

Chapter 5:

Key terms and concepts of the pluricentric theory

This chapter defines key terms of the pluricentric theory. The research question is: What are the terms that form the standard model of pluricentricity?

1. Key terms and concepts of pluricentricity - Explanation of terms:

1. *Self governing political entity:*

This term can stand for "nation", "self-governed part of a nation" or a "region" which has the legal right to decide on its language. The extension of the definition from "nations" (as used by Clyne, 1992) to the abstract term "self-governing political entity" appeared necessary, as recent research has shown that there is "second level pluricentricity" in countries such as Italy or Spain where regions have the right to determine for a specific language. However, the primary foundation for the creation and description of PCLs are state nations.

2. *Nation, state nation:*

In the context of the pluricentric theory, this term "nation" always refers to "state nations" and not to "ethnic nations". According to this concept each state is at the same time a nation in itself even though it shares a language with another nation. (Muhr 2019).

3. *Ethnic nation:*

The term *ethnic nation* is not a component of the theory of pluricentricity. It is presented here in order to distinguish it from the "state nation". Ethnic nations are based on the principle that the identity of the state and of each inhabitant is equated to the national language. It is the "one language- one nation principle" that is also applied to citizens of other nations if they share the same language.

According to this concept, the inhabitants of Austria would be "Germans", the inhabitants of Canada and the United States would be "British" or "French" citizens etc. The result is *confusion between linguistic and national affiliation*. It is

obvious that this concept will not work in a postcolonial context, nor according to the political developments that took place in Europe and in other regions of the world after World War II.¹

4. *Lingoid*:

Denotes a conventional human communication system called language whose status in a given language community or political entity is not yet decided. (See chapter 2). It is a neutral umbrella term.

5. *Pluricentric language*:

Definition (see chapter 3): A specific language is pluricentric when it is used in at least two self-governing political entities (nations or regions) where it has an official status as state language, co-state language, or regional language. The varieties of each national / region have their own (codified) norms that contribute to the identity of the self-governing entity and its inhabitants. This turns the self-governing political entities into a norm-setting centre through the conscious use of the norms native to the respective self-governing entity.

Note: The term “*pluricentric language*” does NOT refer to a single lingoid. It is an umbrella term for several (at least two) acknowledged national lingoids (national varieties) that in their territory have (in most cases) the highest status and act like monocentric national languages.

6. *Linguistic status / Official status*:

Languages come into existence through the explicit and deliberate decision of populations and their legal and political institutions (Chapter 2 and Muhr, 2019). Each language used in a certain nation is assigned a specific social and legal status. This can range from being a national/official language with unlimited usage in all domains to migrant or local languages that have no explicit rights other than to be used by their community in private life.

The status of a language determines the scope of its usage in a given society. Languages that are not formally recognised may be used in private life but not in public life (with the exception of usage in domains like religion or ritual usage).² The criterion of the *official status* also distinguishes between *recognised* and *not recognised languages* in a specific society.

Languages that are not recognised do not officially “exist”. The status of a language is therefore of crucial importance for the concept of pluricentricity as it decides over the function a certain language has in a specific self-governing entity.

7. *National/regional variety:*

Is the specific manifestation of a given pluricentric language in a certain nation or region.

Contrary to state nations, ethnic nations do not recognise/accept national varieties as they assume that there is only one nation, which is usually equated with the largest nation. They only accept regional varieties as "dialects", i.e. a language that is merely spoken and uncodified. The term regional variety is usually also applied by the dominant variety to the national varieties of other nations sharing the same language. There is the tendency to downgrade national varieties to regional ones (see Clyne, 1992). This approach leads to a strong centralisation of norms by the dominant nation. The norms in the other national varieties or self-governing regions are often denoted as "dialects" or even as "degenerate language" (like in Arabic).

8. *Norm-setting-centre:*

Self-governing political entities that share a language of the same name with another self-governing political entity are at same time *linguistic norm setting centres* as they are developing specific norms over time. The norm-setting is completed when the specific norm of the political entity is established and codified in dictionaries, grammars and textbooks for schools.

