1 Standardising Minority Languages

Reinventing Peripheral Languages in the 21st Century

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1. Introduction

This book addresses a crucial, yet often overlooked dimension of minority language standardisation, namely, how social actors engage with, support, alter, resist and even reject standardisation processes. We look at standardisation processes as a political domain where social actors use standards as semiotic resources for articulating discourses on society. The chapters in this volume are therefore concerned first and foremost with social actors, their ideologies and practices, rather than with language *per se*. By considering the perspectives and actions of people who participate in or are affected by minority language politics, this volume aims to provide a comparative and nuanced analysis of the complexity and tensions inherent in minority language standardisation processes. Echoing Fasold (1984), this involves a shift in focus from a sociolinguistics of language to a sociolinguistics of people.

Comparatively little work exists on how individuals engage with standardisation and language standards in minority or minoritised contexts. In this introduction, we provide an overview of ongoing debates about standardisation processes, highlighting how social actors involved in these processes often find themselves at odds with conflicting priorities. On the one hand, standardisation remains a potent way of doing or inventing language, of producing languages as bounded, discrete entities and as social institutions and subsequently increasing the social status of those who use them. On the other hand, standardisation is inherently a limitation of diversity (Milroy and Milroy 1999) and a way to harness and act upon linguistic, that is to say, social differences. Promoting language standards is thus both a way for validating groups and for limiting group-internal diversity. Considering that diversity is often the very *raison d'être* for minority language movements based on the claims that all ways of communicating are equally legitimate and that language diversity needs to be protected, this trade-off is at best contentious and at worst a Faustian bargain. Language advocates, and in some cases state or regional authorities, often view standards as emancipatory and empowering, a way to promote education and other forms of

civic communication through mother tongues and ensure better chances of equal achievement for minority groups. Yet, such processes require selecting particular forms over others; they generate and legitimise certain varieties of writing or speaking, as well as the structures and institutions that sustain their diffusion. This potentially establishes linguistic standards that speakers themselves cannot meet, together with new hierarchies that give advantage to some speakers over others. Consequently, minority language speakers are potentially faced with a double stigma (Gal 2006): their language continues to hold lower prestige and to fall short when measured against official national languages, and they may also be considered inadequate when measured against the standardised version of the minority language. Paradoxically, standards for minority languages may come to be perceived by social actors as lacking both the authority and anonymity of a national language as well as the authenticity or the capacity to index locality often ascribed to minority languages (Woolard 2008).

How do social actors experience and negotiate these predicaments? Why are standards for minoritised languages sometimes sought after and praised and at other times vehemently contested and rejected? What are the consequences of standardisation projects for different people? It is these questions that this volume considers through case studies of minority language standardisation from around the world. The authors, who come from very different backgrounds with respect to involvement in standardisation processes, draw on ethnographic, historical and discourse data in order to examine standardisation projects in diverse settings. In bringing these case studies and analyses together, we aim to provide both empirical and conceptual insights into minority language standardisation. This volume highlights the role of social actors in the creation and negotiation of standards, and the diversity of marginalised or peripheral speech communities in which standardisation efforts occur. Focusing on ground-level processes and participants allows us to illuminate ways in which projects to standardise minoritised languages echo, reinvent, and at times subvert the characteristics of language standardisation established since the 18th century. Beginning with a reflection on language standardisation from a historical perspective (section 2), we then define our focus on minority/ minoritised language communities and discuss the nature of standardisation projects in these settings in particular (section 3). We conclude with an overview of the volume (section 4).

2.   On the Importance of Standardising Language

Language standards have become naturalised and widely accepted as the normal forms of dominant European languages. Processes akin to standardisation have existed in Europe and elsewhere in the world since at least the advent of literary language in Ancient Greece (see Colvin 2009). Koines, norms, standards, literary languages and the advent of grammatisation

(Auroux 1995) all correspond to attempts at harnessing language use and imposing particular views on speech. In this section, we wish to unravel some of the threads that lead to standardisation, and argue that modern processes of standardisation since the 18th century differ markedly from previous processes. While standards are closely related to other collective projects, we suggest that the standardisation processes which have been occurring in the 20th and 21st centuries have roots which can be traced to a particular place and a particular moment in time: the onset of the modern era in Europe and in its early colonies in the Americas. Current standardisation projects, from this perspective, are descended from the 17th and 18th century philosophical projects which aimed at decontextualising language and at instituting a democratic, universally accessible public space.

2.1   Defining Standardisation

First, let us start with a broad definition of standardisation. Following Charles Ferguson (1996 [1988], 189),

> standardisation is the process of one variety of a language becoming widely accepted throughout the speech community as a supradialectal norm—the "best" form of the language—rated above regional and social dialects, although these may be felt to be appropriate in some domains.

