

2 Issues in language revitalization

1 Introduction

Language revitalization involves counter-balancing the forces which have caused or are causing language shift. At a general level a similar set of forces can be said to operate in most language loss situations, but every case is, in fact, distinct. There are unique historical, economic, societal, and political factors that have affected the manner in which language shift occurs. Therefore, a successful language revitalization program requires addressing a complex set of factors that leads individuals in a particular community to make the choices about language use that they do. It requires, to as great a degree as possible, an understanding of diverse issues such as how uniform attitudes about a local language are within a community, the contexts in which speakers of one language interact with speakers of other languages, the spiritual or cultural values that may be associated with a language, national and regional policies concerning language teaching, and so on.

There is an understandable temptation when confronted with the monumental task of revitalization to look for that one single program which holds the key to success for different language groups around the globe, a tested framework that can be replicated for each situation. This simply does not exist; nor can it exist, because for every individual community a specific combination of issues enters into the picture. Each situation is unique, although there is a commonality of factors shared by most communities. An important aspect of language revitalization, therefore, is identifying these issues, recognizing how they interrelate, and assessing how they will affect and be affected by an attempt to alter patterns of language use. This is not a simple process, to be sure, and at the outset it must be stressed that judgments made about the complicated interplay of variables influencing language use in a community are inevitably inexact. They will, therefore, need reassessment at all stages of implementing a language revitalization program. Moreover, the revitalization program itself can be expected to have an impact on some of these variables (such as language attitudes and patterns of language use),

necessitating reassessment and potential adjustment of programs. Revitalization is a long-term process; strategies must be continually assessed and adapted over its course.

This chapter offers a basic framework in which to consider the issues involved in evaluating endangered language situations. The issues are divided into two basic categories: macro-level and micro-level issues. In most cases, macro-level issues are the laws, circumstances, policies, etc. which pertain at a national level, or even a transnational level. These include such things as governmental support for a local language or lack thereof, national language planning and education goals, attitudes towards bilingualism, and so on. By and large these kinds of issues are beyond the control of any given local community, but their importance and potential impact need to be identified before the implementation of a revitalization program. Micro-level issues, in contrast, are those which involve the demographics, attitudes, cultural practices, and circumstances of a local speech community. Do members of the speech community live in close proximity to one another? What sorts of formal educational opportunities, if any, are available? Is the community relatively homogeneous in its linguistic, ethnic, and economic make-up? These are the sorts of questions that arise when considering micro-level issues.

It cannot be emphasized enough that there is a crucial distinction between features of an endangerment situation which are internal to the group speaking the local language, as opposed to those which exist externally to it (see Brenzinger, et al. 1991; Sasse 1992). Accordingly, it is important to distinguish properties of the individual speech community from properties of the larger context in which that community is located in order to design a revitalization program which may have long-term impact. For example, if macro-level variables such as federal educational policies and national beliefs and attitudes that promote monolingualism are aligned in such a way as to thwart local initiatives for, say, teaching a minority language in a school, then planning a revitalization effort will necessarily include a strategy for overcoming the effect of these factors, or for teaching the language outside of the schools. A very different approach would be necessary in a situation where the macro-issues appear favorable for the promotion of a local language, but there are tensions among ethnic groups in the community where language revitalization is being considered.

2 Macro-variables

Macro-variables encompass the forces external to a linguistic community which have an impact on language vitality and, accordingly, on

revitalization programs. We have proposed elsewhere (Grenoble and Whaley 1998b) that these are attributable to different spheres of influence: *local*, *regional*, *national*, and *extra-national*.

2.1 *The extra-national level*

Certain extra-national variables are often overlooked, but they can be powerful forces in social change, which in turn has an impact on language use. The most obvious contemporary example is provided by globalization, a term used in a variety of ways. We understand globalization not simply to mean the spread of a single, global language (e.g. English), but rather to refer specifically to a growing integration of economic life worldwide. This increased integration requires greater economic cooperation and more efficient transportation networks between countries; it requires the removal of legal and political barriers to trade and the efficient movement of manufactured goods; and it requires communication that is quick and not costly. Thus the “globalization of English” is actually the result of economic integration.

Consequently, we see the rise of international access languages, that is, languages which serve as a *lingua franca* for those who participate in international finance, manufacturing, and commercial exchange. The list of such languages is very limited, but at this point in time includes at least English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and perhaps Arabic, each of which exerts a trans-national influence in certain sectors of the globalizing world. Knowledge of such languages is widely perceived as a path to social mobility, as well as to more varied economic opportunities and wealth. National and regional governments around the world, therefore, promote their use, and individuals/families often make decisions about language use in the home, or choice of language in schools, based on the perceived value of these international access languages. Among these, of course, English must be singled out as having become a *global language*, a *lingua franca* with worldwide reach, or, as Crystal describes it, a language with “a special role that is recognized in every country” (1997:2).

The influence of international access languages on local languages is not uniform for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that globalization impacts nations, regions, and individuals differently. A relatively isolated community that is sustained primarily by subsistence agriculture, for instance, is likely to sit on the periphery of the globalizing world, and there may be little motivation (or opportunity) for members of the community to learn an international access language. At least in the short run, the influence of international access languages in such a situation would not need to be given nearly as much weight in shaping

a language revitalization program as it would in other situations where promoting local language use might be viewed as being in competition with promoting the use of an international access language. At the same time, because the local language is competing with one or more national languages of wider communication, the impact of the added competition of an international access language may become tremendous. In situations where speakers see the need to know a minimum of two languages of wider communication – a regionally dominant one and an international access language – the motivation to use and maintain the local language can be seriously diminished.

To this point, we have highlighted the economic underpinnings of international access languages, but they are also avenues to a wealth of information and entertainment via the internet, as well as to popular culture. The significance of this fact is well known to those working for language revitalization in many places in the world where youth are increasingly eager to communicate in chat rooms with people around the globe, to download music from the internet, and to watch movies that feature actors of international renown. While such opportunities do not necessarily involve international access languages, the number and variety of opportunities increases exponentially for those who know them, especially English. In cases in which language revitalization encourages the increased usage of a local language among younger members of a community, there is often a lack of motivation, or even resentment, because the local language does not seem to offer any obvious rewards.

Globalization is just one of the more obvious examples of an extra-national variable. Others include the influence that neighboring nation-states can have upon one another. In North America, for example, language laws in the United States are sometimes interpreted against the background of Canadian legislation. Where the laws of the two countries have different consequences for related languages and their speakers, the contrast can be striking; therefore communities in one country draw ideas and inspiration from communities in the other. For example, the Hawaiian immersion education programs were based in part on French immersion schools in Canada, and the Inupiaq of Alaska look to Nunavut in Canada as a source of potential models of self-governance and of control over language and culture.¹

¹ For example, Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich, Inuktitut, and Slavey are all official languages of the Northwest Territories. The right to use an official language is regulated by the Official Languages Act. In Nunavut, for example, all government offices are required to serve the public in both Inuktitut and English, except for the offices in Cambridge Bay (Iqaluktuuttiaq) and Kugluktuk (Qurluqtuq), which are required to serve in English and Inuinnaqtun.

