

The standardisation of minority languages – introductory remarks

1 Introduction

There is a vast and continuously growing amount of literature on autochthonous European minority languages (cf., e.g., the bibliographies in Williams 2008; Edwards 2010; Plasseraud 2012 and Pietikäinen/Kelly-Holmes 2013 for an overview). This output exists alongside an equally important volume of literature on language standardisation (cf. Kristiansen/Coupland 2011; Hüning/Vogl/Moliner 2013). Up until recently, however, there was not an extensive body of work for scholars interested in the combination of both themes, i.e. the standardisation of autochthonous minority languages (cf. Darquennes 2010a: 346). The present issue of *Sociolinguistica* (as well as the next one that is scheduled to appear in the autumn of 2016) seeks to tackle that desideratum. In doing so, these yearbooks aim at complementing the recently published proceedings of a conference held in Amiens back in 2011 on the standardisation and the vitality of the languages of France (cf. Eloy 2014b), as well as the outcomes of the on-going STANDARDS-project at the University of Oslo (cf. Lane 2014) and the thriving literature on ‘new speakers’ and ‘new speakerness’ that also tackles questions related to language standardisation and language standards (cf. O’Rourke/Pujolar/Ramallo 2015). Whereas volume 30 of *Sociolinguistica* will – among other things – deal with issues of language standardisation in relation to nation building and language rights (cf., e.g., Wright 2003), the contributors to the present volume have been asked to provide a description of the standardisation process of a specific minority language with reference to Haugen’s seminal four-step model of language standardisation. *Sociolinguistica* 29 thus loosely follows the line of Deumert and Vandenbussche’s edited volume on *Germanic standardizations* (2003) that covered a total of 16 languages, including Frisian, Low German, Scots and Yiddish. Both Haugen’s model and the editors’ motivation for choosing it as a framework for the different chapters are briefly explained at the end of this introductory article. To start with, however, this contribution briefly addresses the notion of ‘(autochthonous) language minority’ as well as the challenges that these minorities face in Europe in terms of language policy and planning.

2 Autochthonous minority languages as part of the European language mosaic

Europe is anything but the most linguistically diverse continent. Following recent estimates on ethnologue.com (accessed on 8 June 2015), Europe would be home to merely 286 (or: approx. 4%) of the world's estimated 7,102 living languages. Language diversity as well as aspects of individual and societal multilingualism are, however, relatively high on the European political and academic agenda.

As Nic Craith (2006: 57) claims, it is common practice among academics and policy makers in Europe and elsewhere to “organise languages into several distinct categories”. Taking the example of ethnologue.com, one could organise the languages by countries, language names, language codes and language families. Another possibility would be to use notions such as ‘big’, ‘medium-sized’, ‘small’, ‘dwarf’, ‘international’, ‘national’, ‘state’, ‘regional’, ‘local’, ‘official’, ‘semi-official’, ‘non-official’, ‘widely used’, ‘less-widely used’ and ‘lesser-used’ languages. However, like many other concepts used in academia and in brochures, documents and reports emanating from international and supranational entities such as the Council of Europe and the European Union, the listed terms can only be interpreted correctly in a clearly defined context, agreed upon by all interlocutors concerned. The same holds true for notions such as ‘majority’, ‘majority language’, ‘minority’, ‘minority language’, ‘language minority’ and ‘autochthonous language minority’ that are at the heart of the present volume of *Sociolinguistica*.

In public and political discourse, immigrant language minorities (sometimes also referred to as ‘new language minorities’) refer to communities that consist of (the descendants of) migrant workers or asylum seekers who quite recently settled in a European state (in most cases in the second half of the 20th century or later) and are mainly to be found in urban settings. Examples include the Pakistani community in Barcelona, the Portuguese community in Luxembourg or the Turkish community in Berlin. Autochthonous European language minorities (sometimes also referred to as ‘old’ or ‘historical language minorities’) refer to language communities that have lived in their respective territories for centuries, such as the Bretons in France, the Kven in Norway, the Hungarians in Slovenia and the Slovenes in Italy. In this issue of *Sociolinguistica* we focus on the latter group.

