Introduction: Minority Languages in a Multilingual Europe

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This special issue of *Us Wurk* deals with indigenous minority languages found in Europe, and gives a snapshot of some of the current research that is being done on these languages. The focus on indigenous minority languages in scientific research is a fairly recent development, with many of these languages still lacking basic linguistic descriptions, and the attention of sociolinguistic, educational and sociological researchers that so many European majority languages can lay a claim to. The editors of this special issue are of the opinion, however, that the studies that use minority languages in multilingual Europe as their research ground are increasing in number. The last half century of research in the fields of bilingualism and sociolinguistics has laid an important fundament for an increase in European minority language research. The outcomes of the last half century are too many, and too extensive in scope to be summed up comprehensively in an introduction like this. Although it is not possible to do this without omitting important pieces of work we would like to highlight some of the fundamental studies that European minority language research builds on, such as the work by Ferguson (1959) on minorities and diglossia, the work by Haugen (1966) and Kloss (1967) as a critique of the concept of national languages versus dialects; Dorian (1972) and Gal's (1978) pioneering work in the fields of contact linguistics and language and identity (that both use examples from Europe); Fishman's (1991) work on the revitalisation of dying languages that has created the fundament for language endangerment studies, and, more recently, Grosjean and Bialystok's work (cf. Grosjean, 2010; Bialystok 2009) that have played a part in generating an interest in the effects that European minority and majority language bilingualism may have on the individual and his/her social and cognitive development.

Similarly, the topic of multilingualism has received a great amount of scientific attention in its own right. Several edited volumes and books on multilingual language acquisition have appeared in the last decade or so (cf. for example Aronin & Singleton 2012; De Angelis & Dewaele 2011; Aronin & Hufeisen 2009; Cenoz, Hufeisen & Jessner 2003; Cenoz, Hufeisen & Jessner 2001) and alternative ways to communicate without acquiring a new language but still maintaining language diversity are being explored (cf. for

example Gooskens 2011; Ten Thije & Zeevaert 2007; Hufeisen & Marx 2007).

One reason why the future seems rosy for indigenous minority languages in Europe, compared to half a century back, is the development of European policies to preserve the linguistic diversity that exists within the continent. Multilingualism is a topic that has received massive attention within the European Union (EU). With 24 official languages and more than 60 regional and minority languages spoken within its borders (European Union 2014), the EU considers protecting and enhancing linguistic diversity and multilingual language knowledge amongst its citizens as one of its most prominent responsibilities. Multilingual language rights first received attention from the EU in 1950, when the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) was adopted: following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the European Convention stated that no one in the EU should be discriminated on the basis of the language they speak. In 1983 the European Commission accepted the Arfé Resolution and in 1987 the Kuijpers Resolution. Both were important for regional or minority languages and led to an earmarked budget line for these languages. Due to this budget the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) was initiated in 1982 and the Mercator Network in 1987. Following this, little changed in European multilingualism policy until 1990 when the Parliamentary Assembly published a list of recommendations (Parliamentary Assembly 1990) in which it advised that the EU pay further attention to establishing and securing the rights of national and regional minorities and their languages. Despite this, the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) and the Nice Treaty (2001) did not explicitly mention the protection of minorities and linguistic diversity in the EU; it was only in 2004, when the EU sought to establish a European Constitution which was supposed to replace all the existing treaties as one single legal document, that it was explicitly mentioned in the Draft Constitution (Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe 2004) that the rights of minorities should be protected (Article I-2) and that no one should be discriminated on the bases of being member of a minority (Article II-81). Also, the document stated that the EU should protect its linguistic diversity (Article II-82). This Draft Constitution was signed by all states that were members of the EU at the time and it was ratified by 18 member states. However, when a referendum was held in France and the Netherlands in 2005, a majority voted against the Draft Constitution, thus ending the ratification process. Nevertheless, protecting the rights of minorities and

promoting linguistic diversity has been mentioned in each European treaty that has appeared in the years after the Draft Constitution (cf. Lisbon Treaty 2007, