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The Gift of Babel

Multilingualism, Diversity, and Migrants

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Abstract

Since the publication of Philippe Van Parijs' 'Linguistic Justice' (OUP, 2011) this research area has grown fast, but it has systematically neglected migration-induced diversity. Filling this lacuna, this paper expands on the logic of 'Linguistic Justice' and explores the integration of migrants' mother tongue into the education system of receiving societies. It proceeds thus. Having argued that Van Parijs' main opportunity-focused logic is no sufficient safeguard to a monolingual end-state (sect. I), I present additional reasons in favour of multilingualism (sect. II). Three paradigmatic sets of rules are discussed that can guide multilingual societies in deciding which further language to adopt in addition to a dominant institutional language: (a) *laissez-faire*, (b) *territorial integration*, and (c) *accommodationist interaction*. I shall argue that the third option accounts best for the new reality of migration-induced diversity and should inform concrete policies (sect. IV).

Keywords

Linguistic justice, migrants' mother tongue, multilingualism, diversity, English as a Global Lingua Franca, Philippe Van Parijs

Author's biographical note

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Introduction¹

Of the 7,102 spoken languages worldwide today only 578 are ‘used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.’ But 85.6% of the world’s population, or roughly 6 billion people, use these ‘institutional’ languages. The other billion individuals account for the remaining 6,524 non-institutional languages. Thereof, 2,447 languages are ‘in trouble’ or effectively ‘dying’.² Moreover, fifty percent of today’s spoken languages will not survive this century (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 7) and only some 300 languages are ‘safe’ in the long run (Krauss, 1992: 7; May, 2009: 528).

These numbers might be frightening. However, less linguistic diversity must not have merely negative consequences. For, thought through, a world where only one language was spoken would not only be simpler but arguably also better: there would be no immediate necessity to learn other languages. Indeed, linguistic diversity and the impossibility to share a common language remind us of Yahew’s curse for the pridefully construction of a tower in biblical Babel³ – implying that it is ‘natural’ to have only one language while persisting multilingualism is anachronistic, burdening, and to be overcome. In fact, contributions on language in political theory have not emancipated themselves from this tower-story. Theories celebrating the reality of linguistic diversity, be it on global or national level, are scarce or do so in contrast to the monolingual norm.⁴

Philippe Van Parijs endorses such a view in his major substantive contribution in the field of normative political theory on language (LJ: 189).⁵ There, he argues that the raise of English as a global lingua franca has to be complemented only by territorial languages. This paper works within the logic set out by Van Parijs’ and advances the following arguments: a) Van Parijs’ arguments in favour English as a global lingua franca suggest a monolingual end-state despite his territorial considerations (section I); b) a multilingual world has net benefits based on the additional-access to further communities, enhanced cognitive capabilities, and prejudice-reducing effects (section II); and c) building up on the Van Parijs’ discussion on possible multilingual regimes (liberal or coercive), I shall suggest a third option (*interaction*) which accounts in a more fair manner linguistic diversity generally, and migrants’ language more specifically.

¹ This paper has substantially improved thanks to comments by Simon Caney, Erik Magnuson, Paula Casal, Yael Peled, Jeff MacMahan, an anonymous referee as well as participants of the applied ethics and political theory graduate seminar at Oxford University (autumn 2015).

² Data and quotes are from: <http://www.ethnologue.com/>, retrieved on: 19/08/2015. Note that other estimates speak of several languages disappearing each week (cf. Patten, 2003: 358 – 359).

³ See Coogan (2012: 52) for a plain English interpretation of the relevant passage in the Genesis.

⁴ ‘...the case for state monolingualism is widely accepted and fairly compelling’ (Patten, 2009: 103). For a historical account of this ‘modernist’ monolingual norm’s development, cf. Bauman & Briggs (2003).

⁵ *Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World*, OUP, 2011, abbreviated as *LJ* henceforth. Cf.: ‘The vanishing of a language must be accepted. This may be sad, but not unjust’ (LJ: 172).

1. Van Parijs' bi- or monolingual paradise

Van Parijs considers Babelians – after Yahew's confusion of tongues – as ‘paradigmatic victims’ of the ‘cacophony’ or ‘handicap’ of linguistic diversity compared to the efficiency of a ‘shared language’ (LJ: 263n28). Efficiency matters to him for achieving equality of opportunity as individuals⁶ initial access to basic resources.⁷ Language is central as such a personal resource: the more jobs in a certain language are available, the higher the number of media or web outlets individuals can access, the deeper the solidarity between people able to communicate with each other – the more they can efficiently multiply their opportunities. In order to maximize opportunities for individuals, a global common language, a *lingua franca*, is needed. Now, Van Parijs believes English is the most suited candidate for this purpose mainly because it is the globally most widespread language additionally learnt. This fact increases the probabilities of successful communication between individuals in English as the language spoken by a maximum number of people sufficiently well (‘maxi-min language’, LJ: 13ff.). This is no mere empirical circumstance in Van Parijs' account but crucially normative role:⁸ it is because of this ‘natural’ convergence that we *should* encourage English-learning.

Now, language is not only instrumental as just described but also carries symbolic aspects and values of identity, dignity, or ‘parity of esteem’ (LJ: 117ff.). This is why Van Parijs defends a ‘hybrid’ account of linguistic justice: groups are granted an identity-based right to impose their language as a ‘Queen’ (LJ: 133ff.) in media, education, courts, etc. of their political and linguistic circumscription. The opportunity-enhancing need of a global *lingua franca* is hence only conditioned by such complementary ‘territorial coercive regimes’ where an ‘asymmetric bilingualism’ favours and protects the territorial language from the dynamics of natural convergence towards the *lingua franca*.