A number of the ‘old’ minority languages are ‘only’ (or, if one takes language minority members that have migrated into account: ‘mainly’) used in one European state, such as Cashubian and Welsh. Inspired by Extra/Gorter (2009: 24) these languages can be referred to as “unique” historical minority languages. Some minority languages are used in more than one European state. This is the case, for example, for Basque, Occitan and Sami. Some languages such as Dutch, French, German and Swedish are a minority language in one state and a major national language in an-

other. In addition, Europe also harbours two non-territorial minority languages, namely Yiddish and Romani (cf. Extra/Gorter 2009: 24–27 for details).

Macrosociolinguistic sketches of minority language communities in Europe as presented above are still commonly reproduced in day-to-day discussions on the topic. Next to their over-generalising and simplistic nature, however, they fundamentally lack any reference to criteria that allow for the internal and/or external characterisation of a social group as an autochthonous language minority, despite a long-standing European tradition since the 1980s on this topic. The scholarly discussions in Europe in the period leading up to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) saw an exchange of viewpoints between scholars from the neighbouring disciplines of sociolinguistics, sociology, anthropology, political science and legal studies (cf. Giordan's edited volume *Les minorités linguistiques en Europe* that was published in 1992). In the accompanying literature (e.g. Fishman 1989; Auburger 1990; Allardt 1992; Poutignat/Streif-Fenart 1995), definitions of autochthonous language minority were established on the basis of criteria such as paternity, patrimony, self-categorisation, language and social power. Today, however, these discussions have faded into the background. Much of the current literature on minority-majority relations at the state level reflects an apparent consensus that the characteristics of an autochthonous language minority are mainly to be seen as “differences”, in terms of its linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, its unequal social status and its power position *vis-à-vis* the dominant majority of the state where it resides (cf. Rindler Schjerve 2006: 108). We, for one, tend to adhere to Rindler Schjerve's observation that the concept of the autochthonous language minority merits further discussion (Rindler Schjerve 2006: 115–118; cf. also May 2001). We deem it necessary to focus the attention on the dynamics and the heterogeneity of the above listed categories used to define the ‘autochthonous language minority’. In the light of the thought-provoking discourse of the sociolinguistics of globalisation (cf. Blommaert 2010; Coupland 2013), we further believe that these minorities are often perceived and defined from a too homogeneous and essentialist point of view¹. One might further stress that ‘minority’ as well as ‘majority’ are “relational categories” (Toivanen 2007: 106). This implies that “minorities are minorities relative to majorities at various levels” (Auburger 1990: 172) and that the minority or majority status of a language community “depends on specific (political) contexts” (Nic

¹ Cf. the debates emanating in the context of the LEARNMe-project coordinated by the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (www.mercator-network.eu). Reflections on how to enliven a discussion on the notion of autochthonous language minority can be found in Rindler Schjerve (2006) and Darquennes (2014), on (tribal) language communities in Versteegh (2013) and on the notion of speech community in general (be it primarily related to its history as a part of variationist sociolinguistics) in Coupland (2010).

Craith 2006: 57; cf. also Toivanen 2007: 106)². An essential point that also merits attention in the discussion of old minority languages is the aspect of minorisation (others prefer invisibilisation, cf. Skutnabb Kangas 2000; Langer/Havinga in press), i.e. the fact that historical language communities have been and to a varying extent still are subject to processes of geographical, political, economical and cultural marginalisation (cf. Nelde/Strubell/Williams 1996: 1–4). These processes of marginalisation differ from one minority to another and define and shape their specific ecology of language (Haugen 1972; cf. Eliasson 2013 for a detailed discussion of Haugen’s ideas on language ecology).