This definition equates the standard form of a language with a linguistic norm, an accepted set of rules among a group of people who may view themselves as belonging to a unified language community—something which exists and has existed in every speech community (see, for example, Bloomfield 1927). This, Ferguson continues, links standardisation with language spread and is associated with three tendencies: koineisation ('the reduction of dialect differences'), variety shifting (the association of a group's acts of identity with the supradialectal norm) and classicisation ('the adoption of features considered to belong to an earlier prestige norm') (Ferguson 1996). From this perspective, a wealth of historical processes could be subsumed under the label of standardisation, and only the intensification of such collective undertakings would mark recent centuries as different from previous eras. While the term 'Standard language' has been dated to the 18th and 19th centuries (Crowley 2003), standardisation could be seen as a form of institutionalisation, i.e. the establishment of a norm by a source of power, to serve wider diffusion of ideas or government. A broad definition of standards, such as the one above, could include Koines in classical Greece, as well as the forms of Greek devised for teaching the language in Egypt and Rome for instance. Chancery languages in the Late Middle Ages, in what was to become the Netherlands, in England, or in France, can similarly be viewed as precursors to standard languages (Burke

2004; Lodge 1993). Literary languages also bear much resemblance to what we call standards, and attempts at creating prestigious literary varieties can be traced to Dante in Italy, Chaucer in England, Henrysoun in Scotland, the Pléiade in France or the Languedoc and Provence vernacular literary revivals in the 17th century, as well as other literary movements in Europe, Asia or the Americas. Translations of the Bible into German (1522), Dutch (1526), English (1526 for Tyndale's edition) or, later, Welsh (1588) and other minoritised languages[1] may also be included under this label. Finally, grammatisation, the movement to produce dictionaries and grammars for European vernaculars on the model of Greek and Latin initiated during the Renaissance (Auroux 1995), also bears much resemblance to processes of standardisation, as do the various projects of orthographic regularisation which became common in Europe and elsewhere after the 17th century.

Yet, if the term 'standardisation' can be used to describe all such trends, how useful is it compared to other notions such as 'linguistic norms' or 'literary language'? How then to capture the unique developments linked with the promotion of writing in the vernaculars after the Renaissance, the rise of nation-states and colonial and postcolonial language policy? Is the Standard French of the *Académie Française*, for example, a social construct that differs markedly from Koineised Greek, and if so, how? This book adopts the point of view that standardisation is different in nature from these previous language-related projects. We argue that standardisation constitutes an outcome as well as one of the main defining features of modernity, beginning between the 17th and the 18th centuries in Europe. Social actors who participate in the standard language regimes of contemporary nation-states are engaging in a social project that is distinct from earlier projects in both its focus and its reach, as examined below.

2.2   Standardisation as Decontextualisation: A Historical Perspective

From our perspective, standard languages are the product of three intersecting processes. First, the philosophical project of modernity paved the way for the dominance of standards by associating correct forms of language with decontextualised, apparently neutral and indexical-free forms of language (see Gal 2006, this volume). Second, standardisation matured hand-in-hand with the subsequent formation of nation-states, which developed standards for particular political projects involving the creation of an apparently neutral public sphere and the reproduction of behavioural norms within that sphere. Third, colonisation exported this philosophical and political model worldwide and created a need for teachable forms of European languages.

Modernity is a historical period with origins in the early 17th century. Understood as a period of radical transformations, philosophically, scientifically and politically, and broadly defined by the quest for certainty in knowledge, modernity can be understood as Europe's response to 30 years

of religious wars after the division of Christendom between Catholics and Protestants (Greengrass 2014). Politically, modernity is closely connected with the outcome of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), a series of treaties which marked the end of hostilities, the long-term weakening of the Holy Roman Empire (contemporary Germany) and the rise of nation-states as the system that would ensure stability on the continent (Toulmin 1990).

Language standards were not explicitly crafted at this particular time, however. Rather, language standardisation derives from a scientific, taxonomic project which held that in order to achieve certain, definitive knowledge, 'a unique, decontextualised view of nature must be developed' (Slaughter 1982, 85). In linguistic terms, this translated into a deep distrust of language (Bauman and Briggs 2003) and into projects to invent radically decontextualised and supposedly universal languages (Slaughter 1982). In the words of historian Stephen Toulmin, 'one aim of 17th-century philosophers was to frame all their questions in terms that rendered them *independent of context*' (1990, 21). The changes which philosophers such as Locke, Hume or Kant made possible all revolve around the idea that in order to discuss science, and later public life, language must be purely denotational or referential and should break free from indexicals—of place or of social class in particular. Cosmopolitanism in Germany, England or Scotland—another hallmark of modernity—influenced the rejection of parochial allegiances and the emergence of a special type of language that new bourgeois public spheres demanded for the exercise of polite conversation (Habermas 1991). Cosmopolitanism and decontextualisation emphasise the need for a neutral, i.e. purely referential medium of communication available to all for the conduct of common affairs and the government of the nation, thus, in principle, affording to all who can acquire such a medium the (at least theoretical) possibility to take part without the burdensome interference of social or geographic provenance. This, we argue, is also the point to which standard languages can be traced back (see also Gal this volume).

Viewing language standards as an outcome of modernity allows us to emphasise one of the main defining characteristics of such linguistic modalities: that they are meant to represent a form of decontextualised, neutral, widely accessible and learnable language—a voice from nowhere, as Susan Gal and Kathryn Woolard have written (1995), drawing on Thomas Nagel's (1986) notion of the 'view from nowhere'. This points to the intimate connection between standard language and differentiated social spheres, such as the notion of public and private spheres as defined from the 18th century onwards in Europe. This laid the groundwork for considerations about which languages should be used to do science, politics and public life. It was in this context, for example, that Hume denounced in 1752 the use of Scotticisms among his fellow countrymen as unfit for polite conversation,[2] thus linking language with the formation of the new public sphere of Enlightenment Europe.

