Agency in the Peripheries of Language Revitalisation

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Agency in the Peripheries of Language Revitalisation

Examining European Practices on the Ground

Edited by
Mary S. Linn and
Alejandro Dayán-Fernández

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This book is dedicated to our friend, colleague and mentor Misty (Alexandra) Jaffe.

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Manuela Pellegrino holds a PhD in Anthropology from University College of London. Since 2006, her research among Griko speakers and activists in Grecìa Salentina (Apulia) and supporters in Greece has formed the basis of her PhD thesis and resultant publications, culminating in her monograph *Greek Language, Italian Landscape: Griko and the Re-storying of a Linguistic Minority*. Manuela currently collaborates with the University of Southern Denmark. She previously was a Fellow at the Centre for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University and she lectured in anthropology at Brunel University London. Manuela composes polyphonic poems in Griko as a method of writing ethnographically about the past and present of this language. Her work reflects a longstanding interest as she comes originally from Zollino, a Griko-speaking village.

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Lena Terhart's research interests include linguistic typology and the sociolinguistics of minoritised languages. She has been working with small languages of South America and Europe since 2008. In 2021, she obtained her PhD from the University of Flensburg with a descriptive grammar of Paunaka, a language from the Bolivian lowlands. She was part of the SMiLE research team on North Frisian and has been working on different aspects of the North Frisian language ever since, including sociolinguistic topics, language documentation and grammatical description. She is currently employed at the Nordfriisk Instituut in Bräist/Bredstedt.

Preface and Acknowledgements

The research presented in this volume draws directly from a set of case studies of European language revitalisation generated through the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH). In 2015, CFCH received a generous award from Swedish-based Ferring Pharmaceuticals to conduct a five-year research project on language revitalisation in Europe. Ferring Pharmaceuticals has a long record of funding tangible and intangible cultural heritage projects around the world. At CFCH, this relationship began with support for the 2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival programme *One World, Many Voices*, curated by folklorist Marjorie Hunt and linguist K. David Harrison. As a research centre of the Smithsonian Institution, CFCH's work focuses on living cultural heritage, its diversity and sustainability. While its major public-facing outputs are the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival and Folkways Recordings, CFCH is committed to research and promotion of Indigenous and minoritised languages. Their vitality underpins cultural sustainability, and their use is a basic human right.

The project funding focused on the creation of a set of ethnographic case studies. Case studies were foundational to language revitalisation theory and practice, illustrating problems and potential solutions. Most early collections of case studies focus on how programmes got started or how they deal with one aspect of revitalisation, such as policy or pedagogy. A few are more ethnographic, focusing on one language community, and though these dig deeper into motivations and problems, they do not always cover the same issues and thus do not lend themselves easily to comparisons. While creating new case studies is not the priority for language revitalisation today, I felt that a set of new case studies focusing on how initiatives and programmes in 'middle years' overcome persistent and shared challenges in language revitalisation could be revealing. The usefulness of case studies is not in producing generalisable knowledge immediately, though this can be an outcome over time. But because language revitalisation is community-driven and responsive to local traditions and concerns, they provide insight into a variety of ways others have worked through common problems, and readers can see what might work for

them in their situations. I also knew that a persistent question by those working in language revitalisation is how other programmes get more people interested and motivated long term. So, I wanted to include questions that delve into motivations, specifically how programmes take individual motivations (such as wanting to learn traditional music or craft forms, talking with grandparents or being part of counter-culture art scene) or current popular motivations (such as local-food resurgence, sports or making and sharing smartphone videos) and build larger, community-wide engagement and identity with the language.

It should be noted that the original grant title was Sustaining Minority Languages in Europe, and we were using the acronym SMiLE. This acronym is the same as the research project Support for Minority Languages of Europe (SMiLE) headed by François Grin and Tom Moring. They investigated the 'protection and promotion' in policy, planning and economic support by the European Union for regional minority languages and made policy recommendations. Their finding that the 'desire' to use a minoritised language is a prerequisite for successful revitalisation bolsters our investigations into motivations and drive (see (https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/Smile_report_2002_Final.pdf for the full report). I talked with Grin in 2017, and he felt that the research scope was sufficiently different, and with enough time between the two projects, so we continue to use the acronym. CFCH ended up changing the word 'minority' to 'minoritised' to reflect that the CFCH SMiLE project does not include immigrant minority languages. The term also underscores the power imbalances that cause languages to become a minority language in their own communities, and much of the project is about how people gain back control over these forces.

In order to consider sustainability and growth in language revitalisation programmes over time, we focused the case studies on Europe. In general, European language programmes have been in existence for longer periods of time than other areas, and some have continued in various forms for over 100 years. Programmes with longevity provided the possibility of institutional memory about ups and downs in the programmes, with internal records or published data that could aid in the investigation. In addition, and often an outcome of longevity, research teams could include academic researchers from the community. I felt it was essential to involve community researchers in building the case studies to obtain a deeper understanding of decision-making processes and community attitudes, and this approach is in line with CFCH's commitment to collaborative research and representation.

Limiting the case studies to one area also had some advantages for making comparisons. While Europe is internally diverse, the European Union has relatively robust legal frameworks behind the protection of minority languages. In addition, they experienced many common cultural, political and economic events, such as post-WW2 reconstruction,

the establishment of the EU, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, and the Great Recession. Clearly, each has unique histories. Sorbian was part of the former Soviet sphere, Galician under Franco's 40-year dictatorship, and the Occitan subject to a highly centralised and homogenising Jacobinist French republic. Reactions to these specific periods, events and institutions have continuing ramifications for language revitalisation, as shown in their chapters here, and offer lessons to us all.

In early 2016, I invited my colleagues Lenore Grenoble, Alexandra (Misty) Jaffe and Keren Rice to CFCH, and along with Michael Mason and Robert Leopold from CFCH, we began discussing topics and questions that could be included in targeted case studies. Since none of us besides Jaffe had our main research in Europe, we wanted input from European colleagues. So CFCH partnered M. Carme Junyent and Montserrat Cortès-Colomé of the Grup d'Estudi de Llengües Amenaçades and invited 25 European specialists to a workshop at the University of Barcelona. After the workshop, I expanded and formalised the advisory board from the initial group named above to include Nils Ølvind Helander, Carme Junyent and Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin. The advisory board put in untold hours and care with the case study teams and me in all stages of this project. And importantly, Anne Pedersen facilitated our travel and workshops as the project coordinator and administrative assistant.

In 2017, we put out a call for this rather unique research project. The call was for Smithsonian Fellows to engage in collaborative research to produce a case study over 18 months. Since we were looking for people who had already established relations with the source community, we encouraged the case studies to be done while continuing any long-term research or language projects. The 18 months also included an initial meeting, a mid-project workshop, and a final workshop, with the other groups and the advisory board. At these workshops (hosted at the University of Barcelona, the University of Galway and the University of Glasgow) we discussed the intention behind the research questions, issues in answering the questions and the emergent findings from the case studies. So, by 'collaborative' we were asking for the researchers to collaborate with CFCH and the advisory board, their source communities and each other.

The board received 23 viable applications, and from these, six research teams were awarded. The selections were based on several criteria. The first criteria were based on merit of the proposal and the researchers' established connections with the source community. Each research team was headed by two to three Smithsonian Fellows, whom we called the principal researchers (PRs). Most PRs hired a larger team made up of local language activists, new speakers and graduate students to aid in setting up community meetings, conducting interviews and transcribing them. The

other criteria were based on the source community. There needed to be some programmatic history and continuity of active revitalisation. We also looked across the applicants to make sure that we had a balanced geographical and language spread.

The case studies cover several types and sizes of language efforts and source communities. Two study sites were programmes in grassroots organisations: Semente in Galicia, Spain (Bernadette O'Rourke and Marcos López Pena, PRs, with Alejandro Dayán-Fernández Co-Investigator), and Oidhreacht Corca Dhuibhne in County Kerry, Ireland (Cassie Smith-Christmas and Orlaith Ruiséal, PRs). Three sites look at small language communities in their traditional heartland areas. These three also have internal comparisons: Greko and Griko, two Hellenic languages and communities in Italy (M. Olimpia Squillaci and Manuela Pellegrino, PRs, respectively); the Upper and Lower Sorbian communities in Lusatia, Germany (Cordula Ratajczak and Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska, PRs); and North Frisian with different dialects spoken on the islands and mainland in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany (Nils Larsen, Femmy Admiraal and Lena Terhart, PRs). One case study situates the history of Occitan language revitalisation through a political lens of the newly formed Occitanie administrative area in France, and then focuses on current Occitan activities in and around the Toulouse area (Sara Brennan and James Costa, PRs). I consider myself fortunate, indeed, to have gotten to work with, learn from and laugh with this talented group, and to be welcomed into each of their communities.

In January 2018, the PRs began their fieldwork using the research questions as a guide. The first set of questions were used to build a more traditional profile of the community or programme and to provide an historical perspective on language revitalisation issues, initiatives and responses to internal and external major events in their area. The rest of the questions were designed to examine common themes across revitalisation contexts: language ideologies – how persistent and new language ideologies affect motivations and efforts, and how programmes build on (or resist) them; lifelong learning – what the motivations and opportunities are and how these affect patterns in intergenerational transmission and lifelong learning, especially the interplay between social processes and individual motivations; policy and economics – what policy and economic support is available, how it effects in valorisation and/or commodification of language and efforts and how it is harnessed on the local level; and responding to the new – language use in new domains, with new modes of transmission, with new and emerging speakers and how issues of authenticity and authority that arise are resolved. A final set of questions provides an opportunity to present and discuss issues and needs that were overlooked in the questions but are of importance to the case study site. The research questions are available and still useful for academic inquiry into community-based language revitalisation, and for the communities

and projects looking at them for assessment questions of their own programmes, and perhaps individuals involved in language revitalisation who want to use them in self-reflection.

In the end, the CFCH SMiLE project produced seven, open access case studies, as the Greko and Griko research team had enough information to create separate case studies. The case studies follow the same format along the research question. This helps in comparing the answers to specific questions across the various studies. The case studies can be retrieved at https://smithsonian.figshare.com/collections/Sustaining_Minoritized_Languages_in_Europe_SMiLE/6280911/5. Copies of primary research materials associated with the case studies are deposited in the Social Sciences and Humanities data station at Data Archiving and Network Services (DANS), the Dutch national centre for research data repositories (https://dans.knaw.nl/en/data-stations/social-sciences-and-humanities/). More information about each case study, the research questions, a 2020 Impact Report and a complete list of publications, conference talks, theses and dissertations from the teams during the research period are available online (https://folklife.si.edu/smile).

At our last project workshop, we decided to look more closely at who the major players are in each of these case studies and how they gain, keep or leverage agency in their language goals. We gave an initial set of papers on this topic as a panel entitled, 'Who saves threatened languages? Examining agency at the periphery of language revitalization' at the conference *Conventional and Unconventional Ways of Transmitting and Revitalizing Minoritized Languages in European Context and Beyond,* in September 2021, Warsaw, Poland (online). Michael Hornsby was the discussant for this panel, and he provided invaluable insight for us as we moved the papers towards this publication. Finally, I am thankful to Alejandro Dáyan-Fernández for taking up my offer to co-edit this volume, even as he was completing his dissertation, and contributing his valuable insights and knowledge.

The strength of the CFCH SMiLE case studies is the teams' access to people working in language revitalisation and maintenance, directly and in the peripheries. While the case studies are within European contexts, the issues and questions are universal, the strategies for gaining agency are replicable, and the insights are transportable to other language revitalisation and maintenance efforts. Beyond the composed research questions, they provide baseline data of language revitalisation efforts in the early-mid 21st century years after. They illustrate how youth, individual language learners, educational motivators, activists and grassroots organisations are affecting larger social issues when they place language at the core. They also provide new analyses of how efforts and programmes, groups and communities, and institutions gain and lose agency in contexts of language oppression, conflict and minoritisation, from within and from external forces. In doing so, they reveal how

community-driven efforts not only survive and grow, but how they gain control – or agency – over the future of their languages.

Mary S. Linn
Washington, D.C.
September 2023

Introduction: Sustaining Minoritised Languages in Europe: An Agentive Perspective on Social Actors and Language Revitalisation

Mary S. Linn and Alejandro Dáyan-Fernández

Joshua Fishman's pivotal 1991 book *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* was instrumental in instigating systematic and theoretical studies of language shift, vitality indicators and approaches to language revitalisation. Welcoming the critique that ensued, and being aware of changes in the work to reverse language shift in his case study communities and around the world, a decade later he published its follow-up, where he posed the titular question: *Can threatened languages be saved?* At the time of publication, Fishman (2001: 478) felt it was too early to truly answer this question but that many more languages could be saved than thought in the past. We recognise that the fundamental power imbalances that marginalise groups and cause language shift persist today. But like Fishman, we feel we can offer a positive yet measured 'yes' to this question.

This volume re-examines Fishman's 2001 titular question from the position of agency. Put in parallel language: Who 'saves' threatened languages, or at least, who is working to reverse language shift? Who are the social actors, both human and, perhaps, institutional, today? What are their goals in becoming actors in revitalisation and maintenance? How do they operationalise motives and navigate problematic issues, not only on a local level but also as players in larger social movements? How do actors become empowered in this continual negotiation of conflicts, from inside and from outside, in the forms of policy, attitudes and beliefs concerning language, economic highs and lows, historical forces and power imbalances?

We situate these questions in the context of peripheries. Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes (2013) address the notion of periphery in connection to multilingualism, and how our understandings of multilingualism are configured and our actions (often subconsciously) dictated by specific centre-periphery narratives, such as language (centre) versus dialect (periphery) or global versus local. Yet, centres and peripheries change, and these dynamics are continuously contested and negotiated by stakeholders (Pietikäinen *et al.*, 2016). Through the lens of language revitalisation, we move away from the centre as constructed by top-down institutional models towards agents of contestation which are rapidly changing as the people involved in language revitalisation and their motivations evolve.[1]

We have seen that new generations of speakers can be produced through dedicated advocacy and changes in language policy. Well-studied grassroots immersion nests and state-level immersion schools, such as for Welsh, Irish, Basque, Māori and Hawaiian have shown that this is possible. These programmes have provided models for communities wanting to reclaim control of their children's education, in both language and sociocultural development. Similarly, the revival of languages with no first-language speakers, starting from archival documentation with dedicated families and moving into community awareness and revival, such as Wâpanâak and Myaamia in the US, emphasise the long-term processes in language planning, community-building and vigilance required. These give many of the smallest and dormant, or sleeping, languages much-needed hope (Hinson, 2019). And new approaches – such as mentor–apprentice and guided learning (Hinton, 2011a) and policy changes (even if symbolic, see Linn & Oberly, 2016) – such as Peru's 2011 recognition of all their Indigenous languages – contribute methodologically and holistically to language vitality and provide necessary boosts in the still-overwhelming task of reversing language shift.

A positive factor for minoritised languages is that the concept of language revitalisation has been normalised in most areas of the world. Younger generations have grown up conscious of language shift: whether they choose to take up the cause or not by becoming new speakers, or using their language in daily life, or becoming language practitioners or advocates. Having lived with how language shift affects them personally, their families, or groups and communities that they identify with, most have internalised, or been actively building, the valorisation of language that is often a response to language shift, and needed to reverse that shift. This underlying incremental appreciation of the minoritised language is providing a seismic shift in language attitudes.

Today, a growing majority of Indigenous and minoritised language advocates and practitioners – such as teachers, programme directors, activists and academics – are new speakers (O'Rourke *et al.*, 2015) or active learners of their languages. In many areas of Europe, North America and Australia, they have never heard or use these languages in

everyday life. In addition, urbanisation, mobility and the break-down of traditional economic systems have left gaps in the cultural ecosystems associated with the languages. We have to ask: What happens to revitalisation when intergenerational transmission has ceased? What happens if language revitalisation can no longer be based in the traditional speech communities and identities?

The Peripheries as Centre

Language revitalisation has become embedded in, and often drives, local concerns and iterations of larger sociopolitical processes. In some contexts, it is a key pillar of wider social movements (Costa, 2017). These movements include Indigenous artistic, cultural and intellectual resurgence, issues of cultural ownership and intellectual property rights; health and wellness, traditional health, ceremonialism and religious resurgence; environmentalism, land rights and climate change; cooperativism and anti-capitalism; feminism and LGBTQ+ rights, and political sovereignty. As a consequence, language revitalisation is less about language itself, or not at all (Costa, 2017), and more about social transformation (see Leonard, 2017; Roche, 2018, 2022). This has changed who, why, where and how language revitalisation is enacted, replacing the emphasis on top-down approaches with bottom-up approaches. What was once considered central to language revitalisation – language planning, policy and governmental support, and institutionalisation – is being replaced by what was once more peripheral – the local and its micro-level approaches driven by grassroots community actors who are more and more new speakers.

The reorientation from language-centred approaches to social mediation can be seen clearly in the changing definition and terminology associated with revitalisation. Fishman's (1991, 2001) early term 'reversing language shift' entailed language planning from both the top down and bottom up, including: corpus, status, prestige and educational planning. The goal was to create new generations of speakers and reach a stage where the language can ultimately sustain itself through intergenerational transmission. To do this, he pointed out that institutional frameworks should offer support. Fishman (2001: 21) states that one of the reasons language revitalisation is so hard is the constant need for social actors to 'simultaneously reinforce [regained language functions] from both "below" and "above" in terms of power considerations'. While we recognise these struggles continue in most efforts today, the power is shifting. Language revitalisation is a long-term process made up of many small, incremental goals towards renewal and while daily language use and maintenance are the ultimate objectives, practitioners – especially those in small language communities – are aware that local attitudes may impede language work and must be factored in. Feeling impotent in the face of revitalisation as the 'recovery, recreation and retention of a

complete way of life' (Fishman, 2001: 452), and often at odds with the notion of recreating an older way of life and modernity, many language revitalisation practitioners eschew larger institutional models and encumbered histories to concentrate on single, family and local domains they inhabit and can have control over.

Reflecting this reality on the ground, McCarty *et al.* (2019) define language revitalisation as 'activities designed to cultivate new speakers in situations in which intergenerational transmission has been severely disrupted' (2019: 3, based on Hinton, 2011b). Activities need not be solely focused on language learning, and cultivation does not entail an immediate goal of creating new generations of speakers. These activities are often aimed at long-term community (re)building and healing from the intergenerational trauma that is a result of the violent disruptions that cause language shift. In these contexts, social actors are prioritising building capacity and opportunity (Grin *et al.*, 2003). Thus, language revitalisation is about community (re)building, healing and wellness (see Davis, 2008; Jacob, 2013).

Myaamia linguist and activist Wesley Leonard (2012) pushes even further from the centre of language revitalisation, and in doing so adopts the term 'language reclamation' to differentiate the two. Acknowledging the fact that for Indigenous and minoritised communities, revitalisation must start with reclaiming *rights* taken from them, reclamation, instead, must be initiated and determined by community agents and be situated in community histories and contemporary needs (2012: 359). Language reclamation strategies, then, are local, place-specific actions by individuals and/or groups, and the motivation is not language, but to counter historical and ongoing minoritisation (De Korne & Leonard, 2017: 5). Leonard (2017: 20) rejects the Western academic notion that 'language' is an object that can be studied and extracted from noting that this is not only incompatible with Indigenous worldviews but also detrimental to revitalisation approaches as it perpetuates colonial hierarchies that oppress people.

Whether or not any group can truly free themselves of the Western notion of language is not at issue here (see Costa, 2019, and this volume). What is important is that language *reclamation* has radically repositioned the centre: reclamation is not the purview of linguists, who have focused primarily on language documentation and the mechanics of language loss, or of sociolinguists and bilingual education/second language acquisition specialists, who focus on language policy and classroom learning approaches and methods. It may not even be the purview of language practitioners teaching and advocating for language on the ground. Instead, it is in the hands of anyone who engages with reclamation, and the potential and future members of this group is expanding. And what, if not speaking the language, motivates them to act? 'When language is "pretty much everything"', Leonard (2017: 24) concludes, 'it ensues that the

responsibility of people who engage with it will be high'. Yet, as we see throughout this volume and in cases everywhere, the feeling of responsibility for reclamation, and the actual responsibility for revitalising, often lies with individuals and groups who do not necessarily have the power.

Many communities in Europe are engaged in language reclamation, such as the Galician grassroots organisation Semente and the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht on the peninsula in the west of County Kerry, Ireland, represented in this volume. However, unless we clearly distinguish reclamation as communities and activities embedded in opposing larger issues of historical repression and power imbalances in late capitalism, we use the term revitalisation to cover the wide variety of European efforts represented in this volume.

Definitions of community have always been problematic, but they have evolved to include much more freedom for social actors to engage in language matters. Early definitions of the 'speech community' rely on having a shared language, shared norms of use and shared attitudes and beliefs about language and language use (e.g. Bloomfield, 1933; Hymes, 1972). Yet, anyone on the front lines of language work understands that community-wide shared beliefs and attitudes about language rarely exist nor are attainable, especially when there are varying degrees of competency (Dorian, 1982). This is a major conundrum: community is no longer seen as having the same beliefs, attitudes or goals for language, but community building is seen as central to the cause (Costa, 2013). Revitalisation entails a conscious, organised and internal attempt to revive or reinvent customs, institutions, knowledge and/or worldview, but whose idea of community will be (re)built and by whom are heavily contested (see Costa, 2017). In language revitalisation, these issues include whose language, especially in situations of standardisation and who can be considered speakers of the language (Lane *et al.*, 2018). All language revitalisation efforts wrestle continuously with these questions. In all of the chapters here, we see social actors grappling with these issues.

Turning away from an encompassing, ideal or imagined community, Morgan (2014) defines a speech community as any group where shared ideology, identity and agency are actualised in society (see Noyes, 1995, on groups; Costa, 2017, on groupness; Anderson, 1983, on imagined communities). This definition allows for the diversity of attitudes, beliefs and goals found in community-wide or traditional place-based communities, and provides a flexible notion of community as groups reflect the possibility (and reality) of membership in more than one group, and the continual process of forming new (and loosing old) groups with societal trends. However, this definition still relies on shared speech and speech norms. In highly endangered and dormant language contexts, community members may not be speakers of the language they identify with or form around. 'Speech' communities may include or be made up of former speakers, semi-speakers, new speakers, descendants of speakers, learners, managers

and even advocates who may not intend to learn the language (Sallabank, 2013: 11–13).

We use the term 'language community' instead of 'speech community' in the revitalisation context, to distinguish any self-identifying group with shared language ideology and identity, but not necessarily speaking the target language. In other words, they are a community of practice, sharing concern or passion for their language and regularly working to improve their own or others' ability to identify with and/or use the language (see Wenger, 1999). Language communities can be regions, tribes and villages, but also grassroots organisations (Semente, Chapter 2), family groups (Tús Maith, Chapter 1), adult learners who create spaces to practise their language (the café La Topina in Chapter 6), religious or ceremonial organisations (Upper Sorbian, Chapter 3), groups centred on reclaiming traditional arts and lifeways (such as music, knitting, boat-building or herding), social media groups that share updates infused with language learning and use across diasporic and fractured societies. The diversity of groups reflects the varying motivations people have for being involved in revitalisation, and conversely, group membership undoubtedly spurs motivation. They also have an accumulative effect of creating readiness for language if not places to use minoritised languages. In the chapters that follow, we see a variety of ways language communities identify and find places and means to actualise their goals.

While all communities are located in specific places (including virtual) and histories, the reorientation of language communities from the more traditionally central state-level and community-wide identities to the peripheral local, group and family identities has several consequences. First, younger generations have become active in language learning and reclamation without waiting for community consensus on issues of what will be taught, how and by whom. As we will see, some groups are formed in order to create safe places for language experimentation. Second, language communities are local, but not necessarily rural. Groups can be in urban settings, virtual and youth-driven. This is helping to de-link heritage language use with parochialism and backwardness, and revitalisation efforts as anti-modern (Fishman, 2001: 21). This trend has been strengthened with the larger 'buy local' movement, which valorises local food products, cuisines and arts. Vestiges of negative connotation of 'patois' or 'backwards' languages persist, such as the Occitan example in Chapter 6, and must be actively combatted in some areas. Simultaneously, minoritised languages and their localness are more and more integral to processes of language commodification (Brennan, 2018) while also gaining traction among local movements. Finally, language communities may be local, but not necessarily traditional. Urban new speakers are often not tied to ancestral place and heritage, but place and belonging are still a motivating factor in community building and reclamation (Ó hIfearnáin, 2018). Whereas none of the chapters deal directly with urban versus

ancestral place, the Galician and Occitan chapters illustrate urban language communities' differing understandings of place, while the North Frisian chapter touches on the dissociation of language identity with ethnic identity.

Language planning has always been core to language revitalisation. Yet, we are also witnessing a shift to peripheries here. In Spolsky's 2004 model of language policy, he proposed three independent but interconnected components: language practices, language beliefs or ideologies and language management. Language managers are those individuals, groups, or institutions who set out to modify the language practices and beliefs of members of the community. His revision in 2019 admits that much of the work on language policy has failed, mainly because the focus has been on centralised planning via institutions and governments and not enough on individuals and group management. To strengthen the model, he proposes adding advocates as managers. He distinguished advocates from activists, stating that while language activists have gained some degree of power to enact change, advocates are 'individuals or groups who lack the authority of managers but still wish to change its [language] practices' (2019: 326). Both are dedicated to creating positive change in their community and the world, but activists take direct, often vigorous, action to instigate broader social or political change (Combs & Penfield, 2012).

This is an important addition and distinction for language revitalisation. First, it recognises this formerly peripheral group, whose support may be seen as necessary for language efforts, but not as important as activists and/or as authoritative as other managers. We argue, however, that advocacy is cumulative, collective and ultimately agentive. Advocacy allows for a greater and more diverse participation and therefore recognises the community in community-building and revitalisation. Second, the distinction between activists and advocates can have real-world consequences. Several of the case studies here are about language activism intended to disrupt social order, and people who identify as language activists, such as the Semente grassroots organisation and its members or the Occitan language movement. In some parts of the world the label of activist can be controversial, or even dangerous. The Upper and Lower Sorbian, the Griko and the North Frisian chapters point out the problematic social ties to historical or current extremism, political and religious differences, or undue authority, when labelling people as activists or language efforts with activism. So, language advocacy can be a safer or more comfortable alternative for some. We postulate that the social praxes that are described in this volume can be seen as cases of language activism which bring 'issues of language policy into focus, often right at the crosshairs of community tensions' (Combs & Penfield, 2012: 467), as well as a form of advocacy articulated in favour of 'revival or spread of a threatened target language' (Spolsky, 2009: 4). Some of these language activism forms entail a 'social project that aims to counter language-related inequalities,

and may encompass many different actors, imaginaries, and actions' (De Korne, 2021: 1), addressing not only linguistic inequalities *per se* but also forms of political, economic and social forms of disparity where linguistic discrimination takes preponderance (2021: 2).

Once seen as not directly contributing to language acquisition and thus marginal to revitalisation, social actors in the periphery are central to the revitalisation and sustainability of minoritised languages. The different case studies explored in this volume offer a plethora of centre-periphery dynamics which are formulated differently depending on the specific communities of practice at hand. While conceiving minoritised languages as being in a perpetual peripheral position is only a matter of perspective and not a clear-cut assertion (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2013: 6), the language communities in our case studies present a diverse history of institutionalisation (or lack thereof) as well as differing levels of legal protection and support in their respective polities. However, while some of the language communities discussed in this volume may have gained a certain level of political, institutional, social or economic power in their autochthonous territories, our case studies demonstrate that the reality of speakers on the ground remains more precarious than it might be assumed from an outsider perspective. Nevertheless, the periphery has acquired new values of authenticity in late capitalism that have opened up new economies of language for minoritised communities through tourism for example (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2013: 7). While in some cases previously minoritised language communities may have attained a relative degree of centre-like dynamics in their relevant linguistic markets (Bourdieu, 1991), the commodification of these language communities' authenticity can turn them into static folkloric entities, often to speakers' detriment, by limiting their cultural and linguistic possibilities of being without essentialising constraints (Jaffe, 2019; Pietikäinen *et al.*, 2016). Thus, the fluid nature of centre-periphery dynamics must always be taken in account. On this note, the next section provides a theoretical lens on the nature of agency in language revitalisation.

On Agency

Studies on language revitalisation and/or reclamation often refer to issues that indirectly consider communities' agency without sufficiently examining and defining the concept in revitalisation contexts. Indeed, the question of agency as a point of theoretical centrality remains underexplored and, often, similarly to other disciplines, insufficiently clarified (Ahearn, 2001, 2010). This volume aims to shed some light on what it means to exert agency at different societal levels in contexts of ethnolinguistic minoritisation from the perspective of speakers and their multilayered and scaled practices on the ground. Thus, rather than focusing

on the circumstances leading to the differing issues of minoritisation that communities have faced, the volume elucidates key agentive practices that either respond to or enter into dialogue with both exogenous and endogenous dynamics of minoritisation in complicated ways across space and time.

Agency is commonly used synonymously with action, and in fact is most often defined as the capacity to act or exert power. Numerous investigations examining transformative actions have proliferated in various academic fields postulating that our capacity to act can either replicate or unsettle the structural conditions affecting action (Ahearn, 2001: 110). For the purpose of this volume, we narrow our scope of agency to social theory within the fields of language revitalisation and language reclamation. Agency is here understood broadly, as multi-layered, polycentric, socio culturally mediated, and ultimately a manifestation of collective steps taken by differing entities (be it individuals, families, groups, communities, etc.) towards enacting ideas of how to transform the realities of language communities in conflict (whether effectively implemented or not and regardless of how much counter-structuration these practices may attain).

Defining agency is an intricate endeavour which partly depends on how one envisages ideas of agency in the first place (Ahearn, 2001: 114–120). Indeed, notions of agency may be different across societies and may entail differing understandings of how personhood and casualty are interwoven with agentive dynamics (Ahearn, 2010: 30). Agency has often been uncritically formulated merely as free will, a notion primarily articulated by action theory (Davidson, 1980 [1971]); Rovane, 1998; Segal, 1991; Taylor, 1985). Notions of free will, however, have faced the dilemma of whether agency is preceded by or complemented with other elements such as intention, motivation, or the self. Associating agency with free will dismisses the rife repercussions of the social world on individuals' actions. Thus, agency has also been conceived as resistance, entailing some form of confrontation with the status quo. However, as Ahearn (2001) points out, scholars should refrain from romanticising resistance, for oppositional agency only makes up one of the several layers in which agency can manifest in social life (Ahearn, 2010: 30). The absence of agency has also been part of the conversation, particularly in relation to whether Foucault's theory of power (1977, 1978) leaves room to entertain the idea of agency at all. On the one hand, Foucault's formulations of power have been noted as entailing insufficient leeway for human agency to take place (Bartky, 1995; Hoy, 1986). On the other hand, Foucault's concept of power has also been argued as a mobile, relational and changing force which allows for limitations to, but still the possibilities of, action (Halperin, 1995; O'Hara, 1992). All of these different understandings of agency ultimately indicate that scholars ought to reflect on unproblematic assumptions made 'about personhood, desire, and intentionality' that might creep into their

examinations, as well as readily avoiding conflating agency with free will or resistance alone (Ahearn, 2001: 130–131).

From the angle of practice theory, which fundamentally looks at the relationship between structure and individual(s) agency, the nature of agency is a push and pull. Thus, social structure determines or constrains the individual and collective ability to act (Bourdieu, 1991; Giddens, 1979, 1984). Bourdieu's 'habitus' encapsulates the forces of societal structure as a 'mechanism that operates from within agents, though it is neither strictly individual nor in itself fully determinate of conduct' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 18). It is a 'socialized subjectivity' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 126) made up of durable dispositions that are imbued with our corporeal being throughout an individual's life (Bourdieu, 1991: 13). In its strictest formulations, the theory leaves us with no understanding of how social change occurs (Sewell, 1992; Woolard, 1985). Indeed, the notion of habitus poses a serious challenge to our understanding of free will (Ahearn, 2010: 32). However, this rigid understanding of structuration has been challenged. For example, in the context of sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological work, the structural elements of Bourdieu's (1991, 1977) theory of linguistic markets have been heavily critiqued. The supposed homogeneity of the markets whereby language varieties are assumed to be valued in relation to the institutionally legitimised form has been challenged by arguing the possibility of more flexibly conceived markets where alternative forms of language are produced to subvert ethnolinguistic hegemony (Woolard, 1985). The idea that markets do not account for change or that scarce leeway for resistance in the linguistic market is accorded to social agents has also been put forward (Martin-Jones, 2007; Stroud, 2002; Swigart, 2001; Urla *et al.*, 2017; among others). By pointing to the locally nuanced nature of the value of language, these critiques underscore the importance of ethnographic research to understand the complexity of linguistic valorisation processes themselves (Del Percio, 2016), particularly relevant to the realm of social structuration and our capacity to contest it. In relation to notions of contestation, De Certeau's (1984) 'Practice of Everyday Life' focuses on 'microprocesses of resistance' which delve into ordinary people's actions, describing the turnings and moves that individuals' implement in trying to disrupt the constraints deployed by the established order (Ahearn, 2001: 119). Similarly, James Scott's (1985, 1990) tactics of resistance reminds us of how the oppressed counter act processes such as colonialism, patriarchy and diverse forms of individual or collective subjugation. Anthropological works on practice theory have also highlighted the importance of agency for social transformation by looking closely at historical processes and the role played by agency and its unintended consequences (Ortner, 1989; Sahlins, 1981). The task still remains, however, for an agency articulated as practice theory, to resolve the conundrum of how social reproduction becomes social transformation.

Dialogic approaches have offered a pertinent framework to further nuance our understanding of agency. Rooted in authors such as Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1993), Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and Holland *et al*. (1998), the dialogic angle highlights that structure emerges through situated action, rather than action reflecting an a priori structure (Ahearn, 2001: 128). Agency could also be interpreted from the perspective of meta-discourse, that is, how social actors talk about agency which Ahearn (2010: 41) calls 'meta-agentive discourse', drawing mostly on Silverstein (1976, 1985, 2001) and Spitulnik (2001). Moreover, from the angle of language as a form of social action, agency can be studied as part of wider socio historical processes such as the semiotic processes that Gal and Irvine (2019) have so sophisticatedly described. From a strictly linguistic anthropological perspective, agency has also been discussed in relation to language itself. Duranti (2003) sees agency as the intertwining of two basic aspects of linguistic agency: (1) performance, understood as the 'coming into being' and therefore enactment of agency in linguistic terms (i.e. ego-affirming, greeting as recognition and speech acts) and (2) encoding, or 'how human action is depicted through linguistic means' (e.g. grammatically, syntactically, morphologically, etc.) (2003: 468–469). From a semiotic perspective in linguistic anthropology, Parish and Hall (2021) define agency as the 'capacity for socially meaningful action' (2021: 1). Their view draws significantly on 'sociocultural linguistics, in that identity, theorised as an interactional accomplishment, relies on one's capacity for social action' (2021: 2, drawing on Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and very much captures the perspective of agency that has been operationalised throughout the volume.

Noting the significant weight of the problematics around structure and agency in social theory, Archer (2003) has postulated that neither determinism nor conditioning are satisfactory to resolve the conundrum surrounding debates about agency. While individuals' actions are shaped by structural and cultural constraints, Archer (2003) argues that via inner dialogue as a form of internal conversation (which she claims to be the neglecting link between society and the individual), social actors can exert reflexivity about their circumstances and act upon them based on what they care about most and their very own concerns, impacting on whether resulting praxes either perpetuate or challenge the status quo. In a similar light, sociologists Emirbayer and Mische (1998) have postulated that agency theorisation has remained extremely unidimensional and that other aspects of the human experience across space and time must be brought to the fore. According to them, agency is a 'process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its "iterational" or habitual aspect) but also oriented towards the future (as a "projective" capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as a "practical-evaluative" capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 962). By

foregrounding that different agents react differently to situated macro and micro power structures within peculiar historical contexts, Emirbayer and Mische indicate that 'in examining changes in agentic orientation, we can gain crucial analytical leverage for charting varying degrees of manoeuvrability, inventiveness and reflective choice shown by social actors in relation to the constraining and enabling contexts of action' (1998: 964). Thus, sketching out the workings of agency, the interplay of three factors in human agency should be identified at a given time and space: habit, imagination and judgement (1998: 970). Iteration is understood as the reappropriations of past lived experiences and resulting reflections by actors to sustain present self-identificatory practices over time (1998: 971); projectivity entails the creative delineation of possible futures by reconfiguring desires (1998: 971); and practical evaluation refers to actor's ability to reassess the possibilities of action in response to changing circumstances (1998: 971). Thus, by realising their capacity to reverse subjectivities of linguistic dispossession, minoritised ethnolinguistic communities develop spaces of meaningful action linked to past lived experiences, projected alternatively in the present and reconsidered to live out possible futures of linguistic reconnection.

From the perspective of linguistic and social anthropology, the notion of agents can be framed from different angles and indeed different kinds of agents may be at play in social life phenomena (Kockelman, 2017). Owing to the collective nature of language revitalisation movements, it is important to recognise as Enfield (2017a) indicates, the 'multiple distinct and scalar components of agency' and 'its central status in human sociality' (2017a: 4). Enfield (2017a: 7) understands agency as the 'relation between a person and a course of action and its effects'. Further noting that agents have a certain leeway or flexibility in what their meaningful behaviour can entail, Enfield (2017a) points out that this flexibility is made up of a certain level of 'controlling' the intended behaviour at a specific place and time, 'composing' the behaviour for a particular purpose, and 'subprehending' how the behaviour might be perceived by others (2017a: 5). By contrast, Enfield (2017a: 7) also indicates that agents are faced with accountability by virtue of being 'evaluated' (by others), 'entitled' (invoking a right to do the behaviour), and 'obligated' (recognising a duty to undertake the behaviour) by the circumstances in which their action takes place. Enfield (2017b) notes that while some agency theorisations place its conceptualisation on the individual, agency is in fact a collective endeavour that is 'radically distributed' (2017b: 9) across social units with which agents interact in ever-changing ways, defining social relations (2017b: 14). Delineating these various agentive layers has proven helpful, if not essential, to understanding the diverse manifestations of agency in connection to power considerations from both above and below, and across space and time, that can be observed in the realm of language revitalisation and reclamation.

A contemporary focus on agency seems somewhat pertinent at a time where language as both an object of study and of use in social life has come under considerable scrutiny, with calls for a shift towards a more speaker(s)-centred sociolinguistics (Pujolar & O'Rourke, 2022). Contemporary (critical) sociolinguistics has been devoted to deconstructing rigid notions of speakerhood that had pervaded academic metalinguistic discourse for decades such as the notion of native speaker, languages as compartmentalised entities, the territoriality principle, or essentialising notions of authenticity. Key scholars in deconstructivist and post-structuralist critique have posited that named languages are sociopolitical constructs and should be 'disinvented', while also calling for a rethinking of the fields of multilingualism and language rights (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Pennycook, 2006), focusing on the fluid notions of languaging and translanguaging rather than perpetuating the separation of language practices any further (García & Li, 2014; Otheguy *et al*., 2015). While such deconstruction of language has led to some innovative approaches in reformulating language issues today, the ontological and epistemological implications of adopting a languaging perspective have been construed by scholars such as MacSwan (2017, 2022) as potentially counterproductive to the whole enterprise of multilingualism studies which, as other empirically-rooted disciplines, requires a certain level of reductive categorisations for scientific enquiry purposes. The dismissal of how 'language rights' have been constructed as allegedly reifying linguistic practices and excluding speakers who do not fit linguistic compartmentalisations or even the need to have 'named languages' at all (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) seems particularly problematic, not only because it undermines the hard-won gains that minoritised language speakers have attained through advocacy processes, but also because it seems counter-intuitive if we take into account that minoritised language communities need their languages counted so their existence can be recognised and their collective right-based claims be made within the legal and political structures available to them.

Indeed, while much effort has been put on deconstructing minority language movements' demands for recognition often to their detriment by accusing them of utilising their peripheral position to vindicate exclusionary nationalist agendas similar to the oppressive nation-state ideologies they sought to escape (see Costa, 2017; Duchêne & Heller, 2007; Pennycook, 2016), Wiley (2022) has pointed out that such critiques undermine the progressive politics that are behind most of language rights' movements, particularly in minority language contexts. Indeed, much needed attention has been diverted from the still overwhelming ordeals that minority language speakers face, not only owing to the subaltern material dynamics that late capitalism subtly assigns to minority language speakers in relation to majority ones, but also the difficulties of trying to subvert the existing social order through various revitalisation or reclamation strategies. Roche

(2020) rightly affirms that the critique of minoritised language movements have been a mere exercise of denunciation, without any viable alternative proposed. In this respect, May (2012) has also postulated that these critiques ignore the conventional nature of linguistic, cultural, ethnic or national majorities and the actual macro-structural infrastructure that social agents must operate in within our actual existing world such as legal protection frameworks, institutions, polities, nation-states, etc. As noted by Kraus and Grin (2018), a significant part of post-structuralist critiques either ignore or consciously forget that in any institutional process, there will be a level of normativeness, inherently reductive of the social world's reality, but necessary for the implementation of any kind of public policy, including of course language policy. As Urla (2012) has argued, while minoritised language movements may reclaim nationhood, 'the nation they imagine and enact looks nothing like the racialized 19th-century model that detractors continue to attribute to them' (2012: 17). Urla *et al*. (2017: 43) have referred to this idea that minority language movements reproduce dominant language ideologies and the inequalities and hierarchies those values entail as the 'reproduction thesis'. Indeed, minority movements also have the potential to 're-signify, reindexicalize, re-imagine' hegemonic discourses (Gal, 2018: 238). As noted earlier, the notion of community itself has also been significantly relativised and pointed as a controversial category of analysis owing to its undiscriminating overuse in social theory (Brint, 2002). However, ideas of community still bear relevance to the ways in which minoritised ethnolinguistic groups navigate their social world, thus the notion should not be dismissed but rather, we suggest, examined as a category of practice instead of analysis. As such, ethnographic analyses of community as a collection of socially meaningful claims imbued with specific signs of difference (Gal & Irvine, 2019) can provide insightful knowledge around how minoritised groups conceive specific ways of operationalising ethnolinguistic mobilisation on their own terms and context-specific circumstances.