3 Language policy and planning in minority language contexts

Nelde and Weber (1998) correctly observed that most of Europe’s historical language minorities find themselves in a situation of asymmetrical language contact in which a majority language group exerts a form of social and linguistic pressure on a minority language group. In order to slow down, halt or even reverse the processes of individual and societal shift from the minority to the majority language, language minority members often engage in language policy and planning actions, either individually or collectively and in an organised or improvised way. Inspired by Baldauf (2004: 1) and Lo Bianco (2013: 3096 and 3099)³ language policy and planning is understood here to cover four interrelated and partially overlapping actions:

1. actions that aim at influencing the social status and/or the functional range of a given language (variety) without necessarily having the intention to increase the number of people actually using it;
2. actions that aim at raising the social prestige (or, in the words of Lo Bianco (2013: 3100): the “reputation”) of a language (variety);

² French, for example, is clearly a majority language in the whole of France, yet a minority language in the Val d’Aoste region in Italy. Dutch is a majority language in Belgium and The Netherlands, yet a minority language in the northern part of France known as Frans-Vlaanderen. Another interesting and much debated example is Catalan. One could argue that Catalan is a minority language in the whole of Spain (as opposed to Spanish), yet a majority language within the Autonomous Region of Catalonia. Given the total number of Catalan speakers (approx. 10 million), one could, however, also raise the question if the notion minority language is appropriate at all in the case of Catalan (as compared, e.g., to Danish that is spoken by approx. 6 million people). That is why some researchers (e.g. Vila/Bretxa 2013) argue for the use of “medium-sized” language when referring to Catalan.

³ Cf. Spolsky (2012) for a recent edited volume on language policy, Johnson (2013) for a recent monograph on language policy from the point of view of the ethnography of language policy as well as Darquennes (2013) and Vila (2014) for recent complementary overview articles on language policy.

3. actions that aim at promoting the acquisition of a language (variety) and, by doing so, at increasing its number of users; and
4. actions that aim at modifying the corpus (i.e. the lexicon, the morphology, the grammar and/or the orthography) of a language (variety).

Both within minority language communities and in research and literature on their (minority) language there is a tendency to focus on actions aiming at positively influencing the acquisition, status and/or prestige of the minority language under consideration. Attention is given to the steps that are being or ought to be taken to strengthen the position of the minority language in public, semi-public and/or private (prestigious) domains or ‘spaces’ of communication (cf. Pertot et al. 2008; Williams 2008). The key importance of minority language education (or education in general) for minority language maintenance or language shift reversal is equally underscored (cf. Baker 2006; Cenoz 2009; Hornberger 2008), especially given the decline of the intergenerational transmission of the minority language in the ‘home-neighbourhood-community’ (Fishman 1991).

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) echoes these language planning concerns at the highest political level in Europe. Articles 8 to 14 of the Charter specifically address status planning issues, including the position of minority languages in education, court, administration, media, culture, economy and transfrontier exchanges (cf. chapter 3 in Grin 2003 for a summary of the Charter; Darquennes 2010b for an analysis of the Charter against the background of LPP theory). When it comes to corpus planning measures for minority languages, the Charter briefly mentions activities that (i) support the role of the language in the media and the courts and (ii) aim at the maintenance and development of administrative, commercial, economic, social, technical or legal terminology (Art. 9 and 12). Those measures that are directed at the training of minority language teachers and the availability of minority language education (i.e. acquisition planning) also imply (a concern for) actions that aim at modifying the corpus of the minority language. All in all, however, the attention devoted in the Charter (and in the European political and policy discourse in general) to the modification of the corpus of minority languages comes close to what Charles Ferguson (1968: 28) “for want of a better term” labelled “modernization – the development of intertranslatability with other languages in a range of topics and forms of discourse characteristic of industrialized, secularized, structurally differentiated, ‘modern’ societies”. This goal boils down to a sort of lexical engineering that makes minority languages fit for contemporary society. Many scholars have commented upon the challenging nature of this enterprise, including Kloss (1969: 84) who called the problem “of whether new needed designations should be taken over from other languages [...] or from the language itself by forming compounds or by use of prefixes and suffixes” a “thorny question” that is connected to the supposed or desired ‘purity’ (and one could add: the ‘authenticity’) of a language.