It should finally be emphasised that standard languages are, from a historical perspective, primarily written languages. As Mary Slaughter (1982) explains, in the same way that projects of invented, universal languages were primarily written ones (which associated one sign with one notion thought to be universal), standard languages initially stem from a reflection on written language. The written medium came to be part of the definition of legitimate knowledge, and of how this knowledge should be conveyed. This element has proven crucial in minority language movements—to the point that Robert Lafont, an Occitan sociolinguist and a prominent minority language advocate from the 1950s to the early 2000s, has referred to the mystique of the written word as pertaining to the 'revivalist ideology of the redemptive text'[3] (Lafont 1997, 117). The origins of standards in the written word are emphasised by John Joseph (1987), and the importance of the written medium is also apparent in the chapters presented in this book.

While the initial philosophical impetus for decontextualised and neutral language is central to the logic of standards, it is another one of the features we mentioned at the onset of this section which ensured the dominance of standardisation regimes; namely the advent of nation-states and their reliance on centralised administrations and public spaces as their mode of political functioning. The current regime of nation-states is also one of the consequences of the Peace of Westphalia (Toulmin 1990) and thus a product of the same modern period as the ideas on language outlined above. Standard languages, seen as ideal and neutral ways to take part in public life without the burden of indexicals of origins, in turn became closely connected with nation-states. Particularly after the French Revolution, the subsequent politics of language sought to eradicate other languages in France (Certeau, Julia, and Revel 1975) and to not only equate polity and nation (Gellner 1983), but also to include language in the equation. This model, subsequently formalised by philosophers such as Condillac in France or Herder in Germany, was extolled during the 1848 Springtime of Nations and exported worldwide through colonisation or cultural influence in the Americas, Africa and other European colonies.

The movement towards standardisation was bolstered through the rise of centralised governments and administration as well as compulsory education and the creation of unified economic and cultural markets, to use Bourdieu's (1977) terminology. The establishment of national language academies (in France, and later in Spain and elsewhere) also played a central role in amplifying purist and prescriptivist ideals and in naturalising the presence of a top-down authority over language practices, particularly in relation to writing. The initial constitution of languages under a standardisation regime required that inhabitants of a given nation-state align with the newly formed standards (Anderson 2006), creating linguistic hierarchies along one major fault line: on the one hand, there would be authorised languages, on the other hand, illicit dialects, accents and patois.[4] Standard languages are thus linked with the active creation of majorities and social

legitimacy. Importantly, however, they should not merely be viewed as the hallmark of majority groups: they also constitute them. In other words, standardisation is always part of a *groupness* project (Brubaker 2002), a project to bring a group into being along lines which are defined with the help of a universalised conception of correct communication and behaviour. The development of structural linguistics in the early 20th century consecrated the standard languages that had been developed in the previous century as the form of language *par excellence* (Milroy 2001; Armstrong and Mackenzie 2013) and subsequently contributed to the expansion of this linguistic and political regime worldwide. This regime has fostered the view of language as an abstract entity, autonomous from the social actors who speak it and the contexts in which it is spoken. Major European languages now boast long histories of codification and standardisation, to the point where those language planning processes, their outcomes and many of the actors involved in them have become opaque; standards are thus generally accepted by speakers and learners alike as the inherently correct form of a given language, and the authority of the standard goes unquestioned.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, so-called minority or minoritised languages—forms of communication which were largely excluded from institutionalised processes of codification and standardisation in earlier eras, as discussed in section 3—are increasingly engaging with the philosophical and political regime of standardisation. This book addresses the tensions that are born of the impetus to standardise minoritised languages in the early 21st century. We seek to denaturalise and re-contextualise language standardisation by foregrounding the role of social actors in the development and use of language standards and by examining ongoing standardisation projects in minority language communities in the global periphery. What are social actors attempting to achieve through contemporary projects to standardise forms of communication which were previously outside the sphere of authorised 'language'? Do minority standardisation projects simply reproduce the linguistic regimes of modernity and nation-states within their own contexts? What is at stake in these processes, for whom? The following section takes up these questions, following the story of language standardisation into the 21st century and questioning its future.

3.   Minoritised/Minority Language Standardisation Projects

As projects to create written and/or spoken standards for national and colonial languages in support of the universalising logic of modernity have advanced, so has the delegitimisation of many other ways of speaking and communicating. Whether classified as patois, dialects or other pejorative terms, there are countless speech communities whose communication practices have not been sanctioned by legitimate authorities within the dominant linguistic market, and have often been expressly excluded. Recognising the

spoken and written communication practices of certain social actors as standard has inversely placed many other actors and their practices in a position of lesser status. It is these social actors and groups who have been marginalised along linguistic lines that we wish to focus on here.

