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244. Language Maintenance and Reversing Language Shift
Spracherhalt und Umkehr von Sprachwechsel

1. Introduction

Judging from the titles of articles recently published, one has the impression that there may be some light at the end of the tunnel leading to the loss of minority languages (Jones 1998; Hinton 1998; Wurm 1999). This comes as a surprise since many researchers see little or no chance for the reversal of a language shift already underway. Edwards (1985, 98) writes that "we can […] regret the loss of *any* language but it is not at all certain that we can do more […]" and

Krauss (in Bereznak/Campbell 1996, 659) states that only 10 % of the currently existing languages are "'safe' from the danger of extinction." If one takes a more detailed look at the publications cited above, the hope of a massive reversal of language shift disappears rapidly. Jones (1998, 17) states that "the Welsh language now has a considerable degree of institutional and popular support which, despite continuing losses from among its native-speakers, make it legitimate to consider it an expanding language" and Wurm (1999, 170) writes that "today old and young Djabugay [a people in Queensland, Australia] use the language in everyday speech, at least key words and phrases." It is difficult to agree with these statements because it seems highly unlikely that Hebrew, the only confirmed case of language revival (Ferguson 1977, 19; Edwards 1985, 86; Bratt Paulston 1994, 93), was rescued by losing

"its native speakers" or its native speakers' indulging in the use of some "key words and phrases." Therefore, one may rather conclude that the optimistic opinions expressed by Hinton, Jones, and Wurm are exaggerations or that they define the concept *reversal* too loosely. Either way, the articles reflect the high degree of ideology involved in the discussion about the fate of minority languages (Edwards 1985, 52; Dorian 1994, 118f). On one side there are researchers advocating absolute pluralism who see in the existence of many different cultures and languages a positive value *per se* (Wurm, Dorian, and Fishman among others), and on the other side there are researchers, such as Edwards and Stein, who are satisfied with stating the facts and trying to explain them, mostly following Hall's *dictum* of "Leave your language alone!" In this article the positions of both sides will be presented by addressing the following questions: Why do speakers of minority languages stop using them, should minority languages be saved, and can minority languages be saved?

2.   Some preliminary remarks and definitions

2.1. The title of this article mentions *language maintenance* and *reversing language shift*, concepts which were introduced by two highly influential scholars in the field. Kloss (1966) was the first who tried to systematically categorize sociolinguistic factors as favorable or unfavorable for minority languages in order to explain their maintenance or loss (for a detailed discussion cf. Kaufmann 1997, chapter 2.1), while Fishman (1990; 1991a) coined the term *reversing language shift* and introduced a scheme which he calls "the eight stage analysis of and prescription for RLS [reversing language shift]" (Fishman 1990, 16). In this scheme Fishman gives a detailed sequence of steps to be followed in order to reverse language shift. The first four stages (Fishman 1990, 18–22) which Fishman regards as "particularly urgent and germane" (1990, 19) only affect the life of the ethnic group in question. The stages are the linguistic reassembly of its language-model (stage 8), the use of the language among the elderly population in public events, rituals, courses, etc. (stage 7), the transition of the language into the real, natural, and daily life of the whole community (stage 6), and the introduction

of formal (written) varieties (stage 5; cf. section 5.4). With the achievement of these stages such a language can be successfully maintained in a diglossic situation. If the efforts of the ethnic group on behalf of its language transcend its group boundaries, the symbolic position of its language can be further improved. Fishman (1990, 22) cautions, however, against a premature transition because this might increase the chances of negative reactions by the affected majority group. These four stages (Fishman 1990, 23–26) refer to the role of the language in school (stage 4; cf. section 5.3.), in the worksphere (stage 3), in lower governmental services offered to the public and local mass media (stage 2), and the upper reaches of education, media, and government operations (stage 1). Fishman stresses repeatedly that all these intergroup efforts must be linked to stage 6, the most important one, because without such a link they would hardly have any positive effect. The most important asset of Fishman's scheme is that he proposes a concept under which one can convincingly subsume the large number of terms such as *language revival*, *language revitalization*, and *language maintenance*, which are assiduously distinguished by others (Hornberger/King 1996, 428; Bratt Paulston 1994, chapter 7). *Language revival* could be seen as reversing a language shift which has been completed, *language revitalization* as reversing a language shift which is well advanced, and *language maintenance* as reversing a language shift which has just begun. Fishman's concept has the advantage of stressing the similarities of the processes and avoiding being too specific about questions which are hard to answer or irrelevant with regard to the process as such, for example, was Hebrew a dead language and had to be revived or is the existence of a written form and some very few native speakers enough to call it a case of revitalization? For Fishman, language revival starts with stage 8 and language revitalization with stages 7 or 6 depending on the degree of language shift which has already occurred.

