

Chapter 1

Language, Politics, and Modern Norway

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1996, leaders of all the major Norwegian political parties, covering a political spectrum from left socialist to extreme neoliberal, appeared briefly together for the universal ritual of the photo opportunity. Grinning broadly, armed with shovels, the leaders were posed awkwardly around a young tree. The tree was being planted in honor of Ivar Aasen, the Norwegian scholar who had died a hundred years earlier and had devoted his life to the development of Nynorsk, the minority written Norwegian language. When questioned by the press, each party leader managed to find a way to tie the legacy of Aasen and Nynorsk to the ideals of her or his party. To outsiders, this joint appearance to celebrate cultural heritage might evoke no attention, or at best, the usual references made to the cultural symbols of smaller European nations as being nothing more than folksy and quaint. Further, outsiders may find it remarkable that this small nation has witnessed three versions of written Norwegian compete for official recognition over the past 100 years: Bokmål, the dominant standard, derived from Danish and widely used in urban areas; Nynorsk, the minority standard constructed out of rural western dialects; and Samnorsk (Common Norwegian), a proposed fusion of the previous two into a standard that reflected the language usage patterns of everyday Norwegians. However, as the subsequent case study chapters will show, this photo opportunity would not have been possible only a few decades earlier. For much of modern Norway's existence, language has served as a tool that elites of varying ideological stripes have used in order to wage political

battle. From the 1880s up to the 1960s, struggles over language went hand in hand with struggles over Norwegian national identity, economic ideology, and electoral politics.

This book explains what factors led to the initial politicization of language in Norwegian society, why it remained a salient political issue throughout much of the twentieth century, and why elite desire to focus on the language question declined in the 1960s. Despite this extensive focus on the particulars of the Norwegian case, my chief aim is not to cast light on events that are solely of interest to specialists in Scandinavian political history. Rather, I argue that an investigation into Norwegian language politics has merit because it adds to a much larger debate about the relationship between group identity and elite political objectives.

I show how political elites create group identity based on linguistic characteristics. This, in and of itself, is nothing new to either political science or contemporary sociolinguistics. Two of the key works on nationalism, Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism*, provide what are generally considered to be some of the strongest accounts as to how language is employed in the construction of national identities.

Where my own investigation differs is in demonstrating that language has potential for elite use well after state construction. Specifically, my own investigation of Norwegian language politics suggests a link between language and identity that has not frequently been explored. The Norwegian case demonstrates that while language was initially politicized to aid in the creation of the new Norwegian state, elites found language to be politically valuable in the following decades as well. Moreover, these subsequent constructions and manipulations of *Norwegian* linguistic identity, taking place well after the consolidation of the Norwegian state, did not involve relations between different ethnic groups.¹ Linguistic differences among Norwegians are correlated with class and regional differences. Social democratic political elites promoted the construction of linguistic identities that merged linguistic characteristics from different social classes. The intent of these newly constructed identities was to assist in forging and maintaining broader cross-class alliances between the urban working class and rural inhabitants.

Prior to the case studies, it is useful to begin by focusing on the varying role that language has been assigned both within political

philosophy and in contemporary political science. In doing so, this review draws attention to a division among scholars regarding language's ability to be employed as a tool in changing society and in obtaining political objectives. Marx's argument that, on the one hand, language is mostly a reflection of a given set of social relations, will be presented. Yet many twentieth-century thinkers who were influenced by Marx arrived at a sharply different conclusion. That is, it has also been argued by some that language can be employed not only to reinforce social relations, but can also fundamentally alter those relations. As the case study chapters will demonstrate, the history of the Norwegian language conflict speaks powerfully to these opposing views on language, lending credence to a view of language as a policy instrument that has ramifications far beyond the cultural arena.

LANGUAGE AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

One importance of language is that it inherently contains insights on the social relations of a given society. In this regard, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* stands out, rejecting the Platonic view of language as a tool whose function was to mirror an objective reality. Wittgenstein argued that the Platonic view of language, in which language gained meaning by naming objects in the real world and expressed an objective universality, was sharply flawed. His alternative is posited through the construction of "language games." In these games, the use of words as object names did not just label them within reality, but also implied a set of commands issued by the speaker and to be obeyed by the listener. Wittgenstein's example of this is the master builder and the apprentice: The builder states only the name of an object that he needs, and the apprentice passes him the appropriate object when requested.² Naming the object lends symbolic representation to it as a physical object, and also carries the message that certain relations exist between two individuals sharing this simple "language": namely, the speaker is commanding the listener to engage in a certain activity, and that the authority for him to do so is understood by both. Thus, the lesson is clear: language, even in its most basic form, goes beyond communication and represents a set of social relations that can assign both speaker and listener to certain roles, each with varying degrees of power.

