Only Hebrew? Conditions for Successful Revitalisation of Languages

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Abstract

Successful revitalisation of a language (making it an ordinary means of communication) requires meeting certain condition. The paper analyzes several attempts to revitalise extinct or highly endangered languages, including Hebrew, Cornish, Irish, Breton, Low Lusatian, etc., and tries to find out why some attempts have turned out to be more successful than others. The conclusion of this paper is that all the following conditions must be met simultaneously: tradition of the use of the language (of course outside the sphere of everyday contacts, because if the language were used in everyday contacts it wouldn't be a need for its revitalisation) and the resulting presence of a considerable number of people competent in this language; high prestige of the language for the concerned community; political support for the language; socio-geographical concentration of persons ready (or not opposite) to learn and use it in everyday life; economic advantages of the use of the language; and necessary practical usefulness of the language resulting from the absence or weakness of competing languages.

All these conditions have been met only in the case of Hebrew, and only Hebrew is an example of fully successful revitalisation of a language. In other cases, revitalisation has been, at best, only partially successful by making the language in question an occasionally used symbol of identity, a political ornament, or a tourist curiosity. The case of Hebrew also points out that only some conditions depend on the will and conscious language policy of advocates of language revitalisation.

Keywords

revitalisation, Hebrew, endangered languages

1. Introduction – origins of revitalisation of languages

The idea of revitalisation (revival) of languages first emerged in the nineteenth-century Europe and was reinforced in the 20th century in Europe and elsewhere as a by-product of the two major ideas of that time – nationalism and modernisation. Nationalism, especially in its romantic and

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ethnic version, transformed national belonging (identity) into the central human value, forcing people to define themselves in terms of ethno-national categories. This created a need for "national" languages as symbols of identity, as proofs of existence of individual nations, and as means of communication which would integrate the nation internally (and separate them from other nations). In many instances, especially in the case of stateless ethnic nations, the national language had to be created in the first place. There were several ways of creating national languages: 1. upgrading and standardising chosen existent dialects (while neglecting others), 2. creating more or less artificial languages based on living dialects and ancient linguistic forms, and 3. revitalisation of extinct or dying languages (or extension of their functions) considered as being the "intrinsic", "proper" languages of the given nations.

The first approach was typical for those national movements that accepted ethno-linguistic characteristics of populations forming their (would-be) nations. This approach sometimes implied the removal of outdated literary languages from everyday use (and relegating them to "museums" – as subjects of study at universities, as liturgical languages, etc.). It was, for instance, the case of modern Serbian, which is based on dialects of eastern Bosnia and whose creation implied the elimination of the Old-Church-Slavonic language (in fact, of several varieties of the latter). The second approach was applied in cases of national movements that partially accepted the ethno-linguistic reality of the population concerned. The language in this situation was internally differentiated, therefore no living dialect was considered as deserving to become the basis of the national language, and the attention of the revivalists turned instead to old traditions of literary languages. Examples of national languages created in such a way can be modern Czech (quite distant from the living dialects of that time, as it incorporated elements of Old Czech from the time of the Czech renaissance) and Norwegian *landsmål* (*nynorsk*) based on countryside dialects and on old Norwegian texts (from times before the union with Denmark), different from the living urban (Oslo) Danish-like language called *bokmål*. In a sense, Czech and Norwegian *landsmål* can be considered as "revitalised" languages. The third approach was adopted by those national movements which rejected the existing situation or trends, considering the language(s) spoken by the population as "wrong" (usually as imposed by enemies or unfavourable historical circumstances) and chose the revitalised "language of the ancestors" as the "true" national language. The most outstanding example is the Zionist-Hebraist movement and the revitalisation of Hebrew. Other examples are the Irish movement for the restoration of Irish and Greek attempts to create and spread *kathareousa* (a would-be "pure" Greek, as opposed to *dimotiki* regarded as a "contaminated" language).

The other major idea of the 19th and 20th century, i.e. modernisation, implies, among other things, literacy of the population, access of the population to knowledge (which always means using a language), and cultural and linguistic homogenisation of the population (necessary for the army, for national labour markets, etc), required a unified and easily

comprehensible national language. This tendency preferred the use of existing living languages or creation of standard languages based on living dialects and contributed to the detriment of classical ancient languages such as Latin or Old-Church-Slavonic in Europe, classical Armenian *grabar*, classical Chinese *wenyan* 文言 or classical Japanese *bungo* 文語, and to the detriment of other languages within national boundaries.