A distinction which has to be made is whether one talks about restoring a spoken language or creating a written form for an exclusively oral language (Fishman 1985, 69). Creating a written form may enhance the chances for the survival of a language in the modern literate world and can be done by some interested non-linguists with the

help of linguists. Restoring the spoken form of a language is a much more challenging task. Here, it is not just the question whether the community members will accept a (new) medium of literacy but whether they are interested in maintaining their linguistic heritage at all.

2.2. In this article a *minority language* is defined as a language (which might or might not exist in other parts of the world) of an ethnic group (indigenous or immigrant) whose speakers are in direct and frequent contact with a (normally) different ethnic group which is more numerous and more powerful and whose members speak a different language.

It is justifiable to add the attribute *minority* to the concept *language*, which appears in the title, simply because majority groups are normally not in danger of losing their language in contact situations. A *minority community* can be defined in two ways, either with regard to the number of members or with regard to the power they have (Haugen 1980, 100). The most typical minority communities are the ones which are neither powerful nor numerous and run by far the highest risk of losing their language. This is true for almost all indigenous peoples in Australia, North and South America as well as for most immigrants around the world. If one only considers small and powerless communities the number of apparently successful cases of reversing language shift is drastically reduced, because it is arguable whether frequently cited cases like Catalan, French in Quebec or German in Southern Tyrol can be considered as languages of minority communities. Firstly, in all these cases the ethnic groups involved may be in a numerical minority situation with regard to the whole country but not with regard to their region (Edwards 1992, 39; Eichinger 1996, 249, 252; but cf. Dorian 1998, 13/footnote 8); and it seems that relative numbers are more important for language maintenance than absolute ones (Simpson 1980, 236f). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because of their political and economic situation these communities are not really powerless in relation to the respective majority groups (Hamel 1997, 121 for Quebec and Catalonia).

With respect to *language* there are two points which need to be discussed. Firstly, there is the question whether one should differentiate between an indigenous language and the language of an immigrant group. From a sociological point of view such a difference does not seem justifiable because the minority situation of such groups is not always influenced by the question whether or not they recently migrated into the region (Fase et al. 1992, 7; Edwards 1992, 41). However, it seems that, from a sociolinguistic point of view, immigrant languages disappear faster than indigenous languages in comparable situations (Lieberson 1980, 24), perhaps because of the different attitudes of immigrants. They cannot claim that their language is the original language of the region and, for the most part, they have chosen to come into contact with another group and its language voluntarily. On the other hand immigrants may find positive support for their language in their country of origin (Dauenhauer/Dauenhauer 1998, 94). The existence of their languages in other parts of the world is the reason why some researchers would completely exclude immigrant languages from this discussion (Fasold 1984, 213f) because German, for example, will not be lost when some German-speaking immigrants stop using it. It may, however, be more appropriate to adopt the point of view of the speech community involved. It is of no interest to an immigrant group that German as a worldwide phenomenon will not disappear if they stop using it because the structure of language shift and the concomitant feelings of the speakers do not normally depend on the question whether or not their language is spoken in another part of the world. The second point is whether one should include the fate of dialects which are in direct contact with a more prestigious standard variety of the same language. There are two reasons to exclude a shift away from a dialect in a dialect-with-standard situation as one may find them in countries like Germany, Spain, or Great Britain. Firstly, the use of dialects in these countries is regionally and socially determined, rather than ethnically and, secondly, the result of the linguistic contact is quite different. Dialects seem to be more resistant than ethnic minority languages. Whether this is the consequence of mutual intelligibility, of a stronger covert prestige or of the fact that these varieties are normally spoken by many people and do not therefore qualify as minority languages, is an interesting question which deserves further investigation.