Given the fact that language is a social construct, actions aiming at modernising (or, more generally, at modifying) the corpus are never purely linguistic in nature but always intertwined with the social context. As stated by Fishman (2006: x), “corpus planning per se reflects and is guided by the status-planning environment – societal biases, ideologies and attitudes – in which it is conducted”. The process of language standardisation, in general, and minority language standardisation, in particular, provides a prime illustration of this interplay between language and society.

4 Standardising languages

Referring to literature on standardisation from the 1960s onwards, Hornberger (2006: 31) notes that the term standardisation “covers a broad spectrum of meanings”. The general point of view underlying this introductory chapter leans on Swann et al. (2004: 295–296) according to whom standardisation is the process by which a standard language (i.e. a relatively uniform variety of a language) is developed. In order to describe the standardisation process, Swann et al. (ibid.) refer to the work of Haugen who developed a four-stage model to describe that process. In their constructive critical appraisal of Haugen’s model, Coupland/Kristiansen (2011: 20) note that it “has continued to influence sociolinguistic research” with its “very wide applicability, but also particular relevance for Europe, where it provides a basis for ‘comparative standardology’”.

The four stages of Haugen’s model can be briefly described as follows (cf. Deumert/Vandebussche 2003b: 4–9 for a more detailed description):

1. The *selection* of a standard variety which can either be an existing regional or social variety (monocentric selection) or a composite variety that includes features from several existing regional or social varieties (polycentric selection).
2. The *codification* of the selected variety, i.e. the establishment of an explicit and normative linguistic codex through the creation of a range of reference works (grammars, dictionaries, spelling manuals, style guides).
3. The *implementation* of the selected and codified variety, i.e. the socio-political realisation of the decisions made at the stages of selection and codification or, in other words, the gradual diffusion and acceptance of the newly created norm across speakers as well as across functions.
4. The *elaboration* (or: modernisation) of the standard variety which refers to those activities that are aimed at extending the functional reach of the standard variety as well as changes within the existing standard variety that allow it to meet the demands of modern life and technology.

None of the four stages is straightforward or debate-proof. Typical of quarrels over the development of a (written) standard is the existence of competing varieties that

belong to the same diasystem, yet are associated with different social, political, economic, religious, cultural, historical or other forces in society. Debates concerning the selection of a monocentric or polycentric standard variety of a given language are often loaded with what Haugen (1987a: 630) refers to as “power brokerage”. Involved in the discussions on the selection of a standard variety are representatives of language academies, language and cultural associations as well as well as language activists and the general public that – in a timeframe characterised as late modernity – increasingly question authority at all sorts of levels (cf. Coupland/Kristiansen 2011: 27).

The emotional values that different forces in society attribute to specific linguistic varieties do not only interfere with the selection phase of a standard variety. They are equally present during the codification process and most certainly also have an impact when it comes to implementing the codified version of the selected variety with the aim of diffusing it and having it accepted across society. As mentioned above, the modernisation of the lexicon is also likely to lead to discussions on the ‘authenticity’ and the ‘purity’ of the selected, codified and implemented standard variety. This is particularly the case when dealing with so-called ‘Ausbau’-languages (cf. Kloss 1952, 1978): language elaboration is a prime tool to distance Ausbau-language communities from their ‘Dachsprache’ (cf. Fishman 2003: 107–108).

As can be inferred from the paragraphs above, the entire process of language standardisation is strongly influenced by competing beliefs and ideas about language in a community. Haugen’s four-step model (which originates from his work on the development of modern Norwegian; cf. Haugen 1966) contains references to the role of extralinguistic forces in language planning and is often still considered an excellent means to identify and highlight the defining social factors in standardisation contexts. Haugen himself, however, acknowledged the limitations of his model. It is, for example, ill-suited for the description of the motivations and non-linguistic goals of the “standardizers” (Haugen 1987b: 63)⁴. Furthermore, his claim that the stages of his four-step model are “closely related, in part even overlapping, and [...] may go on simultaneously or cyclically” (Haugen 1987a: 628) does not address the fundamental teleological nature of his theory (Deumert/Vandenbussche 2003b: 10), which often seems to be at odds with the rather ‘messy’ and ‘non-linear’ character of many standardisation processes. Haugen also primarily approaches language standardisation from a top-down perspective. In addition, one might argue that the classic standardisation cycle has been overtaken by modernity as there is no room for processes of de-standardisation within Haugen’s theory. And yet,