However, if language is not charged with the task of defining universalities, but is rather the subjective expression and description of a given society, one can inquire as to whether language also has additional functions. That is, once produced, are languages limited only to communication and to mirroring (however loosely) existing social relations? Specifically, can languages be used to alter the society in which they were produced? In this regard, a brief discussion of Marx and twentieth-century Marxist thinkers will be instructive.

Marx and Engels were more explicit than Wittgenstein about the connection between language and the organization of society. In *The German Ideology*, they argue that man first makes history by engaging in four circumstances or moments on a near simultaneous basis. Stating that “life involves before everything else, eating and drinking, clothing, and many other things,” the production of the means to satisfy the basic needs becomes the first activity. Following the fulfillment of these basic needs, new needs immediately arise that must also be fulfilled through production. Third, as a practical function of fulfilling these needs, humanity propagates its own kind, and engages in reproduction. Finally, Marx and Engels state that the “production of life, both of one’s own in labour and of fresh life in procreation” is also mirrored in a social relationship, which is considered the cooperation of individuals under any given set of conditions.³ A result of these four moments, particularly that of social relationships, is the production of consciousness within individuals. For Marx and Engels, consciousness is a *product* of the necessity that individuals have social relations.⁴ Language enters into this formulation by being the “practical expression” of that consciousness:

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness, as it exists for other men, and for that reason is really beginning to exist for me personally as well; for language like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men.⁵

Thus, Marx and Engels, in sketching their materialist view of history, place language in the same framework: language is a product of material and social relations. One must question whether the vulgar reductionism which implies that language (as an element of the superstructure) cannot be transformed without first transforming the

material relations of society (base), or that language, once produced, does not have the ability to alter the material relations of society. However, there are significant elements of this line of thinking in Marx's work. For while Marx indirectly considered language in the *Grundrisse*, one cannot conclude that he offered any support for the idea that "language as superstructure" could exercise influence on the current mode of production. Specifically, Marx discussed labor as a "category" that had taken on different meanings under different modes of production. To locate language in Marx's discussion, it is important to recognize that a "category" can be interpreted as an abstraction that is synonymous with language. In precapitalist times, the category of labor had quite limited and specific meanings that were linked to certain concrete activities. However, under capitalism, Marx argued that labor as a category had lost these specific connotations and now existed as only an abstraction, and that it "has ceased to be organically linked with individuals in any form."⁶ Marx goes on to observe that:

This example of labour shows strikingly how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity—precisely because of their abstractness—for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations. . . . The categories which express (bourgeois society's) relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of all production of all the vanquished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up . . ."⁷

In this passage, Marx reaffirms the argument made in *The German Ideology* that "categories" are products of historic relations, but he also is commenting on how these categories can have influence of their own. Marx suggests that the category of labor (as conceived of under capitalism), while only fully valid to describe elements of capitalism, is nonetheless employed by bourgeois economics to describe labor in precapitalist times. According to Marx, the influence that categories/language have is in shaping our present-day understanding of a very different set of historical circumstances. One should note very carefully that Marx is not arguing that (present) superstructure has an influence on (past) base, but rather on our understanding of past bases.

Yet, as a strategy, the use of noneconomic forces in society to *alter* the material base is not fully enunciated until Antonio Gramsci takes the term “hegemony” on loan from the Bolsheviks and the Third International and employs it as the cornerstone of a cultural and political “united front” against capitalist forces. Antonio Gramsci is of course widely noted for his theoretical contribution of identifying the “ideological predominance of the dominant classes in civil society over the subordinate” as the hegemony of the ruling class, yet one can argue that an equal contribution was made when he offered his tactical suggestions for combating the totality of ruling class domination.⁸ Gramsci argued that for the proletariat to fight the bourgeois state successfully, it is necessary to engage in a counterhegemonic effort that consists of a three-prong war of position for control of the state and civil society. It is the second and third elements of this war of position that are of interest in this context and are in fact interrelated.