3. Why do speakers of minority languages stop using them?

McConvell (1991, 144) writes that "if we have wrong ideas about how and why people change from one language to another, we are not likely to find the right ways of stopping or reversing the process." An example of such an incorrect idea is the conviction that speakers of minority languages are always forced to give up their languages. Although there have been many cases involving overt pressure by majority members or government institutions (e. g. Gaelic in Scotland, German in Canada during World War I, German in Brazil during World War II, Kurdish in Turkey, indigenous languages in El Salvador), there is an equal number of cases where overt pressure has not been a factor in language loss (Fishman 1966, 30; Edwards 1985, 54; Dorian 1994, 118). It often seems to be the individual's free decision to use or not to use his language and to transmit or not to transmit it to his children which is responsible for language shift. However, the lack of visible suppression does not necessarily mean that there are no circumstances which strongly favor the use of a more prestigious language. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985, 185) state that "it may well be that our apparent freedom to 'choose' is so powerfully constrained by universal social and psychological factors […] that it is no real freedom," and Edwards (1985, 48) supports this view by writing that "in cases in which it seems that groups have shifted voluntarily, there are often elements of coercion." Examples of such elements are restricted access to power and economic success for speakers of a minority language which most of them are not willing to forsake in favor of their language. Considering this, one has to approach with caution some of Fishman's earlier observations about language shift. He wrote, for example, that the "linguistic facility and interest of immigrants steadily diminishes or atrophies once they have consciously or unconsciously accepted the American dream" and that linguistic attrition is caused, among other things, by "apathy" (Fishman 1966, 30). People struggling to establish themselves in a society from which they are separated by a different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background might simply not have the time, the money, and the power to pay the price for maintaining their language, which for minority communities almost always means maintaining bilingualism (Haugen 1980, 114). The idea of a language as a national resource as claimed by Fishman (1966, chapter 14), Hornberger and King (1996, 428), and Hamel (1997, 108) may simply lie outside the vital interests of minority language speakers.

The mostly positive attitude speakers of minority languages hold toward their language (Fishman 1966, 397; Hornberger/King 1996, 431f) is a clear indication that the loss of a minority language is far from being simply a sin of conscious omission. In spite of these positive attitudes, members of a minority community may decide not to teach their language to their children (Fishman/Nahirny 1966, 103; Huffines 1991, 44). In order to comprehend this apparent contradiction it is important to understand that they do not stop transmitting their language because they do not like it, but because they want themselves and their children to have a better chance in life (Edwards 1985, 50). The result of such individual reasoning is often the disappearance of the language. Keller would describe language shift, as he describes language change, as a phenomenon of the third kind (*"Phänomen der dritten Art"*, i. e. neither a natural phenomenon nor an artifact). He writes: *"Ein Phänomen der dritten Art ist die kausale Konsequenz einer Vielzahl individueller intentionaler Handlungen, die mindestens partiell ähnlichen Intentionen dienen"* (Keller 1994, 92). The individual intentional actions which Keller mentions are the decisions of members of a minority community to give their children a better chance in life by using the prestigious majority language at home; the unintended consequence of this is the loss of the minority language because the children are not sufficiently exposed to it. Fasold (1984, 239), too, writes that "language maintenance and shift are the long-term, collective consequences of consistent patterns of language choice." Thus language loss may be described as an unwanted epiphenomenon of a benevolent and sound behavior. Adam Smith called explanations of such phenomena *invisible hand explanations* because everybody has an individual intention but the collective outcome, be it negative or positive, was nobody's intention and therefore it is hard to hold someone responsible for it. This is the main argument against reproaches such as lack of "linguistic interest" or "apathy."

Ryan (1979, 155) writes that "low-prestige speech varieties persist basically because the speakers do not want to give them up." This seems to be correct but in many cases the reverse is not true, low-prestige ethnic languages do not disappear because their speakers want to give them up.