Introducing the Chapters

This volume is divided into two parts. The first part – Building Agency – focuses on social actors who have exerted, and to some degree gained, agency. The chapters describe factors that fed into their agency, allowing them to take advantage of opportunities; some discuss how they have accomplished gaining control over their own revitalisation processes. They also reveal the immediate, to some degree, and potential long-term effects of this agency. If the first section shows the positive forces at work from the case studies, the second part – Rethinking Possibilities in Agency – deals with continued problems social actors and communities have in gaining revitalisation agency. Issues of authority, authenticity and lack of engagement plague all efforts, and while these chapters cannot provide

clear solutions, they provide insights into how social actors are working through them, within social strictures, and their own aspirations.

The volume begins by focusing on social actors whose agency is often overlooked, if not outright questioned: the children in family language planning. Cassie Smith-Christmas and Orlaith Ruiséal work with families in Tús Maith ('A Good Start'), a family language support initiative in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht of Ireland. Their 'saibhreas model' outlines caregivers' successful intergenerational transmission of Irish as an interdependent goal of language use that is competent, local and embodied. In this model, competency touches on how this community is dealing with the perception of authenticity of schooled-learning language output. They use 'embodied' to indicate the process of the language becoming part of a child's day-to-day being and the language through which they build their community. Importantly, the children (and caregivers) see themselves as belonging to a community. The authors provide examples from how Tús Maith facilitates children's use of Irish through social, fun activities, and so encourages children to enact their own agency in using Irish. Consequently, children and their language use contribute to the ongoing language revitalisation in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht.

Bernadette O'Rourke and Alejandro Dáyan-Fernández work is situated in the urban Galician organisation Semente, a grassroots organisation founded to provide immersion education for children. This chapter examines the role of new speakers in urban spaces, where there are fewer opportunities to use the language, and motivations and goals for language reclamation differ from speech communities in traditional areas. O'Rourke and Dáyan-Fernández expand Fishman's 1991 idea of 'breathing spaces' by examining Semente as an exemplary case study of collective agency, foregrounding that these grassroots spaces are not only incubators for language, but catalysts for a collective action that counteracts hegemonic forces.

The last chapter in Part 1 illustrates the struggles of balancing forces and demands from above and below that too often impede and exhaust language practitioners and activists (Fishman, 2001: 21). Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska and Cordula Ratajczak show how Upper and Lower Sorbian language activists create strategies to overcome historical challenges and managing competing interests and claims over language. They describe this as a 'balancing act' to make progress by working within the limitations of existing institutions and policies while weighing community expectations and ideologies. Instead of seeing these forces solely as impediments, they show it is through these continual negotiations that incremental progress and agency is built.

We shift to less resolved positions of agency in the second half. The complex issues of authority, language change and purism, and the lack of identifying with the language today and thus lack of motivation to learn or use a language, have no straightforward answers. They are recurring themes that all programmes must work through again and again, even the

most successful ones (using any definition of success). Still, the authors here contribute insights into these ongoing negotiations that can help practitioners facing similar situations.

Manuela Pellegrino's chapter on the Griko community highlights generational contests of authority that often occur over the language use, and subsequently stall revitalisation efforts. Like other chapters, she investigates the underlying cultural and historical conditions as well as the ideological discourses which favour or inhibit younger would-be activists and learners. She shows how authority cannot be separated from notions of morality: the moral right to represent Griko and a perceived duty towards the language and its speakers, both past and present. Connecting the issues of authenticity and authority with morality (notably absent in language revitalisation literature) sets in motion possibilities of understanding and reconciliation.

The situation of North Frisian is complex. Like many minoritised languages, there are internal variations, and with them varying attitudes and approaches towards revitalisation. In addition, there are competing minoritised languages (in their case, Low German) besides the majority German and, increasingly, English. Consequently, households are multilingual. Lena Terhart, Femmy Admiraal and Nils Langer show that people's identities are rarely tied to one language, and one does not have to speak North Frisian to be Frisian. Along with a variety of post-WW2 historical factors and language rhetoric that exacerbate the lack of motivation for unified revitalisation efforts, the authors argue that much agency lies with non-speakers, whose attitudes have a reaching impact on maintenance and revitalisation efforts at large. Like other chapters, the authors suggest that a path towards more stable maintenance and revitalisation is not from the top-down programmes or by tying the language to identity, but by supporting and listening to the non-activist speakers, who are quietly using the language in daily life and passing it on in their families, and to the non-activist non-speakers – those who are furthest from the core, but contribute nonetheless to maintenance and revitalisation.

What happens when we reach our institutional goals? Using the Occitan language in the context of the newly formed administrative region of Occitanie, Brennan questions the widely held assumption that linking language and territory reinforces notions of identity and belonging, and thus strengthens minoritised language movements. Brennan also questions the widely held assumption that institutionalisation and professionalisation of revitalisation efforts legitimise language movements and thus the realisation of language goals. The chapter ends in a local Toulouse cafe, started by new speakers as a place to highlight Occitan food, music and poetry, and to create a safe place for new speakers to use what language they have. Thus, the possibilities are best exemplified not from the institutions of learning and social reform, but in the forming of new, local communities of language use.

Can threatened languages thus be saved? This volume builds on a nuanced 'yes' through offering case studies that glimpse pathways through the enormity of the task and focus on smaller incremental steps in gaining momentum. The chapters illustrate the successes and ongoing struggles of social actors to gain individual and collective agency concerning their language communities. The authors base their findings on ethnographic case studies elaborated with community-based teams. Many of them are locals and all have spent years before and after the SMiLE case studies in these communities. This provides a collective and often intimate rendering of how issues of agency play out. Though all the case studies are situated in European contexts, these communities are diverse and have experienced varying degrees of endangerment and minoritisation, as well as differing ways of tackling social action. Taken together, they encapsulate the agency of the peripheries – that of local resurgence and control, small groups engaging in collective action accumulating into larger changes, made up of new often urban speakers – driving language revitalisation.

Note

(1) Our research agenda follows Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen (2013: 223–226) in foregrounding the importance of reconciling structuralist and post-structuralist approaches to language revitalisation. While the critiques provided by post-structuralism allow us to comprehend and trace the reductive legacies of systemic categorisations in sociolinguistic phenomena, we see the structuralist lens as remaining relevant particularly to how social agents on the ground navigate their linguistic realities and the actual existing world they live in. Our case studies were thus designed to understand the real struggles that are still faced by minoritised language social agents today despite the progress that has been made, rather than delving into a merely theoretical denunciation of essentialism as post-structural approaches may be construed (Kraus & Grin, 2018; MacSwan, 2022). Therefore, this volume focuses on the possibilities of action that are happening on the ground and less so on the theoretical possibilities of critiquing those actions.

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Part 1

Building Agency

1 Tús Maith: Empowering Children's Agentive Role in Language Revitalisation

Cassie Smith-Christmas and Orlaith Ruiséal

Introduction: Children and Language Revitalisation

Children are generally conceptualised as the human embodiment of a minoritised language's continuity. They are after all the 'next generation' of speakers and if there is no projected 'next generation' then the language is considered in a highly precarious position. Fishman (1991) for instance is adamant that if the language is not passed on from caregivers to children in the home and community (Stage 6 on his well-known GIDS scale) any other efforts to revitalise the language are unlikely to prove effective. Romaine (2007: 121) states that 'the pulse of a language clearly lies in the youngest generation', a sentiment reflected on the UNESCO framework for assessing language vitality, in which a language is considered definitely endangered if 'children no longer learn the language as a mother tongue in the home' (Moseley, 2010). Despite children's importance to language revitalisation, however, children's *own* roles in this process tend to be obscured, and more often than not, the child tends to occupy the place of the proverbial 'vessel' into which to 'pour' the language, bearing resemblance to the concept in the sociology of childhood that society tends to view children as 'becomings' rather than 'beings' in their own right (Qvortrup, 2009). The ambivalent position of children as *sine qua non* to language revitalisation yet seen more as 'becomings' rather than 'beings' is articulated clearly in Costa's (2017: 155–156) work on the revival of Occitan (see also Brennan, this volume):

> Children are, as initially stated, ambiguous figures within language revitalisation movements. They are both hope for a future, but the type of future they embody might not be the one hoped for within the movement [..] Children are all at once symbols, icons, numbers, pupils, and they are expected to take part in a number of performances in which they are required to act according to norms they might not grasp.

When attention is indeed given to children's roles in language revitalisation in a way which privileges children's actions in the here-and-now (as opposed to focusing on their potential 'becomings'), the emphasis generally has lain on children's agentive roles in thwarting language revitalisation. For example, in Kulick's (1992) study of language shift in Gapun, Papua New Guinea, the children's propensity to speak Tok Pisin meant that caregivers simply did not address the children in Taiap, the local language, resulting in rapid language shift. Similarly, in Smith-Christmas' (2016) study of three generations of a family on the Isle of Skye, Scotland, the children's use of English led to demoralisation among the caregivers, prompting them to speak more English rather than Scottish Gaelic (see also Gafaranga, 2010; Kroskrity, 2009).

The purpose of this chapter therefore is to move away from a sense of the child as a 'becoming' or a 'thwarter' of language revitalisation, and instead explore the reciprocity inherent in how successful language revitalisation enables children to play their *own* roles in this multifaceted and complex process. The chapters centres on the initiative Tús Maith (which translates to 'A Good Start') in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht, and we will discuss specific examples from the ethnographic fieldwork which encapsulate the different ways in which the children enact their agency, which we define as the ability to make choices within the parameters of wider socio cultural milieu and for these choices to have the potential to enact change within this milieu (see Kuczynski, 2002; Smith-Christmas, 2020a; see also the discussion of Ahearn, 2001, in the introduction). In undertaking this exploration, the chapter will underscore the often-discussed reflexive relationship between structures on the one hand and agency on the other (e.g. Bourdieu, 1997; Giddens, 1979); that is, each plays a continual and dynamic role in shaping the other. Specifically, we will focus on how Tús Maith's facilitation of children's use of Irish through social, fun activities enables children to enact their *own* agency in using Irish and how children's synchronic language use contributes to the ongoing successful language revitalisation in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht.

Background: Irish and the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht

The geographical locus of this research is the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht, which is a peninsula in the west of County Kerry, Ireland (Figure 1.1). Our linguistic focus lies in Irish, an autochthonous Celtic language closely related to Manx Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic and more distantly related to Welsh, Cornish and Breton. In contrast to other communities in which a Celtic language is spoken, Ireland gained independence from its colonisers in 1922, and following language revival efforts begun in the late 19th century, Irish was declared the national language of the newly formed nation-state. With the national status of Irish came

Figure 1.1 Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht, County Kerry, and the other Gaeltacht districts, Ireland. Map by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institution

two important overarching policies: first, the Irish language as a compulsory subject in Irish education, meaning that unless they receive an exemption, all pupils undertaking their education in the 26 counties comprising the Republic of Ireland have some exposure to the language through school; and secondly, the designation of areas where a significant percentage of the population habitually spoke Irish as 'Gaeltacht' areas. Having Gaeltacht status entails certain legal and administrative obligations towards the language, such as compulsory education through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht areas, and the underlying expectation is that in Gaeltacht areas, Irish should function as the *de facto* language of communication (O'Rourke & Brennan, 2019). The current Gaeltacht boundaries date from 1956, with some minor additions in 1967, 1974 and 1982.

In the most recent Irish Census (2016), 1,761,420 people aged three and over state that they can speak Irish (39.8% of the population of

Ireland). However, nearly a quarter of these people also state that they *never* speak the language (418,420; 23.8% of the population) and 558,608 (31.7%) indicate that they *only* speak the language within the education system. Only 1.7% (73,803 people) of the population report that they use Irish on a daily basis outside the education system, which is the most suitable proxy for use of Irish as a family and community language. This juxtaposition of a relatively high proportion of people who *can* speak the language with the low number who *do so* in the home-community sphere is replicated in the census data from Corca Dhuibhne, albeit with much less striking disparities. Of a population of 6708, a total of 4775 state the ability to speak Irish (71.2% of the population), while only 1928 (28.7%) use the language daily outside of the education system. The findings of a 2016 survey of children entering the local preschool align with the Census data, as it appears that 26% of children had Irish as the primary language of the home. A further 41% however appear to have had some exposure to Irish (Plean Teanga Ciarraí Thiar, 2018: 26).[1] These types of differences between people who can speak some Irish but do not use it in the home/community sphere and the high degree of institutional support for the language in comparison to other autochthonous language communities have led to views of Irish language policy as having a 'low return' for its efforts, especially in terms of education as a revitalisation strategy. Some prominent language policy theorists have even gone so far as to call Irish language policy a 'failure' (e.g. Lo Bianco, 2012: 518; Spolsky, 2004: 223), a sentiment which is echoed in recent critiques published in the popular press (e.g. Ó Giollagáin, 2020).

As this chapter aims to illustrate that Irish language policy and its manifestation in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht is *not* a failure, especially if one gauges 'success' by Fishman's (2001) rubric of the language being passed onto the next generation and the likelihood of future intergenerational language transmission. The numbers mentioned in the previous paragraph follow from earlier indications of declining intergenerational transmission in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht; in his 1983 study, for example, Ó Riagáin (1992) found that only 25% of those respondents under 45 years of age in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht would use 'all Irish' or 'mostly Irish' with their children if starting a family. Ó hIfearnáin's (2013: 356) study discusses how 'parents frequently remarked that there are no "accidental" Irish speakers anymore' in Corca Dhuibhne. As will be described later in the chapter, Tús Maith was established out of a recognition of declining intergenerational transmission (see also Ní Chathail, 2003). As the chapter will argue, Tús Maith appears not only to have helped stem this trend of declining intergenerational transmission in this area, but has also empowered children to play an agentive role in language revitalisation in their own right (see also Ní Dhiorbháin *et al*., 2021).

Method: Building an Ethnographic Case Study of Language Revitalisation in Corca Dhuibhne

Our understanding of Tús Maith and the wider development organisation within which it is embedded – Oidhreacht Corca Dhuibhne (OChD), which translates to 'Corca Dhuibhne Heritage' – stems from the authors' collective ethnography of these initiatives and their relation to wider social life within the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht. In second author Orlaith Ruiséal's case, this ethnography spans over 20 years, as she has been the director of Tús Maith from its inception. The two authors initially met in May 2017, when first author Cassie Smith-Christmas conducted ethnographic research on Irish-speaking families in Corca Dhuibhne as part of a project funded by the Irish Research Council 'The challenges of minority language maintenance: Family Language Policy in Scotland and Ireland' (GOIPD/2016/644). This project provided the springboard for the Sustaining Minoritized Languages in Europe (SMiLE) case study 'The Intersection of Language and Community in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht'. As discussed in the preface to this volume, the case studies use multiple methods in gaining an in-depth picture of language revitalisation in their respective communities. One of these methods was participant observation, in which Cassie Smith-Christmas took part in a variety of events organised by OChD over the course of the fieldwork (approximately three months over the 18-month project period) and which Orlaith reflected over her vast experience as director of Tús Maith for over 20 years. Cassie Smith-Christmas also continued to engage in ethnographic research (including audio-recording naturally-occurring conversations in the home) with the families she had worked with through the Irish Research Council project, resulting in a deeper understanding of language use in the private sphere. The other main method was conducting interviews with key actors in language revitalisation initiatives in Corca Dhuibhne, most of which were orchestrated by OChD, as well as with key stakeholders in the outcomes of these initiatives (e.g. individual caregivers; students on short courses facilitated by OChD. Most of these interviews – totalling forty-one – were conducted and audio-recorded by Cassie Smith-Christmas, with some either a joint enterprise between Cassie and research assistants Orla Glynn or Mary Burke or conducted and audio-recorded by each research assistant on her own. The one exception to this is author Orlaith Ruiséal's public interview with the national language rights activist group Misneach as part of their annual meeting. This interview was conducted by Ben Ó Ceallaigh and audio-recorded by Cassie Smith-Christmas. The interviews were transcribed by either Cassie, Orla or Mary, or by one of the transcription assistants acknowledged in the full case study, which is available online. Data extracts shown in this chapter include excerpts from fieldnotes, interview quotes and excerpts of interactions in the home. These specific data extracts were

chosen because they were deemed most representative of our understanding of Tús Maith's role in facilitating children to play an active role in language revitalisation. Analysis of these excerpts is based on the tenets of Nexus Analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004), where specific moments in time are linked to wider sociocultural practices over time and space.

Tús Maith: Conceptualising and Facilitating Intergenerational Language Transmission in Terms of 'Saibhreas'

OChD was initially established in 1980, primarily in response to the awareness of the need to protect Corca Dhuibhne's tangible heritage and the wealth of sites of archaeological significance concentrated within this area. Over the years, however, OChD's focus has become more language-centred, a change which was precipitated by recognition of the decline of Irish as a community language, especially the decline in intergenerational transmission in the area as mentioned earlier in reference to the Ó Riagáin (1992) and Ó hIfearnáin (2013) studies. In the quote below, Orlaith describes the role the schools played in bringing the decline of intergenerational transmission to OChD's attention:

> (.) is dócha go dtosnaíodar a' tógaint ceann timpeall ar fiche bliain ó shin go raibh leanaí a' teacht ar scoil sa Ghaeltacht agus ná raibh aon Ghaolainn acu dáiríre agus gur cúis buairt é dóibh ehm agus gur d'thánadar ag caint le Oidhreacht Corca Dhuibhne is dócha mar gheall ar go rabhadar buartha ('leanbh ag caoineadh') go raibh saghas pátrún anois ag teacht chun cinn go raibh leanaí agus níos mó leanaí ag teacht gan Gaolainn
>
> I suppose around 20 years ago that kids were coming to school in the Gaeltacht who didn't know Irish really and that was a cause of concern for them and they came talking to Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne I suppose as they were worried there was a kind of pattern emerging that more kids were coming without Irish

School, of course, is normally children's first main contact point with society and its institutional norms. The fact that children were showing up to school without much knowledge of Irish signalled that Irish was not being used in the children's other main site of socialisation: the home. This, Orlaith then explains elsewhere in her interview, was attributable to the reflexive relationship between the home and the community: that 40 years ago, Irish was so strongly the community language that it appeared there was no need for caregivers to make a choice to speak to the children, as Irish was simply the default language for private and community social life. However, not only did parents need support to make the decision to speak Irish to their children in the first place, but they also needed support in *sustaining* this decision. As also described in Ó hIfearnáin (2013), Tús Maith was set up to address these two key challenges. Prior to

implementation, Orlaith and other staff at the OChD met with practitioners working with the Twf programme in Wales, which provided support to expectant parents to use Welsh as the primary language and was available through pre-natal services as well as other initiatives. Unfortunately, Twf in Wales is now no longer in operation, but for an overview of the programme see Edwards and Newcombe (2005).

Over the years, Tús Maith has developed a comprehensive programme to address the interwoven social and linguistic needs of fostering intergenerational transmission and community use of a minoritised language. The flagship component of the programme arguably is the *Cuairteoirí Baile* (CB) scheme, where 'language visitors' meet with families in their homes for one hour a week and support these families in their individual Irish language use goals (for a detailed analysis of the efficacy of the CB scheme see Ní Dhiorbháin *et al.*, 2021). Families range from those where caregivers have no or limited knowledge of Irish to those where caregivers are fully fluent, but desire more support in using Irish with their children. This in turn complements the *Cúntóirí Teanga* (CT) scheme, which initially began in Corca Dhuibhne, but which is now available in schools in all Gaeltacht areas. Through this scheme, CTs (language assistants) help foster children's linguistic skills through small-group break-out sessions as part of their school day. Other regular interactive Tús Maith initiatives include a weekly Irish language parent–toddler playgroup; a weekly drama group for children in primary school; and a monthly family activity group. These are complemented by three main annual events: a Halloween party, a visit with Santa and an Easter egg hunt. All of these events are run through the medium of Irish, as is the *naoínra*, the Irish pre-school housed in the same building where most of the OChD events take place and where most of the OChD practitioners habitually work. Tús Maith has also produced two CDs of children's songs and rhymes – one aimed at toddlers and one aimed at pre-school children—as well as three picture books aimed at pre-school to early primary-aged children. For older children, Tús Maith has produced a memory card game featuring local landmarks. Tús Maith's most recent initiative is a YouTube video series produced initially during the COVID-19 lockdown in Ireland, which caters to both caregivers and all age ranges of children, featuring diverse videos such as reading stories in Irish to learning to make soup from nettles.

As underscored in the following quote drawn from the interview with the director of OChD at the time the project was conducted, the primary purpose of these multitude of events is to provide children whose home language is Irish the opportunity to meet other children with similar home socialisation patterns. The challenge of children using a minoritised language as a peer language is acknowledged in both in an international context (e.g. Spolsky, 1991) as well as in an Irish context specifically (e.g. Hickey, 2007). As evidenced by the director's quote, Tús Maith seeks to address this challenge:

> (.) chomh maith le seo bíonn an chuid rudaí ar siúil ag Tús Maith chomh maith ó thaobh iarracht a dhéanamh leanaí go háirithe a thabhairt le chéile agus go mbeidh deis age leanaí (.) go bhfuil Gaolainn acu age baile, uimhir a haon, labhairt bualadh le leanaí eile a bhfuil Gaolainn acu age baile.
>
> but as well as that, Tús Maith organises many other things regarding bringing children together so the kids with Irish at home have the chance, firstly, to meet other kids with Irish at home.

This quote highlights the need for children to interact together in building a peer community of young speakers. The director goes on to emphasise the potential of *all* children (both those who are socialised in Irish in the home and those who are not) to play a part in this Irish language peer community. In highlighting how Tús Maith provides support to *all* families who wish to participate in Irish language activities, the director relays how the well-attested stigma of Irish as a 'school language' poses a significant challenge to this endeavour:

> Freastalaítear chomh maith ar ar theaghlaigh ná bhfuil Gaolainn age baile acu ach go mba mhaith leothu go mbeadh an teanga ages na leanaí so bíonn imeachtaí eile agus atá oscailte dóibh sin yeno agus go go féidir leo freastal agus a bheith ábalta teanga a la- is dóigh liom ó thaobh na na tíre seo (.) em féachann mórán againn agus ó na dtuathaí seo féachtar ar an dteanga mar ábhar ábhar scoile seachas mar theanga pobail mar pobail mar theanga cumarsáide, mar theanga gur féidir leat maireachtaint tríotha emm agus is dócha emm (.) níl a fhios agam conas: ehh (.) e:m (.) meon na ndaoine a dh'athrú ón dtaobh sin (.) [[<cogarnaíl> yeah] eh ach déanaimid ár ndícheall [[ya LE] le freastal orthu.
>
> Those families which don't speak Irish but who want the kids to have Irish are also supported, so there are other events that are open to them y'know that they can attend and be able to speak the lang- I think regarding this country many of us see the language as a school subject instead of a as a community language, as a community and a language of communication, as a language you can live through emm and I suppose emm I don't know how to change people's minds regarding that- but yeah we do our best to support them.

This quote in many ways captures the ethos of Tús Maith and how its various interwoven efforts are designed and implemented so that children (and caregivers) both use the Irish language as a 'community language' ('teanga pobail'), a language of communication ('teanga cumarsáide'); and a language that they can live *through* ('teanga gur féidir leat maireachtaint tríotha') (*cf.* Slavec, 2019: 155: 'To *have* Irish in Corca Dhuibhne is a feeling and an experience, as well as an intimate commitment to *live* (through) Irish', emphasis original). In other words, the Irish language is an embodied part of children's day-to-day being and the language through which they build their community. This concept of embodied language

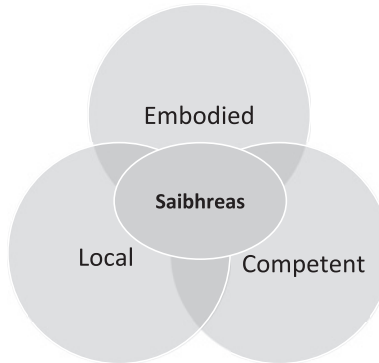

Figure 1.2 The saibhreas model

use – by which we are using Csordas' (1995: 6) concept of embodiment as the 'existential ground of culture and self' rather than the concept of language and physical embodiment (e.g. Pennycook, 2004) – emerged as a key theme across the interviews with OChD practitioners. This in turn became one of the three intersecting components of the model we refer to as the 'saibhreas' model. As explained in Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal (2022), the saibhreas model serves to provide a concrete means to envisage caregivers' goals in language revitalisation and how they bring these goals to fruition. 'Saibhreas' translates to 'richness' in Irish, and we argue that the overarching goal of caregivers, including language practitioners who are involved in language revitalisation, is for the children to speak Irish that is 'saibhir'. As illustrated Figure 1.2, Irish that is saibhir is Irish that is competent, local and embodied.

In the next section, we argue that caregivers' facilitation of saibhreas lays the groundwork for children enacting their agency and in turn, for them to play a role in language revitalisation. We also centre on how 'embodied' use provides the mechanism for children to play a part in bringing certain language norms to fruition and how the enactment of these norms contributes to Irish as the community language in Corca Dhuibhne.

Competent, local use of Irish: Providing the foundation for children's enactment of agency through language

As discussed in Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal (2022), 'competent' language use is considered *sine qua non* to successful intergenerational language transmission and is usually conceptualised as the child's language use as an age-appropriate carbon copy of the caregivers' language use. Determining what this age-appropriate carbon copy of Irish *does* or *should* look like is far beyond the scope of this paper (see Müller *et al*., 2019; Nic

Fhlannchadha & Hickey, 2017), but it is generally agreed that a prerequisite of children's competent use of any language is sufficient linguistic input (de Houwer, 2007). It is clear that Tús Maith seeks to facilitate children's competent use of Irish by providing them Irish language input through multiple avenues, such as using the language directly with the children in various activities and enabling parents to use more Irish with the children through the CB scheme. Tús Maith's initiatives also provide input over varied speech genres and their associated registers (e.g. everyday speech; storytelling; songs; rhymes) in multiple modes (in-person interactions; the *Orla Uan* books; the song and rhyme CD; the YouTube channels). It is also clear that in providing these multivarious input opportunities, Tús Maith valorises the local dialect, which aligns with the importance of 'local' in the saibhreas model (for a linguistic description of the Corca Dhuibhne dialect, see Ó Sé, 2000). For example, one of the impetuses for both the Orla Uan series and the CDs produced by OChD was the lack of these types of language support materials in the local dialect. As well, the CPD day for OChD practitioners explicitly instructed practitioners to use their local dialect when interacting with children (see Smith-Christmas & Ruiséal, under review). It is argued that children's competent acquisition of Irish, including those features particular to Corca Dhuibhne, forms the foundation of children's ability to participate in community life in Corca Dhuibhne and to in turn play a role in language revitalisation. This point may seem quite obvious, and goes back to the '*sine qua non*' nature of linguistic competence conceptualising successful intergenerational language transmission, but it is an important point to emphasise nonetheless. As mentioned in the introduction, language shift is often attributed to the children's agency; in caregivers' views, language shift occurs because children refuse to speak the language. As Kroskrity (2009) points out in his discussion of what he refers to as this 'blame-shifting', what often goes unacknowledged is that in some cases, it is not that the children are actively refusing to speak the minoritised language *per se*, but that the children *lack* the competency to do so as a result of the low input they receive from caregivers in the home and wider community, which in turn is a reflex of the compounding nature of language shift (see also Gafaranga, 2010; Smith-Christmas, 2016). The lack of competency thereby inhibits children's agency in that they may have no choice *but* to use the majority language. Lack of competency also denies them full access to community life, especially in certain interactions with caregivers.

The following excerpt provides a counterpoint to the familiar picture of language shift, and shows how a child uses her competent and local use of Irish to participate in adult conversation and to reify her role in language revitalisation in her home. This excerpt is drawn from an interview between researchers Cassie Smith-Christmas and Mary Burke and caregiver TUISMITHEOIR 1 ('PARENT 1', abbreviated as 'T1' in excerpt), who participates regularly in Tús Maith activities with her two daughters,

the younger of whom was one and a half at the time of the study and the elder of whom was four at the time of the recording (LEANBH 1, CHILD 1, abbreviated ''L1' in excerpt). Cassie Smith-Christmas first met TUISMITHEOIR 1 at a parent–toddler group during a trip with the IRC research project in 2017 and TUISMITHEOIR 1 agreed to be interviewed about her experiences raising children with Irish for the SMiLE project. The interview was conducted in TUISMITHEOIR 1's home and it became apparent over the course of the interview that LEANBH 1 considered herself an equal co-participant in the interaction: in other words, the interview was not solely the remit of her mother. In addition to taking part in 'adult' activities, such as offering and giving her guests refreshments, LEANBH 1 also relayed her views on Irish language support available in Corca Dhuibhne. For example, at one point in which TUISMITHEOIR 1 is speaking about availability of media in Irish, LEANBH 1 chimes in with 'movies sa Bhéarla' ('movies [are] in English'). In this excerpt, LEANBH 1 shows us her toys that speak Irish:

(1) L1: **OH MY** GOD! *Tá sé ag caint cho cho cho cho ard* (.) *Tá sé ag caint <ana-chuid> <Gaelainn> anois*
He is speaking so so so so loudly (.) He is speaking lots of Irish now
(2) T1: *Tá* (.) *agus cá bhfuil Babóg Bear*? *An bhfuil fhios agat*?
He is and where's Babóg Bear? Do you know?
(3) L1: no
(4) T1: *Níl **as in** tá teddy eile ann **but** nil canúint áitúil atá aige – tá fhios agat- an ceann- deireann sé dearg bándearg*
No there's another teddy he doesn't have the local dialect you know that one- he says red pink
(5) CSC: **oh**
(6) L1: *Bionn sé seo ag caint*
This one here talks
(7) TOY: *a ceathair* (.) *a naoi*
Four (.) nine
(8) L1: *sé sin briste*
It's broken

Here, LEANBH 1 is showing us her Glòr na nGael teddy bear and telling us that he is speaking 'ana-chuid Gaelainn anois' [lots of Irish now] in Turn 1. Throughout the excerpt, she, too, is speaking 'ana-chuid Gaelainn anois,' and her use aligns with our conception of saibhreas[2]: it is competent and makes use of local forms (e.g. epenthesis and lenition following the epenthesis in 'ana-chuid'; using the term 'Gaelainn' to refer to the language).[2] Furthermore, she clearly *wants* to speak Irish, which, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, is an important aspect of the 'embodiment' component of saibhreas. We argue that LEANBH 1's saibhreas contributes to her ability to actively ratify herself as an equal participant in this conversation between adults. Although of course a child may insert themselves into adult conversations, we argue her saibhreas empowers her full participation. In turn, she is playing a role in

language revitalisation in two main ways. First, doing so, she is playing a role in reifying her home as an 'Irish-speaking home', both in using Irish in speaking to her mother and applying this norm of the Irish-speaking home when addressing her visitors; in being part of her home, the underlying expectation is that visitors to this space will interact with her using Irish. Secondly, as her younger sister is present, LEANBH 1 is also contributing to language revitalisation not only by providing Irish linguistic input to her sister, but crucially, in modelling norms of expectations: Irish is the language used to address their mother, as well as visitors whom they know speak Irish. This differs from other minoritised language situations, where older siblings especially can play a role in modelling norms that perpetuate language shift (see Smith-Christmas, 2016).

This argument highlights the reflexivity inherent in 'structures' on the one hand and 'agency' on the other. The adult world in many ways sets the parameters for interaction—such as the expectation that one speaks Irish in the home – but in this case, it is LEANBH 1's *own* agency which reinforces these parameters, thus highlighting the reciprocity between structure and agency. As we have shown, it is these very structures – such as ensuring the child's sufficient input through pro-Irish language norms – that allow her to enact her agency and make the choice to use Irish with the adults in a way which fully aligns with conceptions of saibhreas. In doing so, she is contributing to language revitalisation in the here-and-now by reifying an Irish-speaking home and especially in modelling pro-Irish language norms to her sister. The following section will further look at the role that embodiment plays in children's ability to take part in certain pro-Irish language norms.

Embodiment: The Mediating Link Between Language Competence and Use

As previously mentioned, our concept of embodiment centres on language as a way of being or as the OChD director puts it, 'language that you can live through'. As the OChD director also mentioned in her interview, and as underscored by other research (e.g. Meek, 2007; Smith-Christmas, 2017; Will, 2012), *not* viewing the language as an embodied part of one's experience – and in particular, as an artefact of the school – can strongly mitigate against language revitalisation. Thus, while various social actors can speak a minoritised language, it does not mean they do (*cf.* the 2016 Census results discussed earlier). We argue that the mediating link between language competence on the one hand and language use on the other lies in embodiment: that social actors need to see the minoritised language as one they *can* live through and in turn choose to do so. The following will discuss how Tús Maith facilitates children's language embodiment and how this embodiment translates into children's agentive contribution to reinforcing pro-Irish language norms in the home and community.

One of the ways in which Tús Maith contributes to children's embodied experience of language is by modelling Irish as a community language among adult interlocutors. This is illustrated for instance by the following quote from a Cuairteoir Baile (CB) (home language visitor) in which she describes how although the weekly sessions centre primarily on the children, an important component of her job is speaking also Irish *to* the parents:

> fiú má thán tú suite síos ag caint leis na tuismitheoirí nó tuismitheoir mar a tharlaíonn sé formhór den am eh trí Ghaolainn sin páirt don obair suite síos a' caint is co- agus a' comhrá mar rud saghas nádúrtha agus go bhfuil na leanaí suite síos ag éisteacht tá sé sin ana thábhachtach mar de ghnáth bíonn Gaolainn nó iarracht éigin ar Ghaolainn age tuismitheoir ar a laghad tuismitheoir amháin.
>
> Even if you go to sit down speaking with the parents or parent as it happens most of the time through Irish – that's part of the job, sitting down speaking and ch- chatting naturally and the children sitting down listening – that's really important because usually at least one of the parents will speak Irish or be making an effort to speak Irish.

In this quote, we see how the CB is consciously modelling Irish as a community language: not only are the children exposed to what she terms as 'natural' conversation between adults, but crucially, she is showing them that Irish is expected among interlocutors who speak Irish. As Makihara (2005) discusses, adult peer talk is an extremely important component of a child's linguistic trajectory in the minority language and Smith-Christmas (2016) hypotheses that *lack* of exposure to adult peer talk is one of the main reasons that the children in the Scottish Gaelic-speaking family she studied for eight years did not speak much Gaelic. Thus, the CB programme is an important way in which the children are socialised into the idea that Irish is a language that one can 'live through' and one that is part of the everyday fabric of their community.

Another key way in which Tús Maith fosters an embodied sense of Irish language use is by explicit focus on the language in 'fun' contexts, such as play and games. This in turn is an important way in which Irish is delineated from a school context, a challenge not only for Irish, but for other minority language contexts, even in cases where the minority language is used in the home (see Smith-Christmas, 2017). Across the various interviews with practitioners who worked specifically with children, there emerged the very strong sense that they never saw themselves as 'teaching' the language, but as facilitating the language learning and use through play. This sentiment comes across very clearly from the following excerpt, which is drawn from Smith-Christmas' observation notes of a CB session with the CB who provided the previous interview quote:

> Father – from the area originally, spoke Irish, had spent much time abroad
>
> Mother – moved abroad when she was younger so did not speak Irish

> Three children – eldest about 8, second child about 6 or 7, and third child, a baby
>
> It was very clear that the children were very happy to speak Irish, especially the eldest child. The cuairteoir was super friendly and super natural – she embodied everything that she thought was best practice in her interview. She asked questions about what the children had built with their Legos and then played a game where the children balanced different colours on top of a wooden turtle. The children knew all colours and were able to play completely in Irish. The younger one made a grammatical error at one point with 'liomsa mise' (or something like that), but that, and the few times they spoke in English were ignored. It was VERY clear that the children did not think of this as anything related to school, nor did they seem that aware that it was specifically to do with the Irish language, but rather, they just seemed to think of it as a lady comes to their house and plays games with them.

Although I quickly jotted down 'ignored' in my notes, what I meant was that the CB used what Lanza (1997) refers to as the repetition strategy (recasting a lexical item or phrase in the minority language) or 'move-on strategy' (where the caregiver continues the conversation in minority language). From this notes excerpt, it is evident that the children are developing an embodied sense of Irish language use. Irish is not an artefact of the school, but to some degree, a part of their home through the weekly CB visits. Furthermore, through the child-centred nature of the visits, especially the emphasis on play and games, the children are developing a positive emotional relationship with the language: not only do they *use* the language in the context of the CB visit, but they appear to *want* to use the language. This then has the potential to impact their use of language in multiple spheres, and critically, their language use with peers. As Hickey (2007: 61) shows in her work on pre-schools in Gaeltacht areas, if one or two children in a peer situation have a preference for English and appear not to *want* to use Irish, then English tends to dominate as the peer group language, even for children who are strongly socialised in Irish in the home. By fostering a positive emotional relationship with the language as well as the linguistic skills *to* use the language, we argue that the CB programme empowers children to enact pro-Irish language norms in their interactions with each other, which is then complemented by the range of activities that Tús Maith coordinates.

One clear example of this premise is from observations of the Daidí na Nollag [Santa] event, held in the OChD building in December 2018. The children visited Santa, who spoke to them in Irish, in his purpose-built grotto, then came into the main foyer area to enjoy Christmas treats and to make crafts together. Smith-Christmas also played Christmas carols on her violin as part of the festive event. Irish clearly functioned as most of the children's peer group language with each other, which coincides with observations of their language use in peer interactions during the seasonal

themed drama organised by OChD, in which many of the children present at the Daidí na Nollag event also participated. Several of the children also came up to her to request their favourite Christmas carols, always using Irish to do so. Two of these children Smith-Christmas knew had participated in the CB programme, as the children's mother had been interviewed for the project and had discussed how the CB programme and Tús Maith overall had supported her in raising her children as Irish speakers. Throughout the event, Irish appeared the expected norm of communication, both among peers and in addressing adults, and this observation is analysed again to highlight the reflexive relationship between structure and agency: through their attendance at OChD events, children are socialised into the norm that one speaks Irish while at OChD and they then play a role into socialising their peers into this norm. The fact that this norm comes to fruition in enjoyable, child-centred events such as visiting Santa plays a role in how children have an embodied experience of the language and weave it into the fabric of their everyday peer interactions.

Conclusion

One of the strengths of Tús Maith is that its approach valorises the child as a 'being' rather than a 'becoming'. Although Tús Maith's overarching goal – intergenerational transmission of the language to ensure its continuance – does not deviate from other language revitalisation contexts, it is the emphasis on the *child's* role in actively building and sustaining the contexts for language revitalisation that underpins its success (see Smith-Christmas, 2020b). For Tús Maith, children are not simply vessels into which to pour the language and hope that they in turn pour the language into the vessels that are their own future children; neither are they seen as beings which need to be 'made' to speak the language. Rather, children are seen as active members of their own peer community and the wider Corca Dhuibhne community, capable of making their own decisions based on the wider sociocultural milieu. The chapter has argued that by providing opportunities for families to develop their use of Irish in the home and for children to develop their use of Irish in varied and enjoyable interactions with peers, Tús Maith supports children's competent, local and embodied use of the language. In doing so, it empowers children to enact their agency in language revitalisation and for them to contribute to reifying pro-Irish language norms with their peers and within their wider community.

Transcription Conventions

Irish speech appears in italics. English speech appears in bold. Translations of Irish speech appear in plain text.

__	Emphasis in speech
(.)	Micropause (less than two-tenths of a second)
< >	Local variant

Notes

(1) The survey was based on children's language ability (n = 88): 20% are categorised as '*cainteoirí dúchais*' ('native speakers'); 6% are categorised as having '*Gaeilge mhaith*' ('good Irish'); 41% as having '*ar bheagán Gaeilge*'('some Irish'); 17% with '*tuiscint ar an nGaeilge*' ('understanding of Irish'); and 16% with '*gan tuiscint ar an nGaeilge*,' meaning that they did not understand any Irish at all.

(2) For example, in particular on the intensifier 'an' followed by lenition, resulting in 'ana-chuid' and referring to the language as 'Gaelainn' instead of 'Gaeilge.' Furthermore, we argue that as English language pragmatic markers are well-integrated into the Corca Dhuibhne dialect (see Darcy, 2014; also Auer's [1995] concept of 'fused lects'), we argue that this use of what could be considered an English language expression also signals her competent and local use of the language (*cf.* her mother's 'but' in Turn 4).