In the case of state nations, the two ideas – nationalism and modernization – worked in the same direction: strengthening and spreading of (usually one) living national language and elimination of other languages from the public life, both of outdated classical languages, and of living dialects and non-national languages. In the case of stateless nations and romantic nationalism, the situation was rather more complicated – modernisation was sometimes at odds with nationalism and gave rise to the following question: the language of the ancestors, or a comprehensible language? In this way, the idea of modernisation tempered more ambitious attempts to revitalize languages or to create artificial ones. In one special case, as will be explained later on, the idea of modernisation turned out to be fully compatible with the idea of linguistic revitalisation. It is the case of Hebrew.

The above-mentioned instances of revitalisation of languages which emerged as a by-product of nationalism and modernisation can be classified as the first wave of language revitalisation. It took place in the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century, almost exclusively in Europe (if Palestine is considered as a part of Europe). The second wave of language revitalisation started in the second half of the 20th century, spread practically all over the world and was linked to a set of ideas, or cultural mood, that can be called "postmodernity" or "ethnicism", which was in some cases combined with special economic incentives like tourism and personal interests of professional "language revitalisers".

Postmodernity highly valued any kind of diversity because of its opposition to forces of homogenisation stemming from modernism, nationalism, and globalisation. Alongside with biological diversity, postmodernity was related to cultural, including linguistic, diversity. For the proponents of the idea of linguistic diversity, every language has a value in itself and is worth saving as an element of human cultural richness and beauty. Some rational arguments also used to be mentioned in this approach, such as the notion that every language entails some knowledge accumulated in the process of history (e.g. biological knowledge). With the disappearance of the language, this knowledge is lost as well. (This attitude assumes that people who change languages – in the process of language shift – cannot transfer knowledge, for instance words, from one language to another, and that people who keep using the same language cannot forget – lose – knowledge accumulated by their ancestors).

Being different became valuable, even fashionable. Saving and demonstrating difference satisfied the needs of those who were "different" and those who were searching for and researching uniqueness, including professional linguists and sociolinguists. At the same time, it encouraged those who were not "different" to look for something (for instance a forgotten

language of ancestors) what would make them "different". In such a way, saving and revitalising cultural, including linguistic, diversity became a business entailing such institutions like UNESCO (with its red list of endangered languages), professional linguists and sociolinguists, tourist companies (selling "exoticism"), publishers, etc. It can be said that unlike the first wave of revitalisation of languages in which the revitalisation of languages was a bi-product of other processes, in the second wave the revitalisation of languages is the direct aim of action.

2. Is language revitalisation a simple reversal of language shift?

The main question related to language revitalisation (apart from the very basic issues, such as whether to revitalise a language or not, for what reason and whom for) is: how to do it? Another, more "technical" question is: how to measure progress in the process of language revitalisation? Given the fact that except for Hebrew, there are hardly any fully successful examples of language revitalisation, it is difficult to say what are the necessary conditions and stages of language revitalisation. Much better investigated and theorised is the process of language shift leading to the extinction of a language. According to the Joshua Fishman's famous theory (Fishman 1991, 87-91; Woźniakiewicz 2013, 44-46; Dołowy Rybińska 2011, 32-33), the process of language extinction goes through a scale from full vitality via consecutive stages of gradual loss of functions to the complete disappearance of a language (stage nr 8). While this scale enables one to assess the degree of decay of endangered languages, it is doubtful whether it can be used to assess the process of revitalisation of languages, although Fishman's theory of reversal of language shift does assume it.

The problem is that language shift, leading to weakening and disappearance of the weaker language, is a multi-dimensional process. Apart from the question of acquisition (learning) of the stronger language, it entails social, economic, political, geographic, demographical, and psychological conditions encouraging and/or forcing people to learn and use the stronger language and discourage them from teaching, learning and using the weaker one. It should also be stressed that after reaching the critical point, language shift is an automatic, self-reinforced process: a declining number of monoglot speakers of a minority (weaker) language for instance reduces the probability of marriages of people who speak the language and would pass it on to their children, and increases the probability of linguistically mixed marriages where the language of communication and socialisation of children is the majority (stronger) language[2]. Therefore, the reversal of language shift, if it is going to succeed, must encompass the creation of a socio-linguistic environment ("ecology") where the use of the revitalised language is advantageous and necessary. It cannot be achieved without dramatic changes

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[2] According to Czech sociologist Šárka Hernová, the minimum share of endogamy marriages for a minority ethnic group to retain its population numbers is 80%, which means that if more than 20% of members of a minority ethnic group marry members of the ethnic majority, then the minority group starts inevitably to shrink. (Hernová 2003)

in the society. It should also be remembered that the return to one language implies the abandonment of another (the hitherto dominant) language, as people usually have only one $L1^3$. Such a return, being in fact another language shift, may encounter insurmountable obstacles.

