This essay will answer the following question: **Use texts from the course to describe how imagined social construction about language, power and social positions are tied up with different kinds of imagined communities – and how such ties may present themselves in a context of cultural – and language – encounters**. This essay's point of departure will take place through the following bodies of literature: Benedict Anderson (1983), Anne H. Fabricius, Janus Mortensen and Hartmut Haberland (2017), Anne Holmen (2014), Christian Horst and Thomas Gitz-Johansen (2010), Ivan Manokha (2018), and Somdeep Sen (2020). First, I will discuss Anderson's concept of imagined communities and its relation to categorization and power. Furthermore, I will discuss how language is a barrier that separates communities and how English has become the standard, with an analysis of Holmen's (2014), Fabricius' (2017) and Horst's (2010) texts, through the case of higher education institutions excluding foreigners in Denmark. Subsequently, I will discuss the current context of technology and what power it has on users all over the world.

Anderson introduces the concept of "imagined communities" to define a nation, where *"(…) it is an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."* (Anderson, 1991, p. 6) and *"(…) it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."* (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). What this tells us is that there is a feeling of comradeship within nations, thus creating the categories of "us" and "them", which is why communities stick together and reject "the other". But is that the only reason why communities exclude people that do not look or sound like them?

The rise of print-capitalism started to shape the idea of one common thought. Book sellers were motivated by profit, so they only printed what they knew would sell and please the masses. *"(…) it was a great industry under the control of wealthy capitalists."* (Anderson, 1991, p. 38). Furthermore, as Anderson states, *"(…) capitalism and print created monoglot mass reading publics*." (Anderson, 1991, p. 43) and *"print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars."* (Anderson, 1991, p. 45). Therefore, they normalised one language and disregarded the rest. As this was happening, a new imagined community was created.

In this day and age this idea prevails; taking the case of students in Danish Higher Education as our point of departure, we can argue that this rejection comes from the institutions that try to maintain the hegemony. Holmen points out that *"native speaker norms seem to be taken for granted, without the communicative pragmatics of the lingua franca atmosphere and without the awareness that there are students in the classroom who need to develop language and content simultaneously. Both international*

students and domestic minority students mention that this learning environment is problematic." (Holmen, 2014, p. 21). Thus, bilingual students do not belong in the same imagined community as Danish students, and they are more likely to be treated differently. In order to fix this exclusion as well as to attract international students, Danish universities have decided to internationalise education, establishing English as the lingua franca. However, that can also be a problem, as *"internationalization often leads to linguistic uniformity, simply because English comes to be seen as a one-size-fits-all lingua franca, even when this is not necessarily so."* (Fabricius et. al, 2017, p. 11). This may be tied to Eurocentrism and the wish to make English thrive, while profiting off the attractiveness that this language has on international students. Subsequently, as we will soon see, institutions are meant to keep the hegemony and reject other ethnicities.

Authors Horst and Gitz-Johansen introduce the concept of "deprivation paradigm", where multicultural perspectives are excluded by blaming the academic underachievement on minority children and their families lacking cultural, social and linguistic resources, as they fail to live up to the standard imposed. *"This consensus has the function of protecting educational institutions and majority society as such from criticism, as the cause of the problems is located within the ethnic minority communities. This again provides legitimacy for political intervention directed at influencing and 'fixing' persons and families who are identified as members of ethnic minority groups. This may be characterized as a policy development which tends to regulate the social life and education of ethnic minority groups in a still more detailed manner."* (Horst and Gitz-Johansen, 2010, p. 147). The national culture represents the norm, and ethnic minorities are forced to live up to that, while completely disregarding their own culture. This idea is what Horst and Gitz-Johansen denominate "cultural deprivation". *"This constructs an asymmetric relation in which the voice and interests of ethnic minorities are disregarded, and thus the minority groups are not recognized as social and cultural identities in their own right."* (Horst and Gitz-Johansen, 2010, p.138). This way, society keeps a monocultural agenda that 1) maintains a hegemonic society with cultural norms that regulate inclusion and exclusion, and 2) blames the exclusion on the different ethnic groups themselves.