⁴ The role of different actors in the process of language standardisation is mentioned in Weinreich (1968[1954]: 315) and extensively dealt with by Ammon (1995: 73–82, 2003). In recent years, more and more attention is paid to the role of language agencies in language planning (cf. Spolsky 2011; Edwards 2012).

even if Haugen's model might no longer be "fully adequate" and merits further theorising, it remains a "valuable" heuristic tool (Coupland/Kristiansen 2011: 21), even if only for want of a better and newer descriptive model, 50 years beyond its prime. That is why the contributors to this volume have been asked to try and link their contributions on the standardisation of a variety of minority languages to Haugen's four-step model.

5 Contributions to this volume

The minority languages covered in this volume are, in alphabetical order, Cornish (Dave Sayers and Zsuzsanna Renkó-Michelsén), Corsican (Romain Colonna), Galician (Fernando Ramallo and Gabriel Rei-Doval), Ladin (Paul Videsott), Manx (Tadhg Ó hÍfearnáin), Meänkieli (Jarmo Lainio and Erling Wande) and Mirandese (Cristina Martins and Isabel Santos)⁵. These languages roughly confirm to Extra/Gortler's (2009: 24) definition of "unique" minority languages.

Since the authors were not asked to follow a specific structure when writing their contribution, they all dealt with the four steps of Haugen's model in their own way. That explains why some contributions pay equal attention to each of the four steps whereas other contributions put more weight on, for example, selection and codification as opposed to implementation and elaboration. The different approaches of the authors were, clearly, also inspired by the fact that language standardisation is a context-dependent process. As Coupland/Kristiansen (2011: 18) put it: "... language standardisation is a particular set of social processes carried forward under specific socio-cultural conditions and promoted by specific groups and institutions under specific 'market conditions', in specific symbolic economies". This is, of course, what makes the juxtaposition of very different cases of processes of minority language standardisation in one single volume a worthwhile endeavour. It invites the readers to look for similarities and differences across different language communities and offers a basis for scholars to contribute to the difficult enterprise of comparative standardology. In an attempt to spark the discussion, we offer a number of general rather than specific preliminary comments in the concluding paragraphs below.

6 General comments and outlook

The articles in the present volume confirm the rise of language policy and planning activities for European autochthonous minority languages in the second half of the

⁵ As for the sensitive matter of spelling practices across this volume, the editors respected the individual authors' choice to adhere to either British English or American English practices.

20th century, more precisely since the 1970s. At least two elements have undoubtedly contributed to the fact that minority languages have become a political issue in many contexts (Rindler Schjerve 2006: 106; Nic Craith 2006: 58). First, there was the increased emergence of regionalist movements in the 1970s. Secondly, linguistic diversity, in general, and the promotion of linguistic minorities, in particular, have appeared and remained on the agenda of the European Parliament and the Commission since the early 1980s. The last decades of the 20th century clearly marked a new phase of language policy and planning activities for these languages and their speakers, with the creation of language academies, cultural institutes and lobby groups devoting both attention to what their language “has” (i.e. to the distribution of their language in society) and what their language “is” (the structural properties of their language)⁶. The contributions to this volume show that considerable energy has been invested ever since in minority language standardisation and/or in debates about the choice of and/or the need for a standard variety. This holds true for both small and large(r) minority language communities; it further occurred in contexts of language revival and language maintenance alike.