3.1 Minority and Minoritised Language Groups

In this volume, we refer to linguistically marginalised social actors as members of *minority* or *minoritised* language communities and, by way of consequence, their communication practices as minority or minoritised languages. These terms are problematic, yet so are all of the labels which seek to link linguistic forms with groups—whether in terms of minorities or majorities, autochthonous or alien, indigenous or colonial, native or new, vital or endangered. Sociology and political sciences have long grappled with the question of minority groups, and in a seminal paper, Louis Wirth (1945) characterised minority groups both as being cast aside by a dominant group for being separate or different (in terms of customs, language or institutions) and as being viewed as different by its own members with respect to that same dominant group. But more importantly perhaps, it should be pointed out that the very notion of a minority group is itself a product of the Enlightenment phase of modernity (Appadurai 2006) and of later 19th-century Romanticism and nationalism (Anderson 2006). The idea of a minority group, created at the same time as the idea of a majority group, comes hand in hand with the birth of modern nation-states, and with a sense of enumeration (*ibid.*). To use the term 'minority' uncritically, then, is to endorse, or at least use, a term that is historically recent and contingent.

The term minoritised, on the other hand, reflects the understanding that minority status is neither inherent nor fixed. It implies not only that 'minorities' are forged out of 'majorities', but also that certain groupness projects entail the creation of a marginalised collective 'Other'. Finally, and most importantly, it emphasises the processual and constructed nature of group categorisation as 'a minority' (Léglise and Alby 2006). The communities and practices examined in this volume are minoritised through political and social dynamics across space and time. The authors in this volume use the terms minority and minoritised interchangeably, always with recognition of the constructed and negotiated nature of this label. In other words, minority or minoritised language is not used as a term based solely on the number of speakers, amount of territory or frequency of use; rather, dominance or minority status is attributed on the social positioning of groups within a hierarchical social structure (Patrick 2012). Thus, the concept of minority or minoritised language is an expression of relations among groups and not an inherent or essential quality of a language or group (Cronin 1995; Pietikainen, Huss, Laihiala-Kankainen, Aikio-Puoskari and Lane 2010).

The languages and communities examined by the contributors to this volume have all fared poorly in nation-state linguistic markets. The kinds

and degree of marginalisation experienced by speakers vary across contexts, with exclusion of their language from schooling, the judicial system and other prestigious social settings being a common experience. The dynamics of political power which contribute to the minoritisation of individuals, social groups and their communication practices range from the homogenising projects of nation-states to the displacement and extraction projects of colonial (and, more recently, corporate) regimes. While some minority language speakers may not be minoritised in all aspects of social life due to bilingualism and shared nationality (such as the Limburgers in the Netherlands described by Camps, this volume), others are marginalised due to racism and structural prejudices (such as the isiXhosa speakers described by Deumert and Mabandla, this volume). Each case is shaped by a unique history and constellation of factors; however, there are common minoritising influences across the contexts we examine. Some communities have come to be demographic minorities on the periphery of national territories due to the tracing of political borders, such as the Finnic language Kven in northern Norway (see Lane, this volume), the Basque bisected by the Spanish-French frontier (see Urla, Amorrortu, Ortega and Goirigolzarri, this volume) or the Limburgians in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany (See Camps, this volume; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013 for a discussion on peripheral multilingualism). In contrast, communities situated in colonially constructed nations are not always geographically peripheral nor a numerical minority. However, they are routinely excluded from official and prestigious social spaces, and their ways of communicating are marginalised relative to colonial languages, as exemplified in the cases of Manding across West Africa (see Donaldson, this volume), isiXhosa in South Africa (see Deumert and Mabandla, this volume) or even perhaps of Scots speakers in Scotland (see Costa, this volume). These communities can be considered stateless nations, in that there is no political unit which aligns with their community boundaries. Colonised speech communities often experience a loss of territory and weakened political autonomy, such as the Inuit in the Canadian Arctic (see Patrick, Murasugi and Palluq-Cloutier, this volume) and the Isthmus Zapotec in Mexico (see De Korne, this volume). By bringing together such diverse case studies, we aim to illuminate some of these common conditions which shape minority language groups or communities.

One of the features common among minoritised language communities is that their social status is subject to negotiation and flux. While speakers of national languages experience relative stability in the status of their communication practices, shifting and contested status is a defining feature of minoritised speech communities. The delegitimising influences of national and colonial language policies and discourses are not just a matter of history; rather, they are perpetuated and continue to actively construct minorities in many parts of the world (Haque and Patrick 2015; May 2001; Tollefson 1991). At the same time, policies and discourses which legitimise minoritised languages have increased internationally, nationally, and locally. In the

wake of World War II, decolonial processes and international human rights conventions led to social movements foregrounding cultural recognition, including linguistic rights in various parts of the world (Lane and Makihara 2017; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994; UNESCO 1953). This trend was later appropriated in so-called identity politics after the 1980s—often implemented in connection with neoliberal policies (Boccara 2011; Michaels 2006; Speed 2005). Although the outcomes of policies of identity-based recognition are widely and justifiably critiqued (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; García 2005; Hale 2005), the overall trend in policy from international to local scales has been to provide increasing recognition and rights to minoritised groups. Internationally, mechanisms such as the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) have been ratified by many nation-states and have increased recognition for minorities. The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) was drafted and backed by several international NGOs, although it has not been ratified by any political authorities. On the European regional scale, the Council of Europe created the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages in 1992, which has been ratified by 25 countries to date. On a national scale, some countries have implemented their own policies of recognition such as the Sami Language Act in Norway (1987), the post-apartheid South African constitution (1996) and the Mexican Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2003), among many others. On a local scale, members of minoritised communities have engaged in efforts to gain improved status for themselves and their social and linguistic practices, both independently and in conjunction with regional, national, and international policies. These efforts have taken different forms, from promoting literature, song and language aesthetics (Hornberger 1996; Williams and Stroud 2013), to attempts at establishing locally controlled education (Alexander 2005; Hinton 2013; National Indian Brotherhood 1972) and negotiation of territory and resources (Muehlebach 2001; Muehlmann 2009).