Moreover, the policies of one nation-state can greatly influence those of another, and this in turn can affect local languages spoken there. Estonian and Latvian provide a good example of this extra-national variable. Of course, neither Estonian nor Latvian are endangered; they are currently instances of “safe languages” in that they are official state languages with large numbers of speakers, long-standing written traditions, and are used in education and law. Yet their position relative to Russian, and extra-national variables that come into play in Estonia and Latvia, put them in a situation where this could very well change (Druviete 1997). Prior to their incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940, Estonian and Latvian functioned as full-fledged national languages, with well-developed literacy used in all domains, and were used in education and government. The combined impact of relatively heavy Russian immigration into the regions and a Soviet language policy which promoted and favored the use of Russian left the two languages in a curious state at the time of their independence. Russian had been firmly established as the language of economic advancement and had a certain level of prestige, despite relatively strong anti-Russian sentiments among the local people.

Although at the fall of the Soviet Union both Estonian and Latvian were poised to supplant Russian in all spheres of life, the change has not occurred as quickly or as smoothly as might have been anticipated. Russian maintains high prestige, due in part to historical circumstances which established it as a lingua franca throughout the former Soviet empire and to its present position of dominance in the Russian Federation. As Skutnabb-Kangas (1994:178) puts it, “Russian is thus a majorized minority language (a minority language in terms of numbers, but with the power of a majority language), whereas the Baltic languages are minorized majority languages (majority languages, in need of protection usually necessary for the threatened minority languages).” The impact on local languages that fall within the reach of the former Soviet Union have been and continue to be influenced even more dramatically than Latvian and Estonian.

2.2 *The national level*

The national context is a geopolitical construct that yields a high degree of influence in most places in the world; it is at the national level that language policies most often operate, though in most countries policies that have an impact on local languages operate at the regional level as well. The difference in the national contexts, though subtle, is helpful in understanding how strategies for revitalization must be developed with macro-variables in mind. While any number of issues from the national level

might be relevant to the development of language revitalization programs, we mention just a few of the more ubiquitous ones here: language policy; national attitudes towards multilingualism; educational policies; regional autonomy granted to minority groups; and federal support. Each of these involve complications too numerous to discuss in detail here; the goal of this section is not to examine them thoroughly but to bring their relevance to language revitalization to the fore.

2.2.1 *Language policy*

Language policies shape patterns of language use in a variety of social spheres: the courts, the schools, and the offices of government, to name but a few. Thus they have a direct impact on the vitality of local languages and their chances – or lack thereof – for revitalization and maintenance. The impact can be difficult to predict because policies established at the national and regional levels often are in conflict, and many states do not have a uniformly coherent language policy. This is because language is involved in so many different aspects of society that a policy not specifically designed with local languages in mind can have a major impact on their usage. For example, a local language may have support in the legal system but not in the educational system. Native American languages in the United States are in this position, as is clear when one compares the Native American Languages Act and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (section 2.2.3); the Native American Languages Act guarantees the right to education and development of Native American languages, yet the No Child Left Behind Act requires standardized testing in English. The goals of the two acts are in obvious tension with one another.

At the national level, language policies can range from supportive of local languages to neglectful to detrimental. On one end of the continuum are language policies which outlaw use of a particular language or languages and make their use an illegal and punishable offense. Where such outlawed languages are local, indigenous languages, the direct and arguably explicit purpose of such legislation can be the extinction of these languages. The Kurdish language,² for example, has been actively suppressed in a number of different countries. A 1983 Turkish law banned its use in that country; although the law was lifted in 1991, restrictions which

² Technically there are a number of Kurdish languages. These are generally grouped together when outsiders to the community speak of Kurdish language or human rights. Of particular interest to us here are the Kurdish varieties spoken in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Kurdi is a Southern Kurdish language spoken in Iraq (2,785,000 speakers) and Iran (3,250,000 speakers); Kurmanji, a Northern Kurdish language, is spoken in Iran (200,000 speakers); Syria (938,000 speakers); and Turkey (3,950,000 speakers). Both are also spoken in other regions. Speaker data come from Grimes (2000).

are specifically intended to prevent or limit use of Kurdish continue to the present, as reported in the *Annual Reports of the Kurdish Human Rights Project* (2002). Similarly, in Syria use of Kurdish has been banned; Kurdish personal and place names have been replaced by Arabic names; and Kurdish education and publishing have been forbidden (Spolsky 2004). Obviously, such language policies are openly hostile to the use of the target language.

At the other end of the spectrum, language policies can actively support a given language and foster its use. In the extreme, these kinds of policies require equal use of the language in official and administrative situations, in education, and in public spheres. Where such legislation is enforced and the resources are provided to make it possible to meet its requirements, it can have a very positive effect on language use. A well-known example is the promotion of French in Canada. In 1969, the first Official Languages Act was adopted by the Parliament of Canada, recognizing both English and French as the official languages of Canada. In 1988 a new Official Languages Act was ratified; its basic goals are to guarantee the use and status of the two official languages within Canada. Of course neither English nor French is a local language as we have defined it here, but the Official Languages Act is an illustrative case of legislation which has effectively shaped language behavior in Canada. It is perhaps not surprising that the prime examples of such effective legislation involve national languages like French or English; the indigenous view of this kind of legislation in Canada is presented in the discussion of Mohawk revitalization, Chapter 4, section 3.

In reality most language policies lie between the two ends of this continuum. A language can be instated as an official language, but its use may not be required. (This is the case of Māori in New Zealand, or historically in the former Soviet Union, where “national” [e.g. local] languages were guaranteed equal rights but rarely actually received them.) Use of a language can be supported legally but without any financial resources, which can in some cases be a form of real support, while in others it can be a clandestine way to promote language shift and attrition.

A change from negative to more positive attitudes and policies at the national level can result in positive change to the vitality of local languages (Wurm 2002). Although official recognition does not in and of itself guarantee language vitality, the symbolic effect of such recognition can be very powerful. For example, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ratified on 5 November 1992, provides a framework for language policy throughout Europe. (The labels *regional* or *minority* are used in the Charter in much the way that we use the term *local* here, i.e. referring to indigenous, not immigrant languages, which are also not

official languages of the State, or dialects of the official language[s].) Ratification of the Charter commits the party to adhering to the objectives and principles in Part II of the Charter, which include the recognition of the value of local languages, and agreement to promote their use, in speech and writing, in private and public.³ Furthermore, Part II contains specific language about the rights of speakers of regional and minority languages to education in these languages, which is further detailed in Article 8 of Part III. The Charter is a potentially powerful tool for local communities who wish to maintain or revitalize their languages. It is not surprising that recognition of a language as meeting the definition of a regional or minority language, and therefore being eligible for the rights and benefits of such is a goal which many groups in Europe seek to attain. (See the discussion of Cornish in section 4.)