As to the process of standardisation itself, one cannot but conclude that it manifests itself as context-dependent and rather ‘messy’. The ‘messiness’ of the standardisation process not only refers to the fact that the phases of selection, codification, implementation and elaboration are not always completed in an orderly and cyclical fashion. They rather overlap, evolve simultaneously or follow a different order in which, for example, codification precedes selection or elaboration precedes implementation. The ‘messiness’ also entails that one is not confronted with just one single process of top-down minority language standardisation. It concerns a jumble of competing top-down as well as bottom-up standardisation processes, instead. That different sorts of highly or less visible and influential language planning actors (language academies, organised groups of language activists, linguists, amateur linguists working in isolation, etc.) instigate these processes, adds to the complexity of the case. These standardisers often get stuck in discussions with colleagues favouring different choices, be it on the level of selection, codification or elaboration. Typical points of debate include the weight of existing varieties of the minority language when giving shape to the standardised variety, as well as the amount of variation that the standard variety should allow. Equally controversial is the attachment of the standard variety to codified varieties of the minority language as they existed in periods of the minority language community’s recent history or in its more distant history prior to the period of marginalisation from which the minority language community is trying to recover. The degree of ‘purity’ and ‘authenticity’ of the standard variety are also debated, especially (yet not exclusively) in contexts where standardisation activities offer the possibility to increase the linguistic dis-

6 Cf. Dua (1996: 8–9) on what a language “has” and what a language “is”.

tance between the minority language and the surrounding related majority and/or neighbouring minority language(s). Typical of most of the standardisation debates in minority language contexts is the fact that not only do different language planning actors hold different ideas and beliefs about the minority language in general and the standard variety in particular, but they may also change their point of view over time. This makes it hard to describe the different simultaneous processes of standardisation, and it also complicates the goal of reaching a broad consensus on the standardisation path to be followed.

That processes of standardisation cause debate and are hardly ever a top-down affair is nothing new, as such. Recent research in historical sociolinguistics on well-established European state languages (Elspeß et al. 2007; Vosters/Villa 2015) already contradicted the idea of a clean top-down process led by a select group of specialists, supported by the literary production of canonical authors and percolating downwards through society from the upper social classes. However, it is clear that it was very difficult for any language planning activity ‘from below’ (socially speaking) to achieve the same amount of attention as the activities of those who engaged in standardising the language ‘from above’. This is manifestly no longer the case in the minority language communities discussed in the present volume. The ‘counter elites’ in the minority communities now also have unlimited access to influential (new) media and their voices overtly colour and determine the very nature of the standardisation process. The ‘democratisation’ of the linguistic debate and the questioning of authority that seems to go hand in hand with it (cf. Coup-land/Kristiansen 2011: 27) hamper the possible impact of prescriptive top-down standardisation efforts and weaken the chance of reaching a consensus. Even in those cases where a consensus is reached and a standard variety is (ready to be) implemented, those actors who – figuratively speaking – had to taste defeat keep on airing their grievances during the phase of implementation and, as such, exert an influence on the acceptance of the standard variety in society.

If the stage of implementation of the standard variety is reached, the challenges related to this phase are manifold. One crucial factor is the willingness as well as the degree of autonomy of the authorities (i.e. the governing bodies within the administrative areas of the minority language community) to commission and/or to take tailor-made measures that allow for the introduction of the agreed-upon standard variety of the minority language in the domains of language use in society that they control. If this political willingness fails and/or this degree of autonomy of the minority language community is rather low, this can put the implementation of the standard variety at risk or dismiss the process altogether in the worst of cases. If, on the contrary, the political willingness to implement the standard variety is present and the authorities do have sufficient autonomy to take and implement decisions, the success rate of the implementation of the standard variety depends on the availability of a clear language ‘plan’ and/or language planning agencies. This institutional framework can help to steer and support the implementation process by

means of concrete measures in a series of influential domains, including government services, courts, minority language media and education. The success depends on the institutionalised practice of minority language usage and the availability of ‘multipliers’ (i.e. persons that master the standard variety and can assist others in using it) in those communicative spaces in society that are either totally or partially controlled by the minority language community’s authorities. Above all, it also depends on the general acceptance of the standard variety over a longer period of time by the language minority members. They should consider it to be the legitimate variety, even if they might perhaps regard it as an artificial variety at the same time, in the sense that it may be far removed from the minority language variety they use in their everyday life. One should always remember that this latter variety of their own also contributes to the minority language’s actual vitality, and perhaps even more so than the (selected and/or newly created) standard variety. It goes without saying that the identification of the individual language users with the standard variety is a key element in the success of the implementation of that variety. However, it proves hard to influence the mindset of the individual minority language users *vis-à-vis* the ‘need’ for or the ‘added value’ of a standard variety.