The crux, however, is that Van Parijs' account is sensitive to costs. And learning any other language than the *lingua franca* is not cost-efficient in a world where all people mastered English well enough⁹ – not only is the territorial regime not needed for individuals' equal opportunities but it furthermore infringes the centrality of personal liberty in Van Parijs' own theory (LJ: 87ff.): why should English-speaking individuals be *coerced* into learning or mastering the non-English territorial language and

⁶ Van Parijs' (LJ: 50ff.) also discusses ‘fairness of cooperation’ between *communities*, i.e. the contributive duties of native *lingua franca* speakers towards the costs incurred by non-native learners. I will delve into this collective aspect in sections III and IV – as opposed to the focus on individuals in sections I and II.

⁷ Strict equality in terms of outcome would be inefficient: in a redistributive system – as taken for granted by Van Parijs – this would erode the tax base and hence come at ‘an unreasonable cost to others’ (LJ: 88).

⁸ Van Parijs (2015: 239n2) explicitly rejects that he is ‘normatively’ advocating the max-min dynamics.

This is odd – Van Parijs' *normative* embracement of English as a global *lingua franca* seems to fall or stand with the *empirical* power of the maxi-min dynamics. In any case, I work on this assumption here.

⁹ We are quite far from such world just as approaching language in terms of opportunities only is partial – but this is the end-state and methodology Van Parijs appeals to. And this paper is an *internal criticism*; it takes Van Parijs' assumptions and logic for granted and shows how other conclusions than his own follow.

contribute to the cost of the majority's 'expensive taste' of upholding and enforcing this language?¹⁰ Now, it is true that for instance Québec has managed to withstand the pressure of English on its territory on the basis of various 'asymmetric' policies. But, even if they are granted the right to uphold this regime, the question remains of whether this is what they *should* do given the logic put forward by Van Parijs. And there is a tension in the convergence towards English and the avoidable cost of learning another language which the territorial regimes imposes (cf. LJ: 261n17) – a tension which Van Parijs is aware of:

'It is conceivable that only a few linguistic communities will be able or choose to exercise this right [to a territorial regime]—at the limit none at all, which would give the *lingua franca free rein*' (LJ: 173).

In sum, Van Parijs' hybrid account does not imply a world where English and territorial languages are spoken globally. It rather suggests one where only English *should* be spoken – he is not safe of the monolingual ideal of the tower-story. In the following section, I will put forward three reasons against this conclusion and in favour of generalised multilingualism: a) additional-access, b) cognitive enhancement, and c) increasing normalisation of diversity.¹¹ The arguments that follow require that otherwise monolingual individuals learn further languages at one point – ideally as children since they are more receptive. But since a child can learn a foreign language but forget it as an adult, we need an additional argument obliging all adults to actively speak at least one further language in order to achieve generalised life-time multilingualism. But I shall not engage in such an argument here but rather focus on multilingually raised children and take for granted that they are *more probable* to reap the benefits of multilingualism.

2. The individual and social benefits of multilingualism

2.1 Intergroup communication: the additional-access argument

An individual benefit from mastering further languages resides in gaining access to the respective linguistic communities and the opportunities in that language – jobs, friends, arts, media, etc.¹² Whether it is a *net* benefit depends on the trade-off between the welfare (e.g., number of additional speakers accessed) and costs related to learning that language (e.g. simplicity of the language, learner's age and capability). However, this benefit is context-sensitive – an English-speaking person, for instance, reaps no benefit

¹⁰ Van Parijs dedicates a whole chapter (LJ: §5) justifying such a regime (cf. section III.2). But it has *transitional* character at best: 'The reason why linguistic diversity must and will be preserved is simply that it constitutes, for the foreseeable future, a by-product of the pursuit of linguistic justice...' (LJ: 208).

¹¹ A potential further argument in favour of multilingualism, not delved into here, is based on the inherent value of linguistic diversity (cf. LJ: 175ff.; for further references, cf. Patten, 2009: 101n2; May, 2009: 526ff.) This argument intrinsically links linguistic with biological diversity. Language is a tool to engage with and survive in the specific natural surrounding in which it is used. To wit, with every vanished language we lose a 'library' of privileged access to its environment (cf. Nettle & Romaine, 2000).

¹² According to a 2010 Eurobarometer survey, 67% of companies considered knowing foreign languages important for employees and 48% of international firms considered it the most important future skill.

from learning Swedish if all Swedes master English in the relevant contexts. Multilingualism involves hence decreasing benefits for English-speakers with increasing global knowledge of English. Non-native English speakers, in turn, would widen their opportunities all the more by speaking English. However, they would do so at a decreasing comparative advantage since an increasing number of competitors also learned English thereby reinforcing the opportunity cost of learning a non-English language in the first place.

This circumstance points to a more profound problem with the present argument: multilingualism is only beneficial in a multilingual world – the additional-access argument presupposes the problem it solves. Benefits and costs of learning an additional language come only about in world which is already linguistically diverse. Nevertheless, the additional-access argument remains persuasive in our current world where a significant number of jobs, media, etc. are only available in other languages. But in a world converging towards a *lingua franca*, it has plausibility only during the transitional period.

Now, the evolutionary tendency towards diversity is as *natural* as Van Parijs' maxi-min dynamics. Just as Spanish, French, Romanian, etc. have emanated from a common Latin root, any *lingua franca* can diversify in the very long-term into mutually unintelligible variants.¹³ This is not to say that people *should* diversify their languages or shape our institutions to maximize diversification. But it does show that the additional-access argument is potentially not merely transitional if the development of languages cannot be controlled. In any case, learning the mother tongue of other people – even if they also speak English – always provides a privileged access since it conveys an appreciation of the interlocutor's culture and a recognition of her or his identity (cf. section II.3).