4. Should minority languages be saved?

Wurm (1999, 163) writes that the loss of languages is a "sad fact." All linguists will probably agree with that, but the question is whether they should interfere in such processes. Very often it only seems to be possible to reverse a language shift if one neglects the whole process of modernization and therefore the suggestions made by advocates of reversing language shift are frequently of a somewhat doubtful nature. Sometimes one has the impression that they bewail the "lack of strong inhibition to marrying outside the ethnic group" (Smolicz 1992, 300; cf. also Bratt Paulston 1994, 102) and they seem to be in favor of "physical and ideological separation, in order to guarantee continuity of language and culture" (Peltz 1991, 202 about Fishman; cf. also Fishman in Edwards 1985, 96). They also blame radio and television programs in the majority language because they "exacerbate the present condition of constant exposure to English [the majority language in California]" (Hinton 1998, 85). What they sometimes seem to forget is that contact between different ethnic groups in a world full of wars and racism is a very positive thing and that there should be no obstacles whatsoever for interethnic marriages in an openminded society. It is also definitely better to have much information in a majority language than little or no information in a minority language. The regrettable loss of languages might be the price we have to pay for a modern and more united world. Admittedly, it is mostly weak groups which have to pay this price but this is not new. It makes no sense to use television, airplanes, and the internet and at the same time lament the loss of cultural and linguistic diversity because this is just the other side of the coin (section 5.1.). If groups like the Old Order Mennonites or Ultra-Orthodox Jews decide to practice isolation, one has to accept this but one should not promote it. Most of the supporters of reversing language shift are

aware of the somewhat awkward situation they are in. Fishman's acknowledgment that "every people must have the right to reject its past" (1966, 389) and that "all should be free, of course, to choose and fashion their own continuity or discontinuity" (1999, 451) accompany his whole academic career. Bratt Paulston (1994, 9), too, writes that one must face the fact that "ethnic groups within a modern nationstate […] typically shift to the language of the dominant group," although one may not like this fact.

Because of the complex situation in which one finds minority communities and their languages, the attempt to reverse language shift is a tricky one, and overly simplistic efforts are much criticized. Lopez (1991, 136) writes that maintaining a minority language might be "the most effective way to keep minorities under control, and easier to exploit," and Edwards (1985, 95) regards the interest of outsiders in maintaining a language in many cases as "patronizing and naive." What follows from all this is that linguists should be precise and thorough in describing and explaining the processes of language loss and language maintenance (e. g. the approaches of Edwards 1992; Kaufmann 1997) but very careful in judging these processes; and they should only intervene if there is a strong wish for reversing a language shift among the majority of the members of an ethnic minority group, especially among the younger members. This wish should plainly surpass the mere existence of positive feelings toward the language. It is pretty clear that the ethnic revival in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s would not qualify as an indicator of such a strong wish (Fishman 1985, 506–508). Linguists should also always be aware of their role as outsiders because as Fennel (1980, 39) writes, "a shrinking language minority cannot be saved by the actions of wellwishers who do not belong to the minority in question" (cf. also Dorian 1998, 21).

5. Can minority languages be saved?

5.1. Fishman (1996, 905) writes that "language reinforcement is, essentially, a wellnigh revolutionary reconstitution of society and, indeed, without such a reconstitution they [language reinforcement efforts] cannot succeed." That this is indeed so, can be demonstrated by Fishman's comparison of 13 communities where language reinforcement

efforts take place. In table 2 (1991b, 291) which uses the scheme of the eight stage analysis presented in section 2.1. one can see that only four communities have completely mastered the pivotal stage 6, guaranteeing the usage of their ethnic language in real, natural, and daily communication. But the status of these languages is not representative of typical minority languages. Two of them are not being included here because of the number and power of their speakers (Catalan and French in Quebec) and the other two have very uncommon histories (Yiddish of Ultra-Orthodox Jews and Hebrew in Palestine). The nine languages which have not mastered, or not completely mastered, stage 6 are all clear cases of minority languages (Puerto Rican Spanish in New York City, Navajo, Australian Immigrant languages, Frisian, Basque, selected aboriginal languages of Australia, Yiddish of secular Jews, Irish, and Maori in New Zealand). This clearly shows the grim reality for any attempt to reverse language shift. The reason for this is precisely the complex social texture in which language is just one component. Just intervening on behalf of language is therefore mostly a fruitless effort. This applies to many of the attempts of introducing minority languages in schools and creating written forms for exclusively oral languages (sections 5.3. and 5.4.). If one accepts language shift as a phenomenon of the third kind (section 3), one has to accept the fact that the only possible way for planning – as Fishman states – is to change the ecological conditions of language use (Keller 1994, 128 f). Almost all of these conditions are of a non-linguistic nature. They are mostly power-relations and market-relations and it is interesting to note that most researchers seem to be aware of this (Edwards 1985, 64), which does not keep some of them from planning changes exclusively connected to language. They may be trapped by a "decontextualized, structuralist view of language" and may "lack a differentiated insight into the discursive and linguistic complexity of language-conflict situations," as Hamel (1997, 107) states. He describes three different levels in such situations, namely "cultural patterns and models," "discourse structures," and "linguistic codes and structures" (Hamel 1997, 111). With regard to a majority language, all three levels are in harmony because they share the same cultural and linguistic source. In a con-