For such reasons, the creation of the above-mentioned socio-linguistic environment implies building a new society. Consequently, revitalising an endangered (or extinct) language cannot be a simple reversal of language shift – coming down the scale of language shift. It is a new journey. The present experience of one successful and several unsuccessful (or partially or conditionally successful) attempts at language revitalisation confirms this statement. This experience deserves to be examined, for such analysis can help to single out the most important conditions for language revitalisation.

3. A short history of successes and failures in language revitalisation

There can be various lists of attempts to revitalise a language, depending on the definition of language revitalisation. Without going into details, several types of language revitalisation can be proposed: 1. absolute revitalisation - transforming a language which has not been used as a means of everyday communication into such a means, with the consequent appearance of native speakers of this language (vernacularisation of the language) and its intergenerational transmission; 2. territorial and demographic revitalisation – introducing a language used in one geographical area into another geographical area where it had not been used without migration (implying language shift towards the revitalised language in the new area); 3. functional revitalisation or upgrading – a language used only (or predominantly) in the private sphere enters into the public (political, economic, scientific, etc.) sphere. To limit the scope (and length) of discussion, further comments will be concentrated mostly on the first type and on such examples of the second type where the aim of revitalisation was to considerably extent the geographical area, number of speakers, and range of functions of the revitalised language.

The main examples of attempts of language revitalisation, fulfilling the above criteria, are the following: 1. revitalisation of Hebrew which started in the 18th century, 2. attempts to revitalise Irish (since the 19th century), 3. attempts to revitalise Cornish (19th, and especially 20th century), 4. attempts to revitalise Breton (20th century), 5. attempts to revitalise Lower Lusatian (20th century). There are also several cases of attempts at revitalisation of indigenous languages in the Americas. Language policies aimed at strengthening or saving several languages, such as Basque and Catalan in Spain and France, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic in the UK, Upper Lusatian in Germany, Czech (in the 19th and early 20th century), Romansh in Switzerland, Ukrainian in Ukraine after the country gained independence in 1991, Kashubian in Poland (21st century), etc., reveal some characteristics of language revitalisation. However, these cases will not be analysed here (For a

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[3] In linguistics, L1 means „Language number one", or somebody's best known language

more detailed analysis of some of those cases and a theoretical discussion of language revival, see Szul 2010).

The case of Hebrew, as a special case, will be dealt with in the next section of this paper.

Irish. In the second half of the 19th century, Irish, a Celtic language, once the language of Ireland, was spoken only by a minority of the population of the island, then part of the UK. The main language was, and still is, English (a Germanic language). The decline of Irish and the advance of English can be attributed to several factors: political and military defeat of Irish-speaking Catholics in military conflicts with English-speaking British Protestants, the resulting incorporation of Ireland into the British Empire and the disappearance (death and emigration) of Irish-speaking political and cultural elite, the inflow of English-speaking settlers, the persecution of Catholics in the Empire, the attitude of the Irish Catholic Church which, in exchange for concessions for Catholics by the British authorities, promoted the spread of English (as a sign of loyalty of Irish Catholics to the UK), the great hunger in mid-19th century which affected mostly the Irish speakers (death and migration of about one half of the population), English-medium compulsory education, the low prestige of Irish (the language was associated with backwardness), greater opportunities in the English-speaking environment and the related voluntary assimilation to the English language[4]. Areas where Irish was still spoken were scattered all over the country, mostly in the western part, its speakers being predominantly peasants, and its sphere of use practically limited to the private sphere. The main factor constituting the Irish identity, as opposed to the British identity, was religion (Catholicism) and not the language.

At the end of the 19th century, when the Irish anti-British national movement emerged or intensified, the restoration of Irish as a symbol of national identity and dignity became one of goals of this movement, beside the main political goal of political independence. It can be said that the restoration of Irish was an element of romantic nationalism while fighting for independence was an element of political nationalism. In the independent Republic of Ireland, Irish was declared the first official language, but for practical reasons, English was retained as a working language of the public institutions. In an effort to make Irish the actual language of Ireland (in other words: to revitalise it), several measures were undertaken: all official documents had to be published in Irish (with parallel English translations), Irish was introduced as a compulsory subject in schools, and the areas where Irish was still in use (the so-called *Gaeltacht* or *AnGhaeltacht* in Irish) received special treatment (support for Irish-speaking families, restrictions for

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[4] Various authors point out various reasons for the language shift from Irish to English, e.g. Irish sociolinguist Ó Raináin (Ó Raináin 2002) underlines the role of the great hunger, while the British scholar Anne Judge (Judge 2007) stresses mainly the loss of the Irish-speaking elite, the role of the Catholic Church, and the identification of Irish with backwardness.

settlements of non-Irish speakers)[5], etc. Several decades later, forty years after Ireland had joined the European Economic Community (predecessor of the EU), Irish was added to the list of official languages of the European Union in 2007.