A language policy that is positively disposed towards the use of local languages does not in and of itself guarantee positive results for local languages. The policy must be enforced, and it must have provisions in it that allow the policy to move beyond a purely symbolic role. When the Native American Languages Act was instated by the US government in 1991, it was seen by many as a largely empty gesture, as there was no funding accompanying the Act to enable people to put it into action. Even today there is only an annual total of \$2 million allocated to the Act, which does not go very far toward meeting its stated purpose. In a somewhat different vein, the policies which were purported to support and promote native languages in the Soviet Union had no weight to them; they were paper promises which the Soviet government could refer to in defense of its actions, but the government was never required to act on the policies instated by law, and was never held accountable for its failure to do so (Grenoble 2003b).

We cannot overemphasize that any policy, in the long term, is only as good as its enforcement, an adequate level of funding for it, and the administrative commitment it receives. Adoption of a language as an official state language often represents an important shift from policies that have repressed or ignored local languages, but the moniker “official language” alone has little impact on how a language is perceived and used. Language policy must also include incentives toward the use of local

³ Ten years after the initial adoption of the Charter, only 16 of the Council of Europe’s 44 member states have ratified the Charter themselves. These are, specifically, Armenia, Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Another twelve states have signed but not ratified the Charter (Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Russia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Ukraine).

languages. Consider South Africa. The constitution names eleven official languages⁴ (Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Xhosa, Zulu, Northern Sotho [or Sepedi], Sesotho, Setswana, Swati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga), but only two of these, Afrikaans and English, are used for official purposes. This is so much the case that, in July 2004, the African National Congress secretary-general, Kgalema Motlanthe, voiced concerns over the continuing domination of Afrikaans and English in the country. This situation exists in spite of the fact that they are not numerically the most spoken languages. Following the 2001 census, the most commonly spoken languages are Zulu (23.8 percent), Xhosa (17.6 percent), Afrikaans (13.3 percent), and Sotho (9.4 percent); English and Setswana are tied (each at 8.2 percent).⁵ Moreover, the overall percentage of speakers using Afrikaans or English declined from 1996 to 2001. Druviete (1997) makes a similar claim regarding the status of the Baltic languages (Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian) in their respective countries, arguing that despite the fact that they are *official* state languages, the linguistic human rights of their speakers are infringed upon because of the continuing pervasive influence of Russian.

Language policies are also a significant variable in that their influence typically endures far after they are changed. During the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China, persecution against minorities was widespread; this included official attempts to stifle local language use. For example, the government terminated publishing in the Xibe language (a Tungusic language spoken in the northwest of the country) and prohibited its instruction in elementary school. Although these bans were lifted in 1978, the result of almost two decades of prohibition was that an entire generation had effectively lost use of the language (Stary 2003:84–6).

The effects of national policies are far-reaching. This includes both deliberate language policies, as well as policies primarily aimed at other spheres of life, but with repercussions on language use. The latter category can encompass a wide range of acts, most obviously those which affect education, publishing, and the media. A community must be aware of the kinds of policies it lives with: on one extreme such policies may virtually obligate the State to help promote the local language, while on the other they may prohibit a community from creating literacy, any formal educational program, or even a revitalization program. In order to bring about

⁴ Chapter 1, section 6 of the South African Constitution, which was adopted 8 May 1996 and amended 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly. See also Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:298) for a similar critique of the official language policy of the country.

⁵ Data taken from Census 2001, Statistics South Africa 2003, available at <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/publicationbrowse.asp?PublCat=34ce6h0f7o%20-%20fefkb0j8ed&CatSel=1>

change at the local level, ~~most communities~~ will find that they need to address regional and national level policies first.

2.2.2 *Language attitudes*

For a variety of historical, political, cultural, and economic reasons, nations differ dramatically in their stance towards multilingualism within their borders (Dorian 1998). The United States, for example, has traditionally ~~dealt~~ with the issue of language diversity by not developing any official language policy, yet has typically promoted the exclusive use of English in the educational system, at times rather aggressively. Even after the Bilingual Education Act was passed in 1968, which ostensibly indicated an openness to multilingualism in American schools, the pattern has been to use bilingualism as a mechanism towards the acquisition of English (see, e.g., Crawford 2000; Schmidt 2000). In addition, there is pervasive sentiment that multilingualism leads to divisiveness, breakdowns in communication and inequalities, as well as a sense that the financial impact of multilingualism – in terms of translation costs, developing school curricula in multiple languages, training bilingual teachers, providing multilingual legal services, and so on – outweighs the benefits to be gained. Language revitalization, in this context, is tolerated on a small scale, but it is commonly viewed with skepticism as to its value, and it is likely to be opposed by a variety of constituencies when it is perceived to hamper the achievement of fluency in English.

The attitudes of the larger, more dominant population are critical in language revitalization efforts. Historically a number of regions (e.g. the United States, Australia, Canada, and the Soviet Union/Russia) have held negative attitudes towards multilingualism and so maintained negative policies toward local languages. In the United States, where indigenous languages and languages of immigrant populations have traditionally had limited or no legal status, and there has been no sustained official stance on multilingualism, many communities involved in revitalization programs have had to confront a national attitude toward language which finds monolingualism preferable and bilingualism suspicious or even dangerous. In such cases the dominant language speakers tend to be monolingual and view monolingualism as the normal human state; they often regard bi- or multilingualism with suspicion and hostility. These attitudes translate not only into negative policies, but also into negative attitudes at the local level (Wurm 2002). Dorian (1998) takes this further, arguing that the attitudes in Europe and her colonies are hostile toward minority languages, “despising them to death.” The existence of the English Only Movement in the United States is symptomatic of the pervasive fear of multilingualism in that country. This is not a new attitude: in the 1750s Benjamin Franklin opposed German settlers teaching their children German, not English, in

Pennsylvania, arguing the need for assimilation (Crawford 2000; Spolsky 2003). Such attitudes do much to contribute to language endangerment in the first place, and are difficult for local communities to combat, both externally and internally.

The People's Republic of China provides an interesting comparison. The PRC has codified in its national constitution the right for minorities to promote the use of their language (see Grenoble and Whaley 1999; Mackerras 1994). From this vantage point, one might expect to find a rather liberal attitude about groups of citizens advancing the usage of a local language in daily life, either alongside Mandarin Chinese – the national lingua franca – or in its stead. In fact, this is precisely what has occurred in certain places at certain times. However, lurking behind this fact is the reality that such efforts at promoting a local language have been more a matter of practicality than an official endorsement of multilingualism. Until relatively recently, many parts of China, particularly in the west and the north, remained isolated from the sociopolitical center of the country in the east. As greater numbers of the Han majority have moved into these areas and the communication networks of the nation have improved, these regions tend to have far less autonomy than in years past. Constitutional language notwithstanding, the political practice within the People's Republic of China has been to curtail the cultural practices of minority groups that deviate too far from the national norms and to incorporate all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, into a common vision for a modern state that competes economically and militarily on a global scale. Activities by local communities that are seen to be at odds with this vision, including the use of minority languages, are discouraged or even suppressed especially in more politically sensitive regions, such as Tibet and Xinjiang Province.