3.2   How Similar Are Standardisation Processes Across Contexts?

Language-related projects feature prominently among minority recognition initiatives, both in policy documents and local practices. As noted above, branding a group's communication practices as less-than-language is part and parcel of the marginalisation of a group relative to others who speak authorised languages. Abolishing the 'dialect' label and ushering in a new 'language' label is a key step in shifting the status of a language and potentially those who use it, as illustrated in many cases in this volume (see Camps; Costa; Lane, this volume). However, minoritised communities do not have to go to the lengths of recruiting an army and a navy to stand behind their dialect

(following the classic formulation differentiating dialect from language). More subtle sources of manipulative force have also been up to the task in recent decades. A prescriptive standard, frequently in conjunction with some degree of legal recognition, is often the weapon of choice in struggles to resist minority status and marginalisation. Standardisation is therefore the locus of various struggles over classifications (Bourdieu 1980) in which different sets of interests are played out from diverse sectors of society. Be it in the case of Evenki, Galician or Inuit languages, standardisation is regularly viewed by those who promote it as a way to legitimise their linguistic claims *vis à vis* now-dominant languages. They are often presented as rationalising, pragmatic projects centred on making communication more efficacious. In this respect, they remain aligned with modern, nationalist standardising projects and have the potential to create new minoritised groups while attempting to redraw the boundaries of linguistic legitimacy.

Crucially, however, we argue that minoritised language standardisation efforts differ in important ways from national language standardisation projects. Just as nation-state standards differed from the literary languages, koines and other normative practices that came before them, the minority language standards that have been emerging in an era characterised by the politics of cultural recognition, neoliberal economic exchange and global communication flows present us with new features and concerns. Urla, Amorrortu, Ortega and Goirigolzarri (this volume) critique what they term the 'reproduction thesis': the tendency of scholars to view minority language movements as reproducing or echoing the 'dominant language ideology, and inadvertently, the inequalities and hierarchies these values entail' (43). While noting the similarities across standardisation movements, Gal (this volume) likewise argues that minority standardisation movements do not always reproduce patterns of dominant languages, but have the potential to 're-signify, reindexicalize, re-imagine' hegemonic discourses (238). This volume responds to the need for greater attention to social actors (Lane 2015) and a more nuanced approach to minority language standardisation movements, as called for by Urla *et al* (this volume).

Here, we wish to point out three of the significant ways in which efforts to standardise minoritised languages differ from national language standardisation projects and which are illuminated in greater detail in the chapters that follow. First, the low, yet potentially fluctuating social status of minoritised communities sets minority language standardisation projects apart from the processes that resulted in standardised national languages. Although in some cases minority language movements may echo nationalist discourses, as various scholars have argued (Woolard 2016; Thiesse 2002), the status of the social actors involved and the goals of these movements are often at odds with the dominant linguistic hierarchy. While the developers of national languages established norms concurrently with the forging of political territories and bolstered by discourses of modernity, the developers of minority language standards are typically acting within established

political jurisdictions and in societies which continue to view their language and culture through deficit lenses. Proponents of minoritised languages are arguing to change a hierarchy that has already been established on absolute terms by national standard regimes. The marginalised status as a point of departure creates a new motivation for standardisation (that of improving the status of a mistreated group) and new challenges (such as shifting long-standing prejudices and practices).

Second, unlike dominant state languages, the stages through which minority language standardisation is achieved are a contemporary occurrence, documented, accessible and visible. As such, this impedes (or complicates) the naturalisation processes that rendered dominant language standards unquestionable (Woolard 2008). Minority language standards are consequently subject to negotiation, debate, contestation and appropriation by various types of social actors in very diverse circumstances. In addition to this, current processes of standardisation occur within new historical conditions which generate new sets of tensions with respect to language (Heller 2010) and in which states no longer have a monopoly over the production of legitimate knowledge (Duchêne and Heller 2012). Consequently perhaps, while previous tensions emerging from language revival movements from the 19th century onward involved negotiating authority with respect to authenticity, rootedness and language rights, new sets of tensions have emerged in late modern societies given the rise of new types of linguistic markets and new roles for language(s): as marketable competences on the one hand, and as repositories of commodifiable authenticity on the other (Flores 2013; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). In this new regime, languages may still depend on previous indexical connections with traditional forms of authenticity, but in terms of practice, they no longer necessarily rely on active communities of speakers. In other words, minority language users are not necessarily speakers: they may only depend on written forms in order to access niche markets for instance.