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2 Sowing the Seeds at Semente: Urban Breathing Spaces and New Speaker Agency

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Introduction

During one of our many fieldwork trips, we got to know Xosé and Mabel and their two young children. As a family, they were committed to ensuring maximum exposure to Galician through a Galician-only family language policy. Their explicitly expressed aim was to create a safe haven for Galician in the home, largely free from Spanish language influence. Xosé and Mabel self-identified as *neofalantes* [new speakers] of Galician who had been brought up speaking Castilian Spanish in the home and acquired Galician at school as part of the bilingual education system in place since the 1980s in a post-Franco Spain. In discussions with them, they described the many challenges they faced in casting-off their Castilian-speaking selves, particularly in an urban context where they saw Spanish as being omnipresent. They commented on the lack of opportunities to use the language outside of the home as well as the lack of active engagement with other speakers and families. A grassroots pre-school initiative provided the Galician immersion experience they sought for their children, where explicit attempts were made by teachers, educators, parents and children to create a 'breathing space' (Fishman, 1991) for the language. This chapter focuses on agentive grassroots initiatives developed by pro-Galician parents as a reaction to their perceived lack of top-down language policies and structural neglect of Galician speakers in the officially bilingual Autonomous Community of Galicia. It examines the dynamics of a grassroots language revitalisation project called Semente, which began with the establishment of one Galician medium pre-school in 2011 in the city of Santiago de Compostela. Since then, the project has

expanded to other areas such as Lugo, Vigo, A Coruña, Trasancos and Ourense, where there have been similar pre-school initiatives as well as two Galician immersion primary schools. Semente grew out of Galician grassroots social movements which were engaged in social justice initiatives such as anti-capitalism, feminism and environmentalism. In these spaces, the Galician language and its use constituted an index of agentive resistance against the perceived homogenising forces of the Spanish State and as a way of reclaiming alternative personhoods in a homogenising globalising world (O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024).

Our early encounters with Mabel and Xosé and subsequent engagement with other Galician new speakers at Semente, bring together a number of interrelated phenomena that will be the focus of this chapter[1]: first, how to sustain a minoritised language (such as Galician) in an urban context where there are often less opportunities for language use; second, the role of new speakers of minority languages (such as Xosé and Mabel) in this process; finally, the significance of 'breathing spaces' such as Semente in the language revitalisation process on the ground. These phenomena, as we will show, are not of course specific to the Galician context but relate to the dynamics of many contemporary language revitalisation efforts in Europe more broadly and indeed, those found in other parts of the world. We will begin by situating these questions in the context of broader theoretical debates around contemporary language revitalisation initiatives before discussing Galician as a case study and the specific dynamics of Semente, as an example of agency in an urban-based grassroots revitalisation project.

New Agentive Dynamics in Minority Language Sociolinguistics: New Speakers, Urban Communities and 'Breathing Spaces'

Research on revitalising minoritised languages has for long focused on vitality frameworks and language dominance, drawing considerably on Fishman's (1991) *Reversing Language Shift* model. This model was primarily oriented towards the maintenance or revival of native speaker communities. The full complexity of linguistic practices and lived experiences of new speakers of minority languages (such as Xosé and Mabel in the Introduction) in urban spaces, the majority of whom are bilingual or multilingual, has until relatively recently received less attention in the field of minority language research and multilingual studies more broadly.

In many minority language communities, research has shown that traditional native speaker communities are in decline. This is to some extent counteracted, however, by a rise in the number of what are sometimes referred to as new speakers, defined as speakers who were not brought up speaking the minority language in the home through intergenerational transmission but acquired it at school or in the community (O'Rourke *et al.*, 2015). This changing dynamic has called for a re-thinking of how

language 'survival' can be understood in the absence of home transmission in the form of a native speaker community and the linguistic models they provide (Romaine, 2006). There are now a growing number of studies across a range of contexts which have examined the ideologies and practices of new speakers as a sociolinguistic group (Pujolar & O'Rourke, 2022).

This more systematic analysis of new speaker dynamics aligns broadly with the 'multilingual turn' (May, 2014) in sociolinguistics and related strands where there has been a growing academic interest in and creation of new conceptualisations such as metrolingualism (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015), translingualism (Canagarajah, 2013), translanguaging (García & Li, 2014) and linguistic repertoires (Busch, 2017), which in different ways, bring to the fore heteroglossic ways of speaking and thinking about language. In minority language sociolinguistics, there has been a tendency to focus on the rural-small town nexus, with somewhat less attention given to the dynamics of language revitalisation in urban contexts. New spaces of interaction in large towns and cities have, however, provided new opportunities for language use as a result of language revitalisation projects. Many scholars have highlighted the potential effect of urban contexts on the ability of minoritised language communities to maintain and reproduce themselves, and a need for more research in this area given the increasingly urban composition of our populations. This trend can be seen across many European minoritised language contexts, with growing momentum of urban-based communities and networks (Jones & Lewis, 2019). Recent work on new speakers of minority languages has also begun to examine new spaces of interaction and use in urban contexts including an emerging body of work on new speaker dynamics in cities (see O'Rourke, 2022, for an overview).

In these urban contexts, minority language speakers often use their collective agency to create and construct new spaces or seek out any existing ones in the absence of services and provision (Dayán-Fernández, 2022; O'Rourke & Walsh, 2020; McLeod & O'Rourke, 2015). Fishman (1991) has talked about the importance of creating 'breathing spaces' for a minority language – spaces in which there is less pressure for speakers (who are also speakers of the dominant contact language) to switch. As Williams (2019) has highlighted, the concept of new spaces for new speaker integration is already one which exists in some European contexts (for example, the Tŷ Tawe Welsh Centre in the city of Swansea) (see Morris, 2022; Cunliffe, 2021, for the notion of virtual 'breathing spaces'). These and other such studies, as we show here, help move us towards a phenomenological version of relational space which introduces the human experiencer (specifically, the speaker) as the reference point from which spatial relations originate (O'Rourke, 2022). Such studies also allow us to understand how space is actively construed by speakers themselves and their capacity to exercise a level of agency, be it as fleeting interactional

spaces or as more permanent places such as those developed through the Semente language revitalisation project as a socially meaningful space that is relevant because of the activities taking place in such contexts, the values ascribed to such activities, or the social conventions that are associated with them. Ongoing ethnographic work in Galician cities has allowed O'Rourke to explore how urban Galician speakers are agentively carving out new spaces of interaction both symbolically as well as more concretely through permanent places including alternative bars, social centres and immersion schools (see O'Rourke, 2019). Thus, our work here on the dynamics of urban-based Galician speakers at Semente, further explores the understanding of agency as the collective ability to undertake purposeful action (Parish & Hall, 2020) or as a concerted exercise of linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2018: 5). All of the agentive elements involved in creating breathing spaces for the minoritised language in the contemporary urban landscape can be associated with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) notion of human agency as a multidimensional experience across space and time, which engages with the past, the present and the future. Emirbayer and Mische's triadic framework to understand human agency is helpful to unpack processes of human agency applied to language revitalisation (1998: 970): iteration is comprehended as the reformulation of the past and consequent reflexivity by social agents to vindicate current practices (1998: 971); projectivity refers to the possibilities of repurposing the present through the reframing of aspirations (1998: 971); and practical evaluation points to social agents' capacity to re-examine the conditions of possibility in fluctuating circumstances (1998: 971). We see the iteration of Semente's language activists as going back to a legacy of dispossession inflicted by historical Spanish dominance, a process of projectivity in which new spaces of collective action are created primarily by activist new speakers, and a continuous collective practical evaluation whereby changing linguistic strategies are adopted depending on the possibilities of action in reversing language shift.

New Agentive Spatial Dynamics and Galician New Speakers

Many of the sociolinguistic trends outlined above are reflected in the changing dynamics of Galician in a contemporary context. Over the past 50 years, increased movement to the cities in search of work has prompted greater exposure to Spanish. The numbers of Galician speakers reported in consecutive sociolinguistic surveys suggest a notable decline in the use of the language from the 1960s onwards as a result of increased urbanisation and movement to cities which were traditionally Spanish-dominant spaces. Spanish came to be seen as a marker of progress and social advance (Álvarez-Cáccamo, 1993) and was used by many Galicians to construct a new Spanish-speaking urban identity. This period of socioeconomic change also coincides with the Franco dictatorship, a political regime that

solely authorised Spanish as the language of public space, including the areas of education and the media (Monteagudo, 2021). During the 40 years of the dictatorship, the regime used strategies to ridicule Galician and its speakers, a technique explicitly deployed to discourage the use of the language. While Galician nevertheless continued to be used in informal domains, Spanish dominated as the language of public life.

More favourable language policies emerged with Spain's transition to democracy in the 1980s. In this new context, the government of the Galician Autonomous Community awarded Galician the legal status of co-official language alongside Spanish, and post-Franco language advocates positioned the language as a central symbol of an emergent Galician national identity. This facilitated the inclusion of Galician in key institutional contexts, including education and other formal domains from which the language had been previously absent. Despite policy interventions, Galician speakers still face considerable stigma in urban spaces, especially amongst younger generations. There is also growing concern around the tendency amongst younger age groups to not use any Galician and use only or predominantly Spanish (Monteagudo *et al.*, 2018) with corresponding trends in terms of intergenerational transmission, even among Galician speakers (Consello da Cultura Galega, 2017). Also of concern is the declining number of younger age groups claiming to speak Galician regularly, with less than 15% reporting Galician usage (Instituto Galego Estatística, 2019).

As has been discussed in more detail elsewhere (see O'Rourke, 2014, 2018, 2019), low-impact interventionist approaches to language policy in Galicia reflect the lukewarm levels of support for the promotion of the language by Galicia's political establishment. Their handling of the language question reflects an ideological position which has sought to maintain the linguistic and social status quo in Galicia through the promotion of 'harmonious' bilingualism (Tenreiro, 2001) (more recently referred to as 'friendly' (cordial) bilingualism, not to be confused with De Houwer's (2020) conceptualisation). This position promotes the non-conflictual coexistence of Spanish and Galician within the community, framing Galicia as a site of balanced bilingualism in which individuals are free to use either language in any context where neither language is seen to be used to the detriment of the other (del Valle, 2000). In doing so, Galician authorities aimed to reassure the socioeconomically and politically dominant (albeit numerically smaller) Spanish-speaking sectors of the Galician population that their existing positions of power would remain unchanged.

However, such policies and dissatisfaction with them, may also have unsettled the mood of an activist minority of the population who are highly committed to revitalising the language (see O'Rourke, 2014). While neofalantes such as Xosé and Mabel are a product of top-down language revitalisation policies, in difference to their 'potential new speaker' counterparts, they have made a conscious decision to convert the potential they

had acquired through the education system into active use, exercising a level of agency against the structural hegemony of Spanish. Neofalantes therefore constitute a particular type of new speaker, characterised not only by their acquisition of the language outside of the home, but more significantly by their commitment to actively using it as part of an ongoing process of 'becoming' a Galician speaker (similar to the Catalan converts described by Woolard (1989, 2011)). Decisions to adopt Galician language practices are often politically or ideologically motivated, strictly related to the agency of speakers and linked to questions of social justice which also align with other social movements such as environmentalist movements, feminist movements, anti-capitalist movements, anti-establishment and an underlying dissatisfaction with the current social and political order. Speaking Galician, and more concretely, adopting predominantly or exclusively Galician-speaking practices is therefore symbolic of a type of agency to resist and protest against top-down governmentality (O'Rourke, 2018b), also similarly reported in the Basque context (Nandi *et al*., 2023).

Semente – Background, Context and Ethos

The emergence of Semente as a grassroots language revitalisation initiative in 2011 can in many ways be seen as a response to the perceived failures of the top-down language policies described above. The project grew from ideas which were developed by a group of language activists from within the grassroots association 'Gentalha do Pichel', a non-profit association which engages in various initiatives to revive Galician customs and traditions (http://gentalha.org/). Semente was first established in the city of Santiago de Compostela, initiated by a small group of language activists who were dissatisfied with government policy and its perceived inability to provide adequate support for Galician through mainstream schooling (Figure 2.1). The founders of the language revitalisation project were particularly concerned with the fact that their own children and children of others they knew were not getting sufficient Galician input through Galicia's public education system. As urban-based neofalantes who had gone through the process of linguistic conversion themselves as adolescents or young adults, they were now making a conscious decision to bring up their own children in Galician and as such were committed to playing their part in reversing intergenerational transmission. Neofalantes at Semente often rationalised their own practice of linguistic conversion as a reaction to and dissatisfaction with what they perceived as 'top-down' governmentality. Different ideologies underpinned their decisions to become an active speaker as they positioned themselves as visible language planners on the ground. Through their active use of the language, they engaged in a reflexive process which questioned existing power structures as well as the socioeconomic and political conditions within which they are set (O'Rourke, 2018). Many of the founding members at Semente

Figure 2.1 Santiago de Compostela, location of the main Semente, Galiza/Galicia. Map by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institution

are linked to a broader grassroots protest movement, *Nunca Máis* [Never Again] which emerged in Galicia in 2002 in the wake of a devastating oil spill off the Galician coast and which was identified as one of the worst environmental disasters in the history of the region (known as 'Prestige'; see Aguilar Fernández & Ballesteros Peña, 2010, for an overview). The founding of Semente can also be set against the broader context of other sociopolitical and socioeconomic factors prominent at the time. These include a series of demonstrations against austerity policies in Spain, also referred to as the Indignados (the Outraged) Movement which emerged from a State-wide protest organised on 15 May 2011. This was in response to the political dissatisfaction of civil society with the austerity measures imposed by national and local governments on public services to, allegedly, alleviate the level of debt as a result of the 2008 economic crisis. The defence of the Galician language has been at the core of Galician grassroots activities and has constituted an important symbol of these ongoing political and social struggles.

The word Semente [Seed] represents the broader values and teaching ethos which the school wishes to promote. One such value is that of producing a space for 'transformative pedagogy' which is also socially inclusive. Some of their founding principles include coeducation, laicity, an assembly-based decision-making system, respect for child autonomy, direct contact with the local community and respect for the environment. Semente works towards the 'international projection' of Galician by

connecting it to the Portuguese-speaking world. In the Galician context, a grassroots movement exists that advocates for the inclusion of the spoken varieties of Galician within the Portuguese-speaking world, known as 'reintegracionismo' [reintegrationism]. Though a minority movement, it nonetheless plays a significant role in Semente and forms the basis of the particular language ideology on which the schools were founded.

Philologically speaking, and for most of the medieval period, Galician and Portuguese have been contemporarily understood to be part of the same 'linguistic system' or as varieties of an 'archaic language' named 'Galaico-Português'. Within the reintegrationism model, Semente's goal is to educate the first generation of galego-português [Galician-Portuguese], speakers in the 21st century, also called 'galego internacional' [international Galician], 'galego reintegrado' [reintegrated Galician] or even 'português da Galiza' [the Portuguese of Galicia]. Many of these terms are highly contested and carry with them considerable political implications.

Semente is a clear example of an agentive initiative which emerged in the margins, without official or institutional support. This includes both lack of support from institutions led by the Galician language establishment as well as Spanish ones such as the Spanish State educational framework which imposes severe restrictions on language immersion programmes. Therefore, Semente had to find alternative ways to implement their language immersion programme, similar to the alternative grassroots spaces examined by Urla (2012) in the Basque country. As an organisation, Semente also represents an agentive endeavour, since as noted earlier, it moves away from the standardised version of Galician and advocates for a Galician-Portuguese approach which further positions the organisation in the margins as Galician institutions fail to recognise this as a legitimate strategy. Therefore, Semente is not only an agentive initiative as a grassroots organisation that emerged alongside other social movements, but also in terms of how they envisage language revitalisation itself. They do this by reclaiming Galician as part of the Lusophony or the wider Portuguese-speaking world, even though this approach is either misrecognised (Bourdieu, 1991) and/or sometimes penalised by the official Galician institutions.

Methodology

Our study draws on a number of sites of language-based activism linked to the Semente project described earlier. These sites, which can be understood as an 'activist coalition', bring together a variety of grassroots organisations in which language rights activism is aligned with other social movements such as environmentalists, anti-globalisation movements and feminist groups. We have drawn on critical ethnographic sociolinguistic research methods (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Heller *et al.*, 2018) which focus on elucidating socially situated practice. We used methods

central to ethnographic sociolinguistic research such semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 2011; Mason, 2002) as well as participant observation (Atkinson *et al*., 2007), coupled with the collection of material traces (Heller *et al*., 2018). This was also supplemented by fieldnotes of interactions and conversations with language activists. Over a period of six months we gained access to leaders and organisers among grassroots pro-Galician movements. Where possible and practical, we interviewed these activists in person, either in their places of work, at home, or in public settings. We conducted in-depth interviews of approximately 60-minute duration. We also took advantage of opportunities to observe activists in meetings and discussions and recorded fieldnotes on those observations that informed our growing understanding of activist culture and discourse. This also involved periods of time when both researchers were on-site together, allowing them to engage in team ethnography (Creese & Takhi, 2016). Official standard Galician was used for transcribing purposes but one of the quotations included here is transcribed in the Galician-Portuguese standard promoted by Semente and their members (for an overview of the standardisation debate see Dayán-Fernández & O'Rourke, 2020). The data were coded following a mixture of evocative, descriptive and thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016) and analysed in NVivo drawing on Bazeley and Jackson (2013). In the next section, we move on to illustrating how agentive practices are formulated within the Semente context as a response to the hegemonic status quo of Spanish.

Contesting the Hegemony of Spanish and Safeguarding a Galician 'Breathing Space' – Challenges and Tensions

In the early years of the revitalisation project, Semente attracted Galician activist parents who were already bringing up their children in Galician in the home and had made a conscious decision to use Galician with them. As such, Semente can in many ways be seen as an extension of their home family language policy (O'Rourke & Nandi, 2019). In Santiago de Compostela, in particular, where the first school was set up, numbers increased dramatically, so much so that a second pre-school was established along with a new primary school in 2019. The increased popularity of Semente has therefore brought with it a more diverse student population. Some of the newer parents who joined the group, were attracted to the school because of the innovative pedagogical methods on offer and a more strongly child-centred approach. A recurrent concern for activist Galician-speaking parents and for group leaders and educators at Semente was that the 'safe space' which they had created for their children may become 'diluted' with Spanish and as such, may not be providing the alternative space from mainstream education which they sought to escape in the first place. Educators and activists at Semente therefore struggled with the dilemma of how to formulate the monolingual strategies which are

often noted to penetrate many language revitalisation movements. Jaffe (1993: 101) has very aptly referred to this ideological conundrum as:

> […] a fundamental epistemological quandary: how to assert the value of mixed or plural identities in 'minority' societies in which the attempt to escape relations of dominance places a high premium on declarations of absolute difference and clear-cut boundaries.

Indeed, social agents within Semente circles had to discursively juggle between justifying the adoption of what could be perceived (from the outside at least) as socially radical strategies to preserve Galician and their general aim to create a social justice organisation which respected and valued linguistic diversity. In this respect, there was a general recognition amongst parents, teachers and activists at Semente of the hegemonic position of Spanish and the need for this to be contested by adopting assertive strategies to facilitate Galician-speaking spaces. Parents and language activists spoke explicitly about the dominant role of Spanish and, in particular, the role of peninsular Spanish within the Spanish state, and the lack of linguistic referents or valorisation models for Galician which Semente has tried to provide. The underlying sentiment among social actors was one of profoundly felt injustice. There was a collective understanding that fostering Galician was a legitimate way of counteracting Spanish dominance. This also involved the avoidance of *castelanismos* [Spanish sounding terms] which had over time come to be naturalised in Galician oral production. For them, castelanismos were often seen as a sign of linguistic colonisation. Indeed, many participants believed that it was only by adopting exclusively Galician linguistic practices that they could resist the dominance of Spanish in the urban space. The hegemonic role of Spanish thus triggered project leaders and many parents at Semente to carve out Galician-speaking spaces within what they perceived to be an encroaching Spanish-speaking environment. The buildings used to house Galician-medium pre-schools constituted the physical spaces which were used not only for teaching purposes, but also as a means of providing spaces in which parents could hold meetings and cultural events. The baby and toddler group, *Sementinhas* [Little Seeds] took place weekly in these same buildings and provided a space for parents with babies and younger children (in particular mothers) to meet and share experiences of parenthood in a Galician-speaking space. Beyond the physical buildings, parents and children from Semente also sought out other spaces, including the *Gentalha do Pichel*, which as highlighted above is the social centre from which the Semente project emerged. Parents organised frequent meetups in certain bars, cafes and restaurants which were often known to be spaces where Galician is spoken and where the owners were favourably disposed to the language. Indeed, within the city there are spaces which parents and activists explicitly identified as Galician-speaking spaces. For example, some parents identified certain shops, hair salons, book shops

and bars where Galician was spoken by pro-Galician-speaking proprietors who were explicitly supportive of the language. Through a project called Projeto Pontos [Points Project], language activists mapped out businesses across the city where Galician was used prominently and decided to give them annual awards in recognition for their efforts to facilitate Galician-speaking shopping experiences, as well as consciously spending their money in businesses where there was an explicit use of Galician. Social actors at Semente carved out new spaces of interaction both symbolically as well as more concretely through permanent places including alternative bars, social centres and the pre-school buildings described above. They also agentively constructed their own spaces through more fleeting interactional spaces such as spontaneous gatherings at the *parque* [play park], making it an important space in which parents and children from Semente could come together as a group. In doing so, they were attempting to create a critical mass of Galician speakers as a way of counteracting some of the negative experiences that they or others they knew had encountered when taking their children to play parks where the majority of children were Spanish-speaking (see also O'Rourke & Nandi, 2019). It is important to point out that these strategies were not only undertaken by Galician speakers from within the Autonomous Community of Galicia but also embraced by families with mixed ethnocultural backgrounds coming from other parts of Spain, abroad, or the diaspora, for whom Galician had not necessarily been part of their everyday lives before joining the Semente project. Parents from these families, though not orthodoxically considered 'native' Galician themselves, understood and supported the need for Galician-only spaces to exist. They linked this to what they described as the historical legacy of linguistic dispossession that Galician speakers had endured. Adopting Galician-language practices also formed part of their children's future selves as critical Galician citizens.

During visits to the Semente pre-schools, there were many occasions when the contradictions of adopting seemingly monolingual approaches to language while trying to promote linguistic diversity were played out and resolved (or not) by different social actors. For example, teachers, often raised concerns about how Spanish had found its way into the classrooms despite their efforts to maintain it as an exclusively Galician-speaking space. This was sometimes linked to the arrival of a predominantly Spanish-speaking child to the school where the home language may have been Spanish, or in the case of transitioning new speakers who were attempting to adopt Galician-speaking practices but for whom Spanish was still the main language spoken. This often had the effect of changing the sociolinguistic dynamics of the classroom and sometimes led to an increased use of Spanish. There was a general agreement among Semente leaders and stakeholders that, owing to the limited financial and human resources that Semente had as non-profit organisation, Semente

schools would not, at that point, be able to provide the required assistance to allow more children with Spanish as their home language to be fully integrated into the Semente project. This could, they believed, impact their ability to preserve the Galician-immersion experience for which the project was initially created. The teachers we spoke to were sympathetic towards and supportive of transitioning new speaker parents who had very recently embarked on their Galician language journey. Teachers identified the efforts they were making with their own attempts to avoid the use of Spanish in the classroom. However, despite these efforts, both parents and teachers at times expressed anxieties about mixing Spanish and Galician and the need to keep the languages separate. At Semente, there were also individuals who defined themselves as *falantes de toda a vida* [a lifelong speaker of Galician] and who had, unlike their neofalante counterparts, reported having been brought up speaking Galician in the home. These speakers tended to use many Spanish-sounding words which have now become naturalised in Galician, but which are seen as problematic because of the attempt to eliminate them through the language standardisation processes that started in the 1980s. Such speakers reported making great efforts to ensure that they eliminated Spanish-sounding words from the Galician they used in classroom. They often struggled with this and reported that, owing to the omnipresence of Spanish, they would automatically end up using castelanismos despite their efforts. At Semente, teachers and parents used different strategies to maintain the pre-school environment as a Galician-speaking space. For example, in one of the preschools that O'Rourke attended, she was introduced to a language mascot as well as other imaginary figures who she was told 'only spoke Galician'. As one child recounted, 'Si nos escoita falar castelán, marcha!' [If he hears us speaking Castilian, he leaves!]. In different discussions and observations, children often explicitly identified people in the group who they associated with speaking more Spanish than Galician. For many children, speaking Spanish was something which they recognised as being out of place inside the four walls of the pre-school and that Semente was meant to be a Galician-speaking space. Nevertheless, Spanish did get used in the classroom and teachers were often at pains to find corrective strategies to address this. One of the occasions when the use of Spanish became more prevalent was during children's free play activity. Children often used Spanish to imitate characters from cartoons they had seen on Spanish television, which demonstrated that despite all efforts by social agents to prevent children from socialising in Spanish, the overwhelming presence of the majority language filters through and is acutely predominant during free play activity.

While the hegemonic position of Spanish often leads to heightened anxieties around the need to clearly distinguish it from Galician and creates tensions around mixing and translingual practices, there is nevertheless a recognition on the part of many parents that their children *will*

speak and use Spanish because of its use in broader society. Emphasis was placed on the utilitarian value Spanish, on par with other international languages such as English, thus emphasising its instrumental as opposed to the integrative and emotional value ascribed to Galician. One interviewee highlighted that even parents with a heightened sense of commitment to speaking Galician, recognised the instrumental value of Spanish:

> … vai aprender o castelán aínda que non queira, aínda que non queira. E por sorte quere, e eu quero que aprenda castelán e de feito cando el se solta en castelán… Aprécioo tamén porque é a única maneira de que o controle e fale castelán e que se solte e o fale, igual que o inglés, é obvio, por eso aprecio que o estea a falar e que faga, incluso o outro día fixo unha frase completa absolutamente completa sen meterlle unha colocación de pronomes do galego nin nada e xenial, xenial, colocou unha frase completa en castelán xenial, porque eu sei que o vai facer, non será no caso contrario, dá a sensación de que os nenos que son educados en castelán, os pais non lle din, eh, a ver se controlas o galego, é como bah, *eso* da igual aínda que non o controles, *sin* embargo eu estou seguro de que o 100 % ou *eso* é o que acho eu, que os pais que están en Semente, claro que queren que o seu fillo fale castelán.
>
> … he will learn Castilian even if he does not want to, even if he does not want to. And luckily, he wants to, and I want him to learn Castilian and in fact when he speaks in Castilian … I appreciate it also because it is the only way to have a command of the language and to speak Castilian and that he speaks it, like English, obviously, because of that I appreciate that he speaks it and that he does, even the other day he said a complete sentence without using pronouns from Galician, not too out of the ordinary, he used a full sentence in Castilian, great, because I know that is what he will do, it would not happen the other way round, it seems like children who are brought up in Castilian, their parents do not say to them, 'hey, you need to have a command of Galician', and like puhh, it doesn't matter if you don't have a command of Galician, however, I am sure that 100% or that is what I think myself, that parents in Semente want their children to speak Castilian (Parent, Semente, May 2018).

While asserting the value of knowing Spanish along with other languages, such as Galician and English, in this excerpt, the parent also points to the perception that children who are brought up speaking Galician are more linguistically competent in Spanish than children brought up in Spanish are in Galician. This assertion goes against the sometimes-commonplace notion, often propagated in the media, that linguistic immersion in a minoritised language can hinder a child's ability to speak the majority languages. Through a deeper ethnographic understanding of the social practices developed by Semente to preserve Galician, it became apparent that social agents at Semente did not therefore fully subscribe to the 'one language one nation' ideology which language activists are sometimes associated with. One of the mothers at Semente highlighted that she

wanted Galician to be her child's 'mother tongue' while also wanting the child to learn as many languages as possible. A multilingual ideology was thus displayed, encouraging her son to learn and speak many other languages:

> … eu quero que o galego seja a sua lingua materna *pero* quero evitar transmitir-lhe que tem que falar galego ou que hai algo *malo* em falar outras linguas. O que eu nom quero é que el veja que as únicas opçóns som o galego ou o *castelám*. Entóm digamos que um pouco a minha política é na casa falamos galego e logo linguas, *pero* muitas.
>
> … I want Galician to be his mother tongue, but I want to avoid passing on the idea that he has to speak Galician or that there is something wrong with speaking other languages. What I do not want is for him to see that the only options available are Galician or Spanish. So, let's say that my policy is at home we speak Galician and then outside of that other languages, lots of languages (Parent, Compostela, June 2018).

The monolingual ideologies, which from the outside at least, seemed to underlie a Galician-only language policy in the classroom, on closer observation could be seen to serve a more strategic essentialist function (Jaffe, 1999) which existed alongside multilingual ideologies. At Semente, children are, for example, exposed to different varieties of Galician including dialectal forms, standard Galician and reintegrationist Galician which aligns more closely to Portuguese (as noted in the background section). Teachers' multilingual resources are also frequently drawn upon in the classroom. For example, one of the teachers was proficient in both Galician and Spanish sign languages and often introduced these into daily activities with the children. Nevertheless, while some forms of multilingualism are embraced, others (specifically multilingualism which involves Spanish) are sometimes seen as dangerous and encroaching on the Galician-speaking space (see also O'Rourke, 2019) which parents and activists at Semente have set out to create. Such ideologies can be seen as a reaction to the lack of top-down language policies and perceived lack of support for Galician, and attempts to maintain Semente as a Galician-dominant space, as a display of explicit agentive resistance against the perceived hegemony of Spanish.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In Galicia, traditional communities of speakers have been eroded as a result of mobility and as new communities of practice emerge in urban spaces or as social networks. Questions arise in such contexts around the degree to which these new communities of practice are sustained over time given that there can often be a lack of opportunities to use the language in these new urban contexts, in the absence of adequate services and provision. New urban speakers tap into a limited yet effective collective

agency to create and construct new spaces or seek out any existing ones. Semente provides an example of such agentive practices by facilitating 'breathing spaces' in which speaking Galician is not seen as out of place and where speakers are not asked to justify their linguistic behaviour, acting as an agentive counterbalance to the dominance that the majority language, Spanish, has historically acquired.

As an organisation, Semente therefore can be seen to play an important role in mediating social change through the promotion of a particular ideology (Simons & Ingram, 1997) namely, an ideological positioning to counteract the hegemony of Spanish. As a social agent, Semente also undertakes meaningful action through collective agency (Parish & Hall, 2020). In doing so, the revitalisation project plays a potentially important part in reversing language shift through a cellular, bottom-up social movement (O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024). An examination of the circulation of different language ideologies which underly agentive practices thus helps illustrate a way of thinking about planning language ideology in small language revitalisation collectives such as Semente by language activists, educators, parents and by the children themselves, in an effort to promote the use of a minoritised language such as Galician against the structural hegemony of Spanish.

In their efforts to maintain Semente as a 'breathing space' for Galician, parents, teachers and activists' agency sought to establish spaces to speak Galician at all times. This agentive effort is not only implemented at a collective level but also through individual actions to avoid the use of Spanish, including Spanish-sounding words which have become naturalised in Galician. These seemingly monolingual ideologies go contrary to the advice of some scholars that translanguaging can offer a smoother path to the protection of minoritised communities and instead align with the view that translanguaging can also inadvertently favour the use of the majority language at the expense of the numerically and socially weaker minority language (O'Rourke, 2019). This creates the quandary of how to promote plurality in 'minority' societies in which the attempt to escape relations of dominance places an emphasis on clear-cut boundaries between named languages. May (2016) points out that all practices in daily use will become translingual but that this should not detract from a language rights approach to linguistic minorities. This position would as O'Rourke (2019) suggested, give validity to creating safe havens for the language in the form of 'breathing spaces' as Fishman (1991) suggested several decades ago. As we have seen at Semente and in other minoritised language contexts, although speakers *do* engage in translanguaging practices, they can for very good reasons often be ideologically opposed to them. Despite these contemporary scholarly developments, social agents in minoritised contexts highlight the need to invest in the demarcation of their linguistic repertoires as named languages to help fight the imbalances of power between the nation-state language categories and

minoritised ones. Arguably, if 'languaging' were to be fully adopted, those power imbalances might be erased and taken at face value as simply 'organic' language evolution. As such, Semente also provides an example of agency in reclaiming the need to clearly delineate linguistic spaces and to help counteract dynamics of the perceived inequalities they see themselves facing as a linguistic minority. As Urla *et al*. (2017) argue, caution is thus required when critiquing speakers for seemingly reproducing the same monolingual ideologies from which they seek to escape. The reproduction thesis, as Urla calls it, cannot always be taken at face value without knowing more about the micro-level interactions, beliefs and ideologies of social actors on the ground and their reasons behind their investments, something which has been key in understanding the dynamics of a language revitalisation project such as Semente.

Semente also provides an interesting example of a revitalisation project in which the dynamics of mobilisation amongst civil society actors are played out, highlighting the different ways in which speakers engage in collective action in the name of language vitality, functioning as a grassroots social movement. Not all minority language speakers are language activists in the political sense (although many of the neofalantes at Semente are). However, their active social use and investment in learning and speaking a minoritised language, can in itself be considered a form of activist agency and thus a manifestation of agentive stances that defy a certain linguistic status quo. While adopting a new language and becoming a *new speaker* of a minoritised language such as Galician can be understood as an *individual* choice, Semente provides a space where the *collective* choices of urban-based new speakers are channelled through language-based activism and collective action thus agency, framing their language revitalisation efforts as part of a broader social movement similar to what Heidemann (2012) and Urla (2012) have, for instance, found in the case of Basque.

Note

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3 The Dynamics of a Triangle of Agency: Sorbian Language Policy

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Introduction

Agency in language maintenance and revitalisation is a complex activity driven by different actors towards empowering a community to transform the functioning of its language. As Ahearn (2001: 110) admits, '[it] can either reproduce or transform the very structures that shape them'. This issue, as related to the political past of the region, is at the heart of our chapter. Agency is closely related to the concept of language planning that may be defined as activities 'intended to promote systematic linguistic change' (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: ix). The top-down language policy is not enough to present a full picture of the language situation, because 'implicit language policy is an integral part of the culture of the specific entity and is supported and transmitted by the culture' (Schiffman, 1996: 13). Shohamy's (2006) distinction between explicit and implicit language policies prompts a look at the language policy broadly, to go beyond the political statements, and to concentrate on the mechanisms, strategies and negotiations at all levels that influence language practices – in other words, to focus on the agency. Spolsky (2004) differentiated three components of language policy: language practices; language beliefs and ideologies; and language management. The first describes what the typical language behaviour of the members of the community is in different linguistic domains. The second refers to what representatives of the community perceive as appropriate and desirable language behaviour. The third concerns the ideas and ways people responsible for language policy attempt to influence the practices or beliefs of the community. The main actors of language policy are language managers (individuals, groups, institutions) who try to transform the language beliefs and ideologies of the community members. However, centralised planning imposed by institutions or political power often fails in what concerns individuals'

language practices. More effective here is the role of language advocates, i.e. those individuals who may not have the power or authority of language managers but seek to influence their own and their environment's language practices (Spolsky, 2019). In our chapter, we discuss agency in the Sorbian context as a complex network of interdependencies between different actors, both official decision-makers, activists who find themselves between well-structured and financially supported Sorbian institutions and their willingness to transform the Sorbian reality, and individuals with their motivations and ideas about what is best for them, their families and community. Those interdependencies are immersed in the political and power context of established Sorbian structures, Germany-related and particularly post-German Democratic Republic (GDR) attitudes of caution, language ideologies and language reality changing rapidly to the detriment of Sorbian languages. These tensions between the three actors give momentum to change and new solutions, but also sometimes stop important ideas or adjust them to fit the known and safe world.

Our research was carried out from the perspective of critical sociolinguistic ethnography (McCarty, 2011). The analysis of official documents concerning language policy served only as a point of reference to understand better the overt and covert reactions to those policies on the community concerned, the discourses they produced and their agency. In 2018 and 2019 we recorded 20 in depth interviews with the main actors of Upper and Lower Sorbian language policy, including leaders of Sorbian institutions, language activists and people engaged in the protection of Sorbian languages. These interviews were analysed following a content-based discourse analysis method. The third element of our study was 20 micro-sociolinguistic studies (including interviews and participant observations) with people from Upper and Lower Lusatia representing different types of Sorbian speakers. We also conducted participant observation of language practices during different community events where we talked with people. Finally, we organised two workshops with young people from Upper and Lower Lusatia.

This chapter presents how the situation of Sorbian language changes through the interactions between different Sorbian language agents: those who, more or less intentionally, initiate, perform or engage in action around Sorbian in order to strengthen its vitality. They operate on three levels of language policy: the macro, meso and micro (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 52–53). The macro level applies to the state and includes political initiatives and declarations. The meso level is performed by local and regional administrations, institutions and associations. In Lusatia the macro level and meso levels are depicted through the tensions between the official policy for Lusatia and the leaders of Sorbian institutions. The negotiation of responsibility for languages between the State and Sorbian institutions is the result of the broad sociopolitical context of their functioning. A particular place in this process is devoted to the Sorbian

language activists who mediate between Sorbian institutions and the Sorbs. The micro level refers to the people's language practices and attitudes. As we will show through the example of the Sorbian language education, those three levels are mutually interrelated and through this intertwining, the agency in linguistic change is played out.

Background

The Sorbs are a Slavic minority living in Eastern Germany near the borders with Poland and the Czech Republic. Although the population of Sorbs is relatively small with about 60,000 people who identify with this minority, they are internally divided. The main line of division relates to history and politics. Upper Sorbs live today in the Free State of Saxony and Lower Sorbs inhabit the Land of Brandenburg. Even though both communities cooperate on many levels, they perceive themselves as distinct groups. Their current sociolinguistic situation differs significantly due to the political and socio geographical separation with stronger discriminatory pressure on Lower Sorbs in Prussia (Kunze, 1978) than on Upper Sorbs in Saxony where the assimilation policy was never a priority. Those differences affected the situation of the two Sorbian languages, which is a second dividing line of the Sorbian minority (Figure 3.1).

Lower Sorbian today is in critical condition, with an estimated maximum number of speakers fewer than 4000, with this number being only hypothetical as the last comprehensive statistical research in Lusatia dates from a few decades ago (see Elle, 1992). Different non-published statistics claim that there are no more than 400 Lower Sorbian speakers, including a few dozen new speakers. The intergenerational transmission of Lower Sorbian was almost entirely broken between the 1930s and 1950s (Jodlbauer *et al.*, 2001; Norberg, 1996). It was due to a strong anti-Sorbian policy under the Nazi regime and the industrialisation of Lower Lusatia after the Second World War, with the arrival of German-speaking migrants from territories incorporated into Poland. By settling in Lusatia they changed the linguistic balance of this region's inhabitants and enforced the anti-Sorbian attitudes of the dominant society and Lower Sorbs assimilation.

Upper Sorbian is still actively spoken by about 10,000–15,000 people (Elle, 2010a) and the speakers of this language may be found among all generations inhabiting the heartland of Upper Lusatia. This particular situation of Upper Sorbian is connected to the third dividing line of the Sorbs – religion. The most important step in the development and division of two Sorbian languages was the Reformation. Most of the Sorbs converted in the 16th century to Protestantism with only a small Upper Sorbian community who remained Catholics. According to the statistics, in the 19th century, there were still approximately 200,000 Sorbian Protestants, both in Lower and Upper Lusatia, alongside a group of 20,000 Sorbian Catholics (Malink, 2017). Protestantism turned out to be

Figure 3.1 Official bilingual Sorbian-German areas in Lower Lusatia (Brandenburg) and Upper Lusatia (Saxony), Germany. Map by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institution

an important factor of cultural and linguistic assimilation. For the Catholic community, in contrast, protecting its ethnic, linguistic and religious boundaries was an important challenge and factor in enforcing their collective identity. In consequence, all Sorbian areas inhabited by Protestants have been assimilated, while only the Catholic Upper Sorbs maintained intergenerational transmission and constitute still today the numerical majority in some villages on the territory they inhabit (Walde, 2004). The Catholic Sorbs perceive the relation between identity, participation in religious customs and traditions, and language use as inseparable (Kimura, 2015; Pollack, 2018) and recognise themselves as the only 'real' Sorbs. Today they also form the largest, most conscious and most

determined group protecting Sorbian. The phenomenon of the Catholic Sorbs has an essential significance for today's language policy in Lusatia, and impacts (both positively and negatively) language agency.

The Sorbs are recognised as a 'national minority' in Germany. Both Sorbian languages are also recognised in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and Sorbian institutions, as well as their cultural and linguistic activities, are funded by the Foundation for the Sorbian People created in 1991. The rights of the Sorbs are protected separately by the constitutions of the two German states they inhabit and therefore, Upper and Lower Sorbs have to deal with different legal arrangements and problems. At the same time, however, most of the Sorbian institutions are shared by both Lower and Upper Sorbs, with the main part located in Upper Lusatia and its Lower Sorbian branch.

The Lower Sorbs may be called a 'double minoritised group' – faced with Germans and with Upper Sorbs (Marti, 2014). Their linguistic situation, including a three-generation long break in language transmission has increased the urgency to develop their own strategy of language protection. For Upper Sorbs the complication is positioned elsewhere. A large majority of the Upper Sorbian language policymakers are Catholic Sorbs. They know their community's needs well and feel responsible for keeping it unchanged. In consequence, they often do not perceive the problems of other (partially) linguistically assimilated Sorbian communities, including the Protestant Upper Sorbs. Owing to the language strategies of separating Sorbian and German worlds (Ratajczak, 2011), Catholic Sorbs have ambivalent attitudes towards new speakers of the language they perceive as 'theirs' (Dołowy-Rybińska & Ratajczak, 2021). This is also reflected in how Upper Sorbs develop and evaluate their language policy.