Note: It is important that a considerable number of speakers are necessary to develop a norm-setting centre and thus a distinct variety of its own, which is codified and standardized after some time. To qualify as a PCL, the national varieties must have a certain number of speakers and at least the quality of a regional language.

9. *First level-pluricentricity* (external pluricentricity):

First level pluricentricity describes the variability of a PCL that exists in different nations/regions. This is expressed in *national varieties* that distinguish national states sharing the same language from one other.

10. *Second-level pluricentricity*³ (internal pluricentricity):

This type of pluricentricity is found in most nations and it is particularly developed where regional variation is also linked to political entities like federal states (Bundesländer, Kantone, regione, regiones etc.), which is the case in Austria, Germany and Switzerland as well as in Italy and in Spain and in other countries. Diglossia can be considered an indirect form of second-level pluricentricity.

11. *Diglossia as second level-pluricentricity:*

Diglossia is a language situation where two language variants of the same language or two different languages are used in parallel in a language community. However, the use of the respective language variant depends on the language domain (high/low).

Arabic and Tamil (among others) show this type of language situation with a standard variety as the "high" variety and a everyday variety as "low" and second-level pluricentricity. Other examples of second-level pluricentricity are the "*fangyans*" in Chinese⁴ and the "*mother tongues*" in Hindi that make these languages pluricentric in several ways. (Gosh, 2012).

12. *Dominant and non-dominant varieties:*

This distinction has already been discussed in detail in chapter (3). It is only listed here for the sake of completion. Dominant varieties are characterized by a major influence on the norm of the standard language and their spread outside the language area while non-dominant varieties are in many ways disadvantaged in this respect.

13. *Ethno-linguistic awareness:*

Is a strong affiliation to the primary language of the language community that helps the community to survive in an environment where other languages are spoken and/or demanded in public communication. In languages with few speakers, this attitude is essential for the survival of the language (Fishman, 1996).

14. *Linguistic distance (Abstand):*

Linguistic distance describes the linguistic and pragmatic differences that exist on all linguistic and pragmatic levels between national varieties of PCLs.

15. *Linguistic Ausbau:*

This term (Kloss, 1978) refers to the situation when a language expands its functions. This is usually the case when a primarily spoken language is written down and thus gets used in additional domains. A typical case for that is the development of Letzeburgisch – the national language of Luxembourg, which until 1953 was merely a spoken regional variety of German. It became the national language of Luxembourg in 1984.

16. *Linguistic Status:*

The status of a language in a given nation/region regulates the function that the language has in a particular society. The attribution of status is administered by institutions that have the legal or social right to make such a decision. The status of a language/variety consists of two components: (1) The recognition of the language and (2) the attribution of certain functions this language has in this particular society. The status of a language can therefore range from a national, co-national, regional, minority language etc. which implies different rights to the use of a particular language in a particular society.

17. *Codification:*

The codification of a language is a deliberate and selective process of researching and writing down the norm of a language in dictionaries, grammars and other descriptive works. The codification of national varieties in PCLs can orient towards the *native norms of the variety* (endonormative codification) or on the *norms of the dominant variety* (exonormative codification).

18. *Endonormative codification:*

In the course of an endonormative codification the linguistic realisations of the speakers/informants are written down in the reference books "as such" even if they deviate from the model of the dominant variety in pronunciation, graphematics and morphology. This can lead to substantial linguistic differences and in the end to a new language. However, the endonormative codification ensures a close connection between written and spoken language and causes fewer difficulties in grasping the content of written language.

19. *Exonormative codification:*

The exonormative oriented codification excludes all features of a national variety that do not conform to the linguistic system of the dominant variety. If they are included in the reference books they will be marked with labels like "colloquial", "dialect" etc. which means, that they cannot/should not be used in written texts. This approach distorts the codification and makes it incomplete, because frequently used forms of spoken language that do not conform to the norms of the dominant variety are not recorded or wrongly recorded by adapting the NDV-form to the form of the dominant variety and made unrecognisable (see chapter 10).