As opposed to a direct attack (i.e., the use of violent force) on the bourgeois state, Gramsci argued that the key to working-class success lay in the creation of a specifically working-class culture. This working-class culture would be in opposition to bourgeois cultural norms, which, of course, only served to perpetuate bourgeois domination. While Gramsci never directly addressed the role of language conflict in the construction of his counterhegemonic strategy, chapter 3 will show how language conflict can serve in the war of position: The Norwegian Labor Party (DNA), after decades of a traditional Marxist focus on purely “economic” questions and the need to promote potentially violent revolutionary struggle, eventually came around to recognizing the significance of combating the bourgeois control of culture in general and language in particular.

Linked to this is the third component of Gramsci’s war of position, which proved to make the tactics of coalition-building around language possible. Gramsci suggests that there need to be certain shifts in consciousness before the working-class can be successful in its attempt to fight bourgeois control of the state and civil society. One of the transformations that an individual must undergo is to leave behind the identification with only his or her own respective economic class and instead come to see him or herself as a member of *all* subordinated classes, who can “come together to form a counterideology that frees them from the subordinated position.”⁹ However, Gramsci appears to have held contradictory stances as to

whether or not a successful counterhegemonic war of position should be waged that involved language as a unifying force. On the one hand, he argued that as many of Italy's dialects were low prestige, it would be necessary for working-class Italians to take advantage of the "normative grammar" offered by standardized and hegemonic Italian if they were fully to take advantage of the modern and unified Italy.¹⁰

Yet, in personal writings to his sister, Gramsci expressed a far different view on the abandonment of nonstandard linguistic patterns for the new, modern Italian. In dealing with the question of what language his nephew ought to be educated in, Gramsci strongly came out for the use of Sardinian, as opposed to Italian, and justified this view by labeling Sardinian as an entirely separate language.¹¹ Regardless of the tension between these views, Gramsci's development of a united front that would employ a strategy of political and cultural counterhegemony moves us a great deal away from both Wittgenstein and Marx.

What may be thought of in Gramscian terms as a counterhegemonic project utilizing language can also be expressed through Pierre Bourdieu's focus on cultural capital in general and in some of his specific remarks on the nature of language. The broad outlines of Bourdieu's analysis have centered around an extension of Marx's work on capital and the insight that capital as a form of domination cannot be conceived in strictly economic terms. Rather, it is supplemented by at least three additional types: social, cultural, and symbolic. Of particular interest to us here is cultural capital, which can be viewed as the cultural traits that are necessary for children from nonbourgeois backgrounds to attain if they are to achieve a shift in membership from an underprivileged to a privileged group. Alternately, as "natural" members of the advantaged group, bourgeois youth by definition are already rich in the necessary cultural capital that will be of use in perpetuating their dominance over the nonprivileged classes.¹² For Bourdieu, cultural capital, along with the other forms, are thought of in highly strategic and utilitarian terms. He states that the "social world can be conceived of" by:

discovering the powers or forms of capital which are or can become efficient, like aces in a game of cards, in this particular universe, that is, in the struggle (or competition) for the appropriation of scarce goods of which this universe is the site. It follows that the structure

of this space is given by the distribution of the various forms of capital, that is, by the distribution of the properties which are active within the universe under study—those properties capable of conferring strength, power and consequently profit on their holder.¹³

While Bourdieu's own shorthand for bourgeois cultural capital is "style, taste and wit," it should be obvious from the earlier discussion in this chapter that language is also an important element of cultural capital. Bourdieu notes in his discussion of the educational system that "the culture of the elite is so closely linked to the culture of the school" that the two are virtually indistinguishable. Yet the style, taste, and wit of the upper class are not the only cultural traits reinforced or transmitted in an educational setting. Certainly, the language and grammar of the dominant group is also given privileged status. In bilingual nations where language use is closely correlated to class differences, this form of cultural capital takes on the greatest of significance. According to Bourdieu, where the language of the dominant group is the official state language and therefore the official language of schooling, one of the key requisites for moving away from a disadvantaged societal position is to adopt that aspect of elite culture that has been codified as the sole means of official communication. This is necessary not only because one understands that "language" serves as a signifier of membership in the "proper" group, but also because of the very concrete reason that becoming socialized in the elite culture via the educational system is not possible in any other tongue than in the language of the dominant elites. To learn the cultural values of the dominant class, one must also learn the medium through which they are transmitted and in learning that linguistic medium, one is also learning an additional cultural value.