The discourse on the necessity of a standard variety of a minority language and the ‘leverage’ it may create, is explicitly or more implicitly marked by symbolic as well as more pragmatic arguments. Among the more symbolic arguments one finds the idea that the standard variety would positively contribute to the ‘status’ of the minority’s idiom as a ‘language’ (instead of a ‘dialect’) and/or would give it the chance to be on a par with the (standardised) surrounding majority language. A (terminologically elaborated) standard variety of the minority language would facilitate its use in so-called ‘high-stakes’ domains of language use. One might say that minority language communities often display a certain tendency to adopt the social hierarchy that marks the language varieties of the surrounding majority language for their own language. As such, the ‘standard language ideology’ that characterises the surrounding majority language is ‘mirrored’ in the minority language community. In rare cases, however, this ‘standard language ideology’ is explicitly contested and an attempt is made to counter it by means of a different ideology that promotes the view that no (regional) variety of the minority language is privileged over another. The promotion of the plurality of varieties is then put forward as an alternative to the promotion of a single standard variety⁷.

The more pragmatic arguments tend to underline the advantages of having a standard variety when it comes to the production of uniform administrative docu-

⁷ A case in point is the concept of a ‘polynomic language’ as promoted by Jean-Baptiste Marcellesi in the 1980s for Corsican (Giacomo-Marcellesi 2013: 471). The case of Corsican clearly deviates from the other cases discussed in this volume.

ments, legal texts, terminological databases and books, as well as to the use of the minority language for educational purposes (cf. also Eloy 2014a: 8–9).

Unsurprisingly, there is no real agreement on any of the (symbolic or pragmatic) arguments listed. If one takes the role of the standard variety of the minority language in education as an example, some stakeholders may argue that the standard variety could indeed facilitate the acquisition of the minority language by learners who have no or hardly any prior knowledge of the minority language. Others claim that the use of a standard variety in education could drive active users of the minority language away from the ('non-standard') variety they use outside of the classroom; it may concern a variety that contributes a lot more to the vitality of the minority language than the standard variety itself. The validity of such views on the use of the standard variety of a minority language in education is not an issue that we will further debate here. More research needs to be done on the precise role of standardisation in minority language education (cf. Costa 2015 for an excellent example) and on the contribution of standard varieties to language maintenance and revival in general.

All in all, the major contribution of the collective authorship of this volume is the clear and direct advice to any theoretical scholar of standardisation issues that they touch base with the language communities concerned. This advice does not downplay the importance of theoretical descriptions of the processes of standardisation on the basis of Haugen's model (or a derived version from it). Yet, in order to reach a better understanding of the social history of Europe's minority languages, it is vital to illustrate and analyse the actual social impact of these language standardisation models when implemented in the minority communities. All contributors in effect referred to a wide range of societal effects triggered by language standardisation. The most relevant example for this volume of *Sociolinguistica* concerns the possible role of standardisation in minority language maintenance or revival. We hold it for evident that this question deserves to be treated in more detail in language minority language research (cf. Eloy 2014b); it is of direct importance to both minority language communities and minority language cultivation. Given the broad scope of such a research endeavour, Haugen's four-step model of language standardisation by itself is not likely to be able to serve as a framework for that kind of research. The four-step model does not explicitly invite researchers to approach the interplay between language and its environment in a multidimensional way that is necessary to cover the variety of intra- and extra-linguistic factors influencing language shift or maintenance in a particular setting. It could, however, be integrated in a framework of language ecological variables such as the one developed by Haarmann (1986) on the basis of Haugen's inspiring ideas on the ecology of language (Haugen 1972). Approaching language standardisation as part of a more detailed description and analysis of demographic, sociological, political, cultural, psychological, interactional and linguistic variables could help to uncover the role of language standardisation in processes of language maintenance or revival in

more detail and to provide a solid ground for discussions on future minority language policy and planning.

7 References

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