This is done in order to avoid a split of the language into linguistically different new languages. It is also demanded in part by the elites who want to profit from the social and symbolic power of the dominant variety.

20. *Standard language: Formal standards and informal standards (standard of usage)*

A standard language is a specific variety of a language that conventionally is used in written texts and written down in dictionaries and reference books. It is generally used for public communication and transnationally between different national varieties of a PCL.

This is *formal* standard language because it has gone through the process of selection and formal description. However, this is *just one of several types of standard language*. Every social group develops its own (informal) standards over time that promote social cohesion.

And there are geographically wide-spread varieties that are used across many areas in everyday communication. These so-called *koine varieties* are an important part of the *standard of usage* - the *informal standards* whose norms are of the sometime turning up in newspapers and magazines that and then get codified. They must also be taken into account and codified, and not dismissed as "*colloquial*" or "*dialect*" as they are the main conversational norms of many speakers who are very aware of them and lets them believe that they speak a language of their own. The informal standards are particularly important in diglossic situations.

21. *Linguistic cringe: Norm subservience - Linguistic schizophrenia*⁵: *Schizoglossia/linguistic schizophrenia*

These terms denote and decline the idea that one's own language (or culture) is inferior to that of o another country or group. It is derived from the term "*cultural cringe*" which was coined in Australia in 1950 by A. A. Phillips. The effect of this attitude is that speakers to tend to avoid their own language and instead use a variety/language (the dominant variety) that they believe has a higher prestige. Speakers who show this behaviour devalue their own variety/language, but appreciate and use the more prestigious one, which they often do not master completely. This leads to a strong devaluation of the native norm of the speakers and to feelings of shame and unease.

22. *Language shame and feelings of guilt*

Many speakers of NDVs are ashamed of their language and feel guilty for not mastering the formal standard norms properly. This leads to restraint or silence in communication.

23. *Linguistic self-determination and self-definition*

Linguistic self-determination and -definition are present when the speakers of a non-dominant variety decide to codify their language and carry out corpus planning and status planning. Linguistic self-determination means that the speakers will give preference to their own variety and to that of another country. This makes the codification of the language necessary.

24. *Linguistic dominance - reversed dominance*

The term *linguistic dominance* refers to the predominance of the norms of one of the nations that form a pluricentric language over others. (See chapter 3 for details.)

Reversed dominance means the country in which the language originated is no longer the dominant one. Instead, one of the new varieties has become more powerful and is leading in term of the norms of the language as a whole.

25. *The "good and correct usage" - "le bon usage"*

These terms refer to the formal standard and the obligation of the elite or all those who belong to it (or want to belong to it) to use this norm *in all situations*. This attitude leads to a centralization of the standard language norm, which becomes identical to the norm of the dominant variety.

26. *The asymmetric relationship between dominant and non-dominant varieties.*

This phenomenon, in which the dominant variety has the power and the institutions to define the general norm of the PCL, has already been described in earlier sections of this book. It is only mentioned here for the sake of completion and denotes the prevalence of the dominant variety in respect to the "correct" norm of a PCL.

Footnotes:

- ¹ However, see chapter 14 about the pluriareal model that tries to reinstate the old monocentric model under a new name based on the concept of the ethnic nation.
- ² A typical example is Kurdish in Turkey: It has a large number of speakers but cannot be used in the institutions of the Turkish state.

³ For the term see Muhr (1997) and Clyne (1992: 460), for publications dealing with this phenomenon see Miller/Saeli (2016), Rodrigues/Pavia (2016).

⁴ See Tien (2016)

⁵ See Muhr (1983): The term has been coined by the author of this book by observing the linguistic behaviour of Austrian speakers. What at the time was thought a particular behaviour of Austrians has been found in many NDVs (see East Timor)