2.2 Cognitive benefits: enhancing welfare

Recent findings in sociolinguistics have yielded a more complete picture of the individual *cognitive* costs and benefits of individuals capable of interacting in two spoken linguistic systems. Languages can be learnt 'naturally' with significantly less effort until puberty (Hakuta, 2001). The costs of bilingualism are hence significantly lower for children than adults.¹⁴ However, children growing up with two languages do face costs which their peers raised in only one of these languages do not: less vocabulary, generally slower responses to inputs, less semantic fluency and regular difficulties in retrieving common words. But, considering both languages, bilinguals have an *overall* higher vocabulary and under an adequate educative design responsive to

¹³ May (2015) argues in a similar vein that there is no uniform 'English' but a conglomerate of Englishes (different accents, dialects, etc.). Van Parijs (2015) discards this consideration too quickly by not engaging in how this tendency to diversify goes against the maxi-min dynamics. He could, of course, normatively endorse the maxi-min dynamics as the rational thing to do – but he seems to reject this (cf. note 9).

¹⁴ Bilingualism is the best researched form of multilingualism. But under the right conditions it seems feasible to learn more than two languages conveying some of the suggested benefits. While bilingualism is official in several states, I shall focus here on migrants' multiplying factor on linguistic diversity.

their ‘special needs’ (Bialystok, 2001: 224) the costs are normally offset by the following additional benefits:

- ‘phonetic advantage’: young bilinguals ‘sound native like’ even if they are not proficient in their non-dominant mother tongue; they also *re-learn* that language more easily compared to previously unexposed people (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007: 378);¹⁵
- higher ‘metalinguistic awareness’: bilinguals of all ages solve problems better that test the ability to differentiate between form and meaning (Bialystok et al., 2012);
- higher executive control: they have ‘skills based on limited cognitive resources for such functions as inhibition, switching attention, and working memory’ (ibid.);
- filtering ‘misleading information’ (ibid.): ‘bilingual infants show a specific adaptation in the attentional system that enables them to perceive and track relevant information in two different systems’ (Costa & Sebastian-Gallés, 2014: 338);
- higher brain activity: these measurements are ‘suggesting that bilinguals have more efficient and flexible auditory processing than monolinguals’ (id.: 341);
- ‘cognitive reserve’: due to their more demanding language monitoring system, active bilinguals get dementia 3-4 years later than monolinguals (Bialystok et al., 2012).

Bilinguals' brains work differently than monolinguals' suggesting an increased cognitive fitness and overall health. To be generalised bilinguals, i.e. be fluent in two languages comparably well as monolinguals, a ‘frequent, varied, and socially useful’ input *both* languages is needed (Costa & Sebastian-Gallés, 2014: 343). Creating such an environment for children might be costly – especially in monolingual contexts – but it must be traded-off with the opportunity cost of the strenuousness of learning a language at an advanced age. To wit, learning another language as a child is not unlike receiving a *vaccination*: the latter stimulates the immune system and the former the linguistic system at a certain cost in infancy. But this cost is clearly outweighed by the benefit in adulthood of not suffering a disease or not having to learn a second language.¹⁶ Moreover, this linguistic vaccine makes learning further languages easier for early bilinguals than for monolinguals (Cenoz 2013). Even initially bilingual adults who do not receive anymore the necessary input to count as an *active* bilingual retain this advantage: the early linguistic experience stays with them even though every step away from a generalised and *operative* multilingualism will most probably affect the effect of cognitive benefits.

¹⁵ I will use the term ‘dominant’ language as the majoritarian public and ‘national’ language. This phonetic advantage makes a bilingual upbringing necessary and not only sufficient to generalised multilingualism – adults who master another language almost perfectly will most probably not ‘sound native-like’. Note further that the following benefits apply across different language combinations.

¹⁶ I am very thankful to Paula Casal for pointing out that analogy to me.

But is everything stated so far not compatible with Van Parijs' 'territorial languages + English' model? He has to renounce to these benefits if the maxi-min dynamics is the basis on which people *should* choose the languages they learn. If opportunities are the main driver in taking such decisions, then there is little reason to learn any other languages than the global *lingua franca* at all – one is better off spending time on acquiring other non-linguistic advantages. Now, *rational* individuals might be persuaded by the cognitive benefits described here and decide to raise their children bilingually. This is compatible with Van Parijs territorial model in the sense that individuals have the *right* (not) to do so. But they do not have it because of but, it rather seems, *despite* these benefits. That is, the kind of reasons Van Parijs discusses – or those he omits, too – do not suggest that it is the rational thing to learn various languages. And the present paper is dedicated to sketch out such reasons even if they diverge from Van Parijs' conclusion.

To sum up, the cognitive argument goes against Van Parijs' end-state as sketched out in section I. We shall now see that his end-state further marginalises those minorities who speak neither the territorial language nor English – a this matters for society as a whole.

2.3 Marginalization, status of minority languages, and their recognition

More job opportunities and better cognitive health increase the welfare of multilingual individuals, but these considerations *alone* cannot account for social nature of language – a linguistic community is needed for language to fulfil its cooperative function of enabling communication between individuals: individuals must coordinate beyond their particular interests and create bonds to maintain this linguistic cooperative equilibrium. It is this identity-establishing function which underlies the symbolic – i.e. intergenerational and hence not strictly instrumental – nature of language.

And Van Parijs gives full normative weight to this symbolic function of language when defining 'parity of esteem' as the principle that 'people must not stigmatized, despised, disparaged, humiliated by virtue of their collective identity' (LJ: 119). If the maxi-min dynamics drags us towards one language making speakers of other languages systematically and unilaterally 'bow', parity of esteem is violated and the territorial regime kicks in. But parity of esteem also applies to positive endowments: Van Parijs dedicates a whole chapter (LJ: §2) on Anglophones' duties that arise from their privilege of not having to 'bow'. However, he seems to neglect what parity of esteem involves in cases of intra-territorial linguistic diversity: immigrants and members of other minorities have to learn the territorial language (as well as English, supposedly) because they are unviable.

However, what is the precise threshold for being viable? Numbers of speakers don't seem to make the difference – how else could we account for the 40'000 Romansh speakers in Switzerland (0,5% of its total population) or the 75'000 German speakers in Belgium (0,7% of its total population), both enjoying a territorial regime as endorsed by Van Parijs? Contrast this with 22,2% of the Swiss population in 2013 declaring a non-

official language as their main one. Or 20,8% of the US population above the age of 5 years speaking a language other than English at home (2011).¹⁷ Similar numbers will apply to other migration-receiving countries. Numbers do not make the difference.