All those efforts have had little, if any, impact on everyday linguistic behaviour of the population of the Republic of Ireland: English has remained the first or only language of thinking, speaking, writing and reading for the vast majority of inhabitants. Irish, at best, is a second language for a part of the population, learnt at school (and gradually forgotten when people finish compulsory education), *Gaeltacht* is continuously shrinking as does the number of Irish speakers in it[6]. Irish has retained the role of, or was transformed into, a symbolic language: it is nominally the national and official language of the Republic and one of the official languages of the EU, official documents in the Republic are published also in this language, several institutions have only Irish names, borrowings from Irish have been incorporated into Irish English (for instance "prime minister" in the Irish variety of English is not "prime minister" but *taoiseach*), personal names are often used in their Irish forms (with diacritical signs as in the name of the already quoted Irish sociolinguist Ó Raináin). Irish in the Catholic community in Northern Ireland has been more viable. This is due to the conflict between Catholic Republicans and Protestant Unionists and the resulting greater identification of Irish Catholics with the Irish language. It also played the role of the secret language in communication among members of ETA in British prisons (Judge 2007, 219).

Several factors can be mentioned as reasons of the failed revitalisation of Irish. The main obstacle is the presence of English – a language of large opportunities in Ireland itself, in the nearby UK, and in America to which Irish people use to migrate, let alone in the whole world. Besides, one can mention the great linguistic distance between English and Irish, which makes the learning, mastering and active using of the latter very difficult, the scarcity of opportunities to use Irish in everyday life, and the low motivation of the Irish society to learn and use Irish.

Cornish. Cornish is another Celtic language on the British Isles. It was once spoken in Cornwall as its indigenous language. After the invasion of Anglo-Saxons in the early Middle Ages, the migration of one part of the indigenous population across the Channel to Brittany, and the subordination of the local population to English rulers, Cornish was gradually retreating westwards. It died out in the 18th century, but a corpus of written texts in this language have survived that could become a starting point of a revival. This literature was subject of intense academic studies in the 18th and 19th

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[5] For the present situation and promotion of Irish in *Gaeltacht* by the Irish government, see: http://www.ahg.gov.ie/en/AnGhaeltacht/

[6] Compare the opinion expressed by Anne Judge (Judge 2007, 219): *As a result, despite major efforts, Irish is still very much a minority language in its own country. This constitutes a warning to other RLs* [regional languages]*, namely that state policy, however positive, is not enough on its own to reinstate a language. There has to be a strong desire on the part of the population*.

centuries. First attempts at the revitalisation of Cornish started in the 19th century, but truly discernible results were brought about only by a revival movement in the 20th century (Judge 2007, 176-185). This movement is related to a certain rise in the Cornish regional (ethnic) identity awareness, especially in the extreme western corner of Cornwall. The revivalist movement made use of texts from various periods and borrowed elements from other Celtic languages, especially Breton and Welsh, to complement the Cornish language. Allegedly, several thousand people have learned the language and a few hundred people are fluent enough to speak and have conversation in it. They meet in clubs and organise various social events. There are also several institutions engaged in the standardisation and promotion of Cornish[7], it is taught in several schools and there is a growing body of literature in Cornish, including a translation of the Bible published in 2011. A big success of the Cornish revival movement was the official recognition of the language as a minority language by the British government when the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was signed and ratified (in 2002). It is also interesting to note that UNESCO has changed its classification of Cornish from "extinct" to "critically endangered"[8].

Despite the above-mentioned successes, it can hardly be said that Cornish has been fully revived, or that there is a community using Cornish in its daily communication, transmitting it from one generation to the next, etc. The revival of Cornish is still a matter of a handful of enthusiasts. For the larger Cornish community, the language plays mostly a symbolic role (bilingual road signs, knowing a few words, supporting the idea of its survival), as it helps to constitute Cornwall as a separate ethnic or regional group, different from the English. Obstacles to the full revival of Cornish are largely the same as in the case of Irish – the presence and power of English in the everyday life, the difficulty of learning it, the lack of substantial benefits for learning and using Cornish, etc. An additional factor is the absence of one generally accepted form of revived Cornish – there have been several proposals related to the various historical stages of Cornish, which often reveal the personal preferences of their authors.