When trying to define current Sorbian language agency as lying at the intersection of responsibility of different Sorbian actors and the tensions between different Sorbian groups, we have to take into consideration a few important factors that have influenced it. This includes the sustainability of the Sorbian institutional structures in different political systems, and their social effects, with Sorbs' passivity being the most important. In consequence, language activists in Lusatia have to constantly negotiate their position and explain their engagement with the people and institutions. Finally, the inhabitants of Lusatia – speakers and potential speakers of Sorbian languages – are strongly affected by the negative attitudes towards Sorbian and its use in the public sphere escalating sometimes to aggression against them (Walde, 2012). In this chapter, we will present the Sorbian language agency as a complex system of tensions between three Sorbian actors: institutions, language activists and the people. This dynamic of a triangle agency is presented against the background of tensions between different Sorbian communities and their divisions: Lower and Upper Sorbs, Catholic and Protestants, 'native' and 'new' speakers.

Sorbian Institutions: The Responsibility of the State and People's Inaction

It is impossible to understand either the present situation of the Sorbian communities and languages or the tensions between different Sorbian language agents without referring to the changes that were introduced in Lusatia during the GDR era (1949–1990). The first top-down bilingual language policy of the region was launched in 1949 (Schurmann, 2016). In the 1950s and later the entire Sorbian language infrastructure was established, including Sorbian education, media (newspapers and radio programmes), editing house, research institution, music and dance ensemble and theatre. Most of them still exist today. Yet, the language policy of this period was under strict control of the state and of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. The main Sorbian organisation created in 1912, Domowina, became a mass organisation and had to consult politically on any activity undertaken. Its role as an agent of language change was reduced to a 'transmission belt' for Party politics and ideology (Elle, 2010b). The Sorbs felt they had no real influence on the decisions which involved them. This ambiguity – having unprecedented opportunities to protect their language, on the one hand, and the necessity to limit their expectations within the framework dictated by the political system, on the other hand – had important consequences. Sorbs learned to expect state intervention and not to struggle for their rights (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2014). This still affects language reclamation in Lusatia.

While many Sorbs gave up their language, the Catholics developed their own strategy of language maintenance as a family matter and a close-knit community grounded on participation in the religious life of the community. This was also a response to the growing hostility of the German population of Lusatia towards the Sorbs and their languages. Even if not being language managers, they remained advocates for their language, and protected it against the dominant society.

The model practised in the GDR remains in force. Even today the Sorbian leaders place responsibility for the Sorbian languages on the State. Dawid Statnik, the President of the Domowina, explains:

> (…) w tej tučasnej spěchowanskej strukturje Serbow, to bohužel móžno njeje. To rěka, to by sebi žadało wot němskeje politiki, Sakskeho-Braniborskeho zwjazka, wezo jedne cyle hinaše spěchowanje. Pozadk je po mojim měnjenju tón, te tučasne spěchowanje serbskeho ludu, je we wěstym zmysle nastało, na chribjeće wuwića institucijow. (…) Poprawom by jen dyrbjał we wěstym zmysle, pak jednu tabula rasa činić, štož njeje zmysłapołne, abo by jen cyle jednorje też dyrbjał kraj a zwjazk z tym konfrontować, zo to štož my nětkole činimy, njewotpowěduje tej zasadźe active offer, štož by po mojim měnjenju mjenujcy potom tón přichodny krok był, kotryž by k tomu wjedł, zo jen też tón skupinu Serbow samych aktiwěruje a też w tym zmysle docyła wukmani, też so z tajkej strategiju zaběrać, (…). [Ale] ani ta financielna móžnosć aktualnje njejstej.

> (…) in the current structure of support for the Sorbs, it is unfortunately impossible [to develop an appropriate language policy]. This means that we would need to ask German politicians, the Lands of Saxony and Brandenburg, for different protection. Today the main support is oriented towards the development of Sorbian institutions. (…) Honestly, we would have to erase everything that is now, become a *tabula rasa*, but that is not reasonable, or we would have to confront the State and the institutions with the fact that what we are doing now does not correspond to this rule of active offer, which in my opinion should be the next step to activate the Sorbs and explain to them what such strategy means, and how to do that (…). Yet, there is also no financial possibility to do so.

Developing a complex language policy, therefore, and being an active agent of language change, are presented as impossible for two reasons. First, it is the State that dictates the rules, and the Sorbs would have to ask the Lands to change the way they are protected. Doing this would require a proactive attitude. Secondly, today's language policy is based on a well-established system of Sorbian institutions. Some of them are – at least to a certain extent – fossilised as they have existed in more or less the same form for many years and there is no political and social will to change them. We have to recognise that the Sorbian institutions are actually the only employment sector, with a few hundred positions, which requires the knowledge of Sorbian. The President of Domowina speaks about 'becoming a *tabula rasa,*' erasing the past to be able to develop new concepts of language policy. Yet, the status quo is protected by the State, and from the Sorbian perspective any change of the system is risky because it is never possible to predict all the consequences of a change (Cooper, 1989). Therefore the status quo is also protected by the Sorbian leaders and by people whose lives are linked to the Sorbian infrastructure. Adding to this is that any reform of the institutions is difficult, so the Sorbs prefer to remain with what they know rather than risk that what is new might fail to provide.

Today each Sorbian institution has its own approach to language policy dependent on the situation of the community (differences in Upper and Lower Lusatia) and the awareness of the people responsible (whether it is required that Sorbian institution members or employees speak Sorbian or at least learn it, or it is accepted that institution communication is carried out in German). Sorbian institutions' leaders from the Catholic community in the interviews stated that they promote an 'intuitive' language policy, described as 'hygiene of daily life'. Such a language policy is based on 'the hope' that, in one way or another, 'everything will be fine' and this does not demand an active language strategy. With this method the Sorbian organisations transfer the private strategy of Catholics to maintain the language at the official level, ignoring the fact that this strategy is not efficient any longer. This problem has been mentioned by Susann Šenkec, Chairperson of the Foundation for the Sorbian People. She said:

> (…) te činja wšě dobre wěcy, ale te wěcki njeběža na dypku hromadźe a (…) je to disfunkcionalita a my dyrbimy so tym stajić. (…) je to tež zamołwitosć Założboweje rady tutu funkcionalitu přez te spěchowanske móžnosće, my pak dyrbimy při tym na tu tamnu wěcku hladać, zo je přesadźenje Witaj-koncepcije a potom předźěłanja do 2plus je nach wie vor statny nadawk. (…) za mnje wosobinsce nošer rěčnopolitiskeho koncepta abo rěčnopolitiskeje strategije je zastupjerka zajimow [Serbow], to je nadawk Domowiny a wona ma za to jedyn (…) Rěčny centrum WITAJ [kotryž] ma jasne nadawki a wosebje stara so wo tak mjenowane korpusowe a statusowe planowanje. My dyrbimy pak přiwšěm sej wuwědomić a na tym procesu jen je, zo njeje tute planowanje we wšěch polach hižo hač na dypk definowane a na tym so de facto dźěła.
>
> (…) they [institutions] all do good things, but things don't come to the point and (…) that's a dysfunctionality we have to face. (…) it is also the responsibility of the Board of the Foundation because of the funding opportunities, but we have to pay attention to the fact that the implementation of the concept of Witaj [immersion education] and then continuation in '2plus' [bilingual education] is still a State responsibility. (…) for me personally Domowina as the political representative of [Sorbian] interests is responsible for the language policy or for the strategy of language policy, it is their job and it has (…) Language Center WITAJ [which] has clear tasks especially in respect to the corpus and status planning. But we still have to be aware that this process of planning for all areas is still not precisely defined and *de facto* we are working on it.

Language policy on a meso level is distributed to different Sorbian institutions among which none feel fully responsible for undertaking a coherent language policy in the region. This problem of Sorbian institutions has been discussed by the Sorbs for the last 20 years (Šatava & Hose, 2000), and some changes have occurred. They are the results of the tensions between the limitations of the Sorbian institutions, the influence of the new ideas of Sorbian activists and the needs of people who have become increasingly conscious of the situation as a result of the new media and the influence of new discourses. Besides the discourse of language endangerment particularly important in Lower Lusatia, the recent discourse of the benefits of multilingualism is intensively used by the Sorbian institutions within the framework of gaining new speakers through education. The discourse of pride, particularly vital in the Catholic Upper Lusatia, is now enforced by the discourse of profit (Duchêne & Heller, 2012) even if the knowledge of Sorbian is useful only when working in Sorbian institutions, if at all.

At the intersection of these various tendencies, important documents were created on the macro level aimed at improving the situation of the Sorbian languages. In Saxony a Master Plan for Encouraging and Revitalizing the Use of the Sorbian Language was published in 2012 (Maßnahmenplan, 2012) and then 2019 (Zweiter Maßnahmenplan, 2019) and in Brandenburg the Master Plan of Strengthening the Lower Sorbian

Language in 2016 (Brandenburger Landesplan, 2016). These top-down documents mandated the Sorbs to act more decisively than before. Currently Sorbian councils together with federal state governments are working to implement some new regulations for the Sorbian languages. One of them is to attract young people keen to become teachers in Sorbian schools.

Sorbian Language Activist – Between the Sorbs and Sorbian Institution

Many Sorbs distanced themselves from the Sorbian institutions due to their being part of the GDR totalitarian system, even though these institutions offered careers to many Sorbs (Meškank, 2011). In most cases, however, the reservations that local Sorbian organisations had about cooperating with the Domowina have now been overcome, and when the Sorbs have new initiatives, they cooperate with Domowina or search for financial support through the Foundation for the Sorbian People. This is also because the system of supporting the Sorbs is centralised. As a consequence, for many people in Lusatia it is difficult to imagine they can do something for Sorbian without official support and they do not actively search for possibilities and ideas from outside. Měto Nowak, Advisor to the representative for Sorbian/Wenden affairs in the Brandenburg Ministry of Science, Research Culture, and a Lower Sorbian language activist, comments on this:

> My mamy teke jaden potencial luźi, kenž sobu gótujo, ale ebn njepśiźo wót samego na take něco, dokulaž njepasujo do swójich strukturow nejpjerwjej, ale až maš taki potencial, kenž móžoš aktiwěrowaś. (…)To jo něco, źož ja se pśecej źiwam, až serbske institucije njegótujo nic ako crowd funding, Drittmittel, Spenden sammeln.
>
> We have potentially some people who could do something but they don't because what they think of does not fit the existing structures. But there are people you could potentially activate. (…) But I am astonished that the Sorbian institutions are not using crowdfunding, are not searching for external funds, are not collecting donations.

The central system of financing Sorbs has both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, there are funds for activities for the Sorbian language and culture. On the other hand, this situation sustains the passivity of Sorbs in searching for more controversial ideas as it is easier to accommodate to the system that already exists. It is easier to be a language advocate than an activist. In addition, internal relations of power in Lusatia sometimes result in disregarding important bottom-up ideas. The Protestant Upper Sorbs feel ignored, institutionally unrepresented and unsupported by the Catholic Sorbs. A leader of the Sorbian Protestant

association, Mato Krygaŕ, told us how his attempts to institutionalise language courses for people in a Protestant village failed:

> Ten problem jo, my nimamy dosć wučerjow. Ja som jónu jaden serbski kurs organizował [a] ten zajm bě wulki. (…) Pón chcych ja te cyłe lěta jużo hišći jónu tajki kurs organizować, a pón njejo klapowało, tam som se tej na Witaj wobrośił, na tom. Ale te njejsu móhli pomhać. „My mamy naše kursy we Budyšynje.' To móžu wóni zaručić. (…) ja něke so sam wó ceptarku staraś (…) Ale z toho rěčneho kursa jo pón ta bjesada nastała. (…) No also to jo śěžko.
>
> The problem is that we do not have enough teachers. I organised by myself one Sorbian language course in my village and the interest was huge. (…) Then, I wanted to repeat it but the Language Center WITAJ decided that they cannot support us and that we can come to Budyšin for the courses they organise. (…) I will now look for a teacher myself. But this was the ground of our 'Sorbian table meetings'. Well, it is hard.

This excerpt of the interview illustrates the problem of tensions between different communities in Lusatia. The bottom-up idea was born from the observation of the needs of people inhabiting one of Sorbian Protestant villages, today almost totally linguistically assimilated. The Sorbian activist's idea was to offer a language course to people who meet on a daily basis and have expressed their willingness to learn their heritage language. Such an attitude coming from non-active speakers of Sorbian is a recent phenomenon created thanks to language revitalisation efforts. However, it is still very fragile. Such a course serves to integrate people and give them the opportunity to use a language which – apart from dedicated spaces – is hardly spoken in their area. Therefore, the initiative of Mato Krygaŕ may be called a model language revitalisation activity aimed at creating new speakers of Sorbian. According to his words, the course was a success as it gave a beginning to the 'Sorbian table meeting', social gatherings held once in a while, during which people have the opportunity to talk in Sorbian. However, asked for support, the central Sorbian institution refused, using the argument that they may participate in the course organised in Budyšin/Bautzen. They ignored the fact that participation in the standard course serves different objectives: it may provide some knowledge of Sorbian, but not the willingness and opportunity to use it resulting from the exchange with community members.

Owing to language shift which occurs, to different extent, in both Upper and Lower Lusatia, new speakers play an important role in Sorbian languages agency, particularly in Lower Lusatia. Given that the intergenerational transmission of Lower Sorbian has been almost completely interrupted three generations ago and that there are almost no Lower Sorbian native speakers, no one questions that the survival of Lower Sorbian depends on new speakers. While in Upper Lusatia, particularly

among the Catholics where language is still spoken on a daily basis, there is a more ambivalent attitude towards new speakers. In their case, the whole spectrum of language ideologies is often linked to traditional communities: ideology of ownership, legitimate speaker and authenticity (see Dołowy-Rybińska, 2021; Dołowy-Rybińska & Ratajczak, 2019). The attitudes towards new speakers and their role for the future of Sorbian go hand in hand with the attitudes towards language activism. Měto Nowak explains:

> (…) we Dolnej Łužyce ta rěcna a etniska situacija jo wjelgin słabša a cesto wjelgin wobgrozona była, až tam teke ta akceptanca jo wětša za druge formy, za drugich luźi, kenž wót wenkownego pśidu a kśě pomagaś. (…) to su wšo luźe, kenž su do Dolnych Serbow pśišli, su se pón mócnje angažěrowali, identificěrowali, a teke na jadnej wašni, źož jo to widobnje było za wšyknych. (…) A we Górnej Łužycy, pón jo to skerjej katolski tśirog. Tam we ewangelskej Górnej Łužycy jo ta serbska wětšyna tam za mójim zdaśim teke rěc zabydnuła, (…) A tam wěcej běży za mójim zdaśim pśez wósobinske zwiski, (…) móžomy to raz wjacor we kjarcmje rědowaś, abo pón was weiß ich, pó namšy a dla togo njejo ważny na strukturelnej rowninje komunicěrowaś, dokulaž my smy doch powědali - ten to wě.
>
> (…) in Lower Lusatia this linguistic situation is much weaker and the language is seriously endangered. Therefore, this acceptance for different forms [of acting] and for people from outside who come here to help is stronger. (…) in Lower Lusatia there are a lot of people who came from outside, who are engaged, who identify themselves with the Sorbs, and they are treated equally to those from the speech community (…) And in Upper Lusatia, there is this Catholic community. The majority belongs to the Protestant community but there, the language is lost to a large extent. (…) And [among Catholic Sorbs] most things go through these personal relations, that [you know someone and then] you talk about it one evening in the pub, or after mass. You do not need to do it officially, because it is already communicated.

We return here to the problem concerning the division and the relations of power between Upper and Lower Sorbs and between Catholics and Protestants. Activists in Lower Lusatia are mainly (if not exclusively) new speakers, many of whom come from outside Lusatia. Therefore, they have different experiences and purposes, and they are accepted as Sorbian speakers by practically all Lower Sorbian actors. There are among the oldest generation of Lower Sorbs persons whose language trauma was so great that they are still against language revitalisation, although, under the influence of a changing discourse, their attitudes are also changing slowly. The motivations of becoming a speaker of Lower Sorbian are varying, but what is common for all young Lower Sorbian speakers who participated in the workshop we organised, is the difficulty of practising Lower Sorbian. Owing to the very limited number of Lower Sorbian speakers, creating a space where this language may be used is now the

main challenge. As one of workshop participants stated referring to his Lower Sorbian language practices:

> I had Lower Sorbian in kindergarten and in primary school (…) At school we've been learning grammar all the time and therefore I have to say that the lessons of Sorbian were not attractive for me. But activities like Witaj-camp, where you speak only Sorbian during a week, it is a lot, and during this week when you speak only Sorbian, then when I came home and my mother asked me what did we do, I answered her in Sorbian! [At home] I don't speak Sorbian, I can speak some with my brother, but… It is not like you can speak every day and only Sorbian. (…) For me it was important to have a chance to speak Lower Sorbian here [during the workshop] because there is almost no chance to do it in your free time.

In Upper Lusatia people engaged in the language issues have often a rather conservative attitude towards language activism and do not want to be called 'language activists' at all. They even claim that the phenomenon of 'language activism' is unknown in Lusatia which may be explained by the fact that activism was compromised in GDR times and is semantically linked with the active and politically motivated struggle for rights which is rare in Lusatia (as this is considered against the State and may be dangerous for the status quo of the community). In the Catholic community people do not perceive what they do on behalf of Sorbian in terms of engagement but of living through their language (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2020). As a consequence, the type of language activism in Lusatia does not resemble 'vigorous or energetic action that individuals and groups practise to bring about a desired goal' (Combs & Penfield, 2012: 461), e.g. linguistic change. It is rather activism without the label where people who have new ideas and are engaged on behalf of their language and community constantly negotiate with the Sorbs and Sorbian institutions the boundaries of possible changes, place for new solutions and activities.

For the same reason, the Catholics' attitudes towards new speakers are much more distanced compared with Lower Lusatia. However, we have to stress that during the workshop with young Upper Sorbs, all of them from the Catholic community, new speakers became one of the most important topics chosen by the participants. Although the process of changing language practices among Upper Sorbs will take time, younger generations started to notice the necessity of new speakers. As one of the young Upper Sorbian language activists said:

> Haj, also noworěčnicy su wězo absolut ważne za přichod serbšćiny hłownje něke, dokelž njedawe něke einfach wjac tak wjele Serbow, zo bu jen bjez tych wušoł na přikład sej tež přece wjace Serbow jeno němskoh partnera namkaja, abo někoh, kiž njemóže serbsce a zo tón potom tej serbce nawuknje a tak, to widźu ja jako jara ważne. Haj a serbstwo budźe na kóždy pad jenož šće přežiwić, jeli so tež noworěčnicy přeco dale spěchuja a namakaja.

> Yes, new speakers are indeed very important for the future of Sorbian mainly now, because there are not so many Sorbs that we could deal without them, for example also Sorbs find a German partner, or someone who cannot speak Sorbian and then this person can learn it, and I see it as very important. Yes, and I think Sorbs can resist only if the new speakers support it and find it.

Although the Upper Sorbs are strong through the Catholic community and its advocacy for everyday language use, new speakers are also among them who - proportionally to their number - play a role in language advocacy. Julian Nyča, an atheist who initiated the Sorbian Wikipedia and became language activist, explains that his path towards becoming a new speaker was complicated:

> Ja sym tón puć šoł (…) a potom sej přemysliš, (…) čehodla je to tak ćežko, čehodla dyrbi jen so prócować w tutej dwuréčnej Łužicy jako priwatny człowjek, (…) čehodla njeje to normalne, zo je to samo wonka dwuréčne, čehodla njej to normalne, zo naše dźěći w šuli a wšojedne hač w serbskej abo w jednej druhej šuli serbsce nawuknu (…) a to ma wězo z tym činić, zo sy ty twoje prócy sam měł a to potom jen chce, zo to dale dźe a zo so to wuwije a zo to lěpje hodwe.
>
> I have chosen this path (…) and then I was thinking (…) why it was so difficult, why do you have to make such an effort in this bilingual Lusatia as a private person (…) why is it not normal that it is bilingual in outside world, why is it not normal, that our children learn Sorbian and no matter if it is a Sorbian or another school (…) and that obviously has something to do with the fact that you had difficult time with it [learning Sorbian] and then you want it to survive and to develop it and improve.

Brought up in German monolingual normality, the Upper Sorbian activist demands the same for Sorbian. He does not accept the deficits at school, but was ready to fight for equal standards as he struggled himself to become a new speaker. As a Sorbian new speaker and atheist, he rejects the model of a closed Sorbian Catholic community where the only way of transmitting Sorbian is through family.

The Triangle Exemplified: Language-in-Education Policy in Lusatia

Creating a new education concept for Sorbian languages became the most important challenge after the political change in Germany. In the former system, pupils in Upper Lusatia were divided into two groups. In the 'A' classes, mainly for native speakers, they had most of the lessons through the medium of Upper Sorbian. The 'B' classes were dedicated to pupils from German-speaking families, with or without Sorbian origins. They had Sorbian as a second language a few hours per week (Pech, 2001). In Lower Lusatia Sorbian was taught only as a foreign language. Although

this system was successful in maintaining Upper Sorbian where it was still spoken, it did not function well enough to create many new speakers. At the same time the situation of Lower Sorbian became critical and Upper Sorbian was also losing speakers even among the Catholic community. In addition, the attitudes towards Lower Sorbian were hesitant if not negative. In the case of Upper Lusatia, the relations with Germans as well as the Catholics' strategy of distancing themselves from Germans and to live in separate worlds, were making it difficult to accept non-Sorbs as potential Sorbian speakers. Therefore, the idea of creating a new system based on language revitalisation and new speakers needed to come from language activists as a bottom-up idea.

In 1991 the Serbske Šulske Towarstwo (SŠT) (Sorbian School Association) was created and the idea behind it was to adapt some new revitalisation concepts in Lusatia from other minorities. The idea finally came from Jan Bart (2018), a French language teacher and non-Catholic whose son had married a German woman, and who was afraid not to be able to speak in Sorbian with his grandchildren, as switching to German when in contact with non-Sorbian speakers is a common language practice in Lusatia, and the main reason for the language transmission shift in bilingual families. The idea was to transfer to Lusatia the concept of the Breton Diwan immersion schools. But having an idea was one thing, the other was convincing Sorbs and Sorbian institutions which turned out to be not easy. Bart said later that he had spoken with many Sorbs for three years explaining the 'Breton model' before he finally managed to 'break the ice' of the Sorbs (Bart, 2018: 33).

SŠT took over the management of the immersion system. The State supported it as it was in line with the European discourse on multilingualism, which started to be fashionable at the time. At the beginning Sorbs were reluctant to accept the idea of immersion. In Lower Lusatia the most important challenge necessary to attract children was to change the negative attitudes towards Sorbian and teaching through this language. This became possible, among others, thanks to mobilising the 'Western' counter discourse of the benefits of multilingualism (Ratajczak, 1998), which is still used in Sorbian language education.

In Upper Lusatia implementation of the idea of immersion was perceived differently in different communities. In the Catholic territory, with most children from Sorbian-speaking families, the immersion kindergartens and schools functioned well. But outside this area, in many villages – similar to Lower Lusatia – parents did not want to agree to full immersion as it was 'too Sorbian' for them. In 2001 the Rěčny centrum WITAJ/ WITAJ-Sprachzentrum, (RCW) (Language Centre WITAJ) was created as part of Domowina, to take on the responsibility of Sorbian Education. Both RCW and SŠT divided the responsibility for different Witaj establishments. Each institution had a different vision of what was important for the Sorbian: a full immersion (SŠT) or a compromise between the

attitudes of parents and the realisation of the educational aims (RCW). The negotiations between parents and the Sorbian institutions' leaders resulted in the resignation of the full immersion system. Both sides adhered to the same language ideologies, including the one of Sorbian not being a fully fledged language and therefore not appropriate to be the only medium of instruction. This is how the Chairperson of the RCW, Beata Brěžanowa, explains the lack of strong Sorbian language policy:

> W Chróśćicach je ta zakładna šula zhubiła někotrych šulerjow tuteje serbskosće dla a to njejsu jenož Němcy wottrašeni byli, ale samo Serbja, dokelž je jim to přeserbske było. Z mojeho wida je to woprawdźe jenož jedyn komunikaciski problem, ale tón komunikaciski problem ma wězo też něšto z tymi wosobinami činić, kak sebjewědomi a relaxed woni su. Also, jen dyrbi też trošku relaxed być **a nic přeco hnydom jednu katastrofu widźeć, hdyž so něhdźe tak intensiwnje njeserbuje, kaž sej jen to w idealnym padźe předstaji.**
>
> There is the [Sorbian] primary school in Chróśćicy which lost some pupils because of its Sorbian character and there were not only Germans who were scared away but also Sorbs for whom it was too Sorbian. From my point of view there is the problem of communication, but this problem is connected with those people, how self-conscious and relaxed they are. So, a person needs also to be a little relaxed and **not to see a catastrophe when Sorbian is not used that intensively as it could be in the ideal situation**.

This declaration does not sound like a language reclamation statement. This strategy of not 'disturbing' Germans with Sorbian, is a serious obstacle in both the maintenance and revitalisation of the Sorbian languages. Today, as a consequence of these attitudes, only some of the Witaj kindergartens are carrying out full immersion education. In others, Sorbian plays a minor role (Menzel & Šołćina, 2018), sometimes only as a 'language-for-performance' (Sallabank, 2013). Yet, the system is still referred to as 'immersion' and is promoted as enabling children to achieve bilingualism. This is how Gregor Kliem, Lower Sorbian language activist, assesses it:

> Ja pśidu how do Łužycy aby mógał teke mójomu synoju wěcej serbskego pobitowaś a pón jo to tak samorozmějucy było, až se wě, my źomy do tej Witaj źišownje. (…) A to jo pón total taki Reinfall, wjelgin negatiwne nazgónjenje było, dokulaž .. To som teke wót zachopjeńka wěźeł, to njebuźo něnto 100 procentnje, až nichten serbski powěda. Ale což jo mě tak pśechwatało, samo z jadnom luźom, kenž serbski móźo, wóni njepowědaju serbski. Něchten tam, nich ta wjednica abo źišownicy, wótkubłarki. Nichten tam ze mnu serbski powěda. Jano take floskely a pón wjelgin spěšnje do nimskego padnu.
>
> I came back to Lusatia to assure my son more contact with Sorbian and it was evident that we would send him to Witaj kindergarten. (…) And it was then such failure, very negative experience because… I knew it from the beginning that it would not be 100% Sorbian. But what surprised me was that even a person who knew Sorbian, they did not speak Sorbian.

> Nobody, neither the head of kindergarten nor the kindergarten teachers. Nobody spoke Sorbian with me. Only some platitudes and then quickly switched into German.

The lack of advocacy for language policy in Lusatia and the fuzzy responsibility for language management made it impossible to implement a coherent language-in-education policy for Sorbian. Sorbs were only allowed to remodel some of the already existing kindergartens and some State primary Sorbian schools but they never tried to acquire their own education system which would have been independent of the State and the macro-level policy. Some Sorbian language activists think that being dependent on State funds and decisions is one of the most important Sorbian mistakes. Piwarc, a Sorbian activist, accuses Sorbs of inaction in the face of the State decisions to close schools because of the insufficient numbers of pupils. As he wrote on his blog:

> Stat je wina na so minjacych rěčnych rumach w kubłanišćach. – To njetrjechi. (…) Němcy w susodnych kónčinach su na zawrjenje statnych šulow ličby šulerjow dla ze założenjom swobodnych šulow reagowali.
>
> The State is responsible for the disappearance of the Sorbian language at schools – It is not true. (…) In neighbouring villages, Germans reacted on closing their schools due to the diminishing number of children by establishing private schools. (https://piwarc.wordpress.com/2018/10/07/fake-news-wo-serbskim-sulstwje)

Both educational programmes, the Witaj programme in Lower Lusatia, and the '2 plus' system in Upper Lusatia, face problems and are subject to different reactions from the Sorbs. In Lower Lusatia, besides the single primary schools with bilingual teaching, the role of Sorbian is rather symbolic, which is also the case in the Lower Sorbian Grammar School. This is often explained by people responsible for the schools, that if there were more Sorbian, the school would lose pupils and be closed. The lack of continuity of education in Lower Sorbian in the schools has a negative effect on learners' language competences as they regress from kindergarten to Grammar School. In addition, as the programme evaluators write:

> Fluent language skills are not considered necessary, they are also not the goal to be strived towards. You can hear in the interviews with the Witaj teachers examples such as, 'We do not want to raise small native speakers' or 'It is not so important to me that children speak Sorbian properly'. In this manner, Sorbian is marginalised and downgraded, and the principles [of immersion education] are practically portrayed as absurd. (Werner & Schulz, 2018: 59)

This evaluation coincided with an attempt to impose a new rule which did not allow the opening of a class when the number of pupils was below 12, which would mean that almost all the Lower Sorbian classes would be shut down. This time people's reactions were firm. They reclaimed their

language rights. Parents, together with Sorbian institutions and the Sorbian Council, began a campaign to challenge this law. They collected almost 35,000 signatures in a petition against the law and sent it to the Ministry. The Ministry has begun to collaborate with the Sorbian Council and they are working on a new resolution to protect Sorbian interests. This was also the beginning of discussions in Lower Lusatia about their schooling system. As Kathleen Komolka, one of this movement's leaders said:

> Das ist was, was ich in Brandenburg einfach eklatant vermisse. Ein durchgehendes Konzept, (…), wie mit Dingen umgegangen wird, gerade mit bilingualer niedersorbischsprachiger Bildung in dem Fall. Und das ist auch, was wir immer wieder fordern im Zuge der Petition (…) die wir für die Elterninitiative schreiben. Aber ich habe so das Gefühl, gerade diese laute Forderung nach einem Konzept ist die, die am stetigsten und am konsequentesten ignoriert und überhört wird. Und ja das macht mich wütend und traurig, weil ich glaube (…) es wird erst eine wirkliche Verbesserung mit einem tragfähigen und wirklich in die Zukunft gerichteten soliden Bildungskonzept für die Revitalisierung der Sprache geben und das haben wir einfach nicht.
>
> That's something that I find glaringly missing in Brandenburg. A general concept of how to deal with things, especially with bilingual Lower Sorbian education. And that is also what we repeatedly demand in the petition (…) of the parents' initiative. But I have the feeling that this loud demand for a concept is the one that is most constantly and consistently ignored and overheard. And yes that makes me angry and sad because I believe (…) there will only be a real improvement with a sustainable and really future-oriented solid educational concept for the revitalization of the language and we just don't have that.

Although the number of parents who want to be engaged in this initiative and who are willing for their children to have a full immersion education is very limited, the discussion on the Witaj project has started.

In Upper Lusatia, a new concept called '2plus' was established in the 2000s based on European guidelines and adopted by Saxony as an official schooling programme (Rindler-Schjerve & Vetter, 2012). The choice of this particular teaching programme was not an independent choice of the minority itself but a political decision at local government level. Many teachers in informal discussions argued that the imposed system is not a good one, but they cannot change it and have to implement it as well as possible. The official goal formulated on the macro level was that 'All pupils should achieve at school an active Sorbian-German bilingualism, regardless of the respective language level' (2plus, 2019). However, this has turned out not to be possible. As Ludmila Budarjowa, Chairperson of the SŠT, explains:

> Tón dalši zmylk [z 2plus] je tón hdyž bychmy kaž te pěstowarnje, naše šule, hdy bychmy móhli tam sami postajeć, by to cyle hinak wupadało, potom bychmy my móhli to imersiju hnydom konsekwentnje dale wjesć.

(…) Witaj je za nas dospołna imersija, respektiwnje imersija a w šuli so wona w koncepciji 2plus njenałožuje. Kultusowe ministerstwo je dopušćiło jenož w někotrych předmjetach tu serbšćinu a to wo tym so dźensa njerěči. (…) wězo je to daloko preč wot imersije.

The problem is that it [2plus] would be different if we could have our own schools like we have our kindergartens and we could continue an immersion system. (…) Witaj project is based on total or partial immersion, but it does not function like this in the 2 plus system. The Ministry allowed us to have Sorbian as a language of instruction only on some subjects (…) obviously, it is far from immersion.

The way the '2plus' system functions today creates many obstacles for learners to become new speakers (see also Dołowy-Rybińska & Ratajczak, 2019; Ratajczak & Dołowy-Rybińska, 2019). It should be stressed, however, that for the first time it created the opportunity for non-Sorbian speakers to continue learning a minority language from preschool to 12th grade. Very slowly, the increase in contacts between native and non-native Upper Sorbian students began to resemble the way Sorbs from the Catholic community perceive the role of new speakers. Language practices and ideologies directed against new speakers are now changing thanks to education being open to non-native speakers, particularly among the young generation:

Erik tón běše em poprawom ryzy Němc, ale ja by prajił, tam smó tej spočatnje, ach tam běše to tak, tón jo tež žno bół we Serbskej pěstowarni a hdyž sym ja tam do tej pěstowarnje přišoł, ja njejsym němsce móhł a tón njeje serbsce móhł a smó so towa cyle derje zrozumili irgendwie a potom sym ja přez toho němsce nawuknoł a tón přez mje serbsce, ale wot Zakładnej šule smó pon serbsce ze sobu rěčeli (…) mó smo tři dobre kumple bóli tej, Erik a Marko, te su přece němsce ze sobu rěčeli, dokelž jo Marko em tej njejo tajki cyle mócny rěčar bół, dokelž doma em tej njejsu cyle tak wjele serbsce rěčeli, ja pak sym zes wobojemi přece serbsce rěčał. To běše mi wšón, nahaj ja bó prajił, to běše mi wědome. (…) moja mać je mi přece powědała, zo dyrbju ja z wobojemi serbsce rěceć. (…) Haj, ale zes Erikom su wšitcy nimo mje němsce rěčeli.

Erik was actually a pure German, he was also in the Sorbian kindergarten and when I came to this kindergarten, I couldn't speak German and he couldn't speak Sorbian and yet we somehow got along well and then I learned German through him and he learned Sorbian through me, but since primary school we have spoken Sorbian among ourselves (…) we were three buddies, Erik and Marko, they spoke German to each other, because Marko wasn't a fluent speaker because they didn't speak Sorbian much at home, but I spoke to both of them in Sorbian. I did, I would say I was aware of that. (…) My mother always told me to speak Sorbian with both of them. (…) Yes, but with Erik everyone spoke German except me.

This excerpt shows that, thanks to the education system, young people from German-speaking families have contact with native Sorbian speakers. It also shows all the obstacles potential speakers meet, despite the

'overt' language policy that enables them to learn Sorbian and integrate with the community. In the case of our interview partner, both him and his mother (but not the school) were active agents of language change. Yet, all other children spoke German with this German-speaking boy, which is the common language practice among Sorbs. In this case, the individual agency overcame the 'covert' language policy in empowering Sorbian among children.

Conclusions

As we presented in this chapter, agency in Lusatia has the form of a triangle and is the result of tensions between three language agents. The first is represented by the Sorbian institutions. They have a long history and are considered the foundation of the Sorbian community's stability, although they act in a preventive manner and are reluctant to allow change. Second, is Sorbian activists, often new speakers, particularly in Lower Lusatia, who have new ideas and want to change the language reality around them. Nevertheless, in Sorbian contexts, they often adapt their activities and their momentum to the framework already set by the Sorbian institutions. Finally, the third agent of language change is people, Sorbian speakers or potential speakers who often intuitively feel the need for change because they lack concrete options. Conversely, they often become the brakes on change if, owing to their language attitudes or ideologies, they are not ready for the proposed solutions. Language policy in Lusatia, as related to this agency of triangle, runs on different, often opposite, levels. On the overt level, there is a lack of coherent language policy in Lusatia which would consider all areas of language use, from people's language practices and beliefs, through reversing the negative consequences of language ideologies which prevent the use of the Sorbian languages and support new speakers, to language management. This last component of language policy in Lusatia is often disorganised and not comprehensive. Sorbian institutions as language managers each have their own language policy, usually 'intuitive'.

The responsibility for language policy in Lusatia is passed from one actor to another. The State is perceived as responsible for the language policy and, therefore, also guilty of its failure. This attitude is rooted in the GDR times where Sorbs had State protection but on the condition of not reclaiming their language. For the same reasons Sorbs have negative attitudes towards activism. Another consequence of the GDR is institutionalisation of Sorbian matters, including language, which strongly influences the shape of language activism and its momentum.

On the covert level, the changes in Lusatia occur as the result of the dynamics of this triple language agency with tensions between its agents operating on three levels. The official bodies are responsible for creating the necessary framework and the overt policies, in which specific ideas for

Sorbian may be developed. However, any change will not occur if there is no demand for it, and this has to be initiated by language activists or advocates, formulated on the level of Sorbian institutions and supported by people. Returning to the issue of agency, we can see that language activism in Lusatia, due to its historical and social context, is reproducing rather than transforming its structure (Ahearn, 2001). It operates in the frame of the official system of Sorbian institutions and the policy of the region. People involved in language protection are firstly searching for harmony. They try to negotiate some place for their ideas in the Sorbian world rather than to recreate it. Even new ideas such as immersion education, have to be adjusted to the frames acceptable for people and institutions, which result in the abandonment of its effectiveness. People responsible for the Sorbian policy do not want it to be found 'aggressive' by the State, but this hampers change. Moreover, within their functioning, Sorbian institutions constantly negotiate internal and implicit language policies between all actors involved (in the case of school, these are teachers, parents and students). All those actors, including people responsible for Sorbian language policy, are under the influence of language ideologies, and they have their language routines and practices which are difficult to change without conscious language policy and advocacy.

The goals of language policy for those languages vary when we look at the situation in Upper and Lower Lusatia and those differences need to be taken into consideration. The most important challenge for Upper Sorbian is to change the language ideologies and attitudes which make becoming a new speaker difficult. This concerns the power relation between the Upper Sorbian Catholic community with its axes oriented towards native speakers and intergenerational transmission, and people from linguistically assimilated Upper Sorbian areas who are searching for language revitalisation and new speakers, if any. In the case of Lower Sorbian the necessity of new speakers is not challenged by anyone. Yet, owing to triple language agency, the system is often not effective. There is a necessity to create language spaces outside of the Sorbian institutions where Lower Sorbian could be used also by new speakers. At the same time there is important work to be done to reduce the negative attitudes towards Sorbs and their languages in Lusatia and to eliminate language ideologies, which cause the Sorbian languages not to be perceived as equal to German. All those objectives require undertaking a well-thought-out plan for the Sorbian languages, the engagement of different actors and decisive agency at all levels.

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Commentary: Language Conflict and the Contextual Nature of Agency

Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin

In his many lectures and talks on the subject, Joshua Fishman often explained the motivation for his long career of pioneering work in the sociology of language as being a response to a question his father would often ask him at the dinner table when he was growing up, 'Shikl, what did you do for Yiddish today?'. Indeed, Gella and Joshua Fishman raised their own children with a sense of personal responsibility towards the fate of Yiddish. Yiddish was a core element integrated with other personal contributions to society, in Joshua Fishman's upbringing. His parents' milieu of East European Jewish immigrants in Philadelphia was ideologically committed not only to public actions (demonstrating, donating, voting) but in the importance of personal responsibility and personal action.[1] Fishman explored the nature of language shift with an aim of creating theoretically informed frameworks of possible interventions in the societal, cultural and linguistic processes that cause the minorisation and displacement of languages by more powerful ones in order to support language activism by those, like him, who wished to arrest the process and instead maintain and cultivate the hitherto dominated language. As Bernard Spolsky (2017) notes in his appreciation of Fishman's activist scholarship, many sociolinguists were and are motivated in their lifetime's work by their personal relationship with languages. He mentions in particular how Charles Ferguson (who defined 'diglossia') and Einar Haugen (who introduced 'language planning') were motivated by the language varieties spoken in their youth. Spolksy's own linguistic life trajectory also inspired his scholarship. He recounts how he first became interested in sociolinguistics while working on a project to investigate whether Navajo children did better in school if they were first taught to read in their home language, and to this we can add the importance of his scholarship for Māori revitalisation as a home language and regeneration activities in wider society, and to his studies on language testing and the languages of Israel. At the core of Joshua Fishman's motivational anecdote is a theme

that runs through much of his work; the personal responsibility of speakers of a minoritised language to act in order to continue speaking and using it. However, if personal commitment is key to success, it is also necessary to understand the varying sociolinguistic context of societal language contact to determine what are the opportunities that individuals and communities can seize and the constraints that are imposed on them. These might be by the direct actions of the state or the attitudes of the majority population to the minority language speakers. They might be as a result of an extended sociolinguistic contact history that has sapped the energy of speakers and marginalised their language to the extent that it is no longer fluently spoken by a critical number of speakers, and where few then have the motivation to consolidate and extend their linguistic repertoires in order to de-marginalise and normalise the use of their home language in wider contexts. The three contributions discussed here analyse the contextual nature of the agency that is available in the situations presented and how the imposed boundaries that have caused the marginalisation, both external and internalised, are being pushed back.