However, alternatives as territorial concentration and institutional embedding often result from arbitrary historical developments. In any case, the actual generation cannot reasonably be held responsible for the privilege or misfortune of falling above or below such a threshold (Stilz, 2015; Heim, forthcoming). Van Parijs is aware of this limitation when he states that ideally distribution of global wealth should be fair. And the quicker we achieve such distributive justice ‘the more numerous the languages that will be territorially protected before it is too late’ (LJ: 174). Van Parijs presents his territorial model as the only way to save linguistic diversity while benefitting from a lingua franca as necessary pre-condition to achieve such global justice. But, does parity of esteem warrant neglecting the mother tongue of one fifth of the population in certain territories where migrants have to ‘bow’ and learn ‘the weaker local languages’ (LJ: 174)?¹⁸

For Van Parijs, parity of esteem is based on the idea of *reciprocity*. Individuals can be means to someone else's ends, if both parties could accept to change roles: migrants should integrate to the same extent that nationals would if they settled in the migrant's country of origin (LJ: 149ff.). Such reciprocity works as a theoretical criterion to ground the asymmetry between migrant and territorial languages. In practice, however, it does not fit well with Van Parijs' concession that global wealth inequalities unfairly disadvantage certain linguistic groups – and most (low-paid) immigrants move precisely because of this reason. Reciprocity sits even more uneasily with Van Parijs' willingness to grant (well-paid) ‘highly skilled’ immigrants the right to live in ‘linguistic free zones’ exempting them from ‘the heavy “tax” of having to learn the local language’ (LJ: 163).

But beyond what Van Parijs suggests, parity of esteem has to apply consistently on grounds that can reasonably be shared even in our non-ideal world. Our expectations towards newcomers should differ depending on whether they have migrated against the background of an unfair global distribution of wealth or not. Being skilled or unskilled should make no difference to one's duty of learning a territorial language if it follows from reciprocity. And reciprocity or ‘bowing’ should be sensitive to the conditions under which migrants have moved, in the first place. And the current non-

¹⁷ This cohort is furthermore over-represented in other groups: those who are low educated (42,9%), live below poverty level (29,6%), or have no health insurance coverage (38%). Cf. Ryan (2013).

¹⁸ Cf. Kymlicka (1995: 97): ‘...there is an undercurrent of racism in the traditional attitude towards immigrant languages. As Richard Ruiz puts it, “Adding a foreign language to English is associated with erudition, social and economic status and, perhaps, even patriotism... but maintaining a non-English language implies disadvantage, poverty, low achievement and disloyalty”.’ Cf. also Bialystok (2001: 242).

ideal conditions of global inequalities suggest that immigrants – rather than territorial groups¹⁹ – are more vulnerable deserving of a more inclusive account of reciprocity.

Such reciprocity is less likely to antagonise migrants. They could also live up to their languages. The benefit of such a more inclusive and broader understanding of parity of esteem and its potentially ensuing higher degree of diversity is the following: those who decide to integrate by learning the local language – since it is still in their interest – will do so freely and hence more probably in good spirit. Findings confirm that such ‘multicultural’ recognition enhances the integration of minorities (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2013).

But allowing for more local diversity is also beneficial for the local community. Further findings show that more contact between locals and newcomers within a society is correlated with less prejudice towards immigrants (Bello 2015). An inclusive collective identity makes people less prone to fall into personal biases against diversity. And diversity is necessary to normalise, internalize, and potentially appreciate that people are different. Was there no or little diversity, this mechanism would be less probable to take place and I suspect that linguistic diversity is sufficient for people to develop more open attitudes also with regard to other spheres of identity, e.g. race, gender, religion.

Now, what if there was some kind of natural and necessary cap of how much diversity a society can handle? Van Parijs cites findings in this line that prove a negative correlation between diversity and economic solidarity (LJ: 193). He implies that linguistic homogeneity is a precondition for a functioning distributive tax system. However, even if Van Parijs is right, English could in principle also take this unifying role. Qualifying the words of Van Parijs (2015: 236), there should be ‘space for the equal (pro tanto) recognition of all native languages present in a territory’ without, however, ‘asserting the legitimacy of constraints favouring the locally dominant language’ to the extent that they exclude migrants’ languages. And in this sub-section, I have argued in favour of a more adequate account of reciprocity that underlies and justifies this qualification.

In this whole section 2, in turn, I have discussed the benefits of multilingualism on the basis of different – individual-instrumental and societal-symbolic – but complementary considerations which Van Parijs omitted. Together, these three arguments form an *argumentative web* supporting the thesis that multilingualism has desirable net benefits: the argument of access to additional communities is persuasive in our multilingual world, the benefits of cognition undermine the idea that monolingual societies are necessarily optimal, and concerns of reciprocity make states consider more inclusive policies. The question to be addressed in the next section is: how could the distribution of its costs be accounted for? That is, *who* has to learn *what* other language and why?

¹⁹ Van Parijs’ principal worry is the protection of territorial linguistic groups from ‘invading’ languages brought by migrants which over time might crowd out the local language (LJ: 142ff.). However, this fear is over-stated – the case of migrants displaying clear colonial attitudes is unlikely (Kymlicka, 2001: 160).