In addition to a general discussion of noneconomic forms of domination, Bourdieu has also made the discussion of language and domination a specific focus of his work on capitalist society. In writing on "linguistic capital," Bourdieu follows the same line of thought employed when discussing all other forms of capital: namely that it is by default yet another trait that inevitably involves power relations. Bourdieu notes that, ". . . *linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power* through which relations of force between the speakers and their respective groups are actualized in a transfigured form."¹⁴ Elsewhere, Bourdieu points to the coercive nature of a dominant language by noting that:

When one language dominates the market, it becomes the norm against which the prices of the other modes of expression, and with them the values of the various competencies are defined . . . it has a social efficacy in as much as it functions as the norm, through which is exerted the domination of those groups which have both the means of imposing it as legitimate and the monopoly of the means of appropriating it.¹⁵

While Bourdieu's discussion poses cultural and linguistic capital as tools that certain groups maintain in order to perpetuate their domination and that other groups must obtain in order hopefully to leave behind their disadvantaged societal status, one must wonder if Bourdieu has neglected an alternate strategy, particularly for those that are disadvantaged in terms of linguistic capital. Is the only successful path to increased linguistic capital a strategy in which the dominated group takes on the tongue of the dominant class? Collins' discussion of Bourdieu's work on language concludes by observing that recent work in sociolinguistics has taken Bourdieu to task for not recognizing that linguistically oppressed groups can devise strategies that allow for the flowering of nonelite language in certain public spheres.¹⁶ Specifically, he points to recent studies on the Catalan region of Spain, in which the state-sanctioned domination of Catalan has been resisted in the "everyday" sphere of family, work and other face-to-face interactions. However, even these studies fall short of suggesting a truly viable counterstrategy to that of assimilation, for they ultimately must acknowledge that the bulk of the gains are made in nonofficial settings.

As I will show in chapter 3, not only did the Norwegian Labor Party's treatment of the language question ultimately develop into a counterhegemonic project, but it also suggests an alternative to Bourdieu. Ultimately, one may argue that Bourdieu sets forth a type of determinism, in which those that have the necessary linguistic skills are thankful, and those who don't, hope to acquire them. Yet the Norwegian case demonstrates how the intervention of political elites pursuing other, nonlinguistic ends, can have a spill-over effect onto what constitutes valuable linguistic capital. In forging the linguistic coalition between workers and farmers in the 1930s, and in elevating Common Norwegian to a position of official prestige through subsequent policy, Norwegian Labor Party elites altered the linguistic playing field. Those groups, workers and small farmers, that Bourdieu would consider disadvantaged in terms of linguistic capital, did not

have to fully adopt the dominant class' language in official settings. Legislation and orthographic reforms would instead carve out significant sanctioned space in the public arena for the use of this "lower-class" speech alongside the speech belonging to privileged groups. Further, and in even greater contradiction to Bourdieu, in order for the advantaged groups to maintain continued access to the educational and other credentials deemed necessary for success, members of the dominant group would be forced to accept two key linguistic changes. First, through orthographic reforms, Riksmål would be significantly altered to closely resemble the language used by everyday Norwegians. Secondly, through legislation such as the alternative norm essay law (*sidemålstilen*), even members of advantaged groups who considered Riksmål to be their "mother tongue" would be required to show competence in Nynorsk. For Norwegians, language was to become less of a barrier in accessing other forms of prestigious societal capital.

LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE

Though it is often dismissed as a significant political variable, language and the struggles surrounding language planning should be of interest to political scientists for a number of reasons.¹⁷ As David Laitin points out, the sanctioning by the state of one language as the official standard has implications for the social mobility of all linguistic cultures within the nation.¹⁸ In the most basic sense, the language which is the official currency of the corridors of power becomes the requisite one for all members of society. Related to that, Ernest Gellner observes that for there to be mobility among various groups within society, a state "... cannot erect deep barriers of rank, of caste or estate . . ." between members of society.¹⁹ Societies that have a multilingual population, yet only make provisions for one language to be codified as the official standard, erect both formal and informal barriers to those whose primary language is another. The sanctioning of a specific language by a state is then an example of the elite exercise of power to shape the rules of political access. Thus, the ability or the requirement to use one linguistic standard over another can have real implications for individuals and groups seeking to compete with other

forces in society on an equal footing. Each of these observations suggests that there is a politics of language and that studying this aspect of politics involves examining “. . . the relation between the distribution of language skills on the one hand, and political power and high status or prestige on the other hand in a society with more than one variety of language.”²⁰ For social scientists then, one key reason to engage in the study of language planning conflicts is that it is yet another arena where competition among elites and counterelites takes place and where various societal groups battle for increased rights and access to political power.