Third, a further difference is in the relation of minoritised languages to other languages. Under the homogenising logic of state languages, the users of standard national languages were intended to be (or become) monolingual. Monolingual individuals came to be understood as the norm, and nation-states were often constructed and based on the idea of one language (Hobsbawm 1990; Tabouret-Keller 2011). While such ideas have been held with respect to minoritised language groups (in particular in Catalan sociolinguistics, where bilingualism was viewed as a myth serving the progress of Castilian monolingualism—see Aracil 1982), such communities are often familiar with multilingualism and view diversity positively, as an asset. In fact, sustaining this diversity is often an argument to legitimise their enterprise. A desire for a pure, monoglossic norm may emerge in minoritised language communities as it has in national ones (Dorian 1994), but it does not (or cannot) translate into the same monolingual outcome. Acceptance of pluralism and/or ambiguity by actors participating

in minority standardisation projects is attested in many of the cases in this volume. Deumert and Mabandla (this volume) argue that there is evidence of 'a decolonial future for standard languages, i.e. a future in which a diversity of voices rather than a monolithic norm is the way in which we imagine the standard language' (218). Rather than being a conflict which is resolved in order to be erased, the diversity within minority speech communities appears to be a tenacious and perhaps essential feature.

3.3   *Minority Language Standardisation as Social Action*

Within the academic community, there are several disciplines which have contributed to and/ or investigated the phenomena of minority language standardisation, including linguistics, anthropology and language policy and planning. The documentation and description projects of linguists and anthropologists laid the groundwork for the recognition and labeling of certain groups and linked them with named languages (Calvet 1974; Errington 2001). Projects of linguistic analysis or translation of religious texts led to the creation of written norms in many contexts, as illustrated in several chapters in this volume (see De Korne; Deumert and Mabandla; Patrick *et al.*, this volume). These standards and classifications were not typically adopted by a majority of the population nor given official status, however.

   The field which has given most attention to the social realities of language standardisation is language policy and planning (LPP). A discipline which emerged in the post-World War II reconstruction era (Fishman, Ferguson, and Dasgupta 1968), LPP scholarship and practice has been concerned primarily with a macro-level focus on nation-states, particularly the new postcolonial states. It was in this context that Einar Haugen (1966) devised his four-stage model for the implementation of standardisation, from selection of norm to codification, elaboration and acceptance. The enduring influence of Haugen and other classificatory models of standardisation can be seen in Coupland and Kristiansen (2011) and recent issues of the journal *Sociolinguistica* (2015; 2016; see Darquennes and Vandenbussche 2015). As top-down policies and plans have failed to result in the desired behavioural changes, the field of LPP has begun to give greater attention the study of local actors as bottom-up policy makers (Ricento and Hornberger 1996; Canagarajah 2005). The essential work of Milroy and Milroy (1999) presented standardisation primarily as an ideology, or perhaps an idea which can only ever be attained in writing. Further, as they contend, '[t]he only fully standardised language is a dead language' (1999, 22). Standardisation, in this perspective, should be viewed as an open-ended project rather than as a finished process to be evaluated. Numerous scholars have contributed valuable case studies and insights on how this project is being carried out in different contexts (Deumert and Vandenbussche 2003; Gal and Woolard 2001; Jaffe 2000; Rosa 2016; Urla 2012; Milroy 2001).

This book contributes to this trend, shifting focus from macro-level processes of standardisation to social actors and to how language policy is appropriated, negotiated and enacted on the ground. Whether the aim is standardisation of linguistic form or content, design of education practices or establishing official status—*corpus*, *acquisition* and *status* planning, respectively, in the classic formulation by Kloss (1969) and Cooper (1989)—the nature and result of language politics are co-constructed not only by politicians and recognised experts, but also inevitably by teachers, learners and everyday participants in a speech community. These participants range from local activists creating YouTube videos (see O'Rourke, this volume) or Facebook communities (see Costa, this volume), to regional language councils (see Lane; Patrick *et al.*, this volume), national bureaucrats (see Grenoble and Bulatova, this volume), foreign missionaries (see Deumert and Mabandla, this volume), and educators (see De Korne; Donaldson, this volume). Our approach to minority language standardisation is thus situated at the crossroads between critical sociolinguistics (Martin-Jones and Gardner 2012), in particular in the present conditions of modernity and globalisation (Blommaert 2010; Heller 2011) and the ethnography of language policy (Gal and Woolard 2001; Hornberger and Johnson 2011; Urla 1993).

Through the comparative and historicised analyses of minority standardisation movements compiled here, we aim to move beyond the simplistic 'reproduction thesis' that Urla *et al.* (this volume) critique and to offer new insights into the specificities of minority standardisation movements. In addition to this contextualised, comparative approach, another key way in which this volume purports to explore the dynamics of minoritised language standardisation is through careful consideration of the social actors involved. While large-scale political and economic trends have played a decisive role in the creation of minoritised language communities, this volume seeks to shift our gaze towards the social actors who are central to these structural trends. The diverse types of social actors involved in standardisation projects have differing relations to the languages they engage with. While some have a high degree of competence and/or speak these languages daily, others have limited communicative competence or do not speak the language at all. Participation is marked by negotiation and tension, not just between minority and majority groups, but also within minoritised groups. In this respect, we consider individual social actors not as isolated and autonomous, but rather as embedded in sets of relations within different fields they seek to influence, modify or contest through their practices. Standards contribute to shaping frames of action, and consequently enable and constrain, emancipate and subject, include but also, as a result, exclude; hence, the scope and role of agency is central when investigating (minority) language standardisation. In considering the tensions of minority standardisation projects—between the promotion of diversity in line with a human rights agenda and the creation of norms reminiscent of nationalist agendas—the practices and perspectives of social actors are of immense

importance. The actions, influences and participation of people are at the heart of any language political project, and they demand even greater attention in the consideration of projects which potentially aim to address social inequalities.