Unlike the resistance to multilingualism in the United States, which, when it is articulated at all, is most often couched in pragmatic terms – drains on financial resources, disruption of communication, barriers to educational achievement, and so on – the Chinese situation is better described as one of tolerance towards multilingualism that was born out of practical necessity and is now driven by political expediency. Minority populations will be at least nominally supported by the central government in an effort to maintain or revitalize a language, but only if this effort is not perceived as a political threat.

In contrast to both of these situations are regions of the world where multilingualism is a norm of daily life. The advantages of knowing multiple languages in order to move in and out of different locations and activities are appreciated, and so the expectation is for individuals to speak more than one language. Naturally, these situations occur most

frequently in areas of high linguistic diversity, which poses its own set of issues for revitalization (see section 2.3.2), but the cultural acceptance of multilingualism is one variable that works in favor of communities striving to protect or extend the use of a local language.

2.2.3 *Education policies*

Education policies are of course shaped by language policy and language attitudes, and for many of the issues involved in language revitalization it is language education policies which have the most obvious relevance. However, other kinds of education policies can have an impact on the potential for revitalization. One example in the United States, mentioned briefly in section 2.2.1, is the recent **No Child Left Behind Act** of 2001, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush on 8 January 2002. The new law redefines the federal government's role in education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Designed to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers, the new law is intended to change the culture of America's schools so that their success is defined and assessed in terms of the achievement levels of every individual child. One of the four basic principles⁶ of No Child Left Behind is "stronger accountability for results," which is meant to be achieved by regular testing using standardized tests nationally.

The policy makes several stipulations regarding the testing of English proficiency. Specifically, by the 2002–3 school year, all states were required to provide annual assessments of English language proficiency in each of their districts. Special provisions were made for the reporting of scores for students with "limited English proficiency," or LEP students, though states are still required to measure speaking, reading, and writing skills in English for LEP students when they who have lived in the United States for three consecutive school years.

The lack of provisions for Native American students is a striking omission in the language of the No Child Left Behind Act, which presupposes that LEP students are immigrants to the United States. The Department of Education's website for the State of Hawai'i, for example, provides the parent letter and fact sheets about No Child Left Behind in English or translated into thirteen different languages (Chinese, Chuukese, Ilokano, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Marshallese, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, Tongan, Vietnamese, and Visayan), but not Hawaiian.⁷ Understandably, multiple

⁶ The remaining three basic principles are "increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work" (taken from the US government's official website for the Act, <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/>).

⁷ These translations of NCLB are available at <http://sssb.k12.hi.us/esll/NCLBtranslations.htm>.

Native American groups have responded to the new law with concern. The law fundamentally equates English language proficiency with successful education, a presupposition which creates a major disincentive to local language revitalization programs, especially those which include immersion education. Consequently, official groups such as the National Indian Education Association and the National Indian School Board Association have testified to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs about the difficulties implementing No Child Left Behind for Native Americans because it makes no provisions for the specificities of their languages and cultures, and is formulated on assumption that all children, communities, and schools are the same throughout the US.

In response, on 30 April 2004, President Bush signed the American Indian and Alaska Native Education Order, which establishes an interagency group to work with the Secretary of Education to report to the President on the educational status and progress of Native American Indian and Alaska Native students on meeting the goals of No Child Left Behind (Bush 2004). The Working Group is to be made up of representatives from a variety of federal agencies,⁸ yet apparently without representation from agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Office of Indian Education Programs. Part of their study is to include “assessment of the impact and role of native language and culture on the development of educational strategies to improve academic achievement.” It is too early to determine whether efforts by Native American groups to protest No Child Left Behind will ultimately have an effect on the way in which the law will be applied to Native American children or Native American immersion schools. Regardless, the episode reflects the challenge facing local language revitalization efforts; rarely are national (or regional) education policies drafted with the special concerns of local language communities in mind.

2.2.4 *Regional autonomy*

We treat regional autonomy here as a national level variable, although it is relevant both as a macro- and a micro-issue, and can be determined at multiple levels, ranging from extra-nationally to locally. Degree of regional autonomy within a country is a function of historical processes, geography, core political principles, and economic factors, though in exceptional cases it may be determined by extra-national factors. A prime example is the

⁸ Specifically, representatives shall be taken from the departments of Education; of the Interior; of Health and Human Services; of Agriculture; of Justice; of Labor; and “such other executive branch departments, agencies, or offices as the Co-Chairs of the Working Group may designate” (Bush 2004).

instruction of Russian in schools in all regions throughout the Soviet bloc, mandated by the USSR during the Soviet era.

Within a nation, more or less autonomy can be granted to individual regions over education, language, the development of infrastructure, the formulation or interpretation of laws, the regulation of the media, as well as over allocation of resources. In those states where all such policies and resources are centrally controlled, local communities may have no say in what languages are taught in their schools, used in their media, or whether they receive funding for language revitalization. They may have no voice in shaping the legal and political context which governs the affairs of everyday life. Such centralized control, in particular in totalitarian states, may well preclude language revitalization which includes any formal education, use of the media, or even creation of a written form of the local language.

In nations where a high degree of regional autonomy is granted, there is a much better chance that policies can be enacted which are favorable to the use of local languages. In Switzerland, for example, each individual canton has a fair amount of independence in terms of setting its own language and education policies. This has permitted the continued use of Romansch in the canton of Grisons, where its five varieties are taught in a number of schools and it enjoys a set of legal protections (Posner and Rogers 1993; Schöpfi 1974). Given that the language is spoken by less than 1 percent of the Swiss population, its status as an official language and its use in Grisons is in large part due to the political autonomy granted to individual cantons.

In many countries, particular regions might best be described as semi-autonomous, such as in the United States. While each state is given some measure of control over policy making, such as constitutionally guaranteed authority over its educational policies, the federal government can exercise control by the allocation of financial resources (as in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; see section 2.2.3). Note that, in the United States, American Indian tribes are guaranteed the rights of tribal sovereignty and self-determination, potentially placing them in even greater positions of autonomy for educational policies. Unfortunately, the actual practice of this sovereignty is under constant negotiation and renegotiation with federal and state governments, so even in this case the autonomy of local communities is only a matter of degree.

Each community therefore needs to make an honest assessment of its own level of autonomy and the possibilities or limitations offered to it by its national structure.

2.2.5 *Federal support*

A key variable in assessing the possibilities for language revitalization is the existence or lack of governmental funding for language revitalization. Although in principle a community may have sufficient resources on its

own, or may have access to financial assistance from non-government sources, the more typical pattern is for local communities to find their revitalization efforts hampered by insufficient funds for programs. And, typically, regional or federal funding for their work represents the best option.

Quite obviously, the availability of federal resources for language revitalization can be a major motivator for creating such programs and can do much to improve their chances for success. A lack of support has the opposite effect, and limits the choices a community may have. Similarly, unfunded mandates and legislation not only fail to supply the necessary resources to make it possible for communities to satisfy their requirements, but can also have a detrimental effect on overall morale. The community will often see such acts as empty gestures which do not entail true commitment on the part of the majority community.