flict situation, especially the first two levels of a minority language may be strongly influenced by the dominant society, leaving the minority linguistic codes and structures suspended in mid-air (Hamel 1997, 113; cf. also Smolicz 1992, 279). This could explain the apparent speed with which some groups shift from one language to another. The process is a much slower one but most of it is not as easily visible as the shift of the linguistic codes and structures, which appears to happen very fast when analyzed in isolation (cf. also Dorian 1994, 116). Hamel's conclusion is that "linguistic rights cannot be defended in isolation since language or speech as such cannot be protected directly." He hopes that it is possible to protect "the social conditions of production and reception of speech and of a cultural mode of symbolic (re)production" (Hamel 1997, 122). Whether such a protection can be achieved in a peaceful way is very doubtful (Fishman 1996, 905; Bratt Paulston 1994, 87). The armed uprising of the indigenous population in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994 is a clear attempt to gain control over one's own way of life in a situation where minorities are exocategorized (Skutnabb-Kangas 1999, 45).

The basic problem may simply be the fact that capitalism does not, and cannot, respect much cultural and linguistic diversity because progress – the inevitable engine of capitalism – destroys the cultural and geographical space necessary for the survival of minority cultures and languages. With regard to products, progress means constantly developing new technologies which, like airplanes, television, and the internet, increase the spread of mainstream cultural values and thus diminish the cultural space for indigenous communities. With regard to the market, progress means, among other things, gaining new trade regions thus destroying local economic rules. Once these rules do not any longer function the indigenous people are forced to adopt the foreign economic system which they often consider to be better instead of simply considering it as more aggressive and mostly less sustainable. It is this feeling of inferiority which leads to the process of language shift described in section 3. To alter this feeling a "revolutionary reconstitution" really seems to be necessary.

5.2. The measures taken by language planners who want to help minority communities to save their linguistic heritage ap-

pear somewhat disproportionate in the face of these complex interactions. They normally do not have the power to change the ecological conditions and even if they do, their measures are mostly not very successful. The fact that the Irish government has given so much support to the Irish language with so little success is an interesting example (Dorian 1987, 66; Edwards 1985, 65), especially if one considers that there is not even an ethnic difference between the Irish-speaking minority and the English-speaking majority. The goal of the Irish government was precisely to alter the ecological conditions by removing "the pressures in favor of English which were exerted by the schools and the administrative system," and by improving "the standard of living and the economic conditions of the Gaeltacht" (Government report from 1926, in Fennel 1980, 33). But most of these measures, such as giving money to families whose children still spoke Irish, were of an artificial nature and were not really supported by the speakers of Irish. Keller (1994, 129) states: *"Jeder sprachliche Prozeß geht den langen Marsch durch das Handeln der Individuen",* which means that one can intend to change the ecological conditions to a certain point but one cannot plan the individual's reaction to such changes.

This is another problem for the reversal of language shift. Fishman (1991b, 290) regards the chances of rational planning in the "home-family-neighborhood life" as "sparse indeed," and Fasold (1984, 260) writes that "the usual language planning methods are not particularly likely to influence speakers' linguistic practices in unmonitored language use – unless they are designed to support the direction in which natural social forces are moving anyway" (cf. also Bratt Paulston 1992, 74). The natural social forces in the contact of a powerful and numerous majority group with a powerless and small minority group will, however, rarely go in the direction of the minority group's way of life. Thus the problem is that it is almost impossible to influence the linguistic behavior of individuals outside official institutions where this would be most important because the natural way of minority language transmission is through the parents, especially if both are able to speak the language. All one can do is to state the fact that most of them will not, or cannot, do this (section 3; Kattenbusch 1996, 323;

Dauenhauer/Dauenhauer 1998, 69). Fishman (1990, 21) is well aware of this and writes that "if this stage [stage 6: family-, neighborhood-, and community-reinforcement] is not satisfied, all else can amount to little more than biding time." Due to the fact that there is so little one can do about this stage, most researchers concentrate on spheres where they can implement some measures and where planning is adequate, such as the introduction of minority languages in schools and the creation of written forms for them.