The three examples here, Irish in Corca Dhuibhne, Galician in the Semente movement in Galicia and the dynamics of the interaction of Sorbian speakers with official language policies, provide clear evidence of the actual sociolinguistic situation in the context of varying degrees of institutionalised support for the languages. They demonstrate that despite the widespread acceptance in European society that autochthonous, minoritised languages and their speakers have inherent rights, the varying degrees of institutionalisation are double-edged, at least. Official recognition and support of a minoritised language and policies to provide services and promote it through education and usage in the public space, do not necessarily mean that the minoritised language will continue to be spoken in households and communities, let alone prosper and expand. These cases do show how motivated individuals and groups within the wider speaker group (which includes those for whom the minoritised language is their heritage language, by ancestry or residence in the place where it is or was recently spoken), can mobilise the opportunities presented by the latent institutionalisation while tackling the constraints imposed on their actions by wider society. In each of these situations, the forces against which activists must work are more nuanced than those experienced by activists from even slightly earlier times, such as during the Francoist regime in Spain, when some of the forces against which they had to achieve their aims were more obvious. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) epitomises a declared common political, philosophical code of contemporary practice in Europe that confirms contemporary normal, acceptable behaviour by authorities towards minority languages. Even though not all the members of the Council of Europe have signed and ratified the Charter, the reasons for not doing so are not in general because the states concerned disagree with its aims, but because

there is a constitutional argument against it. For example, Ireland has not signed the Charter because Irish, although clearly minoritised, is the primary official language of the state. While France signed the Charter in 1999, it has never ratified it due to the success of opponents who argued, in the main, about its incompatibility with the French constitution. Even if the debates about ratification have given a platform to many who overtly, or even covertly, oppose the protection of France's minoritised languages (Roger, 2019), France would be able to ratify the Charter if it decided to do so without changing any major element of its policies towards its indigenous minoritised languages because each state decides itself, upon ratification, which languages to name and which kinds of support will be offered. Indeed, analysts including the Corsican scholar and activist, Romain Colonna (2020: 99–101) argue that the cycle of arguments about the ratifying the Charter are a trap for the activists, associations, politicians and regions that sucks their energy while the state can carry on oblivious to addressing the real issues affecting the languages. Nevertheless, the liberal, passively supportive attitude of all European states for indigenous linguistic minorities may also now be at turning point, reflecting changes in political society in parts of Europe, and it is opportune for minority language sociolinguistics to critique the purposes of minority language policy, situating promotion, tolerance and control in this contemporary context.

One of the main theoretical focusses of the three papers is the question of the presence of more than one language in the whole speaker group. Stable diglossia, where each of the languages used in a society has distinct domains of usage or domains in which it is dominant, is one of the core hypotheses developed by Joshua Fishman as a framework for language maintenance. It is also one of the most heavily critiqued approaches from the perspective of influential European sociolinguistics, in particular, from what has become known as the school of Catalan-Occitan sociolinguistics, or language conflict theory (see Darquennes, 2015, for an overview). The Catalan-Occitan approach was originally formulated as a response to hierarchical diglossia in language contact, arguing that language contact situations represented language conflicts, and was from its start both scholarly and interventionist in that its proponents advocated action based on their analysis. There were four main founders of the school of thought who founded the *Grup Català de Sociolingüística* in 1973 (Boyer, 1991, 2012; Pujolar, 2021), which came to be a major sociolinguistic approach in Europe. They argued that all diglossia, not just for Catalan, resulted eventually in either the *substitution* of the minoritised language by the dominant one, or in the *normalisation* of the minoritised language and its restoration to, or assumption of the roles of the dominant language. The two languages are thus in competition for the hearts and minds of the population, and action in favour of one will always be to the detriment of the other. The approach was particularly important to

Occitan sociolinguistics, especially scholars based in the University of Montpellier, who saw a clear comparison. Occitan and Catalan are very closely related languages, arguable in one linguistic continuum, but although their linguistic territories do overlap to a small extent, with Catalan being indigenous in a small part of the south of France and Occitan spoken in a small part of north-western Catalonia, the sociolinguistic settings of the varieties have taken two different trajectories. Catalan may be in a minoritised situation, but has millions of speakers and is a key element in all policies in the autonomous region of Catalonia, and to a large extent in the other territories where it is spoken in the Spanish state (the Balearic Islands and Valencia). It also enjoys international status as the only official language of Andorra. Occitan, however, although once the first language of perhaps a third of France, is now very much minoritised (see Brennan, this volume). The comparison of the Catalan and Occitan situations suggests that societies will continue to engage with two, or more, languages on a societal level until the result of the competition between the two languages becomes clear, even if unconsciously so. Occitan scholars (see for example, the discussion in Colonna, 2020: 44–45) argue that a 'diglossic ideology' exists in such situations which overtly undermines the notion of a conflict or competition between the languages and instead cultivates a kind of ambivalence towards the language shift, simultaneously demonising resistance to change as extremism or backward-looking while allowing the minoritised language a restricted function in folk stories and songs and romantic views of the past. The Catalan-Occitan theory of language conflict and intervention, which has been influential in much of Europe and with which many minoritised language activists identify, is thus at variance with the notion of stable diglossia promoted by the Fishmanian analysis and which is often now appropriated by state language policies and actors of the dominant language group. This is highlighted in Galicia's official promotion of harmonious co-existence between Galician and Spanish. The language conflict school suggests that for the minoritised language to prosper, not simply to be maintained, competition across all domains of consequence is necessary. In this respect, language intervention must focus on the minoritised language and aim at its normalisation. The actual result of this kind of policy is likely to be bilingualism, or multilingualism, of course, because the forces of the major dominant languages are not ever likely to be broken. The ambiguity about the ultimate fate of the language contact is maintained, however, and both consciously and unconsciously, and so too is support for the minoritised language. Interestingly, it is not possible for those who espouse this approach to overtly promote it as a way towards bi-/multilingualism because the maintenance of the competition between the languages is the key concept and to advance the position of both languages would be to undermine that which is dominated. Promoting bilingualism is thus a way for authorities to tolerate a certain

level of diversity, but the final sociolinguistic tip in favour of a dominant language will nevertheless occur when it becomes obvious to all minoritised language speakers that the majority language will dominate all aspects of communication in the future. Successful minority language policy lives in the area of covert, creative ambiguity, undermining notions of total supremacy of a major language, and the perceived certainty of language contact outcomes.

The lived experience of language competition in every domain of life is clear in these three contributions that highlight the agency of individuals and small groups of activists, who take on personal responsibility for the fate of their languages and their speech communities within this paradoxical framework of states that discursively support their minoritised languages but where the reality, as lived by speakers, is not quite what officialdom might believe. What success actually means is a fundamental question in these slippery situations of perpetual competition between a dominant and dominated language. The concept of success as achieving *Saibhreas* (Smith-Christmas & Ruiséal, this volume), Irish that is 'competent, local and embodied', as defined by local circumstances, is particularly valuable in this context because it reinforces a locally conceived and appropriate response to the challenge of language revitalisation. It does not replace or challenge other regeneration and revitalisation aims at local and national level, nor contradict the aims of formal education and use of the standard national variety, but validates a logical local understanding of the purpose and role of the language, in effect offering the required competition to English, which cannot fulfil such a role while Irish persists. The agency of children is particularly important in this context. While it is true that adults – parents and their peers – make language choices for their young families and that few if any become fully competent speakers without conscious engagement with Irish due to the dominance of English, it is not just the competence in the language that must be passed to the next generation, but the motivation to use the language and to use it well. The research here shows this as 'embodiment', whereby social actors see the minoritised language as a medium through which they *can* live, and choose to do so. The focus on helping children to come to that view themselves is revelatory, but even more so is the child's role in actively building and sustaining the context, not just as targets for policy.

The discussion of Semente brings both individual and collective agency to the discussion and also brings the question of opposition, or alternatives to official bilingual policy to the fore. The collective ability to take action, in essence to offer competition to Spanish dominance despite the paradox of official support for Galician through 'friendly' bilingualism, as opposed to any construction of language contact as conflictual, is salutary. As O'Rourke and Dayán-Fernández show, the choice of adopting predominantly Galician-language practices is a symbolic as well as a practical act of resistance to the official policy, and it is especially noteworthy

that the speech community is not so bounded that new speakers who have 'converted' to Galician can play such an important role as agents of the language's embodiment, once more with emphasis on youth and youth practices. Semente clearly has much in common with grassroots movements in other parts of Europe which have taken transformative pedagogy through the minoritised language as their core activity in order to contest the hegemony of the state both at a linguistic level and also in the domain of education. The creation of monolingual 'breathing spaces' for Galician, the conscious and covert provision of competition with Spanish, as well as the admission that all competent, local and embodied Galician speakers will also know Spanish, fits well with the concept of language conflict theory in the Catalan-Occitan tradition and suggests that despite the many ways in which the Spanish state and the world have changed since the 1970s, it still offers much intellectual and practical value.

The ways in which many, but not all, speakers of Sorbian delegate agency to state-established organisations, having learned to be passive and not to struggle for further rights over a long period of state support, initially in the GDR (Dołowy-Rybińska & Ratajaczak, this volume) is a solid example of how language agency can be usurped by authorities and the notion of language competition or conflict, arguably necessary for the meaningful survival of minoritised languages, undermined. The theme of embodiment is also present in the case study too, but where the language is part of the 'hygiene of daily life' for a subset of the speaker group for whom it is closely bound with their religious and local identity. This is problematic, however, in that it also means that it is partially closed off to newcomers, even from other Sorbian communities, and is part of the risk of decline and substitution because of the way it is integrated with other aspects of societal change. The tripartite practices of agency in the Sorbian context that are identified are complex. Institutions (established policy and history, interpreted and realised in different ways through local religious and ethnic differences), community members (with language attitudes associated closely to their religious and geographic norms) and language activists (who have ideas and motivation but struggle to maintain their dynamic in the context of the established institutional structures) are all in flux. The authors make clear that the most important challenges for Sorbian revolve around the attitudes which make becoming a speaker difficult and the slow pace of evolutionary activism rather than revolutionary activism espoused by some of the more dynamic members of the speech community.

In all the cases discussed the question of personal responsibility and action for the language and the wider group are clearly at the heart of the motivation. In all cases, agency is exercised within the context in which the language is set. Although it may seem that the language and speakers are well-placed in each of these settings, it is clear that each has had to create and exercise agency, and that opposition to change has come from

many quarters. These may be the state apparatus itself which resists, directly or through inertia, alternative or contested interpretations of its own plan for the language. In other circumstances it is the established language ideologies within the speaker group which present the biggest, perhaps covert, unconscious resistance to change in favour of the language because of a lack of vision for how the language might develop new roles.

All groups of speakers have strongly established, if unwritten, rules about how to use their linguistic repertoires. They are created over long periods and in the case of minoritised languages are formulated by generations of speakers who have been at the receiving end of marginalising discourses from purveyors of the dominant language. There are established ideologies in the group that set out the rules on language values that all members of the group know, even if they do not articulate them. It is the outliers, those who have different ideas and who challenge the status quo who can affect change. To do this they need to exercise agency, that is they need to articulate their aims and influence others until the established norms of beliefs about language and linguistic behaviour become updated. Joshua Fishman was asked from an early age what he had done for his language that day. These contributions show how personal responsibility has broadened to lead group actions on behalf of the languages for the benefit of their speakers. The ways that activists have been able to influence their communities and from there onwards to wider society are core to the discussion and will stimulate further research.

Note

(1) I am grateful to Bernard Spolsky for discussing Joshua Fishman's use of this anecdote with me, and in particular to Joshua Fishman's son, historian and Yiddish scholar Professor David Fishman, for sharing some aspects of the family lore around the phrase with me and its original Yiddish form, 'Shikl, vos h'ostu haynt 'ufgeton far yidish?'.

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Part 2

Rethinking Possibilities in Agency

4 I Was There: Agency, Authority and Morality Among the Griko Linguistic Minority of Southern Italy (Apulia)

Manuela Pellegrino

Introduction

In this chapter, I address issues of language ideologies that affect agency by presenting the case of Griko, or Salentine Greek, a Greek variety used in the Southern Italian province of Lecce (Salento) in the region of Apulia.[1] I begin by providing a brief overview of the social actors who have engaged with the cause of Griko since the end of the 19th century. This will allow me to highlight how they have shifted over time, as did their motivations, claims and goals; the ways their activism was operationalised equally changed as they interacted with contingent constraints and challenges. I then move to the present and to the multiplicity of social actors – single individuals, cultural associations and institutions – who actively participate in and advance multiple claims to the management of the Griko cause and its heritage. These dynamics often give rise to debates which transcend the mere 'linguistic facts', translating into conflicts over linguistic and cultural ownership, over who holds the authority to represent Griko and the community at large (whether mother-tongue speakers, language activists and/or scholars), and over what defines it (whether embodied knowledge, engagement in activism and/or philological expertise).

The implications of such internal fragmentation and the resulting power struggles are endemic to minority contexts and are a central aspect that deserves careful attention, particularly in relation to the performance of agency. In this respect language ideology theory has positioned speakers, and their perceptions and conceptualisations of language structure

and use, at the centre of analysis (see pioneering works of Gal, 1978; Jaffe, 1999; Kulick, 1992; Woolard, 1989). The concept of agency itself has been widely used, possibly abused, by scholars in many disciplines. Considering the plethora of approaches, the lack of an agreed upon definition of agency is not surprising. I endorse Ahearn's (2001: 112) definition of agency as 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' since, as I will argue, my data indicate that agency is shaped by a continuous negotiation between self, the world and others, and that it emerges in collective sociocultural and linguistic practices. An emphasis on the agency of single individuals, instead, would risk dismissing the broader cultural dynamics, ideological references and social alliances which may or may not endorse and enhance their actions, also impinging on their reception by the community at large. To use Kockelman's (2007: 382) words, 'the locus of agency may often rest not in the individuals, but rather in their ongoing interactions and the institutions that enable these'.

Crucial to my argument is the acknowledgment of the connection between agency and responsibility. As Maxwell and Aggleton (2013: 254) highlight, agency is both 'an inherent possibility or imperative formed within a particular discursive and/or material context, which calls upon subjects to act in certain ways'. Laidlaw (2010: 143, 144) indeed further stresses how agency does not provide an increased capacity to get done what is wanted – it is therefore not necessarily a possibility – it rather comes 'as responsibility for particular happenings or states of affairs, and these may include states of affairs that they have rather limited capacity to influence'. Duranti's (2012: 18) definition points to the related notion of accountability, as he argues that 'entities are said to have agency, if they … are evaluated from a practical, aesthetic, and moral point of view for what they do and how they do it'.

Actions related to Griko, taken by any agent, are indeed subjected to collective, practical, aesthetic and – crucially – moral evaluation. More specifically, what I witnessed in my fieldwork is that agency is constantly contested and negotiated among a multitude of social actors, and that it is strictly intertwined with the notion of authority over the language and its heritage. This is enacted, I argue, with reference to morality in its dual articulation: as the recognition of the moral right to represent Griko, and as a fulfilment of a perceived moral duty towards the language and its speakers, past and present. It therefore becomes essential to contextualise the shifting ideological landscapes, to identify the endemic and external forces which promote such shifts and to highlight how they may favour or inhibit the performance of agency in language activism. Yet, it is equally pivotal to critically evaluate whether such actions and initiatives are morally legitimated by the community at large: a criterion on which their effectiveness often rests.

This is also in line with what Emirbayer and Mishe (1998: 971) refer to as 'the practical-evaluative element', which acknowledges 'the capacity of

actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations'. Furthermore, they re-conceptualise agency as embedded in a complex temporal dynamic. Yet, while this can be oriented toward past, present and future, they argue that 'one temporal orientation is the dominant one, shaping the way in which actors relate to the other two dimensions of time' (1998: 972). This is particularly relevant for the case of Griko, which is itself largely perceived as the language of expression of a specific time, of a world that does not exist as remembered: a language *of* and *for* the past. 'Talking about the past' is indeed a recurrent discursive strategy through which locals express their moral alignments to Griko and related practices, as well as their projections to its future, unravelling what I call 'the cultural temporality of language'. Through this concept I capture the multiple relationships that locals entertain with the language through its past, and with the past through language which recursively shape divergent views and perceptions of the role of Griko in the present-future (see Pellegrino, 2021).

Methodology

The analysis is enriched by my diachronic investigation of the Griko revival. I have been conducting anthropological research in the Griko-speaking villages, as well as in Greece, since 2006. I participated in and observed language-related activities and initiatives, among them Griko classes, poetry competitions, cultural events and public debates. I interviewed speakers, leaders, educators and others of the Griko-speaking villages. I also conducted research using past newspaper articles on the topic of Griko, as well as online ethnography of dedicated websites and Facebook pages. In particular, I located metaphors about language, language acquisition, socialisation and shift as potential loci of language ideology transformation; and I focused on dominant metadiscourses, in the sense of 'discursive practices which reflexively focus on language use itself' (Silverstein, 1998: 136). I was equally attentive to implicit and unspoken assumptions about language. Here I follow Jaffe's (1999: 14) argument that 'just as metadiscourse is social action, linguistic practice is also always metadiscursive at some level'. Their dialogic relationship is the key.

I also benefit from the insights on the case of Greko gained through fieldwork carried out in Calabria in 2018–2019 together with the linguist Dr Maria Olimpia Squillaci, a Greko speaker and advocate and Principal Researcher for Greko for the Smithsonian SMiLE project.

Background

Griko is used in the villages of Calimera, Castrignano de' Greci, Corigliano d'Otranto, Martano, Martignano, Sternatia and Zollino, while

Melpignano and Soleto mainly counted Griko speakers until the beginning of the 20th century. They belong to an area now called *Grecìa Salentina* (Salentine Grecìa), which was constituted in 2001.[2] A renewed attention towards Griko emerged in the 1990s in a climate of support for minority languages at the European level. In 1999, complying with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, National Law 482 recognised Griko – together with Greko, the Greek variety of Calabria – as one of the 12 historical linguistic minorities of Italy (Figure 4.1).

Transmitted orally from generation to generation, Griko has long been considered a 'dying language'. In the majority of the Griko-speaking villages, it stopped being transmitted as a mother tongue post-WW2,

Figure 4.1 Griko (Apulia) and Greko (Calabria) language areas, Italy. Map by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institution

when locals came to internalise it as 'the language of shame', and of backwardness, in opposition to Italian. Griko is mainly spoken today by the elderly generation; those born in the post-WW2 period – the 'generation-in-between' – show various degrees of competence in and engagement with the language. Typically, the younger generations born after the 1970s do not speak Griko, although they may show good passive knowledge of it, or partially understand it. While today Griko is no longer used as a primary language of daily exchange, through the process of the current revival, it has moved from being considered a 'language of shame' to being proudly celebrated. Yet, language activism goes further back in time.

Waiting for Recognition: Griko Activism

Activism aimed at the preservation and recognition of Griko's value has been met with varying degrees of acceptance by the community at large, showing whether to actively participate in language revival efforts or to challenge them is ultimately linked to the locals' own language ideologies and their situated interpretations of the dynamics of the revival. In this sense, the investigation of language ideologies always meant investigating them not only *in action*, but *as action* – including the ways in which they 'question the organisation and implementation of ideologies: how, in other words, they are connected to action' (Costa, 2019: 4) – to regimes or rather regimentations of language. I indeed draw attention to the fact that the language ideologies supporting the various phases of the revival were/are at times accommodated and/or embraced, at times re-appropriated, at times contested and – both tacitly and openly – resisted. At all times negotiated.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Philhellenic Circle of Calimera was formed around the local folklorist and intellectual Vito Domenico Palumbo. I refer to this as 'the first revival of Griko'. Following in Palumbo's footsteps, other local intellectuals dedicated themselves to the preservation of the language by collecting poems, songs and tales; they also contributed to the literary repertoire in and about Griko with their own productions as poets, and through philological and linguistic publications. Crucially, they were local scholars who had been educated in the most active centres – Florence, Rome and Naples – of late 19th-century national culture. They represent the link between the periphery and the centre of the national culture (The Lecce Group, 1979: 358). Yet, as I point out (Pellegrino, 2013, 2021), their activism represents the first instance of the interplay between local, national, and transnational language ideologies. This happened in the aftermath of post-unification of Italy and was also influenced by the nation-building process developing in Greece at the time, and by the ideology of Romantic Hellenism, which supported the very emergence of Greece as a nation-state. Crucially, Palumbo was encouraged by the interest shown by Greek folklorists with whom he

established contacts. Here the importance of social alliances comes to the fore as they endorse agency in language activism.

With the goal of restoring prestige to Griko, Palumbo and his circle followed the ideological orientation of Greek folklorists, philologists and intellectuals who were engaged in 'proving' the link between modern and ancient Greece, and they encouraged the bearers of the language – mainly peasants by this point – to keep using Griko. However, they failed in preventing the subsequent language shift to Italian and Salentine, the local Romance variety locally referred to simply as *dialetto*. This was delayed by the isolation in which the majority of Griko speakers continued to live until the agrarian reforms of the post-WW2 period. These language advocates' discourse was drastically different from the preoccupations of the speakers, who largely ignored the cultural wealth of Greek; only local intellectuals were knowledgeable about it and proud to highlight it, in line with 'a philhellenic tradition which has characterised the ideology of the "well-educated" class of the country from the unification of Italy onwards' (The Lecce Group, 1979: 358).

The philhellenic intellectuals of the first revival worked to recognise the value of Griko, and in the aftermath of WW2 a second generation of language advocates continued to perceive Greece as the agent of such recognition, and to establish contacts with Greece. Their performance of agency was enhanced by the cultural ideology of Hellenism, yet it also contributed to exacerbating the social gap which separated the 'bearers of the language' from its advocates. Instead, the social actors who promoted 'the middle revival' starting in the mid-1970s belong to the in-between-generation. Born in the post-WW2 period, among them were the children of the upwardly mobile peasant and merchant classes, including professors, government employees, librarians, employees of the local municipality. These activists were politically engaged, and through their activism they aimed to rebuild self-awareness about the value of a more recent past, to reclaim the value of Griko and the local cultural identity and to redeem it.

Crucially, the performance of their agency was ideologically justified, and enhanced by a wider national and European context of revitalisation movements occurring in the 1970s, which aimed at legitimising and promoting difference and locality (Boissevain, 1992; Lanternari, 1977; Poppi, 1997). Numerous cultural associations were established during this phase in the various Griko-speaking villages, but their activities were not restricted to Griko. Their *trait d'union* was their commitment to document and revive traditions which had gone into disuse, including those in Salentine. This struck a chord in people's memories, memories that were still alive. The terms which dominate the activists' discourse are indeed *recupero* (recovery) and *riproposta* (re-proposal); the difference between these terms and 'revival' is not merely semantic, as it highlights the activists' self-assigned role of cultural reproposers, hence reproducers. It is a

performative act, which does not limit itself to 'revive' – to bring back to life something which belonged to the past – but which self-consciously 'reproposes', re-suggests, re-articulates and transmits it (Pellegrino, 2013, 2021). On the one hand, during the middle revival the exclusionary actions of the first revival were avoided. On the other, the intergenerational struggle over authority, and a constant negotiation of the authenticity of cultural practices once *re-proposed* took centre stage and is a dynamic which persists to the present.

Furthermore, these activists demanded the valorisation of local cultural expressions – language included – within the framework of Italy, and lobbied for the legal recognition of Griko as a minority language. Their explicit goal was to gain such recognition and to render Griko an object of teaching and, it was never an effort to reclaim the language at a social level (Nucita, 1997: 28). This led to the first law to safeguard Griko which supported the teaching of the language (Law 820, enacted in 1971). However, they would have to wait another 15 years before the Italian government passed a law safeguarding the historical linguistic minorities on Italian soil. Law 482/1999 (*Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche* – [Norms on the subject of the protection of the historical linguistic minorities]) provides for concrete measures in the fields of education, public administration, services and media, to be adopted by competent Ministers, Regions, Provinces and other public territorial bodies. Activists often complain that the law was written too late to reverse decades of neglect, and crucially that it does not take into account the specificity of Griko as a 'historical and cultural minority language' whose domains of use differ from those of other linguistic minorities. It also underestimates the multilingual environment in which Griko is immersed.

The Current Revival: Contesting Agency

The discussion so far has highlighted how each phase of the 'revival of Griko' is embedded within specific ideological landscapes. Each favours the agency of specific social actors, who face different types of challenges. We have also seen how, in order to overcome these issues, they modified the ways in which they operationalised their activism, 'the strategies that guided their social action' (Costa, 2019: 5). This is particularly the case with the current revival of Griko. Originating in the late 1990s partly the outcome of the ceaseless activity of Griko activists and of the longstanding contribution of cultural associations, this phase is crucially embedded in a global discourse which celebrates linguistic diversity as richness. The performance of agency in activism has therefore been favoured by the climate of support for minority languages nourished at the European level. The European Council was instrumental in sustaining the efforts of *cultori del griko* and activists who felt that their efforts were finally being

legitimated. Indeed, throughout the 1990s the European Bureau for Lesser-used Languages – which was established in 1982 to represent their communities in their dealings with European Union institutions – funded several projects by local cultural associations; these resulted in the publication of books, CDs and grammars of Griko. Crucially, National Law 482/1999 itself was adopted in conformity with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

The 1990s were also characterised by the intensification of contacts between local cultural associations and Greek ones. As hinted above, the dynamics of the current revival interact with the cultural ideology of Hellenism and historical continuity. The social actors engaged with the cause of Griko in fact feature also Greek aficionados of Griko who circulate a language ideology that projects Griko – as well as Greko, used in Calabria – as a 'living monument of Hellenism'. Moreover, in 1994 the Greek ministry of education began to send Greek teachers to teach Standard Modern Greek in local schools and cultural associations, a policy that has unsurprisingly affected the ideologies, and to different extents the practices, of those who attend these courses.

The 1990s were in fact vibrant years. Newer cultural associations were established in the Griko-speaking villages, focusing on different aspects of the cultural heritage but only Grika Milùme [We Speak Griko] in Martano focused specifically on language issues. The agency of cultural activists and Griko scholars would be eventually overshadowed by local politicians, who made the most of the availability of such legal instruments and financial resources, national and European, leading to the current institutionalisation of the revival. In 2001, the mayors of the Griko-speaking villages indeed joined their efforts and created the *Unione dei comuni della Grecìa Salentina* (Union of Villages of Grecìa Salentina, UCGS hereafter), making the Griko cause their own and capitalising on it and on cultural heritage more broadly to stimulate tourism. Furthermore, they accessed EU INTERREG programmes aimed at encouraging interregional cooperation between Italy and Greece. During this phase, the folk music repertoire in Salentine and Griko was to take centre stage, rather literally. The now internationally known folk festival *La Notte della Taranta* [Night of the Tarantula], promoted by the mayors of the Griko-speaking villages, effectively inserted Grecìa Salentina into the cultural tourism circuit. At the same time, this predicament interacts with a pre-existing one, as Salento has long been the subject of intense anthropological gaze.[3]

In the current revival, a variety of claims about Griko and cultural heritage at large have been advanced, creating contradictions and tensions among activists and the wider community. Cultural activists lament that the UCGS has exploited their longstanding engagement with Griko initiatives, only to manipulate the activists' original claims and goals. They denounce and morally sanction local politicians' managerial approach to

Griko and cultural heritage and their privileging large folk music events that attract floods of tourists rather than supporting the smaller realities and initiatives promoted by cultural associations. More to the point, the funding provided by National Law 482 is earmarked to schools and local authorities, and in the case of Griko, to the UCGS. In order to access funds, cultural associations have to submit a project proposal to the UCGS, which may or may not be funded. The bureaucratic mediation of the UCGS has indeed intensified disputes over the use of financial resources, revealing the contradictory effects of long-awaited recognition, epitomised by a recurrent and openly resentful statement among activists that it might have been better when no money was available.

We see, therefore, how the interplay of national and transnational language policies and ideologies which led to the institutionalisation of the revival also led activists and *cultori del griko* to feel deprived of their own agency, and to claim the moral right to manage the Griko cause based on their competence, expertise and long-standing engagement with the language – in other words, their own authority over Griko. Indeed, particularly those who have actively engaged with Griko for decades now enjoy prestige, social recognition and visibility as experts in the field – both in Grecìa Salentina and in Greece, where they equally cultivate relationships and may fear to lose control over the management of Griko and cultural heritage more broadly.

This climate of tension has improved since the passing of the regional law 5/2012, which avoids the bureaucratic mediation of the UCGS, as the funding provided is directly earmarked to cultural associations of Grecìa Salentina, in addition to municipalities and schools. Yet the power struggle over who holds authority over Griko remains a struggle over access to resources provided by the current revival – symbolic or otherwise – and crucially over access to modes of representation.

Vignette: 'I Was There: I Am a Witness of Griko'

It is the end of August. As I walk through the village square, I hear someone calling me. Michele is 65 years old, the son of Leonardo, a 90-year-old Griko speaker. The last time I saw him was summer 2019 when the event *Cinùria Ghetonìa* [New Neighbourhood] took place in my home village, Zollino. The event had brought together members of the Griko- and Greko-speaking communities for two days with the aim of opening a dialogue and reflecting on common challenges. Maria Olimpia Squillaci and I organised the event. It was the first meeting among speakers of the two Greek varieties, and the participants were asked to contribute exclusively in the language, that is to only use Greko and/or Griko. On that occasion, Michele had helped his father find a seat and then left the room. As I was looking for more chairs for the audience, I realised that he had been standing by the entrance of the cultural centre, where he could

still listen while seemingly hide. I immediately invited him to join us inside, to participate in the discussion in Griko. 'I can speak it, but you don't just speak Griko like this, to talk about anything' he convincingly and rather harshly stated. I insisted once more, without success.

This time instead Michele greets me in Griko and asks me the ritual questions of how I am, when I arrived in the village, and when I will leave the village. He soon switches to Salentine, and asks if I can help him find an English school for his eldest daughter. After I agree to help, Michele adds, 'No one learns a language in school, we know it, but so be it, let her go. What I don't get is why Francesco asks me to tell him words in Griko for his homework, but then I read that he is taught other words which I personally cannot recognise. Nor can my father, mind you!' he points out. His son is taught Griko in primary school, so I suggest these may be neologisms, or more likely, words used in that past which have gone into disuse, and which Griko teachers may have re-introduced. This is when he interrupts me saying, this time in Italian, 'What do they know? I was there. I am a witness of Griko'.

Rita is passing by. She belongs to a local cultural association and writes poems in Griko. Having overheard the last stretch of the conversation she stops and says, 'There are too many experts when it comes to Griko. They are more than its witnesses!'. Michele interrupts her, 'They are ambassadors, rather …' while Rita raises her voice, challenging him and emphatically exclaiming, 'But if you are a witness, you *must do* something for Griko'. He promptly replies, 'I know and I do, every night when I put Francesco and my youngest daughter to bed, I sing *Tela na se torìso*' [Come [close] so that I can look at you], a contemporary song written by Giuseppe (Pippi) De Santis from Sternatia. We all laugh about his choice, as he could have selected a Griko lullaby instead of an upbeat song. Michele leaves his bike by the entrance of the cafe we are standing by and says, smiling, 'But my kids will remember these moments. And so, I pass the baton to them'.

The very word 'witness' used by Michele here and evoked again by Rita incorporates and conveys both the notion of authority and of morality that take centre stage in the articulation of agency. Michele and Rita belong to the in-between generation, born after the WW2 period; they did not acquire Griko as first language in the home and because of this, their linguistic competence varies considerably, so in the literature, they would be described – not unproblematically – as semi-speakers (Dorian, 1982: 26) with features of 'forgetters' (Sasse, 1989: 23) and 'rusty speakers' (Menn, 1989: 345). The limited opportunities for interaction further contribute to their insecurity; in fact, they tend to feel monitored when speaking, and they are apologetic when they fail to speak Griko 'fluently'; crucially they compare themselves to their own parents, who used the language as a medium of daily interaction and, if enquired, they often abruptly state that they cannot speak Griko. Yet, memories of language

use – themselves imbued with emotions – continue to shape language ideologies and practices, reopening debates about the authenticity of the language and of linguistic practices. Crucially, what confers authority to Michele – and to the in-between generation at large – is not necessarily language competence *per se*, which in his case is admittedly rusty, but his embodied knowledge, as he has experientially inhabited the relatively recent past when Griko was still spoken. 'I was there', he says, to claim his own authority and the moral right to talk about it over those who, being younger, have not inhabited that world; they therefore cannot know more about it than he does – language teachers and experts included.

Yet following a widespread practice, Michele projects more authority onto elderly mother-tongue Griko speakers. To sustain his point, he in fact refers to his own father, arguing that neither could he recognise some of the words his grandson Francesco is taught at school. Metalinguistic comments such as Michele's here characteristically highlight the 'moral significance of "mother-tongue" as the first and, therefore *real* language of a speaker' to borrow Kathryn Woolard's words (1998: 18, emphasis in original). This also points to the mutually constitutive nature of what 'real' or 'authentic' Griko stands for, so to speak, and who can claim authority over it. The further back in time you go, the more 'authentic' Griko you will find.

The definition and articulation of authority moves according to a temporal-moral scale where the older it is, the better, it is (Pellegrino, 2019, 2021). It is a process which effectively involves 'fractal recursivity' (Irvine & Gal, 1995) inasmuch as it continuously and recursively creates oppositions and separations whereby speakers of the past are perceived as more authoritative than today's speakers. Today's speakers may remain more authoritative than language experts who lack embodied knowledge. Crucially, when Rita exclaimed, 'There are too many experts when it comes to Griko!' she indirectly calls out the multitude of social actors advancing claims to the extant management of Griko and competing for authority. Now that Griko has been 'redeemed' from backwardness to pride, it has become fashionable, crucially increasing the social prestige of those who lay claims to it and effectively reversing the reference applied to Italian during the phase of language shift away from Griko. In fact, as part and parcel of the current revival, language experts and advocates have been proliferating – including self-proclaimed experts, as the critique goes.

These metalinguistic comments reveal a general resistance to specialist control which would render Griko a language for experts, leading to a further 'professionalisation' of roles and internal fragmentation. Yet such comments also unravel the fear that, mirroring the dynamics of the folk music revival, Griko and its heritage will be further exploited rhetorically and otherwise. Michele tellingly uses the word 'ambassadors' to mark the difference with 'witnesses'. This dynamic points to the power struggle

over who holds the knowledge which confers the moral right to represent Griko and the community at large – and hence to perform as its agent – a dynamic which recursively fractures the linguistic and metalinguistic landscape. Indeed, as we have seen, language experts, activists and *cultori del griko* claim more authority over local politicians based on their long-lasting engagement with the cause of Griko, but also when comparing themselves to people who have approached Griko more recently. The latter tend to be evaluated according to a hierarchy of motivations: memory and affect nourished through personal connection to speakers tend to be 'valued' over a generic and/or extemporaneous interest in the language or over scholarly/academic pursuits. *Le mode passano, le persone restano* [Fashions wane, people stay] to use the Italian words of Donato, then president of a local cultural association. Comments such as this extend into issues of linguistic and cultural ownership, appropriation, and intellectual property.

The vignette crucially points to the moral dimension embedded in the role of the witness. Rita in fact tells Michele that if he is a witness – if he was there – he must do something for Griko, he must take action. In doing so she defines a witness of Griko as an agent with a moral duty to the language and the people who spoke it. Many among speakers, activists and *cultori del griko* indeed express such a sense of moral responsibility, yet they often do not use Griko as a language of daily interaction, nor strive to.

Witnessing Griko Today: Performing the Past

Language activism and policies have so far not aimed at transmitting Griko or at reversing language shift. Instead, it is what I call a 'language ideological revival' where what has been revived is not the language itself, but ideas, feelings, and emotions about the place and role of this language in the past, and hence bearing on the present (Pellegrino, 2021). The moral duty toward Griko is articulated through different actions that translate into various forms of activism, reflecting the multi-layered linguistic and metalinguistic landscape: it may be through written documentation with the goal to leave the language for posterity; it may pursue language valorisation; it may be the more recent digital activism through social media. Each of these contribute to the material presence of Griko. I have, in fact, been using 'activism' as an umbrella term to include every action or initiative with reference to Griko, and 'activist' to refer to a multiplicity of social actors involved in the current revival. These include local and Greek cultural associations, institutions (schools, municipalities, UCGS) and single individuals, speakers, and using the Italian *appassionati di griko.* [language aficionados], *esperti di griko* [Griko teachers], *cultori del griko* [local Griko scholars] and *operatori culturali* [cultural operators]. In this pool figures also Greek scholars and aficionados of Griko. As the very

term *appassionato* indicates, Griko is commonly referred to as a passion, as a fascination which interestingly is often cultivated on an individual level, as an intimate form of language activism. In fact, Griko scholars, aficionados, activists and speakers alike write poems in Griko, which are at times set to music, or else they translate poems and songs mainly from Italian and Greek. Griko has increasingly been enjoying a renewed presence in the written form in the landscape and economy through its use in naming B&Bs, cultural associations and local products (Pellegrino, 2013; see Brennan, this volume).

Through the multiple ways in which Griko is put into use, the language has been entering the experiential reality of the broader community, even while its use as a vehicle to convey daily information has progressively diminished. The Griko community largely conforms to what Avineri (2014: 19) has defined as a 'metalinguistic community' that is, one 'of positioned social actors engaged primarily in discourse about language and cultural symbols tied to language'. Indeed, the activities promoted by cultural associations, schools and municipalities in support of the language tend to be metalinguistic in nature, and to focus on local intellectuals of the past, on some aspect of local history, or on the traditional repertoire of songs and poems in Griko. This is supported through the review of projects funded by regional law 5/2012. In 2017, for instance, out of a total of 24 projects submitted and financed, only two of them were purposely aimed at teaching Griko.

Griko was officially introduced into local schools in 2002 through the funding provided by National Law 482 which varies in its application and is sometimes temporarily suspended. Yet, 20 years later, what prevails is teaching 'the love/the passion for the language', to use the words of the very teachers. Indeed, as attested through my participant observation, Griko teachers tend to discursively teach schoolchildren to recognise the importance of the language, its history, its traditions. They privilege teaching poems, songs, popular rhymes in Griko and the wider repertoire of popular culture. At the end of the school year, schools often organise events such as theatrical or musical performances, in which the children are protagonists and perform using the knowledge of Griko they acquired in the classes. In other words, the teaching of Griko in school is not to teach its grammar nor to transmit the language for everyday use but is aimed at conveying and replicating past cultural and linguistic artefacts. The same consideration applies when language activists or *cultori del griko* teach the language to adults as part of the activities promoted by cultural associations (see Pellegrino, 2021).

While not leading to an increase in the pool of speakers, the current revival has certainly inspired a shared sense of empowerment and pride in the rediscovered value given to the local cultural heritage, music and language included. This may be generic and superficial, but may be deeply felt or rhetorically articulated as well. Younger generations who still have

relatives who speak it and who are eager or willing to learn the language remain to date exceptions – who deserve attentive analysis by virtue of that alone. Depending on their level of exposure, more often than not younger people take discursive pride in Griko and its cultural heritage without feeling the urge to learn the language; among them figure also those who are actively involved in promoting the intergenerational transmission of traditional cultural practices in Griko, such as the annual Palm Sunday singing (Pellegrino *et al*., 2020). Or, in the name of their emotional attachment to the language nourished through affect and the memories of language use, they may resist the very idea of having to learn Griko 'as if it were a foreign language', as they characteristically put it.

What prevails for them is the memory of the people they associate with Griko, and in this sense, their Griko appears to be distant from what they perceive as the systematised knowledge one acquires through dominant/monolingual pedagogical approaches and institutions. 'No one learns a language in school', as Michele characterised it. While ownership is largely defined by authority, belonging is more specifically articulated through affect (see Mclaughlin, 2015). Hence, those belonging to the younger generation may perform Griko through the creative and strategic use of language tokens which they retrieve from the stock of memories. More specifically, they cite and re-appropriate words or entire expressions from memory, and they re-contextualise them in the present. By crossing the generational distance between the elderly and themselves, they perform an act of symbolic identification with them, and with the cultural repertoire. Building on Rampton (2009), I call this 'generational crossing' (Pellegrino, 2013, 2021). This in turn poses the conundrum of whether and how young adults ought to be motivated into learning the minority language. To that end, it will be essential to investigate their prevailing ideologies about language acquisition, socialisation and belonging and also to analyse how they interpret the current revival, how they view its accomplishments and failures – and to identify potential shifts emerging through networking with other minority language users, facilitated by social media and increasingly promoted as good practice within language revitalisation programmes.

It is certainly not coincidental and not surprising that the majority of individuals engaging with Griko at various levels belong to the in-between generation. Having grown up 'with one foot in the old world and one in the new world', as Mario (born in 1961) put it, they contingently suffered from the language displacement their own parents suffered, which forced Griko speakers to continually evaluate and negotiate the meanings attached to each language. They may now express regret for not having transmitted Griko to their children or not having engaged more with it in the past – the free time that comes with their retirement provides them now with such an opportunity. This sense of guilt, as they characteristically put it, prevails in their motivations to act in support of Griko, or else

does the desire to keep redeeming the language from the stigma long associated with it and its speakers. Tellingly, as we have seen, this perceived moral duty towards Griko and its speakers past and present, articulated also through affect, translates into claims of authority and ultimately over the moral right to represent it and to speak on their behalf.

Many among the Griko activists may seem nostalgic, yet they are not eager to bring the past back: nostalgia becomes instead a discursive strategy through which they evaluate the present (Avineri, 2012). A performance of nostalgia prevails indeed in cultural events dedicated to Griko which have long been organised by cultural associations or single activists in the Griko-speaking villages. Some of the events have become established appointments for activists and aficionados, others may be put on hold and then surface again under different names. During these events, participants recollect their memories by telling stories, singing songs in Griko and/or Salentine, reciting poems of the oral tradition as well as their own poems and thoroughly enjoying themselves in doing so. The common characteristic is that Griko is heard in the landscape while not being used as a primary language, yet the intentional, albeit limited, use of Griko becomes more important than speaking it as a tool to exchange daily information. Not only has Griko been used over the years as an artistic and performative resource, as we have seen above, but crucially locals have increasingly been using it performatively: it is through their conscious and intentional use of Griko, however limited, that they shape and manifest and their linguistic identity. This attests to the postvernacular nature of this use of Griko. This is similar to what Shandler (2004) argues for a postvernacular Yiddish when he refers to the contemporary use of the language which has acquired significance which transcends communicative purposes to become a form of cultural communication. In the current revival, Griko has indeed become a cultural and social resource, a form of performative post-linguistic capital (see Costa, 2015; Hornsby, 2016; Sallabank, 2013; Shandler, 2004, 2006).