2.3 *Regional variables*

The regional level is defined geographically, though the geographic unit often corresponds to a political entity within a larger national domain. Examples would be the western portion of Ireland, the Autonomous Regions of the People's Republic of China, provinces of Canada, all of which supply a significantly influential context for local language use. Most of the macro-variables that operate at the national level have corresponding regional level variables. Therefore, we mention just two variables in this section which are of particular import to revitalization: the role of regionally dominant languages and that of language density.

2.3.1 *Regional languages*

In the modern world, local communities will find themselves in part of a tiered system of language choices, where the tiers represent spheres of influence and use. The local language is on one tier, a regionally prevalent language on another, the national language on a third, and, in some cases, a language of international access on a fourth. The domains of usage of these languages will vary in individual situations. Typically, the national language is the language of higher education, law, and the government, while a regional language is used in commerce and lower levels of education, and the local language is used for informal social interactions, as well as unique cultural practices (religious rites, ceremonies, traditional holidays, and so on). The domains of local language are limited, not only regionally, but also functionally. In some cases, it may be used only in the home. In others, it is additionally used at the level of the language of village communication; in others, for communication with different villages; and so on.

The actual number of tiers would be a minimum of two, and in many instances the global, national, and regional language will coincide. This is clearly the case for Native American languages in the United States, where the national language – English – is clearly a global language and functions as the regionally prominent language nearly everywhere in the country. In contrast, the number of tiers may be greater, as in parts of Siberia, where the local languages can be divided into those majority indigenous languages with some official status (such as Yakut or Buriat) versus other indigenous languages (such as Evenki or Chukchi). Thus, in some areas in Sakha, for example, Evenki is used at the level of the village; Yakut, at the regional/provincial level; Russian, at the national level; and English, at the global. To be able to function proficiently at each and every one of these levels, a speaker needs to know four languages. The regional level, therefore, adds a layer of complexity to the language situation. Decisions will be required about how the balance among languages can be altered in order to extend the domain of the local language. Indeed, it may be that the most imminent threat to a local language is a regional language rather than a national one. This is true, for example, in much of Africa.

2.3.2 *Language density*

Language density and multilingualism (or monolingualism) are closely related variables that can have a significant impact on language vitality and on language attitudes (section 3.1). They are not unambiguously positive or negative factors in language revitalization, yet are always important. The languages of the world are very unevenly distributed geographically. Of the 6,800 or so languages spoken in the world, only 15 percent are spoken in the Americas combined, and only 3 percent in Europe. In contrast, 30 percent of the world's languages are spoken in Africa, and 32 percent in the Pacific (Grimes 2000). Moreover, the languages are very unevenly distributed over these vast regions, so that language density can vary greatly. South Africa is listed in the *Ethnologue* as home to 31 living languages, for example, while Nigeria has 505. Similarly, 47 percent of the languages in the Americas are spoken in just two countries: Brazil and Mexico. Differences in language density are discussed in Nettle and Romaine (2000:32–3), who illustrate that the majority of the world's languages are spoken in tropical regions. They show that 60 percent of all languages are spoken across seventeen countries which can be mapped geographically into two major “belts.” One of these extends from the West African Coast, through the Congo Basin, to East Africa, encompassing Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaire, Ivory Coast, Togo, Ghana, Benin, and Tanzania. The other belt extends from South India and peninsular

Southeast Asia across to Indonesia, New Guinea, and the Pacific, including India, Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands.

So the experience of individual communities in different parts of the world can be radically different with regard to language density and multilingualism. At a simplistic level, it is clear that in regions with high language density, people are more likely to be multilingual and are more likely to have positive attitudes toward multilingualism. In regions with low language density, monolingualism may be more heavily promoted as a national policy (with the United States serving as a prime example).

A deeper analysis shows that the issues of language density are very complex and not at all straightforward. Nigeria is a country with an exceptionally high number of languages, a total of 505 spoken by a population of 106,409,000 (Grimes 2000). If the population were evenly distributed across languages, each would have just over 21,000 speakers. But it is not. There are nine official or national languages in Nigeria (Edo, Efik, Fulfulde, Hausa, Idoma, Igbo, Yoruba, Kanuri, and English), accounting for approximately 64 percent of the population, not including any first-language speakers of English. So a large number of Nigerian languages have a small number of speakers. The “Middle Belt” zone of Nigeria has arguably the greatest linguistic diversity, with between 250 and 400 languages, depending on how the region is defined and how the languages are counted (Blench 1998:187). Four major factors for language loss in the Middle Belt have been identified:

- (a) assimilation to larger, more powerful groups nearby
- (b) assimilation to smaller but culturally dominant groups
- (c) assimilation to English, the national language
- (d) demographic crises caused by labor migration/urbanism (Blench 1998:198)

While these are all related to well-known socioeconomic factors in language shift, all but (d) stem from the contact situation. Of course, the kinds of language attrition we are concerned with here primarily involve contact situations of some sort, as we are specifically interested in those cases where speakers of a given language shift their usage to another language; these are inherently contact situations. But factor (b) is particularly striking in this regard; it shows shift in Nigeria from one local language to another. (This is in fact more typical of an African pattern of language shift than elsewhere in the world.) Note also that the general failure of literacy in local languages in Nigeria is often attributed the layers of multilingualism in the country. People receive their education in a regional language, which is used as the language of education for a

particular region, while English functions as a lingua franca at the national level. Ultimately this is a disincentive to developing local literacies, which have no foreseeable role at either the regional or national levels, and appear superfluous at the local level (Grenoble and Whaley 1998b:32–3).

It is not just the number of languages, but also which languages are spoken in a given area, that is relevant. The existence of related languages in a region can further bolster the sense of prestige. To return to the Siberian example, Evenki see themselves as closely aligned with other Tungus groups. This alignment translates into a sense of shared ethnolinguistic identity, a sense of affinity with Even, Nanai, Negidal, and so on. Moreover, this reflects the historical reality of identity. Before the Soviet government created “nationalities” along ethnolinguistic lines, the different Siberian groups tended to define themselves more in terms of clan than larger tribal affiliation.

Another key point about language density is the geographic distribution of local languages, in relation to one another and in relation to the language(s) of wider communication. Speakers of languages on the eastern side of Botswana, for example, are more likely to shift to Setswana than those on the western side, while some of these may be more likely to shift to Sekgalagadi (Batibo 1998:273).

3 Micro-variables: the local level

In this section we present micro-issues which come to the fore in language revitalization. We would like to emphasize certain key points. First, as micro-level variables, these are considered from the internal standpoint of the community. Each local community is situated within a larger regional or national context; some of the same variables come into play at the macro-level but they do so from an external standpoint. In this section, we are concerned specifically with the way in which these variables operate internal to a local community. Second, it must be noted that any division between national, regional, and local issues though expedient for building a conceptual framework, is somewhat artificial. All levels of variables are interrelated and interact in complex ways. Thus, for example, language attitudes at a local level are usually heavily influenced by attitudes at the regional and national level. Finally, the list of variables presented here is by no means exhaustive; instead we have chosen to highlight some of the most pervasive and important variables. Local situations vary greatly from one to another, and there may be factors not cited here which are of critical importance in language revitalization in some communities.