3. Three multilingual ‘regimes’ and their rationales

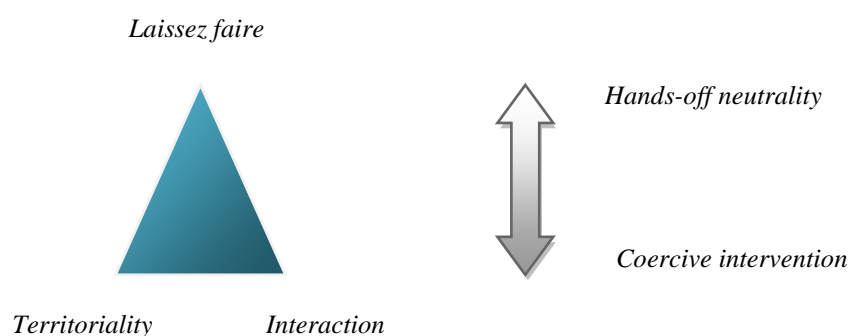
Some will consider this argumentative web from the previous section not tight enough still preferring a monolingual pre-Babel hegemony. But even if they were right, they would have to account for the wide-reaching transformations in diverse societies – and most societies are diverse. Van Parijs has offered such reasons by introducing a territorial criterion which, however, unduly excludes migrants. But is there any realistic alternative of including them? Indeed, the concrete political outlook to more inclusion of migrants' languages in most host societies is not rosy. This is why I shall aim to show now that such an alternative is conceivable and that there are reasons in its favour.

In doing so, I take for granted that *a* language is needed as a shared means of communication and coordination among the members of a political community e.g. to be able to engage in public debate, to vote, or take up office. But the remainder of this paper does not depend on whether it is a territorial language or the global lingua franca – as long as it is only *one*. Nevertheless, for non-substantial reasons of presentation and simplicity, I shall assume that it is English on the basis of Van Parijs' maxi-min analysis (cf. section I). These imagined states wouldn't be unlike the federal states of India where English is the overarching factual lingua franca but regionally different languages can have official character, too. If this is unconvincing, my argument can be taken to apply mainly to states where English is the territorial language – i.e. what other language should Americans, Australians, the British, etc. learn and on what grounds?

To answer this question, I shall now present three possible ‘regimes’²⁰ with mandatory second-language education of children as a necessary (but insufficient) criterion to achieve the benefits of generalised multilingualism of section II: a) *laissez-faire*, b) *integration*, and c) *interaction*. The second regime corresponds to Van Parijs' territorial regime which he endorses in contrast to the first. However, I shall introduce the third regime as a further political possibility prematurely excluded by Van Parijs in order to introduce the mere possibility of a more systematic inclusion of immigrants' languages. All three will be presented as ‘pure’ regimes each relying on a specific set of values. The following diagram illustrates the relation between them and the triangular space within which institutional and political possibilities reside:

²⁰ A regime is ‘a set of rules’ rather than a full-fledged theoretical principle (cf. Van Parijs, 2011a: 54).

Figure 1: The space of institutional and political possibilities



Before proceeding, one might wonder why I assume a *bilingual* model rather than a trilingual one. Migrants could after all learn English, the territorial language, as well as their mother tongue similarly to the European Commission's plan of 'mother tongue plus two' (cf. LJ: 131). However, I share Van Parijs' pessimistic reading of the feasibility of such plans in that the maxi-min dynamics will undermine the viability of weaker and less institutionalised of these languages (LJ: 132). The question is eventually one of priority: which language should receive more resources in situations of scarcity, and why? To be clear: Van Parijs endorses the idea of mother tongue classes for migrants (LJ: 196ff.). But it is of tertiary importance after knowledge in the territorial language and English²¹ But if a regime can 'intervene in the spontaneous competition between languages' (LJ: 140), which one would maximise symmetry and minimise 'bowing' between all linguistic groups? The outlines of such a regime are drawn most clearly in a bilingual scenario where the reasons for a territorial regime solely clash with those in favour of an interactive one (cf. section III.3). That is, for the sake of this article, I take Van Parijs' reasoning in favour of English as the global *lingua franca* for granted.

3.1 *Laissez-faire, competition, and non-intervention*

Under this *laissez-faire* regime, the state remains neutral with regard to what *additional* languages autonomous individuals *freely* decide to learn. To the extent that being multilingual is a politically pursuit-worthy goal (on the basis of arguments provided in section II), the state ensures that *a* further language is learnt, with classes and prices traded on a market.²² However, the state's 'neutrality' or 'benign neglect' makes predominant market forces determine the available additional languages (Kymlicka 1995: 51 – 52; LJ: 133 – 134). With equal standards of teaching (material, personnel, etc.), the languages spoken by few (many) will be accessible at high (low) prices due to economics of scale. Such a regime was uncontroversial if all agents of this market could

²¹ Mother tongue classes, for instance, are mainly a manner to ensure parity of esteem unless they coincide with 'valuable' 'world languages' such as 'Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, or Bengali' (LJ: 196).

²² Individuals would then have to assume possible negative effects of their choice if these were reasonably foreseeable (cf. De Schutter & Ypi, 2012). Applied to children's education, a far-reaching and arguably quite controversial account of parental authority over their children's language-choices would be required.

afford such ‘expensive’ minority language classes, e.g. by reducing their consumption of other non-subsistence goods. However, global wealth inequalities persist and socio-economically marginalised minorities are unable to burden this cost even where it is possible. Given the maxi-min dynamics, we would end up in an English-speaking world.

Because of this basic unfairness, Van Parijs rejects such a *laissez-faire* regime which is not unlike what he calls an ‘accommodating regime’ (LJ:133 – 134). Yet, the underlying liberal principle of *laissez-faire* still matters in Van Parijs' theory: people should be free to abandon ‘their’ language and this ‘fair resignation’ (LJ: 171ff.) is precisely grounded in their liberty to assume to cost of maintaining their language as long as they can carry this burden under fair circumstances. Let us now turn to what he considers fair in his alternative to the purely liberal regime: a *coercive territorial regime* where one or very few ‘official’ languages are imposed in media, education, etc. (LJ: 134).

3.2 Integration, territoriality, and equality

To the same extent that we defined English as the first language, the second language could be prescribed, too. Canadians, for instance, have to speak both French and English to live as a full and active citizens anywhere in Canada. Other states, could decide to teach other ‘historic’ or valuable ‘prestige’ languages in addition to their national language.²³ This is the strategy in Van Parijs ‘territorial language + English’ model (in this order of priority). The local language has to be the ‘Queen’ mainly in order to avoid ‘colonial attitudes’ as violations of parity of esteem (LJ: 139ff.) and ‘kindness-driven agony’ as an unconditional subjugation to the maxi-min dynamics (LJ: 142ff.).