Witnessing Griko Today, Debating Its Future

As we have seen, the analysis of the metadiscourses embedded in the activities promoted in support of the language keeps pointing to the 'past of Griko' and the prevailing language ideology that considers Griko to be its expression. Referring again to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998: 872) argument, through such routinised practices which evoke the past, actors relate to the other two dimensions of time. Particularly in cases of minority languages involved in processes of so-called endangerment and revival, the ways in which members of the community experience and/or construct the past become central, rendering it critical to self-representation (Pellegrino, 2021: 12). Griko has indeed turned into a metalanguage through which to evaluate the present. This provides further evidence of

the cultural temporality of language and its power in shaping language practices up to the present and into the future.

This also emerges from the analysis of the 'language ideological debates' (Blommaert, 1999: 9) surrounding change – broadly defined – which affects or may affect Griko and related practices. Tellingly Griko speakers and long-standing activists tend to equate it to 'decay', all the while commenting with regret on Griko's limitations in expressing the needs of the present. Such debates include the potential creation of a standard form, and/or of a *koinè*, as locals tend to refer to it. Griko is indeed characterised by a high degree of variation across the villages due to the fact that each Griko-speaking village reacted differently and at different times to its isolation from the Greek spoken around Greece (Sobrero, 1979). If the lack of a hegemonic village historically explains historically why a Griko koinè did not emerge, today locals tend to resist on affective grounds the creation of a standard which 'mixes' the lexical and phonetic uniqueness of each village; specific words and expressions become indeed images of and from the past, linked to memories of language use and crucially to the people who uttered them (see Pellegrino, 2021: 130–135).

Conscious attempts to create a Griko koinè have occurred in the past. In the 1930's Domenicano Tondi wrote a Griko grammar to this end. Yet his book was largely criticised for creating an 'abstract' language. Almost a century later, even those who tend to integrate words and/or mix the pronunciation used in different villages are blamed for creating 'a Frankenstein', as I heard a middle-aged speaker phrase it recently. Interestingly, also those who may publicly praise attempts to use Griko regardless of these concerns, and discursively embrace the perspective of 'a new Griko for a new life', end up rejecting such a practice of mixing and/or of levelling Griko to a standardised form. To use the words of a longstanding local Griko scholar, 'It is a strange language. I do not identify myself with it since I was born in one of the villages of Grecìa Salentina'. Through this covertly paternalistic comment, he distinguishes himself and other locals from those who do not hail from a Griko-speaking village, implying that they may find this practice productive and unproblematic, but that is because they lack the experiential and affective dimensions of memories of language use that give rise to such concerns.

What is morally right and aesthetically or emotionally sound for Griko ultimately remains a matter of perspective. There seems, however, to be less of a concern about the loss of Griko as a language of daily communication than they are about preserving the authenticity of Griko and of historical linguistic practices, regardless of how these are perceived and defined. Similarly, idealisation of a pure pre-contact Griko poses constant challenges to language renewal and revitalisation. Griko has indeed long been a hybridised language (as the longstanding label as 'bastard language' locally applied to Griko attest), the result of a long history of contact and bilingualism of the Greek/Latin and Griko/Romance varieties.

Yet, while in the past speakers used the language resources at their disposal to fill 'the gaps' of Griko as an unreflective practice, today language borders are continuously guarded and also the longstanding practice of grammatically adapting Salentine and Italian words or verbs to this end is considered to pollute the perceived purity of a pre-contact Griko. Yet, the introduction of Modern Greek words to implement the limited vocabulary of Griko is largely contested on the grounds that locals – elderly Griko speakers firstly – would not understand them, and that this practice would contaminate and denaturalise the historical characteristics of the language.

As paradoxical as it may seem, in the name of authenticity, not only may Griko activists not speak Griko at all, but many among scholars and activists often avoid speaking it even when they *could*. They tend to resist attempts to continue a conversation in Griko beyond restricted topics and specific contexts, switching to Salentine and/or Italian, and remarking time and again that it does not come naturally to them, or else that the Griko being used is not the same language the elderly would speak. Yet, and unsurprisingly, it is not simply a matter of lacking words or creating neologisms: the very practice of writing or speaking about contemporary topics is often defined as '*una forzatura*', literally 'a stretch or forcing', or else something 'not spontaneous', 'folkloristic'. Such use of Griko beyond its recognised and recognisable context, is hence considered artificial, and the practice itself is once again morally evaluated as potentially harmful, or as Luigi characterises it, '*Iu kànnome puru danno sti' glossa'* [we may damage Griko this way]. What they ultimately debate is not only having to bend, stretch and modify Griko, but having to stretch the boundaries of what is considered an authentic linguistic practice and context, and whether this mere act is considered morally sound. In this respect, locals privilege composing poetry as opposed to prose because it is recognised as an authentic practice, being longstanding and widespread. Through poetry, moral and aesthetic preoccupations are overcome.

To be sure, among local activists there are also those who have overcome such concerns and embrace the view of Griko as a living organism which changes over time. By welcoming neologisms and emergent linguistic practices, they are claiming the right to use and promote the use of Griko as a spoken language. Yet, they have so far remained the minority within the minority, as such attempts are often silenced and the performance of their agency is marginalised on morally loaded aesthetic grounds. What I find particularly revealing is the recurrent alternation and interplay of references to Griko as either an artefact or as a living organism. Such archaeological versus biological metaphors highlight the clash between representations of Griko as a 'dying language' or as a 'living monument' (Pellegrino, 2013). These divergent language ideologies and embedded temporal orientations, which may compete and overlap, then guide activists and equally affect the performance of their agency. Sharing

or not the same cultural temporality of language, the same visions about the role of Griko in the past-present-future, in fact, engenders intergroup intimacies and intragroup estrangements (Pellegrino, 2021). These may favor alliances among specific social actors, but also further fracture the linguistic and metalinguistic landscape, as they attempt to reproduce or challenge the dominant ideologies at the root of the construction of national languages, in such a never-ending chase for moral authority and recognition 'as witnesses of Griko' and ultimately as its agents.

Agency and Categories of Representation: The Predicament of Minority Languages?

The overview of language activism in this chapter highlights how efforts to re-evaluate, preserve and/or promote Griko have interacted throughout time with national and transnational language policies and ideologies. Crucially, throughout the various Griko revival phases, even when initiatives were/are articulated by single social actors, their agency rests on a dialogical relation with other social actors and institutions which may facilitate or inhibit it. Today, the global attention to language diversity as richness enhances activism and re-shapes its forms, claims and goals. This dynamic is illustrated in the shift of Griko from a language of communication to a language of representation (see also Pipyrou (2016) for Greko), raising the issue of representativity of any bounded social formation in language activism. Yet the institutionalisation of the current revival, generated by the availability of symbolic and economic resources, has exacerbated local debates about ownership and management of cultural heritage.

The practice in which speakers repeatedly engage in monitoring and policing how Griko is used becomes the strategy they adopt to foster the language all the while preserving its perceived authenticity. It becomes the very strategy to claim the moral right to represent Griko, ultimately revealing locals' fears of losing control over linguistic ownership and access to modes of representation. Moreover, while minority languages are often perceived by their very speakers as lacking market value, in the case at hand the commodification of the local folk music repertoire acts as a warning; in other words, locals may not consider Griko 'profitable' in economic terms *for themselves*, yet they recognise the dangers of commercial drifts. The visibility achieved by Grecìa Salentina and Salento more broadly is, in fact, the outcome of what Di Mitri (2007: 28) defined a 'territorial revolution': a successful marketing campaign which has been steadily attracting tourists introducing the area into the destinations of 'anthropological tourism' (Apolito, 2000: 13–14).

The case of Griko shows how despite and beyond the historical and extant specificities of each case, minority languages remain entangled in globally shared political and economic dynamics, which recursively bring

the periphery – and its inhabitants – on stage, so to speak. Griko is now embedded within a global frame of representation and equally subjected to what Herzfeld (2004: 3–11) describes as the 'global hierarchy of value' – and to global processes of *merci-patrimonializzazione*, or the construction of local cultural specificities in terms of patrimonial goods (Palumbo, 2013: 136). Now that Griko has left the periphery, it has been increasingly produced, consumed and evaluated by a matrix of social actors – local, national and global – with multi-stranded and often divergent goals, motivations and claims. These dynamics may recursively and paradoxically hinder the performance of agency at the local level, further fracturing the linguistic and metalinguistic landscape – creating more minorities within the minorities – and a morally ordered hierarchy of language-related activities/forms of language activism.

If language loss has never been a neutral process, the same is true of language revitalisation, revival and reclamation. The beneficial outcomes that these processes may bring to individuals and communities should equally prompt us to analyse the ways in which expectations to conform to pre-ordered categories of representation play out in specific ethnographic contexts. We are also compelled to engage analytically and conceptually with the implications of the internal fragmentation endemic to minority contexts, in which the need or desire to revive or reclaim the language may not be shared by the community at large – this is regardless of scholarly definitions and beyond local understandings of these processes and goals. An uncritical emphasis on the notion of empowerment and self-determination may therefore fail to unravel the potential contradictory effects of these processes, leading to overlooking the unequal access to and distribution of resources among community members, symbolic or otherwise. Finally, frustrating as this may be for language advocates, analysing agency in language activism also means endorsing that agency is equally performed by taking no actions, or actions other than those more commonly expected to be taken to revive/revitalise/reclaim a language. As the case of Griko shows, assessing locals' agency in language activism through their efforts to *speak* the minority language means to disregard and devalue the multiple ways in which the language is put into use – or rather, through which locals live with the language. In other words, questioning the organisation and implementation of ideologies is yet another way to perform agency (Costa, 2019). It therefore becomes essential to attend to the multiple understandings and performances of the acts of reclaiming a language in a given ethnographic context.

The persistent discursive and representational struggles over Griko in which locals engage furthermore reveals that the effectiveness of any form of language activism is measured according to whether its agents and their actions are morally legitimated by the community at large. The case of Griko provides evidence that agency in language activism may be negotiated and performed according to a complex intermingling of morality and

authority, ultimately prompting us to redefine the concept time and again, by attending closely to the multiplicity of social actors involved as they act in a dialogic – and at times tense – interaction with national and transnational language policies and ideologies. This will help us to unravel collective linguistic and cultural practices and expectations about the role of the minority language in the past-present-future.

Who will be there remains to be seen.

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To' tànato 'e' torò
ida ton urtimo afimò
pu àfikato ittù
na sas èchume stennù

Notes

(1) Aspects of this article appear in various chapters of my monograph (2021) which builds on my PhD thesis (2013) and presents an historiography of language ideologies. See Chapters 1, 3 and 5 for an analysis of the 'first', 'middle' and 'current revivals'. I acknowledge support from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Greek State Scholarship Foundation (IKY) and the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, which facilitated my fieldwork in Italy and in Greece as part of my PhD, and from the Center for Hellenic Studies (CHS), Harvard University, during the book editing process.

(2) The term *Grecìa* now widely used is an artefact of the current revival; crucially the accent (Grecìa) serves to distinguish it from Greece as a nation-state (It. Grecia). The villages of Carpignano and Cutrofiano were annexed to the administration in 2005 and 2007.

(3) Ernesto de Martino, who pioneered the field of Italian anthropology, carried out research in Salento in the late 1950s, specifically on the phenomenon of *tarantismo*, the ritual in which the music of *pizzica tarantata* was used therapeutically to cure those women (*tarantate*) who claimed to have been bitten by the tarantula (*taranta*). In his book he linked it to female existential and social suffering, and understood it as a manifestation of class and gender inequality. See Pizza (2004, 2015) and Imbriani (2015a, 2015b) on the creation and production of the musical event *La notte della taranta*.

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5 Which North Frisian Should Be Maintained? Exploring Language Attitudes and Agency of Speakers and Non-Speakers

Lena Terhart, Femmy Admiraal and Nils Langer

Introduction

North Frisia has been a multilingual area for centuries, but – at least since WWII – the balance between the languages spoken there has shifted to the disadvantage of North Frisian. This chapter explores the attitudes towards language varieties and use by native speakers, new speakers and non-speakers alike in the current maintenance, and potential revitalisation of North Frisian. We sought to shift focus from the main actors engaged in the Frisian cause, such as directors and chairpersons of associations, and including a handful of other people who regularly and publicly comment on North Frisian issues. Instead, our aim has been to include the everyday speakers who usually do not speak up and, importantly, non-speakers who at this point have no plans to learn the language.

This chapter thus does not examine the agency of groups or individuals dedicated to language activism and revitalisation. Instead, we look at a case of (somewhat) stable language maintenance. In terms of centre versus periphery (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2013), if the investigations in this volume centre around revitalisation and reclamation (Leonard, 2017), then language maintenance is a periphery. And if activists and language practitioners are core to reclamation and maintenance, then non-activist and non-speakers are the outer margins of the periphery. Yet, we

argue that in a multilingual society, and in all efforts to reverse language shift, these people strongly contribute to the sociolinguistic situation, even if their contribution may be unconscious and undeliberate. They are thus actors in language maintenance who simultaneously prepare the ground for other people's agency in this endeavour. We do not problematise agency in the North Frisian context, but understand agency to be socio culturally embedded and negotiated following Ahearn (2001). We do, however, expand on Ahearn's caution to equate agency with resistance (Ahearn, 2001: 30), showing that oppositional agency, or confronting the status quo in the North Frisian case, is not the only form of agency.

This chapter takes a broad perspective into the larger society in which North Frisian maintenance is negotiated. We explore forms of agency – or non-agency – in the maintenance of North Frisian from differing views on the forms of language that ought to be maintained and reflect on the functions the language fulfils for different groups of the population. Finally, we discuss speaker and non-speakers' assessment of the language's future, including the means and conditions that people consider necessary in, and thus have an effect on, language maintenance.

Background

North Frisian is a West Germanic language spoken on the northwest coast, islands and marshlands of Germany. There are two major dialect groups, island North Frisian and mainland North Frisian, which are each split into several varieties. North Frisian is spoken in the district of Nordfriesland [North Frisia], with the small exception of the island of Heligoland (Halunder dialect), which belongs to another district. Within Nordfriesland, the strongholds of the language can be found on the western part of the island of Föhr (Fering dialect), the island of Amrum (Öömrang dialect) and the village of Risum-Lindholm (Mooring dialect) on the mainland (see Figure 5.1).

North Frisian is classified as 'severely endangered' by the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, which is defined as 'language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves' (Moseley, 2010). This definition does not apply unreservedly since many children on Föhr and Amrum and the children of some families on the other islands and on the mainland, especially but not exclusively in Risum-Lindholm, acquire North Frisian as a native language. However, we know that the number of speakers is definitely low and has drastically decreased during the last 200 years. By 1850, estimates suggest, there were some 30,000 speakers (Walker, 2016). In the late 1920s Johannsen conducted a survey and counted 14,148 people with active or passive knowledge of North Frisian out of 40,687 inhabitants of the linguistic area, or 34.8% (Johannsen, 1929). Currently the most reliable estimates speak of

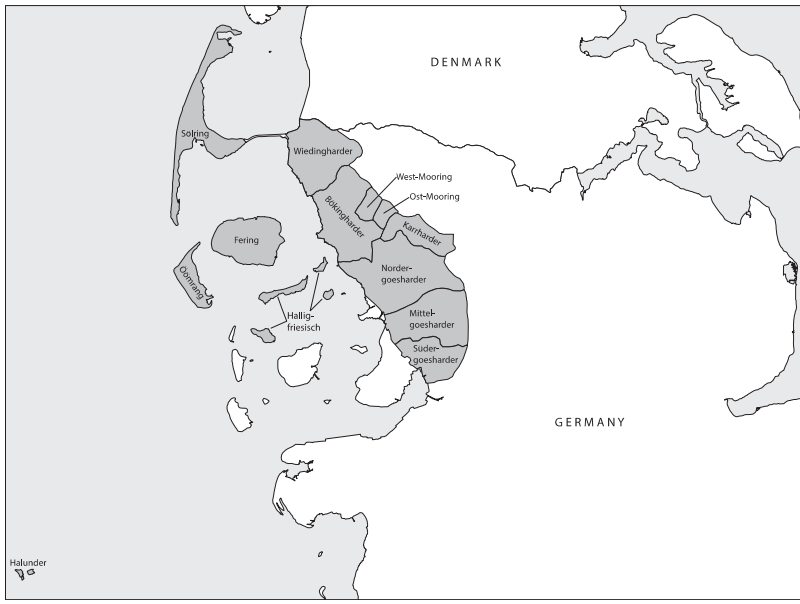

Figure 5.1 Nordfriesland with North Frisian dialect areas, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. Map by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institution

some 4000 to 5000 speakers in Nordfriesland and perhaps another 2000 in the diaspora in Germany and the USA (Århammar, 2008; Versloot, 2021). All speakers are at least bilingual, with native-like competency in High German and many who also speak Low German. In the North of the area, Standard Danish and South Jutish may also belong to the linguistic repertoire of speakers or the communities they live in.[1]

North Frisian has long been an invisible language (Havinga & Langer, 2015), especially since it was never used in significant ways in official written domains such as legal texts or public media. Yet, *indirect* evidence shows that a significant proportion of people spoke the language, and there are cases of linguistic transference and code-switching in historical private writing (Jacob-Owens, 2017).

The first efforts to consciously promote North Frisian language and culture date back to the 19th century and culminated in the foundation of the first North Frisian association in 1879 (Steensen, 1986). Since then, the North Frisian varieties have been introduced into the written domain, with stories and theatre plays written, dictionaries published and educational material designed. Today a number of books are available, both for children and adults and some teaching materials for the bigger varieties. Some speakers occasionally write in Frisian, especially on social media. Every two years, a public writing contest for short stories is held, which has significantly increased the amount of North Frisian literature

over the last two decades. However, North Frisian is still largely an oral language, and a significant number of speakers never read or write the language.

Some 70 years ago, the North Frisian language was considered backward. Parents were told by authoritative persons like teachers or priests that raising their children in North Frisian – and Low German alike (both low or L-languages) – would impede their success in school. As a consequence, many couples decided to raise their children in High German (an H-language) only. Due to this disruption of intergenerational transmission, many people in Nordfriesland have parents or grandparents who still speak or spoke the language, but do not speak North Frisian themselves.

Since the 1970s, Frisian has been (re-)introduced as a school subject on a voluntary basis into various schools in the linguistic area (Steensen, 2002). The number of schools providing such teaching peaked in the 1990s. The total number of pupils taking North Frisian classes was highest in the early 2000s (Walker, 2015). School closures, lack of teachers and lack of interest by school management have led to a slow decline since then, and in 2022 the total number of pupils attending Frisian classes has halved, compared to the peak in 2003/04. North Frisian has always been taught only in primary schools with just a few exceptions. Most importantly, the language is an optional subject for the school-leaving exam in the grammar school in Wyk on the island of Föhr.

North Frisian has been protected under the European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages since 1999, and a number of publicly supported cultural associations promote North Frisian language and culture. Yet, there is still limited public use. Most notably some villages have bilingual signs at their entrances showing the name of the village in German and North Frisian. The state broadcasting station NDR offers a weekly three-minute radio programme *Frasch för enarken* in Mooring. In addition, private broadcasting on Föhr offers FriiskFunk for two hours on workdays with a repeat of the show in the afternoon, which is mostly in Fering. There is no use of the language in television, and a very limited use on the internet (Heyen, 2020).

North Frisian has a positive image in the language area, even among non-speakers, which may well be connected to a regional identity (cf. Kleih, 2019). It is, for example, *en vogue* to choose a North Frisian first name for one's child (cf. Christensen & Bosse, 2016). Despite the general positive attitude towards North Frisian, very few non-speakers feel motivated to learn the language themselves and become new speakers. Learning North Frisian is not considered useful by non-speakers (Kleih, 2019; Terhart, 2022). Owing to the general high-level bilingualism of the speakers of North Frisian, it is not *necessary* to speak North Frisian in order to communicate with a North Frisian speaker. North Frisian speakers are prepared to switch.

Methodology

The data on which we base our analysis were collected between August 2018 and November 2020, and consist of 86 transcribed interviews with 97 people on topics of the use and perception of North Frisian in public, education and personal relations or daily life. We purposefully included speakers as well as non-speakers, the only condition being that they had grown up in Nordfriesland (see Figure 5.2). We almost exclusively interviewed people in what is defined as the linguistic area of North Frisian, i.e. an area much smaller than the district Nordfriesland. Potential interview partners were partly approached on the street and partly recommended to us by our extended network.[2]

Most interviews were conducted in German, but among the ones carried out on the island of Föhr, most are in Fering. We deliberately tried to avoid approaching interview partners through the North Frisian societies and associations because we were interested in speaking with people not involved in the Frisian cause. However, these kinds of people were much easier to find among the non-speakers than among the speakers, and we did not exclude people who were (or are) professionally or voluntarily engaged in associations or institutions. Since we used snowball sampling and did not actively strive for a gender-balanced sample, more female participants were involved (64 in total) than male participants (33 in total). Fourty-two were speakers of North Frisian, 55 non-speakers. Most numerous were people between 20 and 30 years of age (see Figure 5.3). All interviews were transcribed in an application for annotations (ELAN), and tagged using a controlled vocabulary elaborated specifically for this study. This resulted in an annotated corpus, which is searchable for

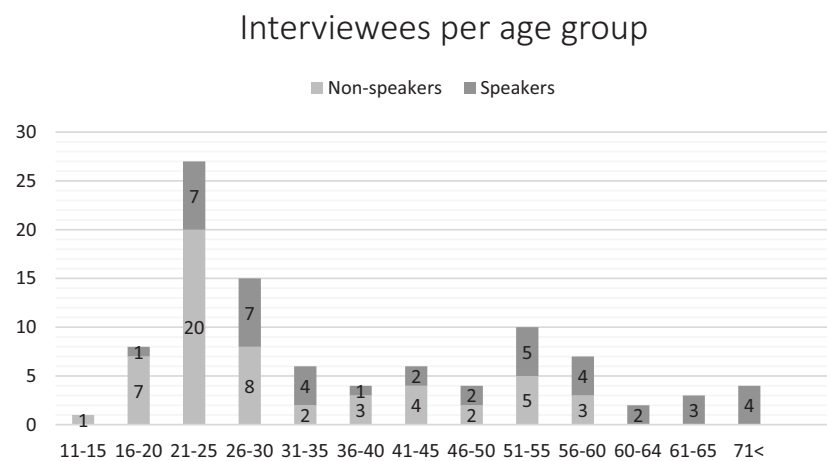

Figure 5.2 Speaker and non-speaker consultants per age group

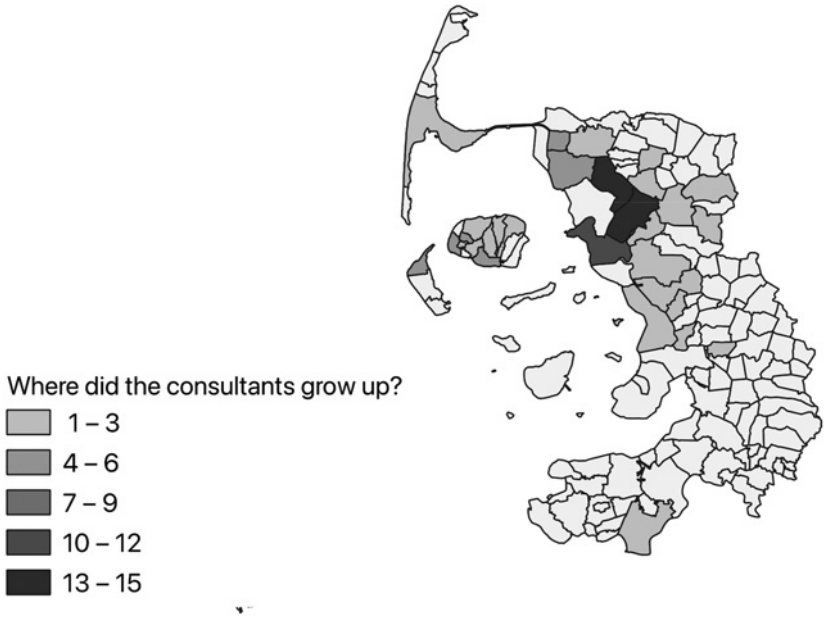

Figure 5.3 Place of origin of the consultants inside Nordfriesland (map created in QGIS, underlying map © GeoBasis-DE / BKG <2018>)

cross-references (DANS Data Station Social Sciences and Humanities, https://doi.org/10.17026/SS/JJQROY).

Contesting North Frisian: Purism or Multilingual Code?

Although the fact that the North Frisian language ought to be promoted – at least to some degree – is largely uncontroversial in the region today, the question of what precisely constitutes correct North Frisian remains to be a matter of disagreement; indeed, one could argue that this disagreement only emerged with the positive revaluation of the language overall and can be traced back to the beginning of North Frisian activism in the 19th century (Bosse & Langer, 2020; Gregersen & Langer, 2020).

A large number of native speakers use North Frisian with a relatively high proportion of German words. Estimates by speakers suggest some 25–30% (Hollmer, 2018), something that is noted and objected to by many people, both native speakers and new speakers,[3] and which runs along lines of arguments found in many other minority languages where contact with the majority language is seen as a threat. Interestingly, at the same time Low German is considered a minor threat and Danish influences are even welcomed since they increase the perceived distance to German (Gregersen, 2019).

It has often been proposed that speakers should monitor their use of the language to speak 'good' North Frisian and reduce the number of German words. In addition, some speakers also repeatedly and publicly recommend to decrease the proportion of German lexicon by the coining of neologisms (Gregersen, 2019). It is worth noting in this regard that some of them are not native speakers but those who learned North Frisian as an L2, in an educational context, where they were confronted with only those features that a small proportion of speakers – the ones developing teaching material – consider to be correct or the idealised form. In our case, some new speakers are known to frequently correct the North Frisian of native speakers:

> aber es is halt immer wieder, ich bin halt auch mit der Grammatik nich gerade so perfekt, aber ich sprech es einfach ich denke nich nach, sondern ich rede einfach los deshalb heißen wir die Bauchfriesen und die [anderen] halt die Bücherfriesen, weil die es sehr genau nehmen und dann is das echt anstrengend, wenn die dich immer wieder korrigieren und ja, so'n bisschen zum Perfektionismus neigen, das sind die Muttersprachler auf jeden Fall nich
>
> but, it is like always, I am not that perfect with the grammar, but I simply speak it, don't think about it, but just talk, that's why we are called the belly Frisians and the [others] are book Frisians, because they take it very seriously, and then it is really annoying when they keep correcting you and, well, always drive towards perfectionism, that's not what native speakers are (ME-181214CH-A-01)

In terms of agency, we see that the 'belly Frisians' and 'book Frisians' engage in different practices. In general, the belly Frisians are more focused on the use of North Frisian for communication within the family, and their agency concerns maintaining the use as a home language, and possibly pass it on to their children. The book Frisians, again generally speaking, take a more agentive role in the public discourse, e.g. policymaking, creating teaching materials, and so on. In that sense, the perspective of the book Frisians, whether L1 or L2 speakers, is often more heard in society, which may influence non-speakers in their thinking about North Frisian. Thus, non-speakers may assume that the North Frisian of those who learned it as an L2 is more correct than native North Frisian:

> Ich, ähm, könnte mir vorstellen, dass das, was [Person1] spricht, dass nicht hundertprozentig jedes Wort Friesisch ist, sondern so'n, vielleicht so'n Kuddelmuddel, so ein paar deutsche Wörter zwischendurch. Und, äh, das lernst du ja natürlich nicht.
>
> Interviewerin: Findest du das, ähm, schlimm oder ist das egal oder…?
>
> Also, wenn du's lernst musst du's natürlich richtig lernen und deswegen ist das schon richtig so, ja, ganz klar.

> I – er – can imagine, that what [person1] speaks, that is not to 100% every word in Frisian, but rather, maybe a jumble, a few German words in-between. And – er – obviously you don't learn that.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think – er – this is bad or does it matter or…?
>
> Well, if you learn it, obviously you have to learn it correctly and that is why it is right the way it is, yes, clearly. (ME-181030JG-A-01)

Learners of North Frisian acquire a variety that is different from that of the native speakers because it does not incorporate ongoing changes in grammar and is less open to lexical borrowings from the majority language. This is not striking but applies to all learners of foreign languages who obtain their knowledge through formal teaching and textbooks. What is extraordinary, however, is that these learners, at least those mentioned in the quotations above, do not adapt their North Frisian when encountering the language as used by native speakers. A further observation worth noting is that many native speakers will consider such L2-usage by new speakers as more correct than their own (native) use. One native speaker commented, 'Die können einfach zu viel Friesisch' [They just know too much Frisian] (ME-190222LT-A-01).

Native speakers of North Frisian are a prime example of a fully multilingual community. When talking to each other, they draw on all linguistic resources they have and, since all of them understand both (or all) languages in question, they can freely switch between North Frisian and German (High and Low) without having to fear that communication might fail. It is precisely the lack of German words in North Frisian speech that reveals new speakers:

> Aber, ähm, doch man hört das schon extrem, finde ich. Also wenn jemand da kommt und der das komplett gelernt hat, das hört sich auch einfach ganz anders an. Ne? erstmal von den Wörtern, verwendeten Wörtern. Da sind gar keine deutschen Wörter häufig dann drin, ne? Die versuchen ja auf Krampf immer dann irgendwie überhaupt keine deutsche Wör-, deutschen Wörter zu verwenden.
>
> But – er – you do notice it extremely, I think. Like if somebody has completely learned it, it simply sounds completely different. You know? First by words, by the words used. There are no German words at all, you know? They always try desperately not to use German wor-, German words at all. (ME-190222FA-A-01)

Many native speakers also stated that they consider it ridiculous to introduce neologisms into North Frisian, where there is a German – or for technical terms also often English – word they can use. Nonetheless, some speakers have changed specific features of their speech to meet the standard of 'good' North Frisian. One consultant reported that participating in Frisian drama made him replace some words of German origin by North Frisian ones:

> gut, einige Sachen haben wir inzwischen ja auch übernommen, w- weißt du früher hat man, wir ham immer gesagt, äh, 'und' oder 'oder' oder diese deutschen Wörter, d-, ne? und dat heißt aber 'unti' oder 'suner' oder – lernen wir natürlich auch durchs [friesische] Theaterspiel
>
> well, by now we have adopted some features, y- you know, before one, we always said – er – 'und' [i.e. and] or 'oder' [i.e. or] or these German words, you know? And it is precisely 'unti' [i.e. or] or 'suner' [i.e. without] or – we learn that through participating in [Frisian] drama (ME-190222LT-A-01)

For new speakers, however, using (too many) German words in North Frisian speech is often considered sloppy:

> Ähm, also mir ist das aufgefallen, zum Beispiel bei manchen Freunden die, äh, die Mutter ist, ähm, in Alkersum aufgewachsen und ich fand mal, als ich bei denen war, hatte ich das Gefühl, dass sie sehr viele deutsche Wörter ins Friesische einfach mit rein-, oder einfach ein deutsches Wort genommen haben, wo ich mir so dachte, na, eigentlich, also ich will jetzt nicht Verbesserungen, verbessern, aber eigentlich gibt's da ja ein friesisches Wort für so.
>
> Er – well, I noticed it, for example, with some friends – er – the mother – er – grew up in Alkersum [on Föhr], and I found, when I was there once, I felt that they used very many German words in Frisian, or simply used the German word, and I thought, well, I don't want to correction, correct, but actually there is a Frisian word for it. (ME-181201MR-A-02)

The idea that mixing elements of certain other languages into one's speech is a sign of language mutilation is not restricted to new speakers of North Frisian. The same view can be found for other minoritised languages, see Pellegrino (this volume) for example, and majority languages alike. A significant difference to the North Frisian case is that linguistic purism also plays a role in the evaluation of the language by a number of linguists who speak of language decay when describing the development of the language, both sociolinguistically and grammatically (cf. Gregersen & Langer, 2020).

Purism does not only relate to German influences but also concerns different sub-varieties of the North Frisian dialects. On the island of Föhr, the western variety of Fering, *Weesdring*, is most widely used. It is considered to be least influenced by High and Low German, and is thus the variety sought by linguists working on grammar or phonetics (see Bohn, 2004; Parker, 1993), and also the one taught in the schools of Föhr. It is thus implicitly (and sometimes also explicitly) promoted as the best variety of Fering and has become normative to a certain degree. This has consequences for the evaluation of the two other varieties (*Boowentaareps* and *Aasdring*) by their speakers. We noted that some of the speakers of these varieties feel or felt that they speak worse than people from the West.

> aber ik hed iar üüs, üüs dring imer wan ik uun Olersem wiar al det Gefühl, det ik en ferkiart fering snaaket
>
> but before, when, when I was a child, whenever I came to Oldsum I had the feeling that I spoke an incorrect Fering (ME-181125MR-A-02)

Owing to Fering lessons at school, some people change their way of speaking, thus reducing the features typical for their own variety. Note that North Frisian education on Föhr substantially differs from elsewhere, because it is mainly directed at the significant number of L1 speakers. Elsewhere, North Frisian is rather taught as a foreign language.

> Nee, ik haa mi, also, üüs ik do uun a oberstufe diar fering uun a onerracht hed, diar haa ik mi en gansen mase ufwenet, auer ik toocht, üüs, wi snaake aran jo komplett ferkiart an ring, oober so eftert, üüs ham do uk diartu liart hee, det det uk waasterlun, also aasdring an weesdring jaft, do, oober ik haa mi det nü so ufwenet.
>
> No, I have, when I had Fering classes in the sixth form [the last three years of high school] I unlearned a lot of things, because I thought, we speak completely incorrectly and badly at home, but later, when one also learned that there is also the western part, that is Aasdring and Weesdring, then, but I have simply unlearned it now. (ME-181201MR-A-02)

As the quotation above shows, the existence of differences in the varieties of Fering does not appear to be reflected on in school. On the contrary, it is even thought that there is 'un-Fering', though it is unlikely that the idea of 'un-Fering' being spoken in a specific place is conveyed through schooling in this absolute sense. But we note that this consultant has the particular view, which in itself is perhaps meaningful:

> ähm, wat haa wi noch maat [uun a onerracht], ja, huar komt det faan, hoker, huar snaaket ham fering, huar snaaket ham ünfering, sowat
>
> er – what else did we do [in Frisian lessons], well, where it [i.e. Fering] comes from, who, where Fering is spoken, where un-Fering is spoken, things like this (ME-181123MR-A-01)

On the mainland, Mooring has the highest number of speakers and receives the most support and promotion. The dominant sub-variety of this dialect is the one spoken in Risum-Lindholm, the stronghold of North Frisian on the mainland. This became apparent in a discussion in a private Facebook group about a bilingual sign in the parking area of a supermarket in Niebüll. One person expressed indignation at the allegedly wrong spelling of a word, and the arguments exchanged dealt with the question, if correct spelling and other linguistic norms would be necessary or rather obstructive for language maintenance (Gregersen & Langer, 2020). Nobody noticed that the contested spelling reflects precisely the variety of the word that is used in the village where the sign stands (Gregersen & Langer, 2020: 176). The situation we find today is that some varieties of

the still largely oral North Frisian language have become normative to some degree, and there are people who defend this norm by depreciating other uses. According to their view, they are protecting the North Frisian language by doing this. However, the result has been that speakers who have not gone through formal education in their L1 have partly adopted a negative attitude towards their native code. Thus, they adapt to this norm to a certain degree – a success for those who propagate purism – but at the same time they also reject parts of it as artificial and ridiculous. This can be seen as a spark of resistance against an imposed norm. In other words, the agentive practices of those defending normative varieties has an influence on the agentive practices of L1 speakers, who sometimes change their way of speaking, or develop a more negative attitude towards their own North Frisian.

The Perception of North Frisian: Culture, Communication or Solidarity?

Many non-speakers who live in Nordfriesland identify as North Frisians as a local connotation. This does not necessarily mean that they also identify as Frisians, leaving this term to speakers (Kleih, 2019). Conversely, speakers, have often stated that it is not necessary to speak North Frisian in order to identify as Frisian. Since there are non-speakers in most 'Frisian' families, and nobody would presumably want to deny Frisian identity to their own family members, the matter of how to identify or label people is complicated. In general the issue is left to individuals' own self-identification. In addition, Low German is also around, which is often equated with a North Frisian identity by its significance for the region and its similar fate of interrupted intergenerational transmission. Thus, a Low German speaker can also be recognised as a Frisian. By intertwining linguistic and local identity, the language North Frisian becomes part of the cultural self-conception not only of its speakers. Our consultants, especially the non-speakers, often mentioned the historical and cultural importance of the language. A majority of our interviewees also stated that they like the bilingual linguistic landscape (albeit small), such as the village or railways signage. They are seen as a visible expression of the role the language has for the region and contribute to distinguishing themselves from others.[4]

> als ich sie [die zweisprachigen Ortsschilder] das erste Mal gelesen hatte, dann sag ich so, ja, das sind wir, wir wollen uns mal 'n bisschen besonders machen
>
> when I read them [the bilingual place name signs] for the first time, I said like, yes, this is us, we want to make us a bit special now (ME-181025JG-A-01)

Many non-speakers also perceive the main aim of North Frisian education to be connected to historical and cultural education and not that much to learning a language:

> Was mir jetzt als erstes einfällt, ist auf jeden Fall geschichtlich, so, dass das zusammenhängt, dass das viel ja mit der Geschichte von Nordfriesland allgemein zu tun hat. Dass das dann da drüber so'n bisschen vermittelt wird.
>
> The first thing that comes to my mind is definitely historically, like, that it is all connected, that it has a lot to do with the history of Nordfriesland in general. That it is conveyed by this. (ME-180805LTLS-A-01)

This focus on culture rather than language is also reflected in the view of a prospective teacher of North Frisian:

> also ich möchte den Kindern nich unbedingt die Sprache komplett beibringen, sondern eher die Lust an der Sprache wecken, also dass sie neugierig sind, dass sie auch die Kultur entdecken wollen, sowas wie Biikebrennen zum Beispiel
>
> well, I don't necessarily aim at teaching the language completely to the children, but I rather want to raise interest for the language so that they are curious, that they also want to explore the culture, like *biike* [bonfires on the eve of the feast of the Chair of St. Peter] burning for example (ME-190219LT-A-02)

North Frisian education is very limited, mostly offered only for two years either in grades 1 and 2, or 3 and 4 of primary school and always as a voluntary subject. Although most interviewees proposed that North Frisian should also be offered in secondary schools on a voluntary basis, the great majority admitted that they would not have participated in such classes at least at that time (aged approximately 9–18), the reason being that North Frisian is hardly useful for them in daily life. Consequently, most attempts to introduce North Frisian in secondary schools have failed so far. Thus, although most non-speakers we interviewed like the language and may even identify with it, a symbolic use of it is often sufficient for them since they mainly assign a historical or cultural value to the language. They do not wish to increase the proportion of Frisian they are confronted with in daily life. It is not a contradiction for somebody to welcome the public display of the language on signs and to overhear people talking North Frisian to each other, but at the same time object to people speaking the language when they are in a group with non-speakers.

> aa- so, aber es gibt ja schon so Momente, wenn man so Kaffeekränzchen so hat mit zehn Personen und da dann irgendwie drei, vier Leute Friesisch reden, find ich das nich so schön, weil man, das is so so ähnlich wie hier wenn zwei Leute beim Kaffeetrinken flüstern
>
> b-, well, but there are situations, like if you have a coffee party with about ten people and then there are somehow three, four people talking in

> Frisian, I don't like that, because you, this is as if two people whisper with each other at the coffee party. (ME-180806LT-A-02)

In a situation in which everybody is allowed to identify as Frisian, there is no need to struggle for identity.

The friendly indifference of non-speakers makes it hard for speakers to oppose or protest against their linguistic discrimination and by doing so possibly strengthening their own belonging to a purely linguistically defined group of Frisians. Their potential agency is thus undermined by being generally accepted by non-speakers, though not with all consequences. With the situation being like this, the widespread belief of North Frisian speakers that they cannot change the language of communication with a person, once they got used to this language, can be interpreted as a strategy of defence of their communicating in North Frisian with some people. At the same time, it provides a reason – or an excuse – for not speaking North Frisian with others (although they potentially could in some rare cases).

An equation of language and culture is also found in official rhetoric. As Arendt (2009) shows, cultural importance of a language connected with the biological metaphor of language death is the basic argument for increased and urgent protection of minority languages found in the specific German legal texts based on the European Charter.[5] While she finds that the line of reasoning in these texts is highly efficient with respect to influencing top-down policy, it does not necessarily contribute to language maintenance or even revitalisation. The parallel drawn to the extinction of species disguises the agency of multilingual speakers. Languages are threatened and languages are to be 'rescued' while speakers remain invisible. They are not construed as actors who have an influence on their own fate in these texts. As a consequence, this aspect is completely forgotten in North Frisian language policy. Furthermore, the focus on culture neglects the communicative function of a language and thus turns it into an object of historical preservation, a museum-like artefact which is maintained for the observer's gaze and not for actual use (Arendt, 2009). The lack of a convincing strategy to increase a communicative need for North Frisian is probably the main reason why young people do not find it attractive to learn the language (Terhart, 2022).