Breton. After the migration of Celts from Cornwall to Brittany, Breton was the main language spoken in this region for centuries; however, it was used almost exclusively in the private communication of peasantry. Rulers participating in the political and cultural life of France were gradually assimilated to the French language and culture. The erosion and retreat of Breton accelerated in the 19th and 20th century due to several factors: the language policy of the Jacobin French state ("one state – one nation – one language"), which had strong influence especially in the education sphere where French was the only language in schools and speaking Breton was prohibited and punished, the very low prestige of Breton and the related

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[7] See for instance Cornish Language Partnership, an umbrella organisation, set up in 2005 to oversee the implementation of the Cornish Language Development Strategy. Its website in English and Cornish: http://www.magakernow.org.uk/default.aspx?page=28 . This website provides rich information on history and present-day Cornish

[8] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-11935464

desire of many Bretons to get rid of the stigma of being Breton and backward, the attractiveness of French, including for economic reasons, the process of urbanisation during which Breton speakers from the countryside migrated to towns and cities where French was dominant, the language policy of the Catholic Church which followed sociolinguistic trends and preferred French, etc (Judge 2007, 9-34, 93-100, 120-145; Dołowy-Rybińska, 2011, 70-220; Żelazny 2000, 158-195). As a result, Breton as a living language is now near extinction, it is spoken by a few thousand of predominantly old people in rural areas, and the intergenerational transmission of Breton has practically stopped. The process of decline of Breton has not been reversed even by the fashionable idea of Celts as would-be ancestors of the French in the 19th (Thiessová 2007, 44-52), or by the appearance of written literature in this language and its standardisation at the beginning of the 20th century.

Parallel to the process of decline of Breton, there emerged a movement for its protection and revival. This movement accelerated in the second half of the 20th century, and people who are not necessarily from Brittany and of Breton origin are engaged in it. This is mostly a grass-root movement, tolerated or modestly supported by public authorities. The central element in this movement was the establishment of "Diwan" schools in 1977 – schools in which Breton is taught as a subject and used as a means of instruction. In the large part, the parents of students of Diwan schools do not speak Breton themselves, they (both parents and students) consider Breton as their symbolic language and feel a moral obligation to save the language of their ancestors. Being in fact fully integrated in the French language and culture, they do not feel the stigma of being Breton. It should be underlined, however, that the number of children attending Diwan schools accounts for a mere negligible fraction (about 1.5% in 2013[9]) of the total number of the school age children in the region. Beside Diwan schools, there are various opportunities to learn Breton aimed at different kinds of learners, festivals of Celtic and Breton music (including newly composed) are held every year and there is a number of other events where people can meet and use Breton. Participants of these events are usually young people for whom the first language is French, and Breton, learned at school or at courses, is at best the second language. After these events, the participants return to their original sociolinguistic environments where they do not have opportunity to use Breton. There are also several institutions taking care of revitalisation and daily use of Breton, one of them being the Public Office for the Breton Language established in 2010, an umbrella social organisation supported by the public authorities[10]

As a result of the two opposite processes – of language decline and language revival –,two completely separated groups of users of Breton have emerged – the group of native speakers: old people living in the countryside, speaking various dialects, using Breton only in informal private contacts and still feeling the stigma of being Breton and therefore avoiding using their language outside a strictly defined set of circumstances, and the group who

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[9] http://www.fr.opab-oplb.org/5-chiffres-cles.htm
[10] http://www.opab-oplb.org/

acquired Breton as their second (at best) language (the first being French), mostly young, educated, urban, speaking standard Breton (with a French accent), using it occasionally and in order to publicly demonstrate their Breton identity. These two groups do not understand each other – in both senses of the word "to understand": the first group does not understand the artificial standard Breton of the second group, the second group cannot comprehend living Breton dialects; the first group does not understand the reasons why does the second group seek to learn Breton and demonstrate its Breton identity, the second group does not understand why does the first group feel ashamed and shun Breton in the public life (for more information, see Dołowy-Rybińska 2011).

Consequently, Breton is transforming from a living language into a symbolic language used occasionally as a second language, visible in (rare) notices, signs, etc. Factors hindering a full revival of Breton are generally similar to the above-mentioned cases of Cornish and Irish: competition with the dominant language (in this case French), a low number of people really engaged in the process of language revival, the lack of a socio-linguistic environment where using Breton would be necessary and natural. One may add to the list the lack of official recognition for Breton – France has not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (French prime minister signed it in 1999, but the president and the parliament refused to ratify it because it would, according to them, violate the French constitution whose article 2 states that the official language of the French Republic is French). However, as the cases of Cornish and especially of Irish demonstrate, the official status does not suffice if necessary sociolinguistic conditions are missing.