5.3. It is quite understandable in the light of the problems with regard to the planning of unmonitored linguistic behavior that the school as a possible stronghold for minority languages has gained such a prominent position in research. At the same time this is somewhat surprising because everybody agrees that the school alone will never save a minority language (Fishman/Nahirny 1966, 123; Ferguson 1977, 12; Edwards 1985, 75; Fishman 1990, 23f). It seems that teaching in a majority language or ousting minority languages from school is a much more severe blow to minority language maintenance than the (re)introduction of a minority language into school is an asset to the reversal of language shift. This is an interesting parallel to language attitudes. Negative attitudes of minority members toward their language will hasten its disappearance whereas positive attitudes are not enough to save it (section 3). It is definitely important to grant minority languages a place in schools because this may bolster the self-confidence of minority members by improving the prestige of their language, but linguists and minority language speakers should not overestimate the effect of this measure. In order to reach such positive goals the position of the minority language in schools must surpass that of just another school subject. If the status of an ethnic mother tongue is that of any other foreign language in the regular curriculum, and if it is taught only on a basis of one to three hours per week (Fishman/Nahirny 1966, 118; Niedzielski 1992, 378), its effect will be close to zero. Even if minority languages serve as a medium for instruction, everything depends on the question whether such a program is assimilative, i.e., the language only plays this role during a transition period until the students can be taught in the majority language, or whether the goal is pluriculturalism and plurilingual-

ism that "not only recognizes cultural diversity but assesses it positively" (Hamel 1997, 108). Skutnabb-Kangas (1999, 43) states that the schools which use minority languages to ease the final cultural and linguistic assimilation of the minority children are still the most common model and that such models "violate linguistic and cultural human rights" (cf. also Dauenhauer/Dauenhauer 1998, 66). In such schools the minority language is only maintained for a certain time on the superficial level of linguistic codes and structures whereas the cultural patterns and models and the discourse structures are provided by the majority culture. This can only be changed if the majority group is willing to give the minority group the "right to define and control their own culture-based education" (Hamel 1997, 117). In the case of Chiapas mentioned in section 5.1. one does not have the impression that this is the goal of the Mexican government.

5.4. Up to this point one may have gained the impression that all minority communities live in linguistic situations where their minority language serves as an L-variety and the allochthonous majority language as an H-variety but the situation can be much more complex. The Mennonites in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, for example, use Low German in their informal intraethnic contacts, High German in formal intraethnic contacts as in school (reading and writing) and for administrative and religious purposes, and Portuguese for all interethnic contacts. This clear-cut polyglossic situation is about to collapse since the younger members of the community have introduced Portuguese in intraethnic contacts. Ongoing work by Kaufmann indicates that they have already significantly lower indices for competence and usage in both German varieties. In view of this, an interesting discussion within the community has begun. The question seems to be which of the German varieties should be maintained, because the Mennonites feel that the cost of maintaining a trilingual situation is too high – especially because Low and High German are linguistically very different. There is no clear-cut consensus, though. In a questionnaire on language preferences 19 out of 33 informants selected High German as the most important local language as opposed to only 7 who selected Low German (13 selected Portuguese; multiple answers were possible) reflecting the overt prestige of High German.

But Low German was selected by 23 Mennonites as their favorite language as opposed to only 8 who selected High German (12 selected Portuguese) reflecting the covert prestige Low German enjoys. Only 3 informants selected High German as being both the most important language and their favorite one, while 4 exclusively selected Low German, and 6 Portuguese. Fourteen informants, however, selected one German variety as the most important language and the other German variety as their favorite language and *vice versa*. This shows that it will be very difficult to reach a consensus among the Mennonites, but without such a consensus the necessary planning for a bilingual or trilingual future will be almost impossible. For most Mennonites it seems it would be strange to use High German for informal conversation but it would be equally strange to lose it because it has the prestige of a full-fledged language, a prestige which Low German lacks. But despite this apparent vote for two German varieties both give way to Portuguese among the younger Mennonites.