Taking Somdeep Sen's personal experiences as a case, we can see that racism is ingrained in the institutions. As he explains, systemic racism lies in more than just hateful comments. *"In fact, the academics that used these racial slurs would otherwise consider themselves to be critical or progressive scholars."* (Sen, 2020). However, their white privilege allows them to get away with offensive comments without anyone questioning them. Furthermore, there seems to be no active responses or solutions from the institution's part, as *"Academic institutions are intimately involved in the making of the hierarchies that inform the international political order."* (Sen, 2020)

Finally, we can look at imagined communities from the perspective of the digital age. What once was the impact of print media is what now is social media. The rise of technology and social media platforms has enabled a certain hegemonic discourse to be spread across the world and keep society's standards. Following Foucault's theory on the panopticon, author Manokha explores surveillance and self-discipline, and argues that *"(…) online social networks collapse diverse social contexts into one; as a result, in managing their online image, users tend to be subject to a 'lowest-common-denominator effect,' that is, they 'only post things they believe their broadest group of acquaintances will find non-offensive' (Marwick and boyd 2011: 11)"* (Manokha, 2018, p. 229). Thus, people in the digital age self-regulate and only post ideas they know their peers will agree with, which is what is known as the "chilling effect".

Furthermore, one issue that started around the rise of print-capitalism and that prevails today is profit. Advertisers are all over social media and look for the most convenient space to advertise. That is, not only the social media platform, but also the community they are addressing to, which is the same one they advertise in. Ultimately, what advertisers are trying to sell is whatever most people will like, which is why they collect all the data they can and sell it back in material form. We can see clear examples of this with the case of influencers, who act as authorities many people look up to and establish a standard to follow. Finally, these same influencers are the ones getting paid by companies to sell a product to their audiences, thus creating a perfect niche or imagined community.

In conclusion, we can see imagined communities everywhere and in our everyday life. Anderson's concept prevails today in institutions that try to maintain the hegemony and have one common thought thrive in a community, while disregarding others. These institutions are in a position of power and they have a say in establishing the norm the community is supposed to live up to. We can especially see how these communities come together with the barriers of language and race they have established. The most distinguished social position is Danes and foreigners, who not only have different languages as their mother tongues, but also look different, thus drawing a color line between imagined communities. Danish academia seems to be one of the places where this problem originates from, 1) using English as the vernacular and 2) excluding other ethnicities. The latter one brings us to reflect on how racism might be for the most part imagined for white people, who are privileged, but is very much a reality for people of color. Ultimately, we can draw on the idea of Foucault's panopticon in this day and age, with the social media very much contributing to maintain society the way it is, as well as acting like a place where users become self-disciplined out of fear of not fitting in and being excluded.

Bibliography:

Anderson, B. (1991 [1983]). "Imagined communities". London: Verso. ISBN 0-86091-546-8.

Fabricius, A., Mortensen, J. and Haberland, H. (2017). "The lure of internationalization: paradoxical discourses of transnational student mobility, linguistic diversity and cross-cultural exchange" March, Volume 73, Issue 4, pp 577–595.

Holmen, A. (2014). "Being Bilingual Means Being a Foreigner". Categorizing Linguistic Diversity among Students in Danish Higher Education, Hermes, 53: 11-24.

Horst, C., and Gitz-Johansen, T. (2010). "Education of ethnic minority children in Denmark: monocultural hegemony and counter positions", Intercultural Education, 21:2, 137-151, DOI: 10.1080/14675981003696271

Manokha, I. (2018). "Surveillance, Panopticism, and Self-Discipline in the Digital Age". Surveillance & Society 16(2): 219-237.

Sen, S. (2020). "Race, Racism and Academia: A View from Denmark" [online]. Guestblog in thedisorderofthings.com
https://thedisorderofthings.com/2020/09/29/race-racism-and-academia-a-view-from-denmark/
[accessed 17 November 2020].