4.   Overview of the Volume

How are social actors engaging in minoritised language standardisation projects under different circumstances around the globe? We wish to answer the call put forward by Ricento (2000) when he emphasised that the role of individuals and their agency is one of the unanswered questions within language policy research, and hence, we ask: who engages or does not engage in these processes and who is affected by them? What is at stake and for whom? Through this approach, we align with critical sociolinguistic endeavours to 'rethink language in the contemporary world [. . .] in order to provide alternative ways forward' (Makoni and Pennycook 2007, 3). Our key analytical units are the actual social actors and the complexity of the social fabric in which the invention of standard languages occurs. In that respect, the chapters in this book are not so much concerned with languages themselves as with the social processes that reshape so-called marginal or peripheral minority-language-speaking communities. We aim to analyse the multiple dimensions of minority language standardisation, highlighting the multifaceted political processes subsumed under this appellation and how these processes are created and engaged in by social actors.

The authors in this volume offer insights drawn from ethnographic, interview, multimedia and survey data and, in some cases, their personal experiences participating in language standardisation projects as linguists, planners and/or community stakeholders. The language communities profiled in these chapters vary extensively in terms of geography, demographics and historical trajectories. They have different degrees of political recognition and have been engaged in standardisation projects for differing amounts of time. Above all, it is the relative marginalisation and minorisation of the speech communities profiled in this volume, rather than any official status as a minority language community that motivates the examination of these diverse social groups as they engage in standardisation projects.

In every context, the initiative to standardise a minoritised language is neither straightforward nor universally embraced; while some social actors promote these processes, others inevitably critique and resist them. None of the cases examined here show universalisation or what might be considered an optimal implementation of the standard, regardless of whether the standard in question is five years or five decades old. Rather than assume that all minority language standardisation efforts are failures (as one might if taking national standard languages as a gauge), we argue that ongoing contestation and diversity of practices are hallmarks of such projects. As Urla *et al.* (this volume) point out, social actors in minority standardisation settings

may have a dual stance in relation to standards, whereby they appropriate them for some purposes, yet problematise them for others. The practices and positionings of social actors in all the cases explored here are complex, showing that in addition to an instrumental relation to the standard (one of acceptance or rejection, use or non-use), they additionally associate the standard (and its semiotic components) with open-ended projects of identity and groupness, as discussed above.

Jacqueline Urla, Estibaliz Amorrortu, Ane Ortega and Jone Goirigolzarri open this volume by considering the engagement of new speakers in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain. They discuss the attitudes of new speakers towards the standard variety, analysing the results of focus groups and interviews to show that the standard holds prestige, yet has not delegitimised the vernacular as the dominant logic of standardisation would predict. They critique the widespread assumption held by many scholars that minority standardisation replicates the same kinds of social relations as national language standardisation and call for a more nuanced understanding of what is occurring in contexts such as the Basque community. The authors suggest that the political praxis of the Basque promotion movement, which has been characterised by participation and reflexivity, has influenced the kind of non-hegemonic, yet positive uptake that has occurred in this setting. The processes through which the language promotion movement is carried out are thus highlighted as an area which activists would do well to consider.

James Costa then examines the case of Scots, a language which at first glance appears to reject standardisation, both in principle and in practice. Through a mix of traditional and online ethnography, he illustrates moments when social actors challenge the notion that Scots is a free-for-all form of expression and the response they receive from other members of the speech community. Despite the absence of an official standard, he points out that there is an implicit writing norm which some members of the Scots community adhere to and defend. In a context where the dominant national language establishes standardisation as the norm, he questions whether lack of an explicit standard may in fact, despite the emancipatory potential of the idea, impede the way speakers may access the public sphere.

Limburgish in the Netherlands is another example of a language whose status has risen through protection under European policies of recognition. Formerly viewed as a dialect of Dutch, Diana Camps examines the discourses and practices which legitimate Limburgish as a language in its own right. Beginning with a document analysis of protection policies under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, she notes the role that discourses of heritage play in the legitimation of Limburgish at international and national levels. At the local level of a language classroom, Camps draws on observation data to examine how a teacher of Limburgish legitimates himself and the language through appropriating the discourse of heritage and deploying a discourse of linguistic expertise.

Bernadette O'Rourke considers how different social actors are influenced by and negotiate the Galician language standard in northwest Spain. After over three decades of official status and use in government and education, there remain numerous debates around the use of standard Galician. The experiences and perspectives of people who have learned Galician in the home are contrasted with the perspectives of young adults and adolescents who learn Galician through formal schooling. Discussions about the standard offer insight into the ways in which social actors articulate their legitimacy and ownership as new or native speakers of Galician.