The fact that a minority community possesses a prestigious written variety of its own language does not seem to guarantee its survival, and other minority languages survive without their speakers ever striving to create a written version of their language, as in the case of Pennsylvania German of the Old Order Amish (Johnson-Weiner 1992, 27 f). Nevertheless, creating a written, standardized, variety is another important point in language planning for minority languages. Fishman (1985, 69) describes it "almost as a moral imperative and as a strain toward closure, toward completion" (cf. also Fishman 1990, 21 f), and Grenoble/Whaley (1998, 31) write that "literacy is generally agreed to play a significant role in speech communities and in the relative vitality of threatened languages." Again, developing a written variety can be a very useful thing if this counts with substantial support from within the minority community, and is a pre-requisite if such a group wants to introduce its language in school or in other formal settings. But there are several points one should keep in mind. With regard to immigrant languages there is always the danger of further feeding the minority speakers' frequent self-consciousness with regard to the 'grammaticality' of their non-standard variety once it comes in direct contact with the standard variety. An example for this is the situation in Louisiana

where Louisiana French has a "'double' minority status […] not only in relation to English, but also to other varieties of French" (Brown 1993, 68; cf. also Hayden 1966, 203; Fasold 1984, 241). The introduction of International French in 1968 made the community members think that "their mother tongue is incorrect and inappropriate" and "this instruction has not helped the children to communicate with their grandparents" (Brown 1993, 77). This means that International French was learned as any other foreign language because it could not be used within the community. In the 1990s immersion programs were introduced which were "tailored to the local varieties" (Brown 1993, 78). The advantage of this is that it is more appropriate within the community, but on the other hand the students will not have the advantage of learning an international language and there will be much less reading material available. The case of indigenous minority languages is somewhat different because the challenge here is mostly the unification of different dialects. The best possible result would be a norm that is "nobody's speech, but everybody's language" (Haugen 1980, 109) but this goal is not always reached. It is quite understandable that one wants to avoid a further fragmentation of an already small linguistic community such as Basque or Romansh (cf. also Posner 1993, 54), but again the consequence is that a foreign or artificial variety is introduced. The danger is the same as with immigrant languages, "the introduction of nonlocal norms only has the effect of reminding local speakers of just how deviant their own everyday speech is" (Dorian 1987, 59; cf. also Edwards 1985, 64; Jones 1998, 358). Therefore, the art of the business is to find or create a variety which is linguistically close enough in order not to alienate community members and which at the same time has, or will gain, enough prestige to improve the situation of the minority language. A final point which one should not forget is mentioned by the Scollons (in Dauenhauer/ Dauenhauer 1998, 88) who argue that "literacy in general […] is perceived by traditional Native people as a non-Native phenomenon so that non-literacy or resistance to literacy becomes part of the Native 'badge of ethnicity'." The same might be true for the introduction of the school system of Western societies in indigenous communities (section 5.3.).

6.   Some final remarks

This article might give a somewhat gloomy prognosis for any attempt at reversing language shift but this is simply the consequence of assuming the point of view of the participants in language shift, the speakers of minority languages. As long as more and more non-English speaking linguists publish in English in order to reach a wider audience one should understand minority language speakers who prefer a majority language out of pragmatic or economic reasons. It also sounds somewhat far-fetched if linguists want to maintain a language in order for "humanity" not to lose "what the language could have contributed to general knowledge of human language, culture and thought" (Bereznak/Campbell 1996, 659; cf. also Wurm 1999, 163). The only ones who really lose something are the speakers of the language and they should not just be seen as interesting objects awaiting possible further research.