Despite this apparent importance of language as an issue that promotes or prevents groups from accessing political power, political science has not granted language a larger role in questions over societal conflict. In political science, the role of language generally appears in conjunction with investigations into national identity. In the literature on nationalism, language figures prominently among those who seek to explain the rise of states and nations.²¹ David Laitin, for example, has devoted several works to explaining the choices of language planners in postcolonial African states;²² Jonathan Pool has focused attention on the manner in which emerging states can efficiently adopt an official language policy suitable for a bilingual state;²³ and William Safran has focused on “superordinate languages as state-building instruments” in both European and non-European settings.²⁴

After state formation, and over the course of a state’s history, language has generally received less attention from political science, with the exception of those states where language cleavage is thought to be an underlying source of conflict. In this area, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, and Spain often stand out.²⁵ Each of these cases has a shared characteristic: these states possess specific geographic zones where distinctly different languages are dominant, and where distinctly different ethnic groups are also dominant. Further, each of these states has not imposed “language rationalization” upon its citizenry; that is, the state has not mandated the exclusive use of one national language. Finally, while the state may not have rationalized the use of language, the state has been a key player in the attempt to create language policy. Each of these examples is emblematic of state efforts to mediate some balance acceptable to all of the chief linguistic subcultures. Ultimately, that language is a salient or significant conflict in these states is generally not questioned.

The Norwegian Case

An interesting contrast to these cases is the example of multilingual Norway. The Norwegian language has two official written standards. The hegemonic language variant, Bokmål, is used mainly by high status groups, particularly the petit bourgeois in urban centers of eastern Norway. The alternative, Nynorsk, is a collection of rural dialects and used primarily in western Norway, but also favored by many of the country's intellectuals and activists on the political left. Until 1929, Bokmål was officially known as Riksmål, and Nynorsk was known as Landsmål. (In this case, however, for the sake of simplicity and also to avoid confusing the reader, I use the term Nynorsk throughout this book, even when discussing Landsmål in the pre-1929 period.) Written Norwegian also has had a third standard, Common Norwegian, which primarily existed as the policy aim of a gradual fusion between Nynorsk and Bokmål. This third written variant remained mostly an aspiration on the language planning horizon throughout the twentieth century and was eventually discarded as a policy option by the Norwegian Labor Party in the 1960s.

Since the establishment of parliamentary sovereignty in 1884, the conflict between adherents of the two languages has played itself out frequently in the Norwegian policy arena. Legislation regarding the two languages initiated with a parliamentary resolution granting equal status to the two standards and has continued over the past 110 years to include laws on the use of the language in government institutions, education, textbooks, and broadcasting institutions. The impact of this legislation has ranged from what some may dismiss as the symbolic, such as the requirement that certain stamps and currency be labeled with both official renderings of "Norway" (Norge/Noreg), to legislation that has had substantial impact on the behavior of both individuals and institutions in Norwegian society. This includes the requirement that all Norwegian citizens pass exams certifying their competency in both standards upon graduation from secondary school, the requirement that all civil servants conduct official business in the language of the individuals they are interacting with, and the guidelines that have increased the amount of Nynorsk in state broadcasting institutions to roughly twenty percent of broadcast time.

In observing the conflict that has evolved between adherents of these two standards, it is important to note the key manner in which Norway differs from other multilingual European states. Language

conflict between the two official Norwegian standards is not an expression of ethnic differences.²⁶ Unlike the use of the Sámi languages, using one version of Norwegian over another does not mark an individual as being an ethnic outsider. An additional difference between Norway and its other European counterparts is that language has not become exclusively compartmentalized by region. While Nynorsk experiences its strongest base in the west of Norway, it is required that the general population have sufficient Nynorsk training for communication in the minority standard. It is also worth noting that language cleavage has never been the key cleavage in Norwegian society. A number of scholars have shown that while language is a powerful group symbol in Norway, it has ranked behind both regional cleavages and the left-right divide. Finally, the Norwegian party system has never seen the rise of parties that primarily reflected language issues at the expense of other political questions. Without these parties, Norway is lacking a factor critical in other bilingual/multilingual European nations where language policy has received substantial attention from political elites.