Lower Lusatian. Lower Lusatian (also called Lower Sorbian or Wendish) is a nearly extinct Slavonic language in south-east Germany, in the area of Cottbus (in Lower Lusatian: Chóśebuz). Lusatians are descendants of Slavic tribes which settled down in Lusatia in the early Middle Ages. The later expansion of German settlers and the foundation of German states in this area isolated Lusatians from the rest of Slavonic peoples and made Lusatians a marginal community in German states (Brandenburg/Prussia, Saxony, united Germany). As a result of natural sociolinguistic processes and deliberate policy, especially of Prussia and the Third German Reich, the number of speakers and the area populated by the speakers of the two Lusatian languages (Upper and Lower Lusatian) have shrunk dramatically. Two factors were especially detrimental for the Lower Lusatian language: Reformation in the 16th century and strip brown coal mines in the 20th century. When Reformation gained the upper hand in Germany, it also encompassed Lower Lusatia (and only a part of Upper Lusatia). One shared religion enabled contacts between Lusatians and Germans, which, as always in contacts between a minority and a majority population, led to language shift and assimilation of Lusatians to the German language and identity. The negative attitude of the Protestant Church to Lusatians and its cooperation in the Prussian government's policy of their assimilation also contributed to this process. The intense exploitation of brown coal fields, the resulting

destruction of Lusatian villages and resettlement of their inhabitants to German-speaking towns, especially after the Second World War, destroyed the sociolinguistic environment in which Lower Lusatian was used as living, natural language. It should be added that Lusatians are bilingual which makes Lusatian especially fragile (Lusatians can easily integrate in the German linguistic environment).

The pace of assimilation was somehow slowed down by the Lusatian national movement which started in the 19th century. One of the main objectives of this movement was protection of Lusatian languages. It was active in the social sphere − in publishing, organising events, etc. In the German Democratic Republic (until 1990), the Lusatian minority enjoyed some privileges, including generous financing of Lusatian institutions (the main being Domowina[11], an umbrella organisation established in 1912, banned in the Third Reich, and then re-established after the war) and the existence of education in and of Lusatian. Education in Lusatian was limited to Upper Lusatia where the language was in a much better condition than in Lower Lusatia. The end of the GDR, the deterioration of the economic situation of Lusatian institutions, and the economic crisis which hit Eastern Germany, forcing massive emigration to western part of the country, was another blow to Lusatians and their languages. It can be said that apart from a handful of older people, Lower Lusatian is no longer a living language (Dołowy-Rybińska 2011, 221-364).

In parallel to this process, there emerged a grass-root movement for revitalisation of Lower Lusatian, as well as another movement campaigning for its "independence" from Upper Lusatian (Faska 2003, 173-183) (resulting, among other things, in some changes in Lower Lusatian spelling designed to make it more distant from Upper Lusatian). The movement for revitalisation of Lower Lusatian consists in organising various courses of the language for various kinds of potential − voluntary − recipients, both individuals and institutions, preparing place names and signs in Lower Lusatian, etc. This activity is complementary to the statutory activity of Domowina (e.g. publishing education materials, books in and on Lower, as well as Upper, Lusatian, calendars, etc). It is interesting to note that the main person involved in the movement for revitalisation of Lower Lusatian is Maria Elikowska-Winkler, a Polish woman who lives in the area (Elikowska-Winkler 2003). This confirms a general characteristic of language revitalisation movements − the engagement of "outsiders" in rescuing or revitalising languages. It can be said that the very existence of a movement for the revival of Lower Lusatian is a success, but the possibility of transforming Lower Lusatian into a living language is unlikely. The main reasons are, as in other cases, the competition with the strong majority language − in this case German, in addition to the low prestige of Lower Lusatian, dispersed settlement of its potential speakers, etc.

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[11]www.domowina.de

4. History of the revival of Hebrew

History of the Hebrew language is too rich and complicated to be presented in a detailed way in a paper like this one. The aim of this analysis is therefore to outline several turning points in the history of Hebrew and some conditions that had led to these points (for more details, see Szul 2010).

The first turning point was the religious literature – the Bible and other relating writings – written in this language in the ancient times. This made Hebrew a liturgical language, a "holy language" or "language of holiness" (*lashon kodesh*), very prestigious and symbolic. After Hebrew ceased to be the language of daily communication among the Jews, especially in the Diaspora, it continued to be present in the community thanks to its function of the liturgical language which implied, among other things, that there were people who learned and taught Hebrew in each generation and were able to write and read texts in it. Knowledge of Hebrew was considered as a proof and a condition of being educated.

The second turning point occurred in Europe (most notably in Polish lands and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe) during the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) period (18th and 19th century). Proponents of the Haskalah in this part of Europe used Hebrew as a means of communication for conveying, through its educated representatives, the ideas of the movement to the Jewish population (Dieckhoff, 2004, 187-200). The choice of Hebrew was determined by pragmatic reasons: there was no other language in which Jews of that time could read (and write) and would be acceptable for the proponents of the Haskalah (for several reasons, this role could not be fulfilled by Yiddish, the language of daily communication of most Jews in Central / Eastern Europe). In such a way, Hebrew went beyond the traditional sphere of religion and religious disputes. Besides, writing for the Haskalah publications and reading them enlarged the number of people fluent in Hebrew. It should be stressed that the revival of Hebrew was not an aim of the followers of the Haskalah. Hebrew was only a useful, temporary instrument that would be abandoned after it had fulfilled its task to make Jews modern and integrated in the local society. When and where local sociolinguistic conditions enabled the use of other languages to spread the ideas of the Haskalah, as was the case of German for German Jews, Hebrew was not used – in such a way, the Haskalah strengthened the position of German in the Jewish society in Germany. Regardless of the original intentions of the Haskalah in Central / Eastern Europe, this movement contributed to the modernisation of Hebrew and to the increase of its users, who would eventually switch to another idea – Zionism-Hebraism.