> also, was ich immer so'n Gefühl dafür hab, ist, dass, äh, wenn ich jetzt zum Beispiel im Englischunterricht bin oder so, ist das Ziel des Unterricht-, im Unterricht zu vermitteln, dass die Leute die Sprache sprechen, um mit anderen Leuten in Verbindung bleiben zu können. Und beim Friesischunterricht ist das so, die sollen die Sprache sprechen, damit die Sprache noch gesprochen wird, also, das bekommt man als Schü- Schüler auch vermittelt, und das ist… das ist so, für mich war das nie 'n Grund, deswegen 'ne Sprache zu lernen
>
> I always have the feeling that – er – if I participate for example in English lessons or the like, the aim of educ-, of the classes is to convey that people

> speak the language to keep in touch with others. And in the Frisian classes, they shall speak the language for the aim that the language is still spoken, well, this is what a pup- pupil gets conveyed, and this is… this is like, for me, this has never been a reason to learn a language (ME-180806LT-A-02)

None of the North Frisian speakers specifically talked about the communicative function of the language, probably because it is an inherent and natural function of a spoken language. However, many speakers reported that speaking North Frisian to somebody creates a feeling of solidarity. They feel closer to and more familiar with people with whom they can speak North Frisian, which has the side effect of creating more trust in contact with clients and customers. Some connect this to the lack of a pronoun corresponding to the polite form *Sie* in German, a second person pronoun (identical for singular and plural addressees) that is used in situations of social distance, while *du* (in singular, the plural is *ihr*) is used in situations of social closeness:

> Dann ist allein auch, die, die Atmosphäre ganz anders, weil im Friesischen gibt es kein Sie. Da gibt's nicht dieses Hochförmliche, da ist es mehr auf Du und mehr direkter und, und persönlicher. Deshalb, ähm, würde ich fast sagen, mit einem Drittel meiner Kunden spreche ich hier sogar auf Friesisch.
>
> In that case, the, the atmosphere is totally different because there is no 'Sie' in Frisian. The very formal does not exist, it is more 'Du' and more directly. That's why – er – I would tend to say that I speak Frisian with a third of my customers (ME-190219LT-A-01)

Since North Frisian has always been an L-language and continues to function mainly as a family language, the emotional evaluation of this language is different and more positive in comparison with the H-language German:

> Als wenn man so, ähm, in so'n Teddybär reinknuddelt, ne?
>
> as if you – er – cuddle a teddy bear, you know? (ME-180912FA-A-01)

When non-speakers learn North Frisian, this is considered as an act of integrating into the family, or on Föhr into the larger community:

> det, dan wurd jo nemlich, dan kön jo sik nemlich integriiire uun son taarep an uk uun detdiar fering, uk uun det fering teenken
>
> that, then they will be, then they can integrate in such a village and also in the Fering, the Fering way of thinking (ME-181020MR-A-01)

Importantly, the feeling of solidarity seems to be largely restricted to the speakers of one's own dialect or other, mutually intelligible dialects. In our interviews, nobody specifically mentioned solidarity or a feeling of common identity with speakers of other North Frisian dialects, but we did not explicitly ask for relations to speakers of other dialects, either. In some

rare cases only, interviewees made a general difference between 'the Frisians' and 'the Germans'.

> an an an de de, hü skal man sai, de de gesellschaftliche gegensätzliche Achtung as jo uk ölers, auer bi, uun feringen jaft det jo nian Standesunterschiede, wi san ja ale like föl wäärt, det as uun tjiisken ja ölers, diar as det jo ausgeprägt, detdiar Untertanentum, an an det as för üüs üüb Feer ja en Grauen, wan diar hoker määnt, det hi aufgrund fon wat witj ik, oober, äh äh, en öler gesellschaftliche Position hee üüs wi, an an det maat en mase ütj'
>
> and and and the the, how can I say, the the societal mutual respect is also different as with the, there is no class distinction between Fering people, we all have the same worth, that is different between Germans, they have a distinct kind of servantdom, and and this is for on on Föhr it is anathema, if someone thinks that due to whatever, he is, but – er, er – he has a different societal position than we have, and and this makes a big difference (ME-181125MR-A-02)

On Föhr, the Fering language may also serve inhabitants to retain distance from tourists (A. Arfsten, personal communication, 8 August 2018). It is not clear, however, how much this also applies to the other islands or the mainland.

We have shown that there are competing motivations as to why and to what extent the North Frisian language should be maintained. Non-speakers show little interest (generally speaking) to reclaim the language because they perceive it as a nice add-on which may strengthen their identification with the area they live in but has no significance in daily life. Thus, while welcoming a symbolic use of the language and generally accepting that North Frisian is spoken, they have no wish to increase the range and importance of it. This is certainly not enough to comply with the communicative needs of speakers.

In addition, for speakers North Frisian is an important resource for creating solidarity with other speakers of the same dialect, but there is not necessarily an imagined pan-North-Frisian identity. This may ultimately be the result of firstly, not denying (North) Frisian (self-)identification to non-speakers, and secondly, of speakers not using different dialects in communication with each other with just a few exceptions. Normally, they resort to High or Low German instead. With the situation being like that, non-speakers are usually not actors at all, they are satisfied with the situation as it is. Being generally accepted by non-speakers, speakers are in a situation in which there is nothing to heavily protest against. Thus, they often only demand slight improvements of their situation, such as the extension of Frisian education in schools. This is even supported by non-speakers. As long as it keeps being voluntary, nonetheless, voluntary offers have not had sufficient success in the past, so that the argumentation goes round in circles. In addition, at least on the mainland, Frisian offers at

schools are perceived to mainly aim at learners, not L1 speakers, a fact that has not been challenged by the speakers up to now. Nonetheless, the North Frisian associations partly address L1 speakers with their activities, though they do not offer formal education.

The Future of North Frisian: Flourish or Perish?

While the development of numbers of speakers is one factor in assessing the vitality of languages, it is also important to know how people evaluate the fate of the language since this may well influence their own commitment to language maintenance.

In our interviews it became clear that almost all people are aware that there is less North Frisian today than 30 years ago, and this correlates to the death of many older speakers of the language. Given the fact that intergenerational transmission of North Frisian – at least as an unconscious, natural decision of parents – was interrupted roughly after WWII and fostered by promotion of raising children in High German only, this assessment is certainly correct. However, a few people also mentioned that there is more North Frisian today; the language is promoted by being part of the linguistic landscape (albeit small), by being taught in schools and nurseries (albeit incompletely), and by young people's conscious decision to raise their children bilingually. On Föhr, the language is now heard in villages that are traditionally associated with Low German because people from Fering-speaking villages moved there and continued using their language (ME-181125MR-A-02, ME-181126MR-A-02, ME-181202MR-A-01). We thus have a decrease in terms of numbers of speakers and a simultaneous increase in some domains, especially those visible for the public. What remains unclear for lack of census data is whether the current number of 4000 to 5000 speakers can be considered stable, or in other words, whether the majority of today's young speakers decide to transmit the language to their children.

When asked to judge the situation of North Frisian in the future, we found, not surprisingly, that speakers are in general more positive about the language's future than non-speakers, and speakers on Föhr and Amrum are more optimistic than speakers on the mainland. Furthermore, the answers we got from our interviewees showed that they believe the responsibility for language maintenance to depend at least partly on the educational system:

> das liegt ja immer daran, kommt ja immer drauf an, ob da wieder Leute sind, die sich dafür einsetzen, ob es weitergemacht wird in den Schulen oder ob irgendwann mal einer sagt 'so, jetzt Schluss aus, was sollen wir noch'

> well, it always depends on, it depends on the question whether there are people again who engage for it, whether it is continued in the schools or whether sometime someone says 'well, now it is finished, why should we still' (ME-190219LT-A-04)

As has been mentioned above, many interviewees suggested that the language should also be offered in secondary schools, but did not show interest themselves to participate in such classes (see also Terhart, 2022). As our analysis has shown, voluntary lessons in primary schools cannot create competent or fluent new speakers of North Frisian. This is true even for the primary schools with an increased engagement for the language, such as Fahretoft with their prize-winning mentor–apprentice model[6] or Lindholm, where North Frisian lessons are integrated into the normal school-day (while normally they either take place after – or less often before – the regular subjects which means that pupils not taking Frisian classes can go home earlier – or come later). The majority of our consultants with direct experience with these schools report very positively about their experience but they acknowledge that they did not obtain fluency or used the language outside of the classroom.

> Also in der Grundschule hatten wir das [Friesisch] dann. Da … man hat das auch verstanden und man konnt's dann auch sprechen, aber das wurd halt dann nicht weiter gefördert. Also zuhause nicht, mit Freunden nicht. Man spricht halt dann nur Hochdeutsch. Ähm, von daher vergisst man das dann.
>
> Well, we had it [Frisian] in primary school. There … one could also understand and speak it at that time, but it was simply not promoted further, that is not at home, not with friends. You only speak High German in these situations. Er – and that is why you forget it again. (ME-180912FA-A-03)

This shows us that there is a great contradiction between North Frisian education in schools being considered *the* measure for language maintenance and its very low effectiveness in reaching this aim. Nonetheless, what North Frisian education can achieve is to help increase and uphold the positive attitude towards the language, and to convey cultural and historical knowledge. It can further support speakers in learning to read and write their native language, though rather as a side effect than as an explicitly expressed goal. Education may thus play a role in maintaining the status quo: a general friendly attitude towards the language in which whoever wants to can learn North Frisian and in which speakers are at least not discouraged to use the language in private settings.

It is somewhat surprising that intergenerational transmission was mentioned less often as a decisive factor in language maintenance. As for non-speakers, some statements suggest that this is due to the fact that many believe hardly anybody speaks North Frisian as an L1 anymore:

> ich glaub, die meisten Elternhäuser können's nich vermitteln, weil was ich nich selber kann, kann ich meinem Kind nich beibringen
>
> I think, most families can't convey it, because I can't teach my child what I don't know myself (ME-190105UC-A-01)

Regarding the speakers, it is not clear whether they do not recognise their own agency in language transmission or they take their own active role for granted and thus by and large found it unnecessary to mention in the interviews. In any case, the most important factor in North Frisian language maintenance remains active usage of the language by its speakers:

> das wichtigste, das allerwichtigste ist kostenlos; dass du mit deinen eigenen Kindern Friesisch redest, mit Nichten und Neffen und, und was weiß-, dass das in der Familie weitergetragen wird
>
> the most important thing, the really most important thing is for free; that you speak Frisian with your own children, with nieces and nephews and, and whatev- that it is continued within the family (ME-180810LT-A-01)

Two main factors have been identified by interviewees that render the extension of active usage more difficult. Firstly, in mixed families, where only one parent speaks Frisian (but both speak German), the family language is likely to switch to German only. Secondly, immigration of non-speakers as well as outmigration of speakers challenges the linguistic balance of families, schools, associations, villages or other social units. It could be helpful, if policymakers and activists would focus on these problems and find ways to support speakers in maintaining and transmitting their language, thus spreading the language beyond a symbolic use.

Another problem which was identified in the interviews is the introduction of North Frisian into new domains which is missing or only slowly pushed forward, especially anything connected to new media (Heyen, 2020). There are not enough skilled people who could work on this task and not enough money to properly pay them:

> Und das muss aber irgendjemand betreuen, und das, der braucht Geld von der Regierung, der braucht Geld aus Europa, ne? Der muss, der muss, da muss die friesische Community, die Westfriesen und die Nordfriesen und die Saterland-Friesen vielleicht auch noch… Die müssen alle sagen, 'hey, wir wollen jemanden haben, der sich über Jugend und Medien, der da Geld rein, da muss Geld sein, da muss jemand, das müssen Profis machen'
>
> And somebody has to be responsible for that, and that, he needs money from the government, he needs money from Europe, you know? He has to, he has to, the Frisian community has to, the West Frisians and the North Frisians and perhaps the Saterland-Frisians too… They all have to say, 'hey, we want somebody, who is for youth and media, who [puts] money into it, there has to be money, somebody has to, that has to be made by experts' (ME-180910FA-A-02)

Increasing the proportion of North Frisian in new media could have several advantages. Firstly, it may address younger people and thus reduce the associations of the language being an object of museal preservation. As a side effect, it may have the potential to increase literacy in the language.

Since new media is, at least in parts, more open to non-standard forms of written language which more closely resemble the spoken language, we could also expect a raising awareness for the existence of different registers, and possibly an increased acceptance for different forms of the language. The question remains whether such an endeavour could be institutionalised, and if so whether an institutionally initiated and guided approach to new media could be successful.

Conclusion

We have shown that North Frisian has a positive image in the linguistic area in general. Even if some people do not feel explicitly positive towards the language, no dedicated anti-Frisian attitude is discernible. In this situation, while only a few people actively promote the language in public, the majority can be seen as drivers in preparing the ground for a low-level maintenance of the language by intergenerational transmission inside Frisian-speaking families. Families who raise their children in or with North Frisian are not socially excluded, nor do they have to fear animosities from people speaking German only. From that perspective, there is no reason *not* to use the language in raising a child. At the same time, there is hardly any demand to expand Frisian domains by these people. Speakers are often satisfied with the status quo of speaking the language with some family members and friends, and possibly visiting the Frisian theatre or participating in another cultural event from time to time. Non-speakers associate North Frisian with their shared culture and history, and in order to comply with this function, a symbolic use of the language as part of the linguistic landscape or a few phrases learned at school is sufficient. Speakers welcome this symbolic usage and seldom call for more engagement of non-speakers. It is thus no surprise that non-speakers are also less optimistic about the future of the language than speakers.

We have also shown that in order to feel Frisian or be recognised as Frisian, it certainly helps to speak the language, but is not a requirement. Whoever feels (North) Frisian is recognised as (North) Frisian. A reason for this may be that in most of the families that have lived inside the language area for a few generations, there are speakers as well as non-speakers – resulting from a relatively recent interruption of transmission. If Frisianness were mainly connected to language, people would deny Frisian descendance or identity to their own family members, and this is nothing that they wish for, presumably. In addition, Low German is also present in Nordfriesland. This language definitely counts with more speakers and is spoken in a much wider region. Nonetheless, it faces partly identical problems. Low German is also regarded as belonging to the region, and some families have shifted from North Frisian to Low German rather than High German. There is thus not a Frisian-German dichotomy in which the question of inclusion and exclusion by language could be relatively

easily sorted out, but a much more complicated situation. In consequence, Frisian identity remains a fairly open concept that can embrace everyone who feels at home in the region. Nonetheless, despite this generally inclusive situation, the Frisian *language* does serve as a source of solidarity between speakers of the same dialect, and use of the language automatically creates a feeling of familiarity. It is the converse – the pronounced exclusion of non-speakers from an imagined group – we do not find in the North Frisian context.

Certainly, speakers also use the language to satisfy their communicative needs. However, there are metalinguistic debates on what variety or form of North Frisian is considered authentic or correct. Some speakers, among them partly new speakers, find it necessary to keep the language as free from German influences as possible. Others think that this propagated form is unnatural, sometimes even ridiculous, yet these voices remain largely unheard, because they are not publicly expressed. Language planning, rather, strives for elimination of many German words that are part of the lexicon of an average speaker, as does any written published material. This variety has become normative to some degree, so that some speakers have experienced moments in which their own use of the language was made to be felt inferior. A more forward-oriented approach towards the minoritised language including the acknowledgement of the multilingual reality speakers live in could help to overcome negative attitudes towards non-purist forms of the language and ultimately lead to an empowerment of the everyday-speakers. Increased use of the language in new media with its association to embracing non-standard forms could support this. With a growing amount of written material and a declining number of native speakers, one possible scenario is that two different linguistic styles more strongly grow apart from each other, with one being associated to the formal and written domain and the other to less formal and oral domains. However, this scenario presupposes that a growing number of speakers actually learn the written form of the language. It has not been clarified up to now where and when speakers should acquire these skills, and many of them do not feel the need to learn to read and write Frisian, when everything is available in German. Schooling could play a role, however, in all parts of the language area except for Föhr, education has been oriented to the creation of new speakers although the aims of North Frisian education have never been officially defined (L. Grützmacher, personal communication, 22 October 2022). Indeed, surprisingly many people believe that the educational system plays an important role in language maintenance despite the very low success of the North Frisian education they may have experienced themselves. The interviews have shown that whilst public language planning measures (linguistic landscaping, use in schools and cultural activities) are considered a positive contribution to North Frisian society, they are not effective in increasing the number of speakers and the range of uses of North

Frisian. Since the beginning of these measures, no general drift towards acquiring Frisian has been observed. Nonetheless, some people have individual motivations to learn the language, mainly connected to marrying into a Frisian-speaking family, sometimes out of interest in culture and society.

What we expect in this situation is maintenance of the status quo: since there are no language movements at the moment, regardless of whether based on political, cultural or ethnolinguistic identification, we do not expect a significant growth in the number of new speakers. Nonetheless, since a symbolic use of the language is considered a positive sign of regional self-identification, we do not expect growing hostility towards the Frisian language and its speakers, either. Frisian-speaking families continue to communicate in Frisian and they also continue to transmit the language to their children. However, we cannot yet foresee which linguistic decisions these children will take once they have grown up themselves. Since the number of speakers is already low for some dialects, individual decisions of a few people can become decisive for the community of speakers as a whole. In areas where transmission has been completely or almost completely interrupted, we expect the language to lose its communicative function within the next generation, and consequently a reduction of the number of actively spoken dialects.

What do these assessments about the future reveal about agency and agents? Applying Emirbayer and Mische's (1998: 970) three factors in agency – habit, imagination and judgement – is revealing here. Like them, we believe that the ability to imagine a positive future is a prerequisite for agentiveness. In the case of North Frisian, while speakers are generally positive about the future of the language, imagination and therefore judgement – assessing the past habits and employing imagination to make changes – continues to be limited to the habit of language in the schools and other minimal top-down approaches which have little effect. In this scenario, non-speakers and mostly academic learners exert more agency than speakers in the public sphere. Thus, a precarious multilingualism is maintained, and transformative action is stalled. We conclude that both top-down language policy and language activism could be evaluated more successfully by people in Nordfriesland and new approaches could be more successful in the North Frisian case if the needs and perspectives of the different types of agents – speakers, learners and non-speakers – were recognised and addressed with specifically customised offers and programmes.

Notes

(1) The context is very different from that of its sister language West Frisian, spoken in the province of Fryslân in The Netherlands. West Frisian is spoken by some 60% of the total population of ca 655,000, and Frisian is taught as an obligatory subject in all primary schools, as well as in the lower grades of secondary school (Riemersma, 2023).

(2) We would like to specifically thank Greta Johannsen, a former teacher, who – having heard of the project – contacted quite a few of her former pupils to ask them for an interview with us. In addition, some students of the University of Flensburg were engaged in interviewing, namely Ute Carstensen, Johanna Gregersen, Carina Hansen and Meike Ohlsen.
(3) German has also influenced other parts of the language, but this usually remains unnoticed by people who are not linguistically trained.
(4) There is especially a rivalry between Nordfriesland and the neighbouring administrative district Dithmarschen, both on the west coast of Northern Germany and with a similar landscape, in which the North Frisian language (unlike Low German) may function as a key distinguishing feature.
(5) Arendt's (2009) work is on Low German, an officially protected *regional language* (not a *minority language*). However, despite some superficial differences, the sociolinguistic status of Low German and North Frisian and measures to support them are strikingly similar.
(6) The mentor–apprentice model introduced in the late 1980s brought together pupils and older Frisian speakers from the village, often the children's own grandparents, sometimes neighbours etc. In 2003, it won the local Christian-Feddersen prize, which used to be awarded for special engagement in North Frisian language, culture or history. The school in Fahretoft was closed in 2009 due to a declining number of pupils.

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6 Reconsidering Agency in 21st-Century Language Revitalisation: Insight from the Occitan Context

Sara C. Brennan

Introduction

The introductory level Occitan class I attended in Toulouse in September 2020 began like every other adult beginner Occitan class I had sat in on over the course of the SMiLE project: with a map. The professor, employed by the local branch of a major Occitan advocacy organisation to teach this evening class, passed around copies of a map of the Occitan linguistic domain, which was marked at the bottom with the copyright of the institution – an institution which received public funding specifically for their adult language classes. The circulated map set out the geographic distribution of the different dialects of Occitan, with the names of the pre-2016 French administrative regions and the capitals of each department encompassed by this domain translated into Occitan. For the seven learners gathered in the room, this map served as a springboard for launching the discussion in a language course we were paying to attend, helping to ease the transition from introducing ourselves to getting down to the business of learning Occitan.

While perhaps not the most earth-shattering of fieldwork vignettes, this opening exchange points to dynamics that have become central to many European minoritised language movements: the linking of language and territory, and the professionalisation and institutionalisation of revitalisation efforts. By 'institutionalisation', I refer to a shift from volunteer-based activism to institutionally-led language promotion. This understanding thus differs from the way this term is often used in language planning and policy literature to refer to 'the process by which the language comes to be accepted, or "taken for granted" in a wide range of social, cultural and linguistic domains or contexts, both formal and

informal' (May, 2003, 2012; Williams, 2005). As will be discussed in subsequent sections, the processes of linking language and territory on the one hand, and professionalising and institutionalising revitalisation efforts on the other, have often been accorded a key role as catalysts for language activist agency and positioned as critical for coherent, coordinated mobilisation in favour of minoritised languages. 'Language activism' will here refer to 'a social project that aims to counter language-related inequalities, and may encompass many different actors, imaginaries, and actions' (De Korne, 2021: 1), and the 'agency' of activists will reference their 'socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn, 2001: 112) in order to further this project. Further resonating with the more fluid, multi-layered and polycentric perspective on activism and agency adopted in this volume, the term 'activist' will englobe social actors whose actions and imaginaries contribute to this social project in different ways and at different levels, whether they identify as language activists or language professionals or not (De Korne, 2021: 1–2).

This chapter will question the contemporary contribution of these processes of linkage and of professionalisation and institutionalisation to Occitan language revitalisation efforts in the south of France. More specifically, the following analyses will draw out how these two central pillars of European language movements may now effectively limit activist agency and undermine collective action in the Occitan case. The aim of these discussions, however, is not to sound the death knell for language revitalisation in the 21st century by only highlighting limitations and constraints on activist action. The chapter will thus conclude by drawing on the Occitan context to highlight the potential of (formerly) peripheral activism spaces and social actors to assume a more central role in revitalisation efforts and to offer innovative opportunities for agency.

Methodology

The analyses in this chapter draw on ethnographic fieldwork I undertook with James Costa between January 2018 and August 2019. Entitled 'Language revitalization as community building in Occitania: Language, economics and the politics of transmission', our project aimed to investigate the particular challenges faced by the contemporary Occitan movement in southern France.[1] Our research was based on ethnographic fieldwork across and beyond the Occitanie administrative region, which comprised participant observation, 40 qualitative interviews complemented by extensive fieldnotes recording more informal interactions, and the collection and analysis of diverse texts (official reports, government documents, websites, language advocacy organisations' promotional materials, etc.). The participant observation in which we engaged exemplified the polycentric approach to language revitalisation adopted by the SMiLE research programme, as it englobed diverse settings in which

Occitan was used, taught, or featured as a topic of discussion. These settings included: Occitan cultural festivals; adult language classes, conferences and lectures organised by Occitan advocacy organisations; farms and vineyards where Occitan was spoken or drawn on in some way; associative bilingual Occitan-French immersion schools (*Calandretas*); and Occitan summer schools.

Reflecting our broad understanding of the actors who contribute to the social project of language activism, we interviewed a wide range of individuals involved – directly or more peripherally – in Occitan language revitalisation, including: key figures in the Occitan cultural and political movements; representatives of regional and local Occitan advocacy organisations; Occitan teachers and leaders of teacher organisations; parents of children learning Occitan in school; individuals involved in the Occitan creative arts (musicians, singers, writers, radio station managers, storytellers, etc.); adult learners of Occitan; representatives of regional and local (i.e. departmental or citywide) government initiatives linked to Occitan; and entrepreneurs, artisans and farmers who use Occitan in some way in their commercial undertakings. Most of the interviews were not audio-recorded because almost none of the participants felt comfortable with recording, due to the political or sensitive nature of many of the topics discussed and the threat that voicing criticism could pose to initiatives or access to funding. We thus addressed this challenge by taking detailed notes during interviews. We also took note of many more spontaneous, casual interactions – which at times developed into lengthy, in-depth discussions of our research questions – as part of our fieldnotes, with the details written down *in situ* or immediately after the fact.

In order to analyse our fieldnotes from participant observation, transcriptions and notes from semi-structured and informal interviews, and the collected texts, we drew of the principles of critical sociolinguistic discourse analysis (Heller, 2001), which emphasises the historicised, socially and politically situated nature of discursive production, reception and analysis, and of the sites and actors involved, as well as the role of discourse in situated processes of social inequality and social difference. It is thus important to note that both the observations and discourses presented in this chapter and the analyses of them emerged from and reflect the situated social dynamics of a particular moment of time.

Occitan and Occitanie: A Brief Overview of Two Contested Terms

In discussing Occitan, I refer to the Romance language historically spoken in southern France and parts of Italy (the Occitan Valleys and Guardia Piemontese), Catalonia (the Val d'Aran) and, at least until the 20th century, Monaco (see Figure 6.1). The traditional Occitan linguistic region of France, which will be the focus of the present discussion, covers

Figure 6.1 The French administrative region of Occitanie (dark grey) situated within the Occitan linguistic and cultural domain (light grey). Map by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institution

approximately the southern third of the country, stretching from the Atlantic coast in the west (excluding the French Basque Country) to the Mediterranean Sea and the Alps in the east, and from the Pyrenees in the south to the Massif Central in the north. Despite the vast historic domain of the language, centuries of pressure from the monolingual ideologies propagated by the institutions of the French State have eroded the social use and transmission of Occitan in southern France, with the speaker population continuing to dwindle (OPLO, 2020).

The use of the name 'Occitan' to refer to all the *langue d'oc* varieties spoken across this domain – as opposed to the *langues d'oïl* dialect continuum including what is now standard French – originates in the emergence in the 1930s of a new wave of language activists known as *occitanistes*, who based this name on a Latin term found in medieval texts. In doing so, they sought to link the unified Occitan language to the imagined cultural, historical and political community of Occitanie

(Blanchet, 2012: 19). However, while the term 'Occitan' has gained ground in large part thanks to its increasingly visible use in institutional and educational settings, the name of the language remains a point of contestation (Boyer & Alén Garabato, 2004; Martel, 2007; OPLO, 2020). Among supporters of the Felibrige language and literary movement prominent in Provence, for example, 'Langue d'Oc' is preferred as the name of the language, while the French education system recognises Occitan-Langue d'Oc as its name. Among those who consider there to be a single language named 'Occitan', this language is generally considered to have six main dialects: Gascon, Limousin, Languedocien, Auvergnat, Vivaro-Alpin and Provençal. However, over the past 40 years some language advocates in areas such as Provence and Gascony have sought to reject 'Occitan' as a name they associate with the central part of the linguistic domain and with Toulouse in particular, instead preferring localised denominations such as Provençal and Gascon, respectively. According to this perspective, there is not one language spoken across the South of France but several 'Langue*S* d'Oc', thereby rejecting a pan-Occitan approach to language promotion efforts (Blanchet, 2003, 2007). Most older 'traditional' speakers of the language, meanwhile, refer to what they speak as 'patois', and consider 'Occitan' to be something else, a language of literature, linguistics, academia and the education system (Sauzet, 2012).

As for 'Occitanie' (*Occitània* in Occitan, *Occitanie* in French), meanwhile, this appellation might seem to point to a widespread acceptance of the name of the region in which people speak or have traditionally spoken Occitan, but the historical and contemporary relationship between place and name has been marked by contestation as well (see Costa & Brennan, 2021). References to 'Occitanie' appeared for the first time in the 13th century when used by the French monarchical administration to designate its newly acquired territories following the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229). As regions situated south of the Loire River gradually fell under French influence, they collectively came to be known by varying names, including *Gascogne*, *Provence* and later *Midi*. The term 'Occitanie' was then revived at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries by language activists in the south of France, but it never entered into wider popular usage (Sagnes, 2017). The term has indeed often been rejected by language activists in regions such as Provence, Gascony and Auvergne who refuse the perceived association with central Occitanie and Toulouse in particular. The relationship between 'Occitan' as the name of the language and 'Occitanie' as the name of the region in which it was spoken has thus never been clear-cut beyond or even within activist circles. As the next sections will discuss, this situation seems only to have been further complicated in recent years by the creation of a French administrative region named 'Occitanie'.

The Naming of Administrative Occitanie: A Long Legacy Made Manifest?

Ongoing contestation of the name notwithstanding, the creation of the Occitanie administrative region in 2016 could be seen as inscribed within a long legacy of connecting language and territory. With its roots in the German Romanticism of the late 18th and early 19th century, an essential link forged between language, people and place has been positioned as central to many modern European nationalist movements and language revitalisation efforts. This intellectual movement conceptualised language as one of the fundamental dimensions of the shared tradition and cultural heritage of a specific people linked to a particular place. The Romantic emphasis on 'unity among language, national essence and territory' (Gal, 2006: 164) would come to play a fundamental role in nationalist movements and minoritised language revitalisation efforts worldwide.

In the context of contemporary language movements, we can see the enduring salience of this link between people, place and language in efforts cantered on place names or the linguistic landscape more broadly, whether it be in terms of advocating for bilingual street signs or for the official recognition of indigenous place names. Pointing to the political import of such a link, sociolinguist Henri Boyer (2008) discusses minoritised language place names in relation to what he calls *affirmations identitaires* or 'affirmations of identity'. He characterises these affirmations as fundamentally political acts that are informed by, and reflect activism advocating for, the recognition of place names drawn from linguistically and/or culturally rooted communities. Boyer argues that such acts of naming tend to become acutely relevant in contexts of linguistic and social domination, and are thus closely linked to dynamics of linguistic and/or cultural resistance and to ground gained by community movements in terms of reclaiming linguistic and/or cultural spaces. In such situations, affirmations of identity can be seen as representing an outcome of hard-fought battles for legitimate place names that reflect minoritised languages and cultures. Boyer thus posits that such acts of place naming come about in moments of linguistic normalisation, a term which refers to the conceptualisation within Catalan-Occitan sociolinguistics of diglossia as a site of not only linguistic but also social domination and thus of conflict (Gardy & Lafont, 1981; Lafont, 1984). Within this perspective, *linguistic normalisation* speaks to efforts to expand the domains in which the use of a dominated language is regarded as 'normal', to the point that this language replaces the dominant language in all domains of social communication (Boyer & Alén Garabato, 1997; Kremnitz, 1981).

At first glance, the christening of a newly created French administrative region as 'Occitanie' in 2016 could be seen as representing a fairly monumental instance of such an affirmation of identity. In 2014, the

French parliament passed a law reducing the number of metropolitan regions from 22 down to 13, a change which would come into effect on 1 January 2016. Between January and July of 2016, the new regions were given interim names that combined the names of the former regions that had been merged to form them. All the new regional councils were allowed to propose new permanent names, and the council of Languedoc-Roussillon-Midi-Pyrénées chose to do so via popular vote through a non-binding referendum that took place in June 2016. In a preliminary round of consultation, the regional council created a website through which the public could submit names, and 23,000 were submitted by the deadline. A names committee composed of 30 residents of the new region then narrowed this list down to 90 names for debate, and this committee eventually sent eight names to the regional council. The regional council voted the list down to five names that would be put back to a public vote: Languedoc, Languedoc-Pyrénées, Occitanie, Occitanie-Pays Catalan et Pyrénées-Méditerranée. Of the 203,993 people who voted, 44.9% voted for 'Occitanie'. The selection of the name 'Occitanie' for the newly formed region could thus be seen as representing the will of the people and constituting a major victory for the Occitan movement. The identification of Occitan with a particular territory and the representation of the language as a spatial object via maps have long been central to the Occitan movement (Costa, 2016), and after over 150 years of efforts to promote Occitan language and literature, the people had selected – and the French government had ratified – an official place name directly linked to Occitan, despite the French state's historical opposition to regional identity markers (see Costa & Brennan, 2021, for a full analysis of this naming process and its political implications). It would therefore be reasonable to imagine that the naming of Occitanie represented the outcome of a concerted activist effort to raise popular awareness and reclaim the traditional linguistic and cultural space of Occitan. SMiLE fieldwork conducted within and beyond the boundaries of the new administrative region, however, would indicate that this was not necessarily the case – or indeed that it could even be practically the opposite of what had actually happened.

Linking Language and Place, Dividing a Language Movement: The Case of Occitanie

Based on conversations with Occitan activists, teachers and speakers, it would appear that the campaign for the selection of 'Occitanie' as the name of the region had in fact splintered the Occitan movement into opposing camps, and that the issue remained resoundingly divisive what was then over two years after the vote, when our fieldwork took place in 2018–2019 (see Costa & Brennan, 2021, for further discussion). Central to these disputes was the fact that the administrative region only

Figure 6.2 The Occitan linguistic and cultural domain (thick outline) vs. the administrative region (labelled on the map) (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:French_administrative_divisions_in_Occitania_(EN).svg)

encompasses approximately one third of the Occitan linguistic and cultural domain (see Figure 6.2).

The 'Occitanie' that now appears on the French weather map is thus not the 'Occitanie' that certain activists had long talked, dreamt and sung about, and this discrepancy had effectively split the Occitan movement in two. As recounted by Marcel, an Occitan professor in Toulouse, there had been heated debates among Occitan activists ('*des débats serrés entre les occitanistes*') who were for or against the name.[2] Those who opposed the naming were adamant that the Occitan domain was not restricted to the two former regions that had been merged to create what would become the new administrative Occitanie ('*la région d'oc n'est pas uniquement ces deux régions*'). For those activists who supported the name, however, Marcel explained that they understood the importance of placing Occitanie on the map in terms of its positive ripple effect ('*un bénéfice plus grand*'). Among the pro-Occitanie activists, there was hope that a smaller administrative Occitanie would follow the model of Catalonia, in which the 'official' Catalonia in Spain only represents part of the Catalan domain but it is widely recognised that the linguistic Catalonia is much larger. For these activists, the idea was to put 'Occitanie' on the map as the name of the region in order to make the public aware of the existence of the larger Occitanie and of Occitan language and culture. According to Benezet, an activist and local official in Toulouse who had campaigned for the name, greater awareness of Occitanie would then 'allow other

Occitans' – that is, people living in the traditionally Occitan areas excluded from the official region – to more effectively advocate for the language in their areas (*'[le nom] permet aux autres occitans de revendiquer mieux chez eux*'), because they could benefit from the greater recognition and legitimacy that the name of the region would bestow on Occitan.

According to activists from beyond the administrative boundaries, however, this was not at all the case. While attending the *Estivada* interregional Occitan cultural festival in 2018, I spoke with Sylvie, the director of an association of Occitan teachers based in Provence. She adamantly maintained that the naming of Occitanie had set efforts to promote Occitan in Provence back by 40 years. Miming strangulation, Sylvie described how the effects of the name were 'catastrophic' in her region ('*c'est catastrophique en Provence*') because it was now more difficult than ever for the language spoken there and also for its speakers to be recognised as Occitan outside the boundaries of the newly christened Occitan region ('*on a vraiment du mal d'être reconnu comme occitan, d'avoir la langue reconnu comme l'occitan*'). 'There may well be a region' she fumed, 'but we too speak Occitan' ('*il y a une region mais nous aussi, on parle l'occitan*').

The multidimensional threat these boundaries posed to the pan-Occitan movement was driven home by Domenge, the Provence-based director of an Occitan advocacy organisation with whom James met. Domenge described how the naming of the Occitanie administrative region suggested that only one part of the larger Occitan domain spoke Occitan, thereby delegitimising the large swaths of the Occitan movement based outside the official region. He noted that this was particularly the case in Provence, where activists were split between those who saw Provençal as a dialect of Occitan and those who believed it to be a separate language. In this case, as in other excluded areas like parts of Gascony where activists are similarly divided, the new region greatly weakened the Occitan movement by fuelling the fires of separatists, who could now argue that Occitan was spoken in the place named 'Occitanie' and other languages (including Provençal and Gascon) were spoken beyond its boundaries (Martel, 2012). Moreover, Domenge pointed out, the creation of a region called 'Occitanie' had rendered the funding available for activist efforts in favour of Occitan more centralised than ever, because grants for the language were now associated with the region that bore its name. In Provence, he explained, even Occitan activists had increasingly begun speaking of Provençal and not Occitan in order to apply for funding from their regional administration, and this situation was accelerating the fragmentation of the Occitan movement and potentially risked to usher in the disappearance of a pan-Occitan approach to the language.[3] Domenge's fears concerning the privileging of a local glossonym resonated, for instance, with the 2016 decision by the regional council of the

Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region to reduce funding for *Calandretas* by €35,000 to only €40,000 while allotting nearly €500,000 to a project to renovate a traditional farmhouse into a Provencal language 'observatory' that was submitted by Collectif Prouvènço, an activist association which promotes the recognition of Provencal as a separate language (Neumuller, 2016; see also Costa, 2012, for an analysis of this association's discourses).

Moreover, the lamentations of these activists working to promote Occitan in Provence, and thus outside the administrative Occitanie, resonated with fears expressed within the boundaries of the new region itself. In Carcassonne, for example, I met with Jòrdi, a long-time activist who was involved in the local Occitan cultural centre. Although he acknowledged the argument for the potentially legitimising effects of the official 'Occitanie' name, Jòrdi argued that the circumscribed administrative region clashed with the 'Occitanie' long evoked by Occitan writers and artists in referring to the entire domain of the language and culture. While echoing Sylvie and Domenge in highlighting the boost this naming would give to separatist movements in Béarn and Provence ('*[maintenant, il y a] groupes de Béarn, de Provence qui peuvent dire que l'occitan, c'est pas nous*'), he also pointed to the practical obstacles to collective action in favour of the language within the boundaries of the region. Given the vastness of administrative Occitanie and the underdevelopment of transport links within the region, Jòrdi noted, it would be difficult to coordinate activist efforts ('*vu l'étendue du territoire et les transports, c'est pas facile de faire de l'action commune*'). It would be easier for Occitan activists to meet in Paris, he sighed, than to assemble anywhere in the region.

Even among activists who had actively campaigned in favour of the name in Toulouse, the capital of the administrative Occitanie region, concerns over unintended consequences emerged. Marius, the owner of a bar that had long been a gathering spot for Occitan activists, thought that the naming was a good thing for the central Occitan region ('*pour l'Occitanie centrale*'), because the previously little-used word 'Occitanie' was now part of everyday life. He particularly hoped that the parallel with Catalonia (see above) would bear fruit. At the time of our meeting in 2018, however, his outlook on this potential seemed rather grim. For the other Occitan regions that were not part of the administrative Occitanie, he sadly noted, it was game over ('*c'est perdu*'). Beyond the additional obstacles to being publicly or institutionally recognised as Occitan faced by speakers and activists in areas such as Provence, Marius also despaired of the sense of rejection experienced by these social actors: it will be harder for them to recognise themselves as Occitan ('*[c'est] difficile de se situer comme Occitan*') because Provence had effectively been cast out from the official Occitanie ('*la Provence a été rejetée*').

Rather than representing the fruit of collective mobilisation and offering a launchpad for future coordinated action in favour of Occitan, the

designation of 'Occitanie' as the official place name of the new region thus seemed to have profoundly undermined the capacity of Occitan activists to act in favour of the language. Even within the administrative region, the movement had been splintered between pro- and anti-Occitanie factions, whereas activists outside the region now faced emboldened opposition from separatists and limited access to funding. Long a pillar of language revitalisation claims, the link between language and territory in the Occitan case thus seemed in many instances to instead undermine revitalisation efforts and to limit activists' potential for collective action.

Having pointed to the conflicts and constraints that have emerged from the naming of the Occitanie administrative region, I will turn in the next section to a second mainstay of contemporary language revitalisation movements that SMiLE fieldwork also suggested was restricting activist agency in the Occitan context: the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the Occitan movement.

The Professionalisation and Institutionalisation of Language Revitalisation in (and beyond) Occitanie

While the link between language and place has been a central element of many minoritised language movements since the 19th century, a shift towards the institutionalised, professionalised advocacy of such languages is a more recent development, and the history of the Occitan language movement exemplifies this evolution. Across and beyond European language revitalisation contexts, this trend has become particularly evident since the 1970s in the demand for and establishment of language boards and other public bodies entrusted with the remit of encouraging and/or overseeing the development and implementation of language policy, planning and promotion initiatives. This shift towards institutionalised language advocacy can be seen, for example, in the creation of *Bord na Gaeilge* (1978; staff and activities transferred to Foras na Gaeilge in 1999) in Ireland, the Sami Language Council (1992) in Norway and *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* (2003) in Scotland. In many instances, such a shift has represented a departure from earlier generations of these language movements, which worked to counter minoritisation processes shaped – if not driven – by state institutions aiming to promote 'national' languages at the expense of all others. Focusing on the Breton context, for instance, Ó hIfearnáin (2013) observes this very evolution from oppositional volunteer activism to language policy implemented by state bodies:

> Whereas policy for protecting and promoting the Breton language depended for many years on voluntarist action led by committed language activists who were in opposition to the linguistic and cultural policies of the state, leadership in language policy is on the cusp of becoming institutionalised, where actions in favour of Breton become increasingly

> implemented by various levels of government and regional agencies. (Ó hIfearnáin, 2013: 118)

While at times a tenuous relationship, such a link between grassroots language movements and state apparatus has often come to be viewed by activists as central to the official recognition and thus legitimation of minoritised languages (May, 2003). In examining the case of *Bord na Gaeilge*, Tovey (1988: 56) also points to the potential language advocacy organisations can see such bodies as having in terms of consolidating, coordinating and therefore rendering more effective the implementation of language policy. Urla (2012a: 141), meanwhile, draws on the history of the Basque language movement in Spain to identify another perceived upside of these public institutions: the subsidies they might provide to activist organisations and initiatives.