Thus, the case of modern Norway presents an interesting puzzle, and one with significance to political science.²⁷ Norway is similar to Belgium in that both states have a long history of language legislation that has had real impact on the behavior of society.²⁸ However, Norway's language conflict differs Belgium's and other European nations in terms of the lack of multiple ethnicities, exclusive geolinguistic zones, and single-issue language parties. Thus, the case of Norway leads one to ask why Norwegian elites have chosen language policies in the manner that they have over the past century. More generally, in terms of the interplay between language and policy, the puzzle is phrased as follows: What forces lead political elites toward the adoption of certain types of language policies; and what forces make them more or less inclined to devote space on the political agenda to language issues?

LANGUAGE POLICY AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY AS POLITICAL TOOLS

The objective of this research is to explain the broad variation in Norwegian language policy from the point of parliamentary sovereignty until the late 1960s. While a number of specific policies have been enacted since the late 1960s, this period marks the most recent

shift in orientation by Norwegian political elites to the language question.

The specific thesis I formulate is that the impetus for linguistic policymaking in Norway has generally come from the top-down, from political leaders who advocate linguistic policies in an effort to advance nonlinguistic political objectives, rather than from the bottom-up through pressure from political activists and organized interests. More specifically, I argue that Norwegian political elites primarily viewed language as an instrument for the construction, manipulation, and maintenance of national and subnational identities.

This thesis draws largely on major works dealing with nationalism, such as that of Anderson, Hobsbawm, and Breuilly, who have stressed that national and ethnic identities are largely a political creation.²⁹

Perhaps most apparent in the case of Anderson, language plays a critical role in the emergence of broad-based nationalist movements and the construction of sovereign states. For Anderson, language assumed a key role in conjunction with the rise of print capitalism and higher literacy rates among the masses. He argues that the intelligentsia in many European states were able to garner popular support for nationalist movements by directing appeals toward the increasingly literate masses via print media written in the popular language.

However, it was not just the practical component of communicating in a language comprehensible to the masses that was of importance to the creation of national identity. Rather, the intelligentsia also glorified the common vernacular by making it a defining characteristic of the new nation. By using the common vernacular and making it a focal point of the nationalist movement, Anderson argues that language became both the medium and central component of the nationalist message.³⁰

Similarly, Hobsbawm's focus on the link between language and the establishment of national identity in the nineteenth century emphasizes how nationalist political activists drew on the emergence of linguistic and cultural revival movements in order to generate mass support for the national idea.³¹ In both cases, language and nationalism are portrayed in rather instrumental terms, with their proponents employing these symbols and ideas as a way to gain access to increased resources and political power.

The findings in the case study chapters offer powerful evidence in support of Anderson's "instrumentalist" view that language is em-

ployed by political elites to construct nations. However, there is an additional implication of the story that will unfold in the following chapters. The Norwegian case demonstrates that the political value of language need not be limited to the elite construction of a national community. Language also plays a key role in the elite construction of subnational groupings—in this case, a united cultural front between the dialect-based working class, and the more Nynorsk-oriented farmers. In constructing a united front or counterhegemonic project and in altering the nature of valuable linguistic capital, this study will show that not only are languages employed to imagine national communities, but that they have importance in other types of “imaginings”: Namely, those that center around the strategic need to unify subordinated classes in an effort to gain state power.

This view of the “use” of culture has come under attack by a number of scholars, most prominent among them, Anthony Smith. Smith attacks the “instrumentalist” view of national and cultural symbols, in which the focus is on how “ethnicity and nationalism (come to be used) in the power struggles of leaders and parties.” For Smith, these types of investigations are flawed for two reasons:

Instrumentalism, on the other hand, fails to explain why ethnic conflicts are so often intense and unpredictable, and why the ‘masses’ should so readily respond to the call of ethnic origin and culture. It also fails to address the problem of why some ethnics are so durable and persistent, and why so many people lay down their lives for their nations.³²

As this case study proceeds, it will become clear that I address this criticism by focusing on the contexts that made cultural symbols salient. At the same time, it is important to specify that I do not claim that the complete details of every language policy are the successful result of elite manipulation. Rather, one of the recent major works in American public policy may be of use here. Kingdon’s analysis of agenda-setting in American politics suggests that policy can be conceived of as having two chief components. There is the overall agenda that will be adopted in regard to a political issue, such as whether a given party opts to support one of any number of linguistic standards or whether it wishes to distance itself from the linguistic fray.³³ Kingdon maintains that this broad orientation is largely autonomous of societal pressure and that the position chosen

at this level is more likely the result of “visible participants” such as elected elites, high-level bureaucrats and institutions such as political parties. In the case of elected officials, Kingdon observes that they are not “shrinking violets” and that the incentives for participating in the visible activity of agenda setting is of course related to their ambitions for office. However, policy is not simply the choice of an agenda, it is also the choice among alternatives that can be used to implement a given agenda. Here, Kingdon affords room to various types of societal pressure and suggests that the specific alternatives of a given policy may reflect the whims and desires of pressure groups, bureaucracies and academics, labeling these groups as “hidden participants.”³⁴

