Western European Regional Languages

Latin had coexisted with Western and Central Europe’s unwritten vernacular languages as a joint and uncontested literary language in the early Medieval period; the subsequent centuries brought about a period of slow emancipation which culminated in the development of the nation-state and its idea(l) of a single national language used to forge a single identity. The emergence of the nation-state led to the European vernaculars differentiating themselves from one another in two fundamentally different categories: the successful ones, the WESLs, came to represent the identity of the nation-state, whereas the less successful ones became their opposites and developed into Western European Regional Languages (WERLs). This differentiation makes Europe home to two kinds of linguistic nations: states with a WESL – its official status representing a key element in the titular nation’s cohesion and identity throughout its entire territory –, and regions with a WERL constituting stateless linguistic nations – thus casting doubt on the state language’s claim to absolute validity and generating a potentially conflictive situation.

³ In this respect, the project forms part of the context of Eurolinguistics which also uses this cultural-anthropological definition as a lot for defining its comparisons (for instance, see Reiter).

2.3. WESL and WERL – two kinds of European linguistic nations

The emergence of WERLs is a phenomenon that complemented the enforcement of Europe's state and national languages. A linguistic history of Europe can therefore only be considered complete when not only the history of its victors but also that of its losers is incorporated in a complementary manner. It was the success of its larger (and smaller) state and national languages that first gave rise to the emergence of the WERLs. As long as Medieval Latin's position as language of education and literacy remained uncontested, the vernacular languages of Europe were, to a large extent, partners on an equal footing:

Table 1

(Western) European diglossia in the Middle Ages												
High variety	Medieval Latin											
Low varieties	French	Italian	Occitan	Basque	Breton	Frisian	German	Welsh	English	Franco-Provençal	Sorbian	etc.

Some of the aforementioned languages were most certainly considered to be more prestigious than others, yet, for centuries, none of them claimed to oust Medieval Latin or any other neighbouring vernacular from its domains. By the High Middle Ages, parts of Europe were beginning to display tendencies of reducing the use of Medieval Latin and replacing it with a developed variety of the vernacular; but it was not until French absolutism turned French into a Politolect and made language the *raison d'État*, that this situation took on a supra-regional dimension. It took centuries for Medieval Latin to be driven from the last domains it occupied by a systematically and fully developed state language, the latter becoming the uncontested and only H variety.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this was a radical innovation: for the first time since the demise of the Roman Empire, a vernacular language became a roofing language (*Dachsprache*; cf. Kloss 1969; Muljačić) for other vernaculars. With the advent of the new standardised autochthonous languages, the linguistic elaboration and standardisation of the other vernaculars was blocked, thereby laying down the basic conditions for the emergence of WERLs at a later stage. However, we should not forget that despite WERLs being effectively banished from the majority of domains pertaining to the written and formal registers, their use as spoken everyday vernaculars was initially not affected. To take an example, despite Occitan gradually disappearing as a written language in the early modern era, it was able to remain the dominant (and in some cases even the only) everyday language on its territory well into the 20th century. The meticulously planned linguistic development or *ausbau* of the state language was accompanied by the artificial atrophy of other languages, causing them either to lose their supra-dialectal *ausbau* registers (secondary WERLs) or to even prevent them from developing them (primary WERLs).

Table 2

Diglossia in the early modern period (using the example of France)												
High variety	French											
Low varieties	Picard	Catalan	Provençal	Gascon	Basque	German	Flemish	Lengadocian	Auvergnat	Limousin	Franco-Provençal	etc.

At this stage, state language policy was virtually limited to the written word and the public domain. Language policy following the French Revolution adopted the *Ancien Régime*'s centralist element and the idea of a uniform national language as the nation's symbol and unifying bond. Although the subjects' everyday language was still perceived to be their private matter in pre-Revolutionary France, the events of 1789 turned every *citoyen*'s linguistic behaviour into the object of action with regard to language policy. The regime defined its political programme as committing the entire population to the exclusive use of the national language in its day-to-day affairs. Although it would take a further two hundred years for this to be implemented, its effects can still be felt today in France's language policy. In Spain, the French policy of centralism and its achievement of enforcing a single state language was adopted by the House of Bourbon. The idea of a uniform state or national language raged everywhere.

2.4. The two typical historical phases: Substitution and recuperation

As previously mentioned above, WERLs display important parallels in their historical development. Linguistically speaking, their most important common historical experience was the phase of degeneration as languages of public and written expression, absence from literary works and the concomitant fragmentation into dialects, generally called the phase of "decadence." All WERLs have managed to climb out of the decline and are now once again cultural and literary languages. In the history of a WERL, we can therefore always distinguish clearly between a phase of repression and one of recuperation. During the phase of repression, the Regional Language's formal and written domains are taken over by the State Language. The repression usually results in the emergence of a diglossic situation, where the Regional Language is slowly pushed into the role of a sub-standard variety. The phase of recuperation usually starts from within the Romantic movement with activists collecting folkloric elements of the language such as fairy tales, popular songs and stories, to then be supplemented with poetry and (the emergence of) regional literature. With the recuperation, speakers begin to reclaim full language status and reject denominations like dialect or *patois*. As a consequence, a normative process ensues (typically and essentially as a result of the efforts of individuals) resulting in the elaboration of a written standard variety and its increasing introduction into all domains that had hitherto been reserved for the State Language. Organisations are created by language activists and the demand for linguistic emancipation adopts a regionalist or nationalist stance. The final state of this development is a regionally official alternative standard language used in a situation of asymmetrical bilingualism with the State Language.

3. Summary and conclusion

The general historical tendency in Western Europe to form nation-states with unified national languages has either led to the stamping out of societal multilingualism

or to its preservation in the form of a Regional-Language-configuration. The ways in which language conflict specific to this part of the continent has manifested itself – the repression and subsequent revitalisation of its indigenous smaller languages – makes it the prototype of Western European societal multilingualism. This Regional Language ‘momentum’ therefore constitutes a key element in the continent’s linguistic and cultural history, confronting the majority State Language with an array of Regional Languages to serve as alternatives and generally regarded by their speakers as a focal point in constituting a linguistic nation alongside and alternative to their titular nation. The languages belonging to this type can be arranged on a scale in accordance with their societal vitality, ranging from semi-state alternative standard languages such as Catalan, Galician, Basque or Welsh to residual and emblematic languages such as Breton and Irish. All of them share the historical experience of having been marginalised and consciously revitalised, yet the varying degrees of success at revitalisation experienced in each language are the reasons behind the huge differences that can be felt in the linguistic situations today. The languages in question form a typical sociolinguistic kind of configuration, the prototype of which has been presented in broad terms in this paper. The arguments expounded result in two desiderata for research:

- The WERLs in question here should be compared with one another increasingly by relying on the similarities depicted in this Areal Type.
- More work should be carried out as to whether similar Areal Types can be found in other cultures or societies and to what extent they can be used for research concerning regional languages.

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