In her chapter, Pia Lane brings to the fore the material outcomes of standardisation through an analysis of the recent standardisation of Kven. Formerly considered a dialect of Finnish, Kven was recognised as a minority language in Norway in 2005, and as a consequence, a standardisation process was initiated. Drawing on her experiences as a new speaker of Kven and participation in Kven language planning, she approaches the standardisation of Kven as chains of social actions, suggesting that the material outcomes of standardisation may be understood as frozen actions. The chapter addresses the acceptance of the standard by analysing the reception of standardised texts by social actors when they read texts written in Kven.

Lenore Grenoble and Nadezhda Ja. Bulatova take a historical perspective on the standardisation of Evenki, a Tungusic language in Siberia. A fundamental division into the core and the periphery has been a defining characteristic of Soviet and Russian policies. Decisions about language policy and planning come from Moscow to other 'peripheral' regions, leaving little room for choices by social actors in the areas where languages are spoken. The top-down language standardisation process of the Soviet era has ongoing effects for the use and vitality of indigenous languages in the Russian Federation today. Grenoble and Bulatova consider actors without the right to self-determination, arguing that to ask whether indigenous people accept or resist (or even reject) a standardised variety is misleading, in that indigenous peoples in the Soviet Union were not included in decision-making processes.

Elsewhere in the Arctic, Donna Patrick, Kumiko Murasugi and Jeela Palluq-Cloutier discuss the standardisation of Inuit languages in Canada, where competing orthographies linked back to complex histories and regional variation are present. They examine historical documents and draw on personal experience in recent language planning events and processes to describe these histories. They highlight the importance of local, Inuit-speaking actors in the establishment of a socially-acceptable standard now and in the future. Although past standardisation attempts had disappointing outcomes, the interest in a trans-regional standard has remained strong, and new efforts are being made to develop one through a maximally participatory praxis.

Differing standardisation norms are also present in the Isthmus Zapotec speech community in Mexico, as explored by Haley De Korne. Newly

proposed writing norms imagine future users who are literate in Isthmus Zapotec in addition to Spanish, while current Isthmus Zapotec literacy practices are mediated through and heavily influenced by Spanish. The ideal of an autonomous writing norm reflects a desire for an autonomous and enduring community; however, the current realities of socioeconomic hardships and the dominance of Spanish make the establishment of such a norm elusive and, for some social actors, an undertaking which could threaten to create new social hierarchies.

Coleman Donaldson contrasts the standardisation initiatives of different social actors relative to Manding, a transnational language in West Africa. The priorities and paradigms of linguists differ significantly from those of language activists and educators. Drawing on ethnographic participation and analysis of historical documents, Donaldson charts the differences among several Manding writing standards, and how these official and de facto standards interface with social practice. He illustrates how orthographic choices index sociopolitical stances, and argues for the need to foster a written register of a language which aligns with existing metapragmatic norms if the goal is a wider uptake of writing standards.

The long history underlying a language standard is brought to the fore by Ana Deumert and Nkululeko Mabandla, who trace actors in the establishment of differing standards for isiXhosa across centuries of colonial and postcolonial governance in South Africa. They present historical images and text analysis to illustrate the role that colonial missionaries played in establishing writing norms and disseminating printed texts. Subsequently, the role of isiXhosa speakers as authors and critics of texts, often in opposition to the externally imposed norms, was pivotal in the development of a written register of isiXhosa. They argue that the many moments of resistance evident in the history of isiXhosa writing demonstrate the possibility of a new kind of standard, one which includes a diversity of speakers and practices.

Susan Gal closes the volume with a contribution which advances the concepts brought forward throughout the case studies in the book. Building on her previous theorisation of language standardisation, she traces the semiotic architecture of standardisation and its intimate links with European modernity, in contrast to alternative regimes of language that exist in other cultural and historical contexts. Gal examines how minority language standards replicate the framework of national standards, yet simultaneously represent a challenge to standard language regimes. Further, she argues that minority language activists do have scope to resist and create alternatives to hegemonic standardisation, drawing on a wide-ranging review of case studies. She suggests that by shifting the value of minority languages and the conditions of standardisation, these movements may contribute to shifting understandings of modernity.

In light of our recognition of the political nature of language standardisation, and the international cases we have assembled, we have invited each author to use whichever written standard of English they prefer, rather than

impose one standard throughout the volume. While this volume is in conversation primarily with scholars and the academic community, we hope that it may be of interest to some of the other social actors who make up the lively domain of minority language standardisation. By making the volume open access, we hope to reach a wider audience and make future conversations on these topics more inclusive of actors from different contexts and perspectives. If minority language standardisation movements are to achieve some of their emancipatory goals amidst ever-shifting political challenges, an ongoing exchange of perspectives, practices and considerations may offer some support.

Notes

1. Note that there were attempts to translate the Bible into non-European languages such as Nahuatl as early as the mid-16th century, but this was prohibited by the Spanish Inquisition in 1576 (Rodríguez Molinero and Vicente Castro 1986).
2. Reproduced in the Scots Magazine, 1760: http://enlightenment.nls.uk/scotticisms/source-1 (last accessed 1 December 2016).
3. Or, in the original: 'idéologie renaissantiste du texte rédempteur'.
4. The latter category was to prove a formidable reservoir of signs and symbols for later social movements that sought to use languages as a central element in national or territorial claims—in the Romantic period, or later at various times during the 20th century, as examined in throughout this volume.

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