There is little doubt that as alternatives within Norwegian language policies have been revised and the finer elements debated, that experts and other interested parties have had their say. However, what has not been sufficiently clarified by other studies is whether Norwegian language policy as a whole has reflected the will of society or that of political elites. Uncovering the extent to which language policy has been an arena that elites have been able to shape for their own ends and independently of other forces in society is the chief aim of this work.

One alternative hypothesis for the formation of language policy in Norway will also be investigated. An interest group led strategy, that is, the extent to which policies are a response to the surges and declines in the activism of linguistic organizations independent of larger political movements and issues, will also be explored.

At this point, I will briefly turn to the literature that informs the research hypothesis and the alternative. Following that, a historical overview of language conflict in Norway will be offered so as to demonstrate the varied and substantial policy outcomes that must be accounted for by the research hypothesis. Finally, I will spell out the methodological guidelines that were used to obtain and evaluate data gathered in the course of this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The Political Exploitation of Language

Riker observed that to the political challenger, the art of politics is to find some alternative to the current winner. This “art” is both possible

and necessary as a result of the potential disequilibrium that results from authoritative decisions made through a majority rule mechanism. Through the use of Arrow's Paradox we know that while decisions may be arrived at in a majority-rule society, they will under some conditions be unsatisfactory to the majority of participants, given that any alternative chosen is not the preferred outcome of a majority of the participants.³⁵ In issues that are considered trivial, this outcome would not produce a high degree of dissatisfaction, yet it is more likely in trivial issues that there will be unanimity as to the preferred alternative. According to Riker, most political choices involve issues that are "morally scarce," that is their results benefit some segment of society while punishing others. Therefore, given that a majority of participants in a society will generally be dissatisfied with the outcome of most nontrivial political decisions, "losers" seek to beat the current winning coalition through creating a new winner. In creating this new winner through the formation of a new coalition, the existing equilibrium is then displaced.³⁶

Certainly, it is possible to characterize the broad outline of Riker's argument in a purely opportunistic manner, where elites adopt any issue that may be available to either gain access to or maintain political power. However, the reality of his claim is subtler. Riker states that:

The outcome of efforts at manipulation is also conditioned by the external circumstances in which the manipulation occurs, the underlying values, the constitutional structure, and the state of technology and the economy. Numerous efforts are made at manipulation. Not all succeed. The choice of which ones do succeed is partially determined by these external circumstances.³⁷

Elsewhere, Riker suggests that outcomes are "of course, partially based on tastes because some person's tastes are embodied in outcomes." However, for Riker the critical question appears to be not the existence of these values or tastes, but rather "the ways (in which) the tastes and values are brought forward for consideration, eliminated, and finally selected . . ." Riker sees this process as heavily influenced by political institutions, and in particular, how political party elites shaped the selection of an issue.³⁸

Shifting the focus to language, contemporary sociolinguists and the occasional political scientist have problematized the claim that language policy outcomes are secondary to other goals held by

political elites. Cooper disagrees strongly with the prominent view of language planning espoused by Einar Haugen that language planning occurs "wherever there are language problems." Instead, he asserts that:

Language planning is typically carried out for the attainment of nonlinguistic ends such as consumer protection, scientific exchange, national integration, political control, economic development, the creation of new elites or the maintenance of old ones, the pacification or cooption of minority groups, and mass mobilization of national or political movements. In any war, one uses all the ammunition at hand.³⁹

Yet, despite Cooper's claim that "language planning is typically motivated by efforts to secure or maintain interests, material or nonmaterial or both," he places the argument in a broader framework and concedes ground to other forces. Among his concluding series of generalizations is this: "Language planning cannot be understood apart from its social context or apart from the history which produced that context."⁴⁰ In that sense, one might infer that Cooper also sees a place for values, tastes, and ideology in the language planning process.

Weinstein does not merely concede ground to other social forces; he considers them ultimately decisive. He notes that, "The masses have the last word, however, even though they are always subject to considerable manipulation by elites."⁴¹ For Weinstein, the question of whether a language policy succeeds is ultimately a question of whether there is resistance to it at the mass level. As I will show, the Norwegian case presents numerous examples where protests against policies were orchestrated at the mass level, yet the policies were implemented and remain on the books. Thus, at the very least, Weinstein's claim needs to be tempered by the reality of the Norwegian case.