The coercion of such a regime comes in degrees. And Van Parijs distinguishes four dimensions: the *extensiveness* of the legally constrained freedoms, the *ambition* of the number of languages learnt and their extent, the *generality* or permissibility of exceptions, and the *severity* of sanctions following infractions (LJ: 134 – 135). A perfectly coercive regime would impose the territorial language even in the private sphere used to a native-like level with no exceptions but harsh punishments for deviators. Van Parijs does not go that far due to his endorsement of basic liberties such as the right to freely choose the language of private conversation. However, important voices have suggested policies pointing in this direction – e.g., in 2014 the CSU, the coalition party of Merkel's CDU, proposed that immigrant families better speak German at home.²⁴

²³ ‘It is common for European countries to offer bilingual education schools where children are instructed in two languages (...) Normally, one of the languages will be the national language (English, French, German) and the other will be another high-prestige language’ (Bialystok, 2001: 235).

²⁴ Cf. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30380970>, last access: 7/11/2015. To my knowledge, no political party anywhere has yet written a report on why German families better speak English at home.

Such a perfect regime would be no problem if the territorial language was the only language all inhabitants spoke and would have reason to speak. That is, it is ‘binding’ and interfering mainly with regard to the mother tongues and desires of ‘newcomers’ (LJ: 135). For Van Parijs, public institutions have to be designed in such a way that ‘allophone newcomers’ can ‘reasonably be expected ... to muster both the courage and humility to learn the local language’ while requiring that their children be educated in it (LJ: 141). This is ‘the best that can be done to secure parity of esteem—to avoid it always being the same group who do the linguistic “bowing”’.

What this amounts to is a shift of the ‘bowing’ away from national groups to immigrants. To justify this shift, Van Parijs' does not rely on prior claims of the nation due to his endorsement of a framework of global egalitarian justice (LJ: 139). However, he admits that his territorial regime – in its effects – entails a ‘privilege to the “sons of the soil”’ (LJ: 138). In doing so, he draws upon Kymlicka's (1995: §2) distinction between territorial/national and ethnic/migrant minorities accepting its ‘tension with a principled presumption in favour of an accommodating regime’ (LJ: 246n10). To decide which group falls into what category will cause ‘disagreement’ and ‘disputes’ which can only be solved by making the ‘the language regime explicit as soon as possible’ (LJ: 138).

I have no quarrel with this conclusion but it has to include immigrants' language along lines not unlike what Van Parijs too quickly discards as an ‘accommodating regime’. For, Kymlicka's distinction between national and immigrant groups is normatively under-determined, ultimately arbitrary, and incompatible with a framework of global egalitarian justice as I have argued elsewhere (Heim, forthcoming). The following alternative regime avoids these problems and builds up on English as the global Queen in a world full of interacting local Princesses. In contrast to Van Parijs who eventually cements one form of inter-territorial diversity by pipelining immigrants towards historic and territorial linguistic groups, the next regime relies on no such priority.

3.3. Interaction, accommodation, and normalising diversity

A democratic consultation should guide the transition from one regime to another according to Van Parijs. Its organisation should ‘be most favourable to the weaker language that is meant to be given territorial protection’ (LJ: 169). Now, immigrant languages are consistently the weakest in their country of arrival: after three generations, knowledge in the original language is virtually gone (cf. Kymlicka, 1995: 78 – 79; Patten, 2003: 259 – 260). Van Parijs' theory appears thus compatible with the following:

‘if a heavily Spanish-speaking school district in New York, for example, or a town council in a heavily Polish area of Iceland, votes to make Spanish or Polish the local language and to educate their children in it for part of the school day, their fellow citizens and economic partners have no greater complaint of justice against them than if that locality had decided to

implement a historic preservation law or noise ordinance' (Stilz, 2009: 284).

This is evidently no territorial criterion in the sense Van Parijs imagined – these immigrant groups' mother tongue is still spoken in their respective country of origin. The criterion is thus rather *categorical* and applying to 'certain categories of people in the population' in virtue of their mother tongue (LJ: 136 – 137). Under a coercive reading of this 'personal principle' (LJ: 147) children would have to learn the mother tongue of their parents rather than the language of the circumscription. However, Van Parijs rejects this principle as an alternative to the territorial regime because it does not guarantee interaction, equality of opportunity, or the basic liberty of choosing other languages.

Yet, by accepting English as a global Queen we still recognise that it is 'extremely important to ensure that people actively sharing a territory should also actively share a language' (Van Parijs, 2011a: 58). The 'territory' being the whole world, people can interact, equally pursue opportunities, and choose what other language to learn. But additionally, rational and reasonable parents will prefer their children to be able to access more opportunities, be cognitively fitter, and have less prejudices and hence learn another language (unless they have a non-English mother tongue). The best guarantee for the necessary 'frequent, varied, and socially useful' input (Costa & Sebastian-Gallés, 2014: 343) in that language are the present linguistic minorities. Actually, Van Parijs has anticipated this outcome: a language which is neither English nor the territorial one tends to be adopted only if it has a prior 'special link (typically, *vicinity*, but perhaps also *migration*) ... through the mobilization of the compulsory school curriculum, the audio-visual media and sustained direct contact' (LJ: 132, my emphasis).

But rather than accounting for such outcomes as rare instances, I want to discuss them in the following as the rule of how it could and *should* be. To what extent should the non-English mother tongue of residents ('national' minorities and immigrants alike) define the additional language(s) taught in the district or town of dwelling? The goal of this interaction regime is to normalise (linguistic) diversity – rightly promoted and structurally balanced (cf. Schmidt, 2014: 405) – as an asset rather than a problem. It gives full weight to the idea of interaction as a two-way street – with claims and concessions of both nationals and immigrants recognising the absence of a 'natural' priority of the former over the latter.²⁵ Individuals who only master the dominant language would then have learn one of the languages of their autochthonous and migrant minorities.