The third turning point was related to the idea of Zionism in its Central-Eastern European version at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Unlike the civic-oriented western European Zionism of its founder Theodore (Benjamin Ze'ev) Herzl, which did not pay much attention to the language of the future Jewish state (Herzl himself used German in his writings, including the "Zionist Bible" – the book entitled *Judenstaat*, and doubted if Hebrew could become the language of the future Jewish state), Central-Eastern European

Zionism was a romantic national idea which united the foundation of a Jewish state (Israel) with spiritual remodelling of Jews (or better to say: Israelis): the return to their Jewish roots, to their land (Eretz Israel), and their "true" language. This "true" language was Hebrew. Yiddish, according to this idea, was a product and symbol of the Diaspora that should be washed away together with other traces of the *galut* (slavery, Diaspora). This approach supported the revival of Hebrew. It should be stressed that the choice of Hebrew as the "true" language of Jews by the Zionist movement in Central-Eastern Europe was determined mostly, if not exclusively, by symbolical (sentimental) and political, not practical reasons. Hebrew was another factor separating Zionism from its main rival Bundism (socialist Jewish movement), which favoured Yiddish as the Jewish language. In such a way, a symbiosis of Zionism and Hebraism emerged. One of the representatives of Zionism-Hebraism was Eliezer ben Yehuda who immigrated to Eretz Israel (Palestine) in 1881 and is said to be the first person to use Hebrew in daily communication, and later became the unquestionable leader of the movement for modernisation and revival of Hebrew in Palestine and Israel (Świderska 1984).

The fourth and last turning point was the immigration of Jews from various countries and speaking various languages to Palestine, starting in the 1880s and intensifying after establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. During the first stage (until the Second World War), this immigration was, from the ideological and geographical point of view, highly selective and adherents of Zionism-Hebraism from Central / Eastern Europe were the predominant group. They played a decisive part in the establishment of the State of Israel and in determining its language policy. It should also be mentioned that the Holocaust practically eliminated the main rival of Hebrew –Yiddish: most of its speakers were killed and the ideology of Bundism-Yiddishism was discredited. After the Israeli declaration of independence, there was a massive immigration of Jews from Arab countries, as well as from Europe and America (quite small but significant from the economic, scientific and political point of view). The presence of people from so many linguistic backgrounds in a small area created the need for a common language. This language was Hebrew. The language policy of the Zionist movement and of the State of Israel, which declared Hebrew its official language (apart from Arabic for the Arab community), supported this language, discriminated against Yiddish, and hindered the advance of other languages (German, French, English). This policy obviously helped Hebrew to play the role of the Israeli *lingua franca* and it supported its use in everyday life. On the other hand, the choice of Hebrew as the language of Israel considerably helped to integrate the numerous and still growing Sephardic community in Israel governed by Ashkenazim (Balke 2004). It should be stressed, however, that the political declaration of a language as the official language (as in the case of Irish in Ireland) does not alone suffice to make this language a means of daily communication. The crucial factor was the emergence of a sociolinguistic environment where using Hebrew was a pragmatic necessity. From the "technical" point of view, the decisive factor

for the victory of Hebrew in the "war of languages" (1881-1948) was the introduction of Hebrew as language of instruction in schools. Thanks to this factor, young people learned this language (in a form proposed by teachers and "authors" of new Hebrew words[12]). At home, school children taught the "language of the ancestors" to their parents. The introduction of Hebrew to schools was backed by the determination of parents who preferred Hebrew to other languages supported by the then ruling states in Palestine (German, French, English). In such a way, Hebrew became the *lingua franca* of the Israeli society and gradually the first language of a growing number of people. After reaching a critical mass of native speakers, further increase of speakers and assimilation of outsiders became an automatic process.