Laitin claims that rulers of African states may be less interested in the building of nations than in the construction of states when engaging in the use of language policy. Implicit in this distinction is that the rulers of a given state use the symbols of a nation and certain ethnic groups, but do not do so primarily for the end of advancing the status of those symbols. Rather, the goal of the rulers is to employ the symbol of language for the ends of "maintaining order in society and extracting resources from society." Thus, to Laitin, language is also seen as ammunition, and in this case, the battle is "for the institution-

alized domination over society by a ruling cadre, otherwise known as state building."⁴²

In sum, the previous discussion forms the basis of the research hypothesis, which can now be stated more generally:

Hypothesis #1 Official support for a given language policy in bilingual/multilingual states varies with the extent to which political leaders believe language policy can be manipulated for their own political gain.

The Alternative Hypothesis: Pressure Group Activity

There is a considerable amount of literature dealing with Norwegian language policy. The largest portion of this literature has been produced by Norwegian sociolinguists and lexicographers. While producing a vast amount of material on the conflict, the general tone of this literature is descriptive in nature and does not explicitly deal with how the variations in Norwegian language policy came about. Ernst Håkon Jahr, for example, has contributed a large number of essays on all the periods of the conflict and the multitude of actors and institutions involved, yet he does not attempt to assess the relative impact of any particular set of events or circumstances.⁴³ Almendingen and Torp and Vikør are similar in that they present broad histories of the development of the Norwegian languages and the recent conflict, yet they do not view it as their task to offer explanations for the events they are describing.⁴⁴ Within this largely descriptive literature, however, is one chief theme that serves as the basis for my alternative research hypothesis.

Linguistic interest groups: A repeated theme of the literature surrounding the Norwegian language conflict, if in fact not the dominant theme, is that language pressure groups have played a key role in shaping language policy outcomes. Recent scholars of the Norwegian language conflict, such as Dalhaug, have devoted significant attention to *Fedraheimen*, a newspaper that in the decades prior to the establishment of parliamentary sovereignty agitated for increased use of Nynorsk in such arenas as education.⁴⁵ Also focusing on the period prior to the Norwegian parliament's attainment of sovereignty, Brunstad makes note of the establishment of the first two pro-Nynorsk linguistic

organizations, *Det Norske Samlaget* and the regional *Vestmannalaget*, both founded approximately twenty years before the 1884 legislation. Both organizations served the purpose of publishing books in the Nynorsk standard, and it is assumed that the dissemination of printed Nynorsk is a contributing factor to its growth in usage.⁴⁶

The bulk of the attention on the role of interest groups in the Norwegian language conflict, however, has centered around Noregs Mållag and Riksmålsforbundet. Lars S. Vikør, one of the top scholars researching the language question, provides one of the few English-language works on the Norwegian language conflict, explaining the history of the conflict in terms of *The New Norse Language Movement*.⁴⁷ Jahr points to the role of the East Norwegian movement of dialects as a contributing factor in the agitation supporting the orthographic reforms of 1917, and also the manner in which this dialect movement increased sensitivity for dialects that were not based on the rural western coastal area.⁴⁸

The role of Riksmål activists is also given attention in the accounts of the conflict. Jahr notes that the response to the 1917 orthographic reform was a 200,000 signature petition drive on the part of Bokmål organizations and a nationwide series of protest meetings to urge the repeal of the reforms.⁴⁹ Both Lien and Almenningen, in describing the events of the post-World War II years, state that the combined action of over eighty Bokmål organizations in school district language referenda was a factor in the decrease in the usage of Nynorsk among school children.⁵⁰ Finally, the classic work in the field is Haugen's *Language Conflict and Language Planning*. Haugen offers not only the most comprehensive history of the language question in the twentieth century, but in doing so, sketches the relationship between the various language pressure groups and changing government stances on what constitutes official Norwegian.⁵¹

Yet, the idea that policy outcomes are driven by competition among pressure groups, in an effort to persuade policymakers towards a desired outcome, is by no means unique to the Norwegian language question. Beginning from the observation that political science is "the study of how political preferences are formed and aggregated into policy outputs by governments," Baumgartner and Jones suggest that two "grand initiatives" have emerged within the discipline in an effort to understand how government does in fact aggregate preferences and develop policy.