Such recognition is already common with regard to the established minorities in those states that inspired Van Parijs in the first place: the Flemish part of Belgium, Québec, Catalonia, etc. I am not contesting that much more needs to be done on a global scale to

²⁵ Recognition also leads to a stronger identification of the minority groups with the state dominated by the majority and hence more social cohesion (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2013). Cf. also Carens (2000: 79).

improve the lot of other indigenous and national minorities. However, any such attempt should not unconditionally be staged on the back of migrants. Migration has not only changed the ethnic and linguistic make-up of most receiving societies to a degree that needs to be reflected in our understanding of diversity; moreover, it is bound to increase even further in our world where globalised high-mobility and inequality are growing. Québec and other examples might serve as cases in point of how to deal with intra-national (linguistic) diversity in the absence of migration, but less so in the status quo.²⁶

In concrete terms, the linguistic make-up of the population in a neighbourhood, school district, or municipality determines the second languages of this interactive regime. The regime can thus take a territorial form since multiple mother tongues are ‘Princesses’. This regime differs thus from the previous one in that it is *categorically* informed while allowing, though not requiring, for territorial outcomes (intelligent school ‘zones’ can be delimited in a non-spatial but personalised way, most media can be consulted globally, etc.). Under a strict coercive reading, for instance, if Urdu speakers represented 11% of non-dominant speakers, 11% of monolingual pupils and those who opted-out of learning their mother tongue would have to take Urdu class in public school.²⁷ This is compatible with learning other languages at the *same* schools and other subjects being taught in English.²⁸ Children learn their neighbours’ language with frequent, varied, and socially useful inputs as the most cost-efficient manner to consolidate linguistic skills (compared to, e.g., language stays) while also decreasing discriminatory dispositions.

However, Van Parijs notes, what probably ensues is an ‘apartheid-like set up, with separate schools, associations, and media’ where groups would segregate along socio-economic and corresponding linguistic lines even in the presence of redistributive measures (LJ: 148). People segregate, as matter of fact, but this should have no necessary normative weight – just as the existence of tax-avoidance is no reason not to collect taxes, so should segregation be no reason not to pursue interaction. Institutions can legitimately be designed in such a way as to make segregation burdensome. And intelligent zoning of school districts to homogenize the distribution of pupils is key. But why is legitimate in the first place, as a matter of principle, to orientate whole policies around minorities?

4. Non-assimilationist interaction: why and how?

The three previous multilingual regimes have outlined the conceptual possibilities differing in their degree of neutrality and in their orientation towards the relative size of groups. Van Parijs, however, – and theory on linguistic policy in general – has taken the form of a dichotomy between *laissez-faire* and territoriality: from ‘hands-off’

²⁶ This depends on the definition of collective membership. Rather than providing a full account here, my argument applies to *settled* immigrants who are as nationals in terms of residence (Carens, 2013: 88ff.).

²⁷ Schmidt (2000: 227ff.) already discussed a ‘two-way bilingual education’ along these lines.

²⁸ The same would apply for other minorities in a system with preference-matching. Where this matching was not possible, class-quotas in those languages without enough students would have to be filled.

multiculturalism of *melting pots* as the US to uniform but egalitarian French *raison d'état*. So, why do we need a third concept? And what obstacles would a society face which tried to approximate this regime? The next sub-sections discuss these two questions.

4.1 Interactive productiveness and (il)legitimate claims

Van Parijs actually quickly addresses the possibility entailed by the interaction regime. He discards its coercive reading – forcing monolinguals to learn immigrant languages – as ‘even more counter-productive than introducing it as an optional subject’, but

‘managing to convince some of them (and their parents) of the interest they may have in learning languages such as Arabic, Turkish, Hindi, or Spanish would be a welcome achievement, providing it is not so successful that it reduces significantly the opportunity and incentive for immigrant children to learn the local language’ (LJ: 266n42).

This quote illustrates best the tension I have been elaborating on in this paper. If there are good reasons to learn another language and if there are further reasons for this language to be one of the minorities present in a society, why should it be necessarily relegated to the secondary or tertiary place? This question gets all the more urgent in a world where English is likely to be spoken on a world-wide scale – a world as presented by Van Parijs which I have taken for granted here: there should be no worry about the survival of local language if migrants have good reasons to learn it and if they can afford to access classes to learn that language. A bad reason, however, is to ultimately refer to arbitrary grounds of historic priority as also endorsed by Van Parijs. To wit, immigrants cannot be blamed for certain languages to be under threat by the *lingua franca* – if anything at all, they deserve protection since their non-institutional, non-dominant, and non-territorial mother tongue is most likely to wither away within three generations. The fact that there might be a homeland somewhere on the globe is irrelevant to the *personal* dimension as analysed here. That is, languages do not matter on their own, but justice has to serve people and the languages *they* have reason to speak.

Now, migrants are a heterogeneous group, united in speaking a language *other* than the dominant one(s). But to take their internal heterogeneity against them such as to exclude the institutional integration of their languages on the grounds of *feasibility* falls too short, too: several examples of historic low-numbered minorities enjoying full territorial protection in migration-receiving countries exist (cf. section II.3). Now, it could be said that these minorities are territorially concentrated while immigrant groups are not. And even if they do, their ‘ghettoization’ is accompanied by more urgent social problems to which linguistic recognition is no solution but rather a sure ticket to permanent exclusion. While, I have already voiced my doubts about the necessity and legitimacy of such claims of segregation, it points to a deeper consideration: contingent facts about the status quo should not taint our assessment of how the world should look like. And

Van Parijs should agree when he states that ‘a smart struggle for greater justice will help make feasible tomorrow what is not feasible today’ (Van Parijs, 2015: 239).