3.1 *Language attitudes*

We have introduced language attitudes as a factor at the national level (section 2.2.2), but they play a critical role at the local level as well.⁹ While it is obvious that positive attitudes toward the local language help sustain language vitality and are critical for successful revitalization, most communities are not homogeneous in this regard, with a multitude of different attitudes being found. Consider the case of Resian (Steenwijk 2003). Resian is usually described as a dialect of Slovenian which, due to geographic isolation, has developed independently of other Slovenian dialects and so exhibits certain divergent and distinctive traits. Thus its ethnolinguistic situation and the attitudes of its speakers must be understood against the backdrop of their linguistic heritage and attitudes toward standard Slovenian, and the extent to which speakers identify themselves as solely Resian, or as Resian and Slovenian, or as Resian but not Slovenian.

The group of Resians is small; the population of the municipality of Resia was approximately 1,300 in 1998, although Steenwijk (2003:217) puts the total number of people with some knowledge of Resian at 3,000, a figure which includes both inhabitants of Resia and emigrants. Resians live in two Alpine valleys in the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia near the border of Slovenia. Therefore, in addition to Slovenian speakers living to the south and west, they are flanked by Friulian and Italian speakers to the north and east. In fact, Slovenian is spoken only by older generation Resians, and only 8 percent speak it well. At the same time, all Resians receive their formal education in Italian. In addition, 77 percent of Resians understand Friulian well and 42 percent speak it well. Only 7 percent of the population is monolingual (in Italian), so that the area is essentially bilingual (Resian–Italian) or trilingual (Resian–Italian–Friulian).

In sum, four different languages (or varieties) come into contact in this region: Friulian, Italian, Resian, and Slovenian. For Resians living as part of this community, their attitudes toward these four languages interact and come into play in making local decisions. It is specially with regard to issues of literacy and orthography development that these attitudes collide. Slovenian in some sense is the most distant of the three languages which come into contact with Resian, because it is spoken only by older generation Resians. Nonetheless, it does provide a logical model for a written language and an orthography because it is so close to Resian linguistically. Adapting the written system of Slovenian to Resian would be a relatively

⁹ We discuss how local attitudes can be assessed in Chapter 7, section 1.4.1.

simple task. But to choose a Slovenian-based orthography would mean to align oneself with Slovenian and lose the distinct Resian identity. The issue is further complicated by policies which have been made at a national and an extra-national level. Historically, Resian was classified as a Slavic dialect closest to Russian or Belorussian as part of a general policy to divide Slovenian groups for political purposes (Steenwijk 2003:220). Both Austria and Italy have maintained policies and attitudes that generally treat the Slavic groups in their territories as distinct from Slovenian, so these policies have had a divisive effect, separating Resians and Slovenians. At the same time, Slovenian intellectuals draw attention to the linguistic affinity of Resian to Slovenian, in part in an attempt to align the two groups. At present, it would seem that the larger national politics have superseded, as Resians do not have a sense of Slovenian identity.

Another factor which inhibits the use of a Slovenian-based orthography is the strong influence of written Italian; writing is learned in Italian and, as the national language, Italian is used in most written and official domains. Although a written form of Resian was developed in the 1970s, very few people actively use written Resian. The influence of written Italian is so pervasive that its orthographic system is seen as the model for orthographies by most Resians, even if other systems would be better suited: “every proposal that deviates from this model is frowned upon by a large portion of the population” (Steenwijk 2003:222).

This Resian case points to the intricate ways that cultural identity is shaped by multilingualism present in a local community. Language attitudes, however, can be just as heterogeneous in communities where linguistic abilities are uniform across the population or where they vary along generational lines. In most revitalization situations, there is a tension between a “modernist” faction and a “traditionalist” faction. The modernists, even though they may hold a local language in high esteem, worry that imperfect command of a language of wider communication will limit opportunities for jobs and education. In this way, they see the local language as personally limiting. In contrast, the traditionalists worry that a loss of local language will deplete their sense of identity and erode community ties. They see the local language as a source of cultural liberation.

In undertaking revitalization, it is important to see that both positions have some merit. It is frequently necessary to compromise so that the revitalization efforts do not become a catalyst for division within a community. One positive way to do this is not to impose models on all community members against their will. In the Mohawk revitalization program in Kahnawà:ke, for example, parents can choose whether to send their children to a Mohawk immersion school or to an English school,

with approximately half of the parents opting for the one, and half for the other (see Chapter 4, section 3).

3.2 *Human resources*

By *human resources* we mean the number of people, and their skills, which can be brought to a language revitalization project. First and foremost we are concerned with the numbers of speakers of the local language, their relative knowledge of the language, and the distribution of the speakers across generations. Speakers are the most valuable resource for a language. Levels of these resources can be placed on a continuum, with absolutely no speakers of the language on one end of the continuum, and a relatively large number of fluent speakers across all generations at the other end. As we have seen, when there are no remaining speakers of a language, we are concerned with language resuscitation; when there is a healthy speaker base, we may be concerned with language maintenance as opposed to revitalization, although not always. A revitalization program must begin with an honest assessment of human resources. Speakers are not just an important sign of the language's vitality; they are critical for teaching the language and for helping create new domains for its use.

In addition to speakers, a revitalization program needs committed, energetic people to implement it and to support it for many years. Revitalization is a slow process requiring years of continuous work. With successful programs, community members are often able to name key individuals whose efforts have made the program possible. It cannot be overemphasized that this effort needs to come from within the community itself. External human resources, such as linguists, professional pedagogues, teacher-trainers, and language planners can be brought in to assist the community. In fact, depending on the levels of existing language resources, they may be essential, but these external sources cannot provide the core of support necessary to create and sustain a revitalization program.

3.3 *Religion*

Religion is commonly overlooked in discussions on language revitalization, an ironic fact in that religious ceremonies and cultural activities imbued with spiritual value are often the last domains for a local language which is disappearing. The role of religion within a community results from interacting features of the national, regional, and local levels. The existence of a national religion, for example, plays a role in shaping society and the society's priorities, as well as in government allocation of resources.

Especially in countries where there is no separation of religion and State, this can have a powerful impact on language attitudes and how decisions are made regarding language and other educational policies. Thus, quite obviously, the position of a local religion (and the language practices associated with it) can be more fragile against the backdrop of a strong national religion than the position of a local religion in a country with a high degree of tolerance for religious freedom.

In this section we focus on religion as a local level variable. It is a particularly important factor in both language endangerment and revitalization for many reasons. First, religion is a vehicle for language use; because much of religious language is sacred, in many endangerment situations religious texts (spoken and written) are the best-preserved aspects of the local language and its use. Many religious texts are ritual texts of one sort or another, and are memorized, possibly verbatim. Moreover, there is a correlation between communities which maintain their traditional religious beliefs and practices and those which maintain their language and culture. In Siberia, for example, those shamans who managed to escape persecution in the Soviet era and survive became strongholds for their communities, such that to this day those individual groups which still have a functioning shaman are more likely to use their language and to have first-language speakers. This is a widespread phenomenon which occurs at a highly localized level, within individual villages and with specific herding groups. In specific Evenki villages in Sakha and the Amur region, for example, language retention is higher among those groups which still have a practicing shaman than with those which do not.