This last observation in particular can provide a bridge between the creation of such institutionalised entities and the second dynamic mentioned: professionalisation. The institutionalisation of language activism has often been articulated with efforts to professionalise minoritised language movements by shifting from voluntary structures to publicly funded organisations with business-like structures, managerial strategies and salaried employees. One potential impetus for this dynamic is once again the question of legitimacy: in some cases, contemporary language movements seek to distance themselves from the more contentious and politicised nationalist discourses of generations past and to pivot towards more professional, technical (and thus potentially more politically 'neutral') approaches to language promotion. Such a professionalising shift has been observed, for instance, in the Welsh and Gaelic contexts (Lewis *et al*., 2017; McEwan-Fujita, 2011) as well as in the Spanish Basque Country, where Urla (2012b: 75) describes a managerial approach to Basque revitalisation as playing 'a legitimating role, serving to detach language planning from the conflictual realm of Basque nationalist politics and link it with the highly legitimate practice of entrepreneurialism'. In many instances, moreover, a key element of this shift is a growing emphasis on defined projects and targets that can be monitored, measured and evaluated as professionalised activist entities seek to align their work with the eligibility requirements to receive public funding (Lewis *et al*., 2017; McEwan-Fujita, 2005). This dynamic is of course not without tension: the goals and approaches of state bodies and the institutionalised language advocacy entities that receive their funding are not necessarily always aligned with the aims of grassroots activists (Lewis *et al*., 2017; Urla, 2012a), and reliance on public funding renders language movement actors vulnerable to cuts, particularly in times of economic crisis (Ó Ceallaigh, 2020). Contentious as such measures may be, in terms of both public representation and competitiveness for subsidies, the overall aim of professionalising language activism would thus appear to be showing 'that

language-revival projects are serious, expertise-based efforts, reliant on well-conceived plans, and able to deliver results' (Urla, 2012a: 157).

This increasingly widespread trend can also be linked to the emergence of activist discourses and strategies that highlight the economic value of minoritised languages and of linguistic competence in these languages (Brennan, 2018; Pietikäinen *et al.*, 2016). Such a market-oriented focus is situated within a wider shift in the predominating discourses on language(s) more generally: whereas language was historically conceptualised and valorised in cultural and political terms under the politico-economic conditions of modern capitalism and nation-state formation, it has increasingly come to be approached in terms of economic value in the era of globalised late capitalism (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). The salaried positions created through the professionalisation language advocacy organisations allows activists to tap into these emergent legitimising discourses, as they can then point to the professional advantages and employment opportunities associated with speaking minoritised languages.

These intertwined shifts towards institutionalisation and professionalisation are evident in the history of Occitan revitalisation efforts, which has thus far been characterised by three prominent phases of development: the mid-19th century until the 1930s; the 1960s–1970s; and the 1990s–2000s (Costa, 2013; Costa & Gasquet-Cyrus, 2013; Lafont, 1991). The first phase of the Occitan language movement began with the founding of the Felibrige organisation in 1854 in Provence by Frederic Mistral and six other poets. This Occitan literary renaissance movement emerged in reaction to a perceived decline of language use and aimed to promote the Langue d'Oc across the entire South of France through literature. While successful in fostering cultural production and consumption in Provence in particular, the Felibrige failed to link the language movement to the wider political and economic struggles faced by the population of southern France at the beginning of the 20th century (Martel, 2010). In the 1960s, and 1970s, however, the second phase of the Occitan movement was marked by discourses of language rights and decolonisation, with a strong emphasis on the notion of internal colonialism as made popular in the movement by the Occitan writer, linguist and sociolinguist Robert Lafont (1967). During this phase, Occitan activism aligned itself with left-wing political movements and was closely linked to labour strikes and social movements across southern France which protested the centralisation of the French state, the underdevelopment of the south, and the depletion of the region's natural and human resources for the benefit of the more industrialised north (Lagarde, 2012; Touraine *et al.*, 1981).

The trend towards institutionalised, professionalised (and depoliticised) language advocacy then came to the forefront in the third phase of Occitan revitalisation efforts that emerged in the 1990s and 2000s. During this stage, the Occitan movement moved away from the overt politicalness

of the 60s and 70s and instead focused on cultural issues, tapping into the global circulation of discourses on language endangerment and linguistic diversity brought to the fore by organisations such as UNESCO and by debates concerning the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Duchêne & Heller, 2007). Occitan activists also increasingly focused on the links between language and the economy. On the one hand, a new emphasis was placed on promoting the use of Occitan in business (Alcouffe, 2010; Alén Garabato & Boyer, 2020). On the other, Occitan revitalisation organisations and initiatives that had previously relied on volunteers were increasingly professionalised, with the goal of creating full-time paid positions to allow qualified activists to work exclusively on language promotion (Bernissan, 2013; Martel, 2013). The year 2015 then witnessed the creation, in partnership with the French state, of an Occitan language board called *l'Ofici public de la lenga occitana* (in French: Office public de la langue occitane), more commonly referred to as OPLO. OPLO is an interregional public body dedicated to supporting the preservation, regular use and transmission of Occitan and to enhancing the development of and socialisation in the language in the Occitanie and Nouvelle Aquitaine regions. The establishment of OPLO followed decades of Occitan activist demands (including a hunger strike by two regional councillors in 2015[*La Dépêche Du Midi,* 2015a, 2015b]) in favour of a public language body for Occitan, as they believed the development of Occitan language policy depended on the establishment of such an institution. OPLO's official remit is both to provide financial support for projects proposed by social actors aiming to increase the number of Occitan speakers, and to structure and coordinate the linguistic policies of its two member regions in order to enhance the efficiency of efforts to revitalise the language.

Some Money, More Problems: The Double-Edged Swords of Professionalised, Institutionalised Occitan Language Activism

While great hope has been invested in the professionalisation and institutionalisation of the Occitan movement in recent decades, interactions with Occitan activists during SMiLE fieldwork in 2018 and 2019 suggested that this investment had potentially not (yet, at least) borne the anticipated fruit. One key issue that emerged was that of finances: professionalised language activism requires funding to pay the salaries of those employed to run it, and such funding was not necessarily in abundant supply within the associative sector, particularly in the wake of cuts linked to the 2007–2008 economic crisis and ensuing recession (Bernissan, 2013). News reports from the past decade attest to the precarious finances of professionalised Occitan activism, whether it be in terms of funding cuts that threaten the sustainability of *Calandretas* (Beriou, 2019), or the financial difficulties faced by local branches of the *Institut d'Estudis*

Occitans (IEO), including funding reductions that forced branches to let employees go (*Centre Presse Aveyron,* 2013; Lévêque, 2020).

As SMiLE fieldwork highlighted, even those organisations that managed to maintain salaried positions faced serious funding challenges. In Albi, I met with Irene, an employee of the local Occitan cultural centre who described how the formerly all-volunteer undertaking had created two permanent salaried positions several years ago. Having these two staff members, Irene explained, had allowed the centre to develop more continuity both internally as a team and externally in terms of its relations with the public, as previously there had been a different person working the center's front desk every year (*'avant, il y avait une différente personne à l'accueil tous les ans'*). At the same time, however, she noted that the money ringfenced for these two salaries had to come out of the centre's already tight overall budget and thus reduced the funding available for cultural programming. Irene explained how they were very well aware that it was music that attracted people – and new, young people in particular – to the cultural centre and introduced them to the Occitan language and the movement to promote it (*'on sait que c'est la musique qui attire les gens nouveaux et jeunes'*), but the two salaries on payroll limited the centre's capacity to organise concerts. The centre's regular workshops held in Occitan on a variety of topics, she noted, also tended to draw in crowds, albeit older ones, but it was a challenge to bring in people to host them given the centre's tight budget. Indeed, the workshop on Occitan–Catalan relations that I attended at the centre was led by Irene herself, as it had proved too difficult to invite an outside speaker to Albi. Thus, while facilitating a certain degree of stability in terms of staffing, the professionalisation of the Occitan centre ultimately seemed to have stymied efforts to raise awareness of Occitan and offer opportunities to engage with the language.

In addition to the budgetary constraints created by salaries, Bernissan (2013) also points to another downside of professionalised language activism in the Occitan context: the introduction of business hours for language revitalisation. While the salaried positions created by language promotion organisations had been intended to bring qualified activists on full-time, 'for the most part, [employees'] engagement (and their use of Occitan) does not go beyond their usual work hours, which was far from being the case for the previous generations of cultural actors' (Bernissan 2013: 9).[4] This observation resonated closely with those of Jòrdi in Carcassonne (see above), who identified professionalisation as a major problem of the contemporary Occitan movement. As he explained, employees who 'do Occitan from 9am to noon and from 2pm to 5pm' in keeping with traditional French working hours do not work on the weekend or in the evening, and thus do not participate in or host the fairs, festivals, protests and soirées that have long constituted the lifeblood of Occitan social life (*'les gens qui font de l'occitan de 9h à midi et de 14h à*

17h, ils ne sont pas là le weekend, aux foires, aux festivals, aux manifestations, aux soirées'). Jòrdi thus saw the Occitan movement to be stuck at an impasse in this respect: the movement could no longer rely only on volunteers, but it could not rely solely on employees either.

The question of employees' personal engagement with Occitan also became evident during fieldwork, as the front-facing staff encountered at several activist organisations did not speak much – or even any – Occitan themselves or seem particularly interested in Occitan revitalisation. While in many cases, these employees could at least understand Occitan and were happy for their interlocutors to address them in the language, one temp working the front desk of a prominent Occitan organisation in Toulouse plainly told me (in French) that she did not know much about the language, before turning to her colleague to complain about the Occitan Language Week organised by the Occitan department at the Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès (one of only two universities in France to offer degree programmes in Occitan) as 'some uni thing' (*'un truc de la fac'*). I then walked down the street to visit an Occitan bookshop associated with that same organisation, where another temp informed me that no one spoke the language in Toulouse. Such interactions were enlightening from a research perspective but likely did not quite convey the message that the Occitan movement may have wished to communicate through their public-facing staff.

Beyond questions of staffing, the issue of securing funding for professionalised activist organisations also emerged as a potential roadblock for effective action. Numerous long-time activists identified the need to submit proposals for fundable 'projects' as a major source of the movement's stilted momentum, as this focus on short-term, measurable objectives appealing to funders drew activists' attention away from developing coherent collective actions oriented towards clearly articulated long-term aims. In Toulouse, long-time activist Benezet (see above) lamented that while the Occitan movement had not been particularly strong in years past, its members at least used to 'think' (*'avant il y avait le mouvement Occitan qui n'était pas très fort mais qui pensait'*). The present-day movement, however, could not even claim this latter strong point in Benezet's estimation: he described it as a movement that 'does not question the future' or 'critically reflect' on its activities (*'le movement n'interroge pas l'avenir, ne réflechit pas'*). Indeed, the only thing he saw the contemporary movement being interested in was securing funding. Jòrdi echoed these sentiments in Carcassonne, decrying the focus on working on projects rather than on developing a vision for the future of the language and the long-term perspectives of the movement (*'il faut travailler sur des projets, on ne travaille pas sur la durée'*). Moreover, the problems associated with applying for funding were not limited to projects: as highlighted by Daidièr, another veteran activist in Toulouse, the employees of Occitan activist organisations had to 'do everything possible both to promote the language and to keep their jobs' (*'avec les organisations, la personne embauchée doit tout*

faire pour la langue et pour maintenir sa poste'). Pursuing these not-always-entirely compatible aims effectively spread employees too thin in Daidièr's estimation, in some cases making it hard for them to make much, if any, progress on the work of language revitalisation (*'en fin de compte, [la personne embauchée ne] fait rien*').

Limited by tight budgets, working hours and funders' priorities, professionalised Occitan activism thus seemed to be lacking in the resources, motivation and long-term vision needed to drive innovative, effective action. Representing serious constraints on their own, these issues then seemed further compounded by the institutionalisation of the movement, most notably in relation to the creation of *l'Ofici public de la lenga occitana* (OPLO). A number of Occitan activists and teachers indeed described at best the underwhelming impact and at worst the detrimental effects of OPLO, the public body into which so much activist hope had been invested as a driver of Occitan language policy development and implementation. The widely shared consensus among these members of the Occitan movement was that OPLO had thus far mainly focused on providing funding for projects and had not yet made much progress in terms of coordinating and advancing Occitan language policy in Occitanie and Nouvelle Aquitaine, the two administrative regions concerned by its remit. Even more concerning than this perceived lack of progress, however, was the detrimental effect many of these actors saw OPLO's funding activities as having on activist efforts. According to by Domenge, the Provence-based director of an Occitan advocacy organisation (see above), the language board's role as a funding distributor had made the financing of Occitan promotion even more centralised than ever. As OPLO's remit is limited to the Occitanie and Nouvelle Aquitaine regions, he observed, other territorial administrations, public bodies and other potential funding sources now deferred to OPLO to finance any language-related activities.

Moreover, both Domenge and Tomas, a departmental official from the Tarn department (part of the Occitanie region), noted that the funding OPLO did award privileged 'efficient' projects with measurable 'results', which had made it increasingly difficult to fund local actions or initiatives that were seen as impacting limited numbers of people. The consequences of such an approach, often assailed as technocratic, were a matter of widespread furore within activist circles at the time of SMiLE fieldwork, as in the summer of 2018 OPLO decided to fully cut its funding for *La Setmana*, the only weekly newspaper published entirely in Occitan. After 23 years in circulation, the paper was forced to fold as a result of this loss. The official reason given by OPLO was that the newspaper did not have enough subscribers to be financially viable; for many Occitan activists and speakers, however, this decision by the language board established to promote Occitan – in the media in particular – to axe the sole Occitan-language newspaper represented a profound betrayal.[5] This bitterness was evident at the Occitan summer school that I attended in August 2018,

when an OPLO representative presenting a general overview of the institution's work to the school's adult participants was repeatedly confronted with questions linked to *La Setmama*. One visibly upset participant, for instance, insistently asked the representative about the salaries of OPLO's employees, pointedly inquiring how much the executives made (*'c'est quoi, le salaire moyen des cadres?'*). Similar discontent arose in 2019 following OPLO's rejection of a funding application submitted by *Radio Occitania*, a Toulouse-based radio station that has been broadcasting mostly in Occitan (upwards of 70%, according to one station employee) since 1981 (Souillés, 2019). The uproar over these decisions, among others, was indeed so widespread and furious that the president of OPLO responded with an open letter published on the institution's website to respond to the fierce debates and accusations of attempts to assassinate Occitan and the Occitan media, and to defend the funding decisions. This open letter made clear the budgetary and administrative constraints within which OPLO had to operate, and the president openly acknowledged that a team of six contending with a limited budget could never hope to immediately 'address the immense challenges of such a large territory' and 'quickly implement solutions to triple the number of speakers' (Claveau-Abbadie, 2019).[6] This acknowledgement of the limitations of OPLO's potential effectiveness, however, likely did little to address the widespread disappointment and distrust that had emerged in many activist circles. Just as the administrative Occitanie fell short of the Occitanie long dreamt of by certain Occitan activists, so too had OPLO seemingly failed (at least up until that point) to measure up to the hope activists had long invested in an institutionalised language board.

The interrelated dynamics of professionalisation and institutionalisation thus emerged in the Occitan context as having produced decidedly mixed results for the language movement. While the professionalisation of activist associations and initiatives had contributed to language-related employment and the continuity of these entities' activities and services, it had also subjected activism to working hours and budgetary constraints. The creation of OPLO, meanwhile, had finally provided Occitan with an institutional language board dedicated to it, but this public body's role as a funding redistributor had in some instances limited or even eliminated financial support for activist initiatives. These objectives of the third phase of the Occitan movement thus had not (yet) seemed to become the envisioned catalysts for activist agency, and instead appeared to both limit activists' scope for action and further sap the movement of the revolutionary energy it may have once had.

Concluding Remarks: The Promise of the Periphery

In contrast to the less optimistic perspectives set out in the preceding sections, the opening vignette of this chapter can be seen as illustrating

success stories of the linking of language and place and of the professionalisation and institutionalisation of Occitan language activism. A professionalised Occitan advocacy organisation was able to employ teachers and offer four levels of language classes to adult students, thanks in no small part to funding the organisation received annually from OPLO specifically to support these courses. The naming of the Occitanie administrative region, meanwhile, provided us students with a starting point for discussion, and no one was surprised by reference to this term in either the official or the linguistic sense, potentially giving credence to the awareness-raising capacity of the region's name. It is thus not a question of entirely discounting these central pillars of modern European language revitalisation efforts wholesale, as they clearly still have the potential to contribute to the momentum of minoritised language movements. What this chapter has instead sought to do is to challenge any assumption that language-place links or professionalised, institutionalised approaches will necessarily propel such movements forward and scaffold activist agency as we advance through the 21st century.

This does not mean, moreover, that all momentum is lost. While central tenets of European language movements may no longer be fully reliable conduits for activist agency, relatively emergent social actors, practices and spaces that have existed on the more peripheral edges of these movements may now shift to the centre and assume more important roles as agents of and outlets for renewed language activism. Recent research across and beyond Europe has indeed pointed to the increasingly important roles played by actors and elements that would be difficult to place on Fishman's (1991) famous GIDS scale, such as 'new' speakers (Smith-Christmas *et al.*, 2018), transgressive language practices (Pietikäinen *et al.*, 2016) and social media (Belmar & Glass, 2019), in contemporary language revitalisation efforts. Having often been at the forefront of the evolution of minoritised language movements over the course of its long history, the Occitan movement is no exception, and one site encountered during SMiLE fieldwork represented a microcosm of the promise of the periphery.

While language activists and policymakers have traditionally focused on the home, educational settings and public bodies as key domains of language acquisition, transmission and socialisation, one of the most vibrant settings for the social use of Occitan that we came across was none of the above: La Topina, a cooperative Occitan cultural café-restaurant in city-centre Toulouse. With an entirely bilingual Occitan-French menu, Occitan-speaking staff, and an Occitan library, La Topina has become a major centre of Occitan social life in the Toulouse area since opening in its current location in January 2019. While eschewing a traditionalist or overtly militant approach (as the cooperative director, who is also the manager and head chef of the café,

pointed out to us, there are no flags or traditional cultural symbols such as the Occitan cross to be seen on the premises), the team behind La Topina works to render the language visible and audible and to normalise its use. Often in collaboration with local Occitan associations and artists, they organise Occitan-language events (game nights, cooking workshops, etc.) and weekly Occitan conversation evenings, and host concerts, art exhibitions, poetry readings and talks on a range of topics more or less directly related to Occitan language and culture. These efforts to create a social space for Occitan as a living language have paid off, with La Topina representing one of the few places where we encountered Occitan being spoken outside activist settings during all our fieldwork crisscrossing Occitanie.

One of the most striking elements of La Topina's success, moreover, is its popularity among younger Occitan speakers and learners, particularly students enrolled in the Occitan and Catalan programmes at the Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès, as well as language activists in their 20s, 30s and 40s. As a cooperative, non-traditionalist venue for Occitan activity, the café-restaurant seemed to offer these actors an outlet for both speaking the language socially and exercising innovative activist agency. Students meet there regularly to do homework and converse casually in Occitan and Catalan among themselves and with the La Topina team and other patrons. These students and the younger activists have also taken a leading role in organising La Topina's varied events and activities. The active engagement of this demographic in the café's cultural programming is remarkable in light of several Occitan activists' description of a steep drop-off in engagement with Occitan during this very period: students and 20-somethings once active in the movement often have to focus on making a living and raising young children in their 30s and 40s, before jumping back into Occitan activity again at 50+, with many people remaining active well into their 80s and 90s. La Topina seemed not only to foster increased engagement and socialisation among university-age learners, but also to help sustain active participation and offer leadership opportunities in language revitalisation efforts throughout the following life phases.

There thus seems to be hope on the horizon for the Occitan movement. While long-time pillars of language activism may not always help to channel individual efforts into collective action, formerly peripheral actors are creating and sustaining new 'breathing spaces' (Fishman, 1991) in which emergent generations of language activists can take action to (re)invest Occitan with social meaning and normalise its social use. Resonating with observations from the other SMiLE research sites presented in the preceding chapters, these insights from the Occitan context point to the polycentric, fluid future of language revitalisation efforts as they continue to confront and adapt to the realities and challenges of the 21st century.

Notes

(1) Parts of this chapter have been adapted from the CFCH SMiLE case study (Brennan & Costa, 2019) prepared with my co-principal researcher James Costa, who first introduced me to the Occitan world and with whom I have enjoyed many years of enriching collaboration. Our project greatly benefitted from the institutional support of the Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris). I would like to sincerely thank all the Occitan activists, speakers, learners and aficionados who generously shared not only their time and energy, but also their dreams, fears and passion for the language with us. The names of individual research participants have been anonymised; the names of institutions have not.

(2) See also coverage of the debates in the Occitan press: https://www.jornalet.com/nova/7166/la-nom-doccitania-per-la-nova-region-centrala-marca-totjorn-la-polemica-dins-loccitanisme; https://www.aquodaqui.info/Des-occitanistes-a-Region-Occitanie-fais-du-bien-a-Bertrand-et-il-te-le-rend-en_a1228.html, or the open letter signed by Occitan activist and academics warning against the name 'Occitanie': https://www.jornalet.com/documents/lettre-ouverte-reaction-a-la-nouvelle-region-occitanie.pdf

(3) See also the discussion of the preliminary results of a study focusing on the impact of the naming on the representation of the boundaries of linguistic and administrative Occitanie, as published in the periodical of the *Institut d'Estudis Occitans*, the leading pan-Occitan organisation (Agresti *et al*., 2019). Along with highlighting results indicating that the public better understands the boundaries of the administrative Occitanie than it does those of the linguistic one, the report also warns of the increasing support for local glossonyms in Provence and Bearn.

(4) Translated by the author from the original French: 'Leur engagement (et leur pratique de la langue) ne dépasse pas, pour la plupart, le cadre de leur temps de travail hebdomadaire, ce qui était loin d'être le cas des acteurs culturels des premiers temps' (Bernissan, 2013: 9).

(5) See coverage of the issue in the Occitan press: https://www.aquodaqui.info/Fin-de-Setmana_a1656.html; and in an open letter published by *l'Assemblada Occitana*, a grassroots association aiming to coordinate the actions of Occitan activists at a range of levels: https://www.assemblada.org/français/
communiqué-l-anoc-demande-des-comptes-à-l-oplo/

(6) Translated by the author from the original French : 'L'illusion de croire qu'avec une participation de l'Etat à 65,000 euros à sa naissance, et une équipe de six personnes pour répondre aux enjeux immenses d'un territoire qui l'est tout autant, nous allions mettre en place rapidement les solutions pour tripler le nombre de locuteurs…' (Claveau-Abbadie, 2019).

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Commentary: Rethinking Agency

Lenore A. Grenoble

These studies of language revitalisation and reclamation come at an interesting moment in history, at a time when so much work has been underway for years, even decades, and the Smithsonian SMiLE project has enabled us to step back and assess some ongoing efforts, in the very specific contexts in which they are taking place.

The set of articles in this section raises interesting and even troubling questions about the nature of language revitalisation: what works, what does not work, what to do, what not to do and how to understand agency in the context of language work. What emerges is contradictory and unexpected in many respects: the very actions which would have been thought to facilitate agency may hinder them, which leads us to rethink the relationship between agency, intentionality and praxis. In my remarks here I focus on several core issues that cut across these three papers and consider how we should think about them in the context of revitalisation: the double-edged sword of funding and institutional support; normalisation of activities; linguistic purism; and issues of identity in agency and activism.

Funding and Institutional Support

The studies of Occitan, Griko and Frisian highlight a general shift in language work from its more incipient grassroots beginnings to more institutionalised responses, a kind of professionalisation of language work. Such changes would appear to be a positive development: Griko and Occitan both provide clear examples of a change from under- or unfunded language activism, dependent on the energy and good will of volunteers, to a time where there is funding and institutionalised support. We see, however, that this is a mixed blessing: on the one hand there is support for Occitan activities, while on the other the limited amount of support goes to funding salaries not events. A reduction in events means fewer spaces for language use to happen, since the events themselves Language work becomes a nine-to-five activity that ends at the close of the

work day. With Griko, money is generally directed toward short-term projects as dictated by funding sources and not with any clear planning or long-term strategising. Sorbian language work is in a similar bind: top-down, state-controlled institutions allocate funding, and people wishing to support Sorbian language usage find support from these institutions. This affects the kinds of initiatives they seek to fund, limiting themselves to existing models, and further helps foster the ideology that financial support is required for any language work.

It would be simplistic to conclude that money is not necessary for language work but problematic. Rather, we find a complicated set of challenges. First of all, even where there is funding, there is not enough. Surely, we need both: regular staff who manage activities and the activities themselves. In the North American context, there is a general rule of thumb that those tribes which have casinos have access to more funding, and create successful language programmes with it. Myaamia (Algonquian) provides an example: tribal funds support organised language teaching, youth camps, positions and academic programming at the Myaamia Center at Miami University of Ohio (https://www.miamioh.edu/myaamia-center/index.html). The Myaamia actively fundraise as well, and there are a lot of activities which foster not only language use but also knowledge of culture and history. Funding is critical, as is institutional support, which provides the necessary infrastructure to make all this work possible.

At the same time, funding alone is not enough. Language requires more than institutionalised support, and language vitality does not rest on classes and cultural events. They are but a part of a vibrant language ecology. Critically, language vitality requires active users, users who do not work on the clock but around the clock, or at least who are actively using the language outside the domain of the cultural centre or the school. In the Myaamia case, in addition to the institutionalised support, we find that the role for dedicated activists who carry the work forward is essential for success.

It is all too easy to conclude from these studies that the schools and cultural centres are the enemy of language revitalisation, but that is clearly not the case. If we compare the situation to that of majority languages, it is absurd to imagine those languages not being studied, taught and promoted in schools. It is unfathomable that majority languages would not have this kind of support. A critical difference is that the support is in addition to the widespread usage of the language in all domains. The problem is not the institutional settings in and of themselves, but rather that they have become the main drivers of language acquisition and usage in minority communities, central players rather than supporting team members. For some minority languages, the school programmes or cultural centres are the basic locus, perhaps the only locus, of usage, and that is where the insufficiency lies.

Professionalising language activism has multiple positive impacts. It gives the work legitimacy and visibility. To this day revitalisation is often more about reclaiming control of one's destiny, and invoking rights of self-determination, than it is about increasing speakers of a language. But historically – and in particular in parts of Europe – language activism has often been associated with nationalist political movements. As a clear marker of identity, language can be a tool for resistance.

It can also be co-opted by politicians. Consider the case of Basque, where historically language has been a specific part of Basque nationalism and a form of resistance. Activists have demanded not only official recognition of Basque as a legitimate language, but also *language planning* which is defined as 'the deliberate regulation and promotion of minority language use through legislation, educational programs, and media programs' (Urla, 1988: 379). Urla argues that language planning – not revitalisation *per se* but specifically planning – is best understood as 'government strategies, a set of techniques and practices aimed at regulating social behavior' (1988: 382). Considered from this standpoint, it is not surprising that the adjusting language movements to institutionalised practices can co-opt them in ways that detract from their effects as acts of resistance. Although such regulation legitimises them within existing social orders, it can run the risk of disempowering the movement itself. And thus, the contradiction that by officially granting agency, the agency itself is diminished. This is too strong a claim, and it incorrectly suggests that the pro-active language work is not a kind of protest. Rather, it is not an active push against something, not active resistance, but rather language work becomes a series of constructive actions directed toward building something. But the actors here need to be cautious as the threat of disempowerment is real.

Linguistic Purism

Who gets to decide what the language looks like? We find contradictory positions here: Frisian new speakers correct L1 native speakers of Frisian, valorising a standardised variety over the less 'pure' spoken variety that has emerged in a multilingual context and so, quite naturally, incorporates many German elements. A survey of attitudes toward Frisian shows that new speakers find the language beautiful but difficult to learn, and they report that interlocutors quickly switch to Dutch when they start struggling with Frisian, and some report that others always respond to them in Dutch (Belmar, 2019: 78). The tensions between new (L2) speakers and fluent, traditional (L1) speakers are a complicated factor in revitalisation. I have been told, anecdotally, that for at least some speakers the tensions between rural Basque and urban Basque are not so much that the urban school varieties are viewed by rural Basque as inauthentic, but rather that speakers of local varieties consider themselves to be

uneducated and thus unsophisticated, as compared to urban new speakers. Research has shown that new speakers of Basque position themselves as one of three types: not native speakers, new speakers (*euskladunberria*), or as Basque speakers (*euskaldun*); the category of Basque speakers is seen as less fully authentic than speakers who learned Basque in the home (*euskaldun zahar*), which is in turn viewed as a distinct category (Ortega *et al*., 2015). This attitude is also found among Galician speakers (O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2013: 295), who further point to the complexities of questions of authenticity and speakerhood across Galician speakers, noting that despite (what was then) 30 years of revitalisation, the standard (which the speakers themselves learn in school) is largely seen as artificial (2013: 291). Tensions between a purified standard, regional varieties, and standardised speech learned via formal setting also play a role in Irish language usage and attitudes (Coughlin, 2021).

We find a similar situation in Griko, where there is resistance to the introduction of Modern Greek words to fill in lexical gaps because they are unfamiliar to older speakers, while Italian borrowings are also resisted because they would contaminate what is perceived to be Griko's otherwise pure makeup. This in turn limits the flexibility of these codes, their ability to adapt to new domains and new contexts and constrains usage in the name of some idealised view of authenticity. It is hard to argue that these attitudes, and the actions they result in, promote language vitality.

Linguistic purism is by no means a new attitude, but it is interesting, and indeed sad, that it presents such a persistent challenge to language vitality. Purism in the case studies here operates on multiple levels: for some, the correct form of the language is an idealised, imagined variety that is thought to have existed pre-shift, even pre-contact. Such attitudes valorise a glorified pure language that was not used, and is probably not even useful in today's world. The Frisian case shows that for others, the best variety is the one that has an official stamp of correctness, ratified in formal educational institutions as being correct. Neither camp admits the reality of multilingualism and some mixing of codes, ignoring the fact that majority languages (and notably English) have so many borrowed elements in them that it would be impossible to speak a version that had succeeded in purging them all. Multilingualism is not the enemy; multilingualism and mixed codes are a natural outcome of polylingual settings, which are the kinds of settings where we find language shift ecologies by definition. We need to encourage new attitudes that embrace multilingualism as a sign of vitality (see also Grenoble & Whaley, 2021: 923 in this regard.)

Why are language police appearing among activists, the very group we would expect to nurture the language? This is the interesting question, and one that we need to urgently address if we want to foster vibrant language usage. The answer appears to be related to both language ideologies and the effects of institutionalising language work combined.

Identity and Agency

A number of questions linked to broad issues of identity and agency are raised in these papers. An interesting example is the case of Frisian. Frisian identity is not linked to language, and so its use is not required in any spaces, symbolic usage is enough. Lindsay Whaley and I have argued that speakers should define their own goals in language work (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006: 48–49), and by that reasoning, if Frisian speakers are content with the situation, so be it. But it is an interesting case since the need for language as a marker of identity is so often held up as a driver of revitalisation. Similarly, we see the case of Griko performing language in nostalgic social discourses, constructing self-representation without actually speaking the language in the usual sense of the word. It is the discursive strategy of invoking a Griko past that indexes the Griko identity.

This highlights the fact that revitalisation programmes are often not so much about language as they are part of social interactions (Grenoble & Whaley, 2021: 922–923) and brings us to viewing agency as part of these social interactions. One overarching takeaway message from these three papers is that the very measures that are undertaken to increase agency may hinder it and prevent language work. If agency is 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act', as Ahearn (2001: 112) argues, noting that all agency is socially mediated, the case studies in this section show that sociocultural mediation may be necessary but is not sufficient to guarantee effective agency. Positive language work requires more than empowerment, it also needs committed actors to do the work.

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Conclusion: Final Thoughts on Agency and Affects

James Costa

In his paper on 'The Economics of Linguistic Exchange', Pierre Bourdieu (1977: 664) wrote that '[t]o forestall any "interactionist" reduction, it must be emphasised that speakers bring all their properties into an interaction, and that their position in the social structure (or in a specialised field) is what defines their position in the interaction'. Bourdieu's approach consistently sought to understand how forms of agency are possible within structural constraints. He proposed that within existing frames, humans develop practical strategies that form the logic of practical action. Strategies are ways for agents to maximise the use of the various forms and amounts of capital (symbolic, social, economic) we can muster, and to navigate within the structural conditions of which they are part. Unsettling those conditions is yet another step, and the articles in this volume show how complex this is in the case of minority language revitalisation. This book is therefore an account of the multiplicity of individual and collective strategies implemented towards language revitalisation in a wide array of Western European minority language settings, and on several different scales – from Griko villages to the Occitan territory comprising a third of France.

Agency is at the heart of this volume. This issue is a particularly fraught one in sociolinguistics (Carter & Sealey, 2000). Despite a number of elegant proposals by Monica Heller (2001) or by Susan Gal and Judith Irvine (2019), the discipline struggles with the micro/macro and structure/agency conundrums. This question is perhaps especially problematic when it comes to language revitalisation: as anthropologists such as Margaret Sanford (1974) have shown, far from representing a form of newfound collective agency, revitalisation movements can be understood as a form of acculturation. A cultural element only ever becomes the object of revitalisation or reinvention because it is deemed valuable by an outside, dominant group which a dominated group seeks to emulate in order to gain recognition from those who hold power (see Costa, 2016, for a discussion of this approach in language revitalisation issues). Language advocates thus find themselves in a particularly tortuous predicament:

while in order to exist in the eyes of dominant group they must adhere to its cultural norms (such as 'having a language' – see Hauck, 2018, for an Amazonian example of what this entails), they are in no position to mobilise the full strength of the institutions of modernity such as the media or educational institutions that ensured the success of their model, the national languages.

Agency in language revitalisation is thus already constrained by the very existence of 'language' as an object (see also the general introduction in this volume), one which language advocates first need to develop – based on a model of dominant languages imposed from outwith – in order to then defend and promote it. There were indeed no language revitalisation movements before the 19th century, i.e. before languages as we know them came to be invented and promoted as the normal form to organise speech in legitimate social spaces. Agency is thus from the onset entangled in issues of (often class-based) conflict and in politics of recognition. What, then, can agency even mean in this situation?

All the texts collected in this volume pose the question of the tension between a structuration of language contact that acts against minority languages and the agency of their promoters. Authors thus analyse the centrality of conflict (explicit, as in the Galician case – and perhaps in the Occitan case too – or implicit, in all other cases) as a central element around which revitalisation is organised. This is particularly palpable through the consistent emphasis across all texts on how those engaged in revitalisation negotiate the centrality of language both in language policy and in the politics of identification (i.e. regarding representational issues), rather than in actual language practices.

This, however, should come as no surprise. As Manuela Pellegrino carefully suggests, in contexts where minority languages are used less and less, there are many ways of putting the language to use beside speaking it. Agency is thus conceptualised throughout the volume as a way of getting into the cracks of structure, and of developing strategies that enable people to become actors. Or, at least, to develop a sense of being able to act in a more satisfactory way, rather than of being acted upon by superimposed structures.

This debate interestingly echoes older discussions in Marxist theory about whether language is part of base or superstructure (Williams, 1977). The position adopted in sociolinguistics since at least the 1970s is that language is no mere reflection of social activity but a form of action, a praxis (Boutet *et al.*, 1976). But while theory of action seems not optional, there can be action without agency.

We thus need other ways of thinking about agency, to understand the dynamics which change the course of structural action –other ways that 'foreground different types of agents' (Kockelman, 2017), and that enable us to conceptualise agency beyond Laura Ahearn's oft-cited definition 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act'. As Noémie Marignier (2020:

16) notes, this definition is unsatisfactory because of its vagueness, which leads me to depart further from Ahearn's framework.

The articles in this book do in fact, at times perhaps unwittingly, point to another, more concrete type of agency, namely 'evaluative agency'. As humans we are not only instrumental agents, but also evaluative agents, selective agents: 'agents who not only act instrumentally, but also evaluate instrumental acts in reference to values and, in particular, in reference to values that could be otherwise' (Kockelman, 2017: 19). This does not mean that agents should be seen as free of structural constraints and that they can make pure, rational judgement based on transparent information. Yet, no matter how minoritised the language or small the number of speakers (the Lower Sorbian and North Frisian cases are particularly telling), individuals may also transcend the dominant strategy of shifting entirely to the dominant language to develop strategies to position themselves in society in ways which render the minoritised language meaningful or necessary. However, to arrive at a full theory of this type of strategy, we may need further conceptualisation, the lines of which I suggest below.

This volume is particularly useful for thinking about the vast range of agents involved in revitalisation, from the more obvious (e.g. the language organisations of the North Frisian and Sorbian cases again) to less obvious ones such as the children of the Tús Maith programme in Ireland, too often reduced to passive recipients of language policies decided for them by adults. Cassie Smith-Christmas and Orlaith Ruiséal's study is an especially telling case of how children are, too, evaluative agents who can exert a choice to use the minority language – or not, as Smith-Christmas herself brilliantly demonstrates in her other work (Smith-Christmas, 2014). Sara Brennan's chapter likewise showcases a particularly diverse set of agents involved in various types of activities, including a wider public with little opinion on the language itself – yet voting in thousands in favour of a regional name (Occitania) based on the very existence of the Occitan language. But evaluative or otherwise, agency needs to be understood in terms other than free choice, if only because studies show over and over again that by and large community members are favourable to language retention – as long, presumably, as they are not asked to do anything about it themselves. What, then, drives people to do something for a language (at least when they do not get asked every day what they have done for the language…) (see Ó hIfearnáin, this volume)? What makes them want to attend clubs, organisations and events that promote the use of Galician, Irish – or, for that matter, High Valyrian?

But we must now return to the question the contributors to this book ask. The SMILE team placed agency at the core of its conception precisely because of how difficult it is for language revival movements to alter the rules of the dominant (linguistic) game. The aim of language revitalisation is precisely one of evaluation, a question that runs through the entire volume: why do speakers cease to pass on their language? What makes

non-speakers decide to learn a language? And, an entirely different question, what makes them use it? It seems that we have come full circle, and are left with the same question that this volume started off with. What, to put it more broadly, makes individuals escape linguistic domination, at least as language advocates see it? In several of this book's chapters, one way of achieving this is providing spaces in which agency (i.e. speaking the minorised language) is possible and normalised. But clearly this is not enough, for it offers no explanation as to how people (and which people) end up in those spaces. We thus risk confusing agency with serendipity.

As a way to conclude this commentary, I would like to suggest a way out of the infernal (and unproductive) circle of structure and agency in a manner that could interest scholars of language revitalisation. This way out is perhaps best captured with the notion of affect, as borrowed into the social sciences from the 17th-century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza by the French economist and philosopher Frédéric Lordon. A theory of affects derived from Spinoza's philosophy makes it possible to think of affects *not* as a psychological variable (emotions), but in their social dimensions. Affects, for Spinozas are 'affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections'[1] (Spinoza, 1994 [1677]: 154). They are thus the product of an interaction with an other-than-self, that determine modifications in the body and subsequently result in actions (for an accessible introduction to Spinoza's theory of affects see Robinson & Kutner, 2019; and for an introduction of how the term 'affect' could be used in sociolinguistics see Pratt, 2021). How, then, are bodies (people) affected, and by what? Can their power of acting increased in a way that moves them towards issues of language revitalisation, and if so, how?

The question of revitalisation is indeed one of *Ars affectandi*, as Spinoza put it (Lordon, 2013): how are people affected to do something which language advocates, as activists, deem desirable? One might even argue that both the Galician and Irish cases described in the book are about affect, not agency.

One of the outcomes of modernity is to turn speech into what we call a language, that is to say an institution – into an 'affecting machine' (Lordon, 2013) – as well as an object of desire, something potent enough that in order to exist as a collective on a par with other respected collectives (i.e. nations, or autonomous regions) it is necessary to have one. The difficulty, as traditional speakers point out everywhere, is that there already is a *language* in the modern sense of the term: French, English, Spanish, etc. (Aracil, 1975; Costa, forthcoming). Why go through the trouble of having another one, and turn 'what we speak' (as traditional speakers everywhere often refer to their language practices) into 'Irish', 'Galician', 'Occitan' etc.? Language revival movements thus need to arouse desire, and affect other human bodies to act in such a manner as

to desire what is associated with using a minority language: '*homo* is essentially *passionalis*. He does nothing without having been determined to do so, that is to say without having been determined to desire to do it, and this determination has operated in him through affects' (Lordon, 2018: 18). Interestingly, this echoes the first SMILE report, which insisted on the question of desire (Grin *et al*., 2003).

I have asked seemingly similar questions throughout this paper, but we have gradually advanced from a question interested in 'How can people act in favour of language x or y?', to one that asks 'What makes them *want* to do so?'. It is thus not a question of (inherent) capacity, as Laura Ahearn puts it, but one of being affected (by circumstances external to one's body) to do something. The ultimate aim here is the constitution of a *potentia multitudinis* (power of the multitude, or critical mass) large enough so as to affect in turn – not through choice, but by its intrinsic capacity to mobilise desire – other sectors of society to act in favour of what it stands for. In this perspective, agency becomes the capacity to harness affects and to direct them towards the constitution of the multitude that language advocates seek to bring into being. This is the condition to change the structure of society, and ultimately the individual interactions I opened this commentary with. This, perhaps, calls for the next research agenda for this group.

Note

(1) 'Per affectum intelligo corporis affectiones quibus ipsius corporis agendi potentia augetur vel minuitur, juvatur vel coercetur et simul harum affectionum ideas' (Part 3, Definition 3). https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/Ethica/Pars_tertia_-_De_origine_et_natura_affectuum

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