Neither the *laissez-faire* nor the *territorial regime* provide satisfying reasons as to why we should implicitly or explicitly exclude immigrant languages as a matter of greater justice. They tend to disregard that migrants generally fare worse than other groups and that this has an impact on their ability to vindicate an institutional integration of their language: the Spanish-speaking community in the US, e.g., founds fewer bilingual schools in comparison to other minorities because its members are less educated and hence less versatile in obtaining the necessary permits by the state authorities (Fishman, 2001: 92). Now, what should the guiding general principle be to avoid such outcomes?²⁹

Kymlicka coined the term ‘societal culture’ as a primary good – to act freely requires acting within the framework of a culture and its basic values (Kymlicka, 1995: 76). While for him such culture is shaped by the primacy of indigenous and national groups, he still grants immigrants so-called ‘polyethnic’ rights (e.g. exceptions for Sikhs when wearing hats or uniforms) and also endorses bilingual schools for immigrants. Just as with Van Parijs, I differ in the understanding of such ‘accommodation’ here. For both, accommodating measures are merely instrumentally valuable to enhance ‘integration’.³⁰ But accommodation qua *interaction* is also an end in itself since it recognises the diversity emanating from diverse people. While the additional-access and enhanced cognition are instrumental, the third benefit of multilingualism – recognition – follows from linguistic diversity itself; were the world not inherently diverse, this advantage would not obtain. Intra-local linguistic diversity is a promising tool to naturalise natural differences between individuals. Kymlicka's instrumental account does not seem to imply such a principled endorsement of diversity as a necessary condition for less marginalization – neither Kymlicka nor Van Parijs are forearmed against the tower-story of Babel.

A purely instrumental reading of interaction is not limited to theory, but also widespread in educational practise: bilingual education has mainly been seen as a means of smoothing the learning of the dominant language for children of linguistic minorities – on the basis that a well-established first language enhances and facilitates learning another language.³¹ Such instrumental measures rely upon closer inspection more on considerations of territoriality than of interaction proper. And this is why the presented model has three rather than two extremes: it is only under the third regime that migration-induced diversity and multilingualism involves an asset rather than a burden. In the context of educational programs, it implies that they ‘incorporate at least some of

²⁹ In line with Van Parijs, but in contrast to Kymlicka & Patten (2003), I do not discuss the matter in terms of ‘rights’ but in terms of prior individual interests and fairness (just as Van Parijs does).

³⁰ Cf. (LJ: 266n42) and Kymlicka (1995: 78): ‘... this commitment to “multiculturalism” or “polyethnicity” is a shift in *how* immigrants integrate into the dominant culture, not whether they integrate.’

³¹ However, evidence suggest that the success of early second-language-learning depends more on the supportiveness of the environment rather than the specific kind of immersion (Bialystok, 2001: 238-9).

the diversity reflected by the children they are designed to serve' (Bialystok, 2001: 239).

4.2 Matters of implementation: 'not in my backyard'

Two considerations shall now be addressed in this section on matters of implementation: *choice* and *costs*. Regarding choice, the fully coercive and mutual language learning might antagonize the majority since they perceive such interaction as an undue imposition on their will as the majority adapting to the minority. Moreover, it might lead to whole series of perverse incentives and backlashes: people might avoid certain neighbourhoods with residents speaking certain languages, opt for private education, start to resent immigrants in general, vote xenophobic parties, etc. It is probably in this sense that Van Parijs speaks of 'counter-productiveness'.

However, concluding from these possible consequences that such policies are hopeless is too quick. What matters are the *reasons* one provides to support a certain line of action – and I am not aware of any solid argumentation to support any such backlash attitudes. On principled grounds, thus, there is no reason to give too much weight to negative considerations. But since 'smart' answers also take such irrational behaviour into account, optional mother tongue classes for immigrants could be implemented instead – any intervention can come in degrees. Such a policy would reside within the realm of possibilities (diagram 1) but discount on the principle of interaction and recognition between groups. This is the trade-off involved by moving towards *laissez-faire* and hence towards granting more weight to the choice of (the majority's) agents.

Second, any system approximating the interaction regime will probably face higher *costs* – in terms of teachers' salaries, infrastructure, learning material. Also, indirect costs might accrue: if full interaction was pursued, monolingual children might suffer the difficulty of being 'foreign' in classes with native speakers of that language. If these issues cannot be mitigated with appropriate pedagogical measures, the interaction regime would indeed seem like a gratuitous imposition. The trade-off between these costs and the interactive benefits will depend on the pedagogical evidence as well as the institutional set-up. If the costs prevail, less intrusive ways of achieving interaction could be pursued – e.g. diversity awareness classes or regular multicultural school activities as measures of a gradual 'light' integration of considerations based on interaction.

In more practical terms, a transitional 'where-numbers-warrant' clause could be introduced as to what languages are taught when. Certain measures can help to achieve the necessary thresholds whenever possible, e.g. electronic media teaching ('skype' classes), transportation to centralised language classes,³² etc. The fewer measures are taken to maximise the number of classes, the higher the cost of missing interaction. Fairness and solidarity have their price and trade-offs have to include these social costs.

³² As to the role of language competence centres in a multilingual society, cf. Extra & Yagmur (2004).

5. Conclusion

Everything that has been said in this paper is compatible with Van Parijs' account. There is no necessary and irremediable conflict of principles – in any case, to create those was not my intention. I have provided a series of *complementary* considerations to his account that suggest a change towards a more general inclusion of migrant languages. The argument has been presented in three steps: first, Van Parijs' main opportunity-guided reasons do not preempt a monolingual from coming about; second, there are *additional* access-, cognition-, and attitude-based reasons in favour of a multilingual and diverse state; and third, among the conceivable multilingual institutional regimes, considerations of inclusive *interaction* should inform linguistic policies. This paper has as one of the first put a price on what is lost by not recognising linguistic diversity of all minorities, autochthonous and migrants alike. This omission in the literature is probably due to a neat but nevertheless artificial monolingual worldview – as if we were to make up for some biblical sin and never even to consider multilingualism as a gift to be treasured.

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