At the same time, the arrival of new religions to a community can bring with them a new language and new cultural values. In fact, religion is one of the primary forces driving choices about language use, although the relationship is complex and should be understood in the context of economic, political, geographic, and demographic factors (see Ferguson 1982, who gives a more thorough discussion of these issues). As an example, there is a strong tie between religion of a community and the orthographic system used for its language (see also Chapter 6). The Qur'ān is written in Classical Arabic, and the expectation is that it will be studied in this same language, so the Arabic writing system has become a symbol of Islam. In contrast, the spread of Christianity is tied to a spread of the Roman alphabet, and the spread of Orthodoxy to Cyrillic. (A clear split is seen in the writing of Croatian in the Roman alphabet, a predominantly Catholic population, versus Serbian, written in Cyrillic, by a predominantly Orthodox population, despite the fact that the two varieties are more dialect-like than language-like. Distinctions are determined along

religious and political lines, not ethnolinguistic ones, yet these differences are represented orthographically.) Judaism, and Jewish identity, is linked to the Hebrew alphabet, and so on. Orthographic systems in these cases can be representative of more large-scale cultural spread and language shift.

Though religion can be a vehicle for spreading language, local languages can also be used as a vehicle for spreading religion. Buddhists and Christians, in particular, have allowed or encouraged translations of their texts, although they too have historically had attachments to specific languages (Chinese and Latin). An ongoing reflection of this is that SIL International (formerly the Summer Institute of Linguistics), in conjunction with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, has spent considerable time and effort in translating portions of the Bible into hundreds of local languages. In the process, they have become one of the biggest advocates for local language use. Their efforts are not without controversy, however, as Grinevald (1998) describes.

The actual effect of imported religions on language use is very much dependent on the particular community into which they come. Gùrdùṅ speakers in Nigeria who shift their religious beliefs to Islam or Christianity also shift their language usage to Hausa (Haruna 2003). Alternatively, the Jaru and Kalaw Kawaw Ya languages of Australia have been better maintained, and are now being revitalized, due to connections with the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church (Lo Bianco and Rhydwen 2001).

In revitalization situations, it is important to determine the connections between a local language and religion, both traditional expressions of religion and imported religions such as Islam and Christianity. In some cases, churches or mosques may represent one of the best domains to promote language use, while in others they are associated with colonial languages and cultures. Language revitalization is greatly enhanced by connecting it to traditional spirituality in some communities, but in others this may create tensions with a community that will hamper the effort.

3.4 *Literacy*

Literacy is a sufficiently complex issue that Chapter 5 is devoted to it entirely, and Chapter 6 discusses orthography in depth. In this section we discuss the overall situation of literacy. In any specific community, there can be multiple literacies, a single literacy, or no literacy, i.e. the community may be preliterate. The position and nature of literacy in the community help shape people's attitudes about literacy and their expectations of what it can bring to the local language. One of the driving

forces of language endangerment is competition with the language of wider communication; and where this is a national language, in particular an official state language, it brings with it literacy. Most often there is an expectation that citizens of any given country will achieve not only spoken fluency in the official language, or one of the official languages, but also that they will be literate in that language.

The expectations of literacy in the language of wider communication may be set at the regional or national level, but how a community reacts to these expectations, and how they play into potentials for local language literacy, are often determined internally to the community, at a local level. Community members may so strongly associate literacy with the language of wider communication that they perceive the local language to be completely unsuited for reading and writing. In such cases local literacy should not and cannot be part of a revitalization program, or the program leaders must begin the revitalization process by educating others to understand the benefits of local literacy. Alternatively, local literacy may be viewed as a positive benefit for community identity; it may be seen as a source of pride to be able to read and write the local language; or literacy in the local language may be seen as a way to better access literacy in a language of wider communication.

3.5 *Financial resources*

We consider financial resources as micro-variables in two respects. First is the overall economic welfare of the community, its own levels of well-being, which help determine whether community members are in a position to be engaged in language revitalization or spend their time trying to provide food and shelter for themselves and their families. A subsistence lifestyle, in times of poor harvest or weather conditions, leaves little time for language revitalization. The same can be said for groups facing major health issues, such as HIV infection. Second is the question of the kinds of financial resources a community has available to it for a language revitalization program. These may be resources held locally, within the community, or they may be provided by the government.

Language revitalization is in theory possible without financial resources, but it is certainly easier to begin a program if money is available for education and for producing and disseminating materials. We discuss different models of language revitalization in Chapter 3; even the most economical (the community-based programs and the Master-apprentice model) have a greater likelihood of success with some kind of financial support. More formal educational models require greater funding, to create materials, train and then pay teachers, to outfit schools, and so

on. A lack of financial resources can limit the kinds of programs a community can realistically implement, and so an early-on evaluation of potential resources – both internal and external – is critical.

4 Case study: Cornish

We can illustrate the complex interaction of these variables at multiple levels (local, regional, national, and extra-national) through an examination of the case of Cornish, which is relatively well documented historically and in modern times. Cornish is a Celtic language, originally spoken throughout all of Cornwall in Britain. It is relatively clear that English, at the expense of Cornish, was spreading through Cornwall as early as the beginning of the eighth century, with Anglo-Saxon occupation of the region. By the time of the Norman invasion, Cornish had largely been replaced by English in East Cornwall, but was apparently still robust in West Cornwall, with both English and Cornish spoken there. Its survival is somewhat of a “geographical accident,” as West Cornwall was more isolated from the Anglo-Saxons, who ruled from East Cornwall (Wakelin 1975:72–97). The overall decline of Cornish stems from many of the usual factors in language endangerment; these include religion, education, and economic opportunities. One clear source of English contact was the spread of fishing and tin-mining in the area, although the spread of English through religion has been argued to be the more primary cause (Durkacz 1983:214).

The spread of English into Cornwall was very much a part of political and socioeconomic change; it may well be that Cornish would have declined regardless of English policies. That said, specific policies have definitely had a negative impact of Cornish vitality. One of these was religious in nature, although it came from the central English government. The English kingdom was officially Catholic through the reign of Henry VIII, but when his son Edward VI assumed the throne, in 1547, one of his acts as supreme head of the Church in England was to make Protestantism the official state religion. Even prior to this, the Protestant Church had been advocating the use of the local (or vernacular) language in religion. Thus the Bible was translated into English and subsequently into Welsh, for example.

In 1549 in Cornwall, however, the institution of English religious services and use of the English Bible and prayer book resulted in protests and rebellions in Cornwall. It is important to note that, in refuting the use of English, the Cornish at this time were not seeking the use of the Cornish language but rather a return to texts and services in Latin, along with the kinds of (Catholic) religious practices that a Latin-based service

represented. Historians debate whether the decision to use English in the churches of Cornwall was a deliberate act of linguistic oppression (Davies 2000) or not (Brennan 2001), but it is certainly clear that a governmental act which was intended to legislate religious practices throughout the monarchy had direct sociolinguistic impact.