The socio-psychological conditions to maintain a minority language seem to be either the existence of what Mattheier (1994, 335) calls a *"Sprachinselmentalität"*, a strong drive against complete assimilation as one finds it among the Old Order Amish, or "a (strong) sense of nationalism" as one finds it among some indigenous groups (Bratt Paulston 1994, 77). Both motivations lead to ethnic, cultural or religious boundary maintenance which seems to be necessary for minority language maintenance but is bound to cause certain conflicts with the majority group involved. Because of this interaction it is imperative to include the majority group in any work connected to minority languages, be it descriptive (Kaufmann 1997, chapter 5) or part of a language planning activity (Hamel 1997, 127). Only if one has a profound knowledge of the complex interactions and fears on both sides of the ethnic group contact can one minimize the risk of conflicts and at the same time help the weaker minority community to maintain its cultural and linguistic heritage – if they choose to do so. It is at this point that linguists can be of some help to both the minority and the majority group. They can explain the process of language shift to minority language speakers and can show them that minority language transmission is an active process and not something which is going to happen anyway. In this context approaches such as

the ones by Fishman (1990; 1991a), Edwards (1992), and Kaufmann (1997) are of the utmost importance. Linguists can also assist minority language speakers in the creation of written varieties (Kattenbusch 1996, 330) and the introduction of minority languages in schools (Gleich 1991; Hornberger/King 1996). With regard to the majority group they can promote a positive attitude of majority members toward the minority culture and language and advise politicians in their actions. This is extremely important because it is the politicians who take the important decisions (Edwards 1985, 89).

One final question is whether one should favor individual or group rights in a contact situation. Hamel (1997, 123) writes that the "individual's freedom of choice [...] normally favors the dominant cultures and languages" (cf. also Bratt Paulston 1994, 88f), and with regard to minority languages he favors collective linguistic rights (Hamel 1997, 126f). The problem here is that nobody should question the individual's freedom of choice (section 4) – Edwards (1985, 106) affirms that "an important and positive modern social development has been the organisation of societies based upon individual citizenship." Nevertheless, it may be necessary to grant minority communities some special group rights without impinging on their members' individual rights. Mackey (in Stein 1990, 411) states this dilemma in the following way: "If language [and culture] is the property of the group, bilingualism [and biculturalism] is the property of the individual." With regard to reversing language shift one could translate this into: Every minority member must have the right to leave his group or stop using his ethnic language, but the group must have the right and the possibility to make its culture and its language as attractive as possible.

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245. Language Revival / Sprachwiederbelebung

1. Definitions

"Language Revival" is now a commonly used term in the disciplines of Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Applied Linguistics/Language Planning, and the like. The term *language revival* (Sprachwiederbelebung) may be somewhat ambiguous. In the literature, both complete revival and partial revival are often interchanged with such terms as *language restoration, renaissance, rebirth, resurrection, reintroduction, reestablishment, revitalization and reactivation*. Some scholars, however, are unhappy with such broad application, and would prefer to limit it to instances of complete revival of totally "dead" languages.

Strictly speaking, there is no documented case of a successful overall "revival", or resurrection, of an extinct ancient language (such as Hittite, Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic), i.e., that a language that was totally dead for all forms of communication (oral and written, vernacular and literary), was subsequently resurrected and readopted (and readapted), on a regular basis, as a normal "living" tongue by any speech community. In fact, there do not appear to be even "partial" resurrections of such dead languages, e.g., to merely a spoken vernacular, or merely to being a *productive* literary written language (resembling the status of Latin in the Middle Ages among the Christians in Western and Central Europe; or Greek among the Eastern Europe Orthodox Christians, or Old Church Slavonic; or Classical Arabic among the Moslems; or Sanskrit in India. Even the much celebrated case of the "revival" of the Cornish language (which died in the 18th century) is still closer to dream than reality. The same applies to other Celtic languages.

The use of the term *language revival* may thus be inappropriate, or imprecise, for cases where only a certain domain of the language (e.g., literary writing; or, conversely, the spoken counterpart) fell into disuse for a period of time, and is now being revitalized – i.e., for anything short of a *full* revival. Nonetheless, in view of its common acceptance, and for lack of a better term, the popular term *language revival* will be used in this article for such cases as well.

In this article, *language revival* will refer to the positive, successful and sustained reactivation (renaissance) and revitalization (including modernization) not only of an entire dead language, but also to that of a hitherto defunct, or altogether missing, *major component* (such as the prestigious literary-written part, or of the "common" spoken oral/vernacular part) of a language. What should be pointed out from the outset is that the revitalization process, especially in the revival of the "spoken language"/vernacular counterpart, will inevitably involve both linguistic and socio-linguistic adaptations of the historical language (through both planned and unplanned developments) to the changing needs and circumstances of