As can be inferred from this analysis, the revitalisation of Hebrew went through several stages. At some points, it played the role of the symbol of identity: religious (liturgical language of Judaism during the Diaspora) and national (Central-Eastern European Zionism), and sometimes it played the role of a means of communication: in the Haskalah movement (in Central / Eastern Europe), among the Zionist-Hebraist Jewish settlers, and then in the multi-lingual Jewish community in Palestine/Israel. Therefore it can be said that using Hebrew was not only a matter of sentiments but also of necessity. It should also be stressed that Hebrew always enjoyed very high prestige, much higher than its main rival – Yiddish, and that the creation of the sociolinguistic environment favourable to Hebrew was a result of the selective migration of adherents of the Hebrew revival to Palestine and of the restoration of Israel with Hebrew as its language. This migration wave separated the followers of Hebraism and Zionism from the followers of Yiddishism and other competing ideologies, and also from forces contributing to the linguistic assimilation of Jews to local societies in the Diaspora. This took place in the decisive period (1881-1948) in which Hebrew won "the war of languages". After that, the further process of "Hebraisation" of Israel was automatic.

Commenting on the revival of Hebrew, it can be said that this revival has had its victims: it has contributed to the decline of other Jewish languages, first of all Yiddish. Now it is Yiddish which plays mostly a symbolical and not a communicative role for the Jewish community, and deserves revitalisation.

Conclusions

When comparing the revival of Hebrew with the other attempts at revitalising languages which have been described in this paper, one observes some essential differences:

- presence or absence of a sociolinguistic environment in which using the revitalised language would be a necessity and not only a demonstration of

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[12] Newly invented words, changes in meaning of the already existing ones, some changes in grammar and spelling in comparison to the classic Hebrew gave reasons to some observers (first of all Israeli-Australian linguist Gil'ad Zuckermann) to consider that the language used in Israel is not the revived Hebrew but a new language which should be called *Israeli*. See: Zuckermann 2004, Yadin and Zuckermann 2010, Prager 2005

sentiments and identity: using Hebrew was first a necessity for adherents of the Haskalah in Central / Eastern Europe, and then for Jewish migrants who came to Palestine/Israel from various countries and spoke various languages; contrary to Hebrew, there has never been such a necessity to speak other revitalised languages, as speakers of these languages always could easily (and even more easily) communicate in other languages – English (revivalists of Irish and Cornish), French (revivalists of Breton) or German (revivalists of Low Lusatian), and therefore only a small minority of people was determined enough to learn and use these languages

    - spatial separation, or its lack, between the people ready to revitalise a language from those who were not so much interested in it during the crucial stage of language revitalisation: selective migration of adherents of Zionism-Hebraism from Central / Eastern Europe at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries to Palestine while the rest of the Jewish community either decided to stay in Europe or to migrate to America; no attempts of such separation on a comparable scale (if any) have been observed in the case of other revitalised or threatened languages[13]

    - the prestige of revitalised languages: the prestige of Hebrew for the Jewish community, both for religious Jews and for Jewish secular nationalists (Zionists), has always been very high which gave the former the motivation to learn it and use it as their liturgical language, and the latter had the motivation to revitalise it as a fully-fledged means of national communication; despite an occasional upsurge, the prestige of revitalised languages has been generally low in comparison with their rivals (English, French, German)

    - the broader sociolinguistic and political context of time and space: the idea of revitalisation of Hebrew first appeared in the advantageous context of Central / Eastern Europe in the 19th century, on the western peripheries of the Russian Empire and on its neighbouring territories which were characterised by a "linguistic disorder" where no language had a clear preponderance and where there was a high agitation over the language issue, leading to various linguistic concepts (including a deliberate creation of more or less artificial standard languages, Esperanto being one of them), supported by meaningful social and political forces, while revivalist movements of the other languages appeared mainly in the 20th century in Western Europe in countries with a

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[13] In the 19th century, in 1853, there took place migration of a group of Lusatian speakers (mostly Lower Lusatians), headed by rev. Jan Kilian, to America (Texas) for religious reasons (they did not accept the union of Protestant Churches imposed by Prussian government). Their isolation from the German language, however, did not last long, as in the nearby area German speaking co-believers settled down and contacts with them started the process of erosion of the Lusatian community and their language. (Malinkowa 2011, 160-163). Another example of migration, this time to save a language and identity, is that of Welshmen to Argentina in 1865. *During the 19th century industrialisation and urbanisation that threatened the demise of the Welsh language 153 men, women and children embarked on a journey across the Atlantic. Arriving in 1865 aboard the Mimosa they colonised the first land they reached in southern Argentina because of its sheer remoteness. (...)Subsequent generations moved on to Chile where the landscape, including breathtaking waterfalls and vegetation are much more akin to the Welsh landscape*, Thomas 2004, 81

strong dominant language, and mostly a few enthusiasts (including outsiders and professional linguists) were interested in the revival of the language

These differences make the revival of Hebrew a unique case, and they also explain why is the revival of Hebrew a success story while other attempts have been at best only partially successful, making the revitalised languages second languages of a handful of passionate enthusiasts, used occasionally as symbol of identity and a political ornament as well as a tourist attraction.

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