Over the next two hundred years Cornish continued to decline. The last *monolingual* speaker of Cornish, Dolly Pentreath, died in 1777, but Cornish monolingualism was already considered unusual by the second half of the seventeenth century. Spoken Cornish continued to survive for at least another century; the last native speaker (John Davey of Zennor) died in 1891 (Shield 1984). A movement toward reviving Cornish began in the end of the seventeenth century, but it was not until the late nineteenth century that the Celtic languages were actually deemed worthy of study.

The publication of Henry Jenner's 1904 *Handbook of the Cornish Language* prompted a renewed interest in Cornish revival, but there were relatively few followers at this time, and the group concerned with learning Cornish was almost exclusively constituted by scholars. The lack of wider community involvement kept the interests of the academics from evolving into an actual revitalization effort.

Jenner was followed by Robert Morton Nance, who created an updated and unified writing system for what he called Unified Cornish (or *Kernewek Unyes*), as the variant introduced in the reclamation was to be called (Shield 1984; Williams 2000). In 1929, he published his reconstruction of Cornish (Nance 1929). The Cornish revival movement began in earnest in the 1950s in a general climate of national awareness. In 1967 the Cornish Language Board (*Kesva an Taves Kernewek*) was founded with the charge of fostering and promoting the Cornish language (<http://www.cornish-language.org/english/kesvaabouteng.asp>). Its responsibilities include providing information about Cornish language revitalization, as well as publishing pedagogical and reference materials, and scholarly editions of classical Cornish texts. The Cornish Language Board initially promoted Unified Cornish, as advocated by Nance.

The Cornish revitalization movement gained momentum in the 1980s, but many were dissatisfied with Unified Cornish, finding it stilted and archaic, and disagreeing with some of the decisions Nance had made with regard to the phonological system. In response, Ken George (1986) proposed a reform of both spelling and pronunciation; George's version came to be called Common Cornish. Richard Gendall advocated a more radically different system, which has been named *Modern Cornish* (Gendall 1991a, 1991b). Note that the unhappiness with Unified Cornish is not universal; Williams (2000), argues that, although Nance's version requires some revision, it should not be completely replaced, as it is "the most

secure basis” for a standardized Cornish writing system. Rejecting Gendall’s *Modern Cornish*, Williams advocates a revised form of Nance’s original proposal, or *Unified Cornish Revised*.

This aspect of Cornish exemplifies some of the shortcomings of a lack of agreement about a standard as it is being created. Early work on Cornish was done more by scholars for scholars; in the early 1900s we cannot speak of a revitalization movement with a body of language learners and potential speakers who contributed to the reconstruction of spoken Cornish. Since that time, there have been individual proposals for revisions or differing systems, all of which have sparked debate among proponents of one orthography over another. It is unclear that these debates have led to any kind of consensus. Despite a general agreement that a single standard is desirable, the result of multiple reconstructions is three systems for one language with an estimated hundred fluent speakers (Morgan 2003).

Nonetheless, the revitalization program has made remarkable progress. Today, language policy has helped in part to support Cornish. In a letter dated 11 March 2003, the United Kingdom declared its recognition that Cornish meets the definition of a regional or minority language for the purposes of Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (section 2.2.1), in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Charter.

At present, the Cornish revitalization program appears to have had great success. Cornish is currently taught in a number of schools; the Hayle Community School included Cornish instruction as part of the National Curriculum – a milestone, as it was the first school in the United Kingdom to do so (Morgan 2003). There are also evening classes, taught in universities and private homes, and a correspondence course was created in 1983 to help spread language instruction. The estimated total number of speakers is quite small, but there is a total of approximately 3,500 people with knowledge of Cornish; of this total number, some 100 are fluent speakers and 500 use it on a regular basis (Morgan 2003). This is a remarkable comeback for a language which had been completely lost as a spoken language.

The Cornish case illustrates a number of the different variables we have presented in this chapter. First is the issue of policy. Historically the change in religious policy, a decision which may not have been directly intended to have an impact on language use, unarguably facilitated the spread of English at the expense of Cornish. More recently, a positive change in policy, recognition of Cornish as a minority or regional language in accordance with the European Charter, has translated into a tremendous boost for morale and self-esteem for Cornish revitalization. It is

unclear, however, if this change has meant an actual change in allocation of resources, or is more a recognition of the validity of Cornish, which is itself an achievement of what should be understood as a Cornish reclamation movement. On another level, some of the difficulties the movement itself faces stem from the fact that there are competing standard varieties, and both confusion and dissent over which to use. Whether this could have been avoided may be debatable, but the present situation at least in part results from a lack of widespread community engagement in, and commitment to, the development of any one of these varieties. That said, the accomplishments of the movement to date are remarkable, with increasing numbers of people involved.

5 Establishing appropriate goals

Before beginning a language revitalization program, we advocate a full assessment of needs and resources. A community must be realistic about what it wants to achieve and what it can achieve with language revitalization. Some of the current language programs are “successful” because the communities involved have identified appropriate goals for their programs. The Cornish language program is not, for example, trying to create a community of speakers who no longer speak any English, but rather aims to have some people speak a bit of Cornish; note that activists in this program regularly report how many people (roughly 3,500) *know some Cornish*, distinguishing between this group and those who *use* Cornish, and those who are *fluent* in Cornish. Part of the success has come from having realistic goals.

A critical piece of establishing appropriate goals is a clear articulation of what community members want to do with their language, along with an honest assessment of the attitudes, beliefs, and other obstacles that may prevent them from achieving their goals. This is what Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998:62–3) call “prior ideological clarification.” As they point out, the politically and emotionally correct answer to the question of whether people want to preserve or revitalize their language and culture is invariably yes, although unspoken but deep doubts, fears, and anxieties about traditional language and culture may actually mean that people are not willing to become personally involved. Instead, they may believe that others can “save” the language for them. Yet any revitalization program requires an ongoing personal commitment from at least a large percentage of community members.

Realistic goals can only be set by a frank assessment of the resources and possibilities of a community has, the obstacles it may face, and the amount of time and energy community members are willing and able to bring to

language revitalization. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998) discuss many of the ways in which communities can underestimate potential problems and the levels of commitment needed to achieve their goals. These include unrealistic expectations; a passive attitude which (perhaps even subconsciously) finds revitalization to be a job for someone else, resting on the assumption that other people will take over the task; failure to accept responsibility for language use; and lack of recognition of the time and effort needed to learn or teach what has become a foreign language. Issues of ownership about a language are often central, and it is reasonable and even appropriate for communities to worry about misuse appropriation, and desecration of their linguistic and cultural heritage. Yet, as the Dauenhauers point out, “ownership is only half of the traditional equation; the other half is stewardship and transmission to the next generation and the grandchildren” (1998:91). Communities need to find a way for their traditions to survive in the modern world.

Language revitalization is hard work. Any success comes only with a long-term, sustained effort, involving many parties. Critically, it requires a dedicated sense of collaboration, a willingness to put aside disagreements (about goals, spelling, “correct” speech, appropriate domains for language use, etc.) so as to reach consensus and work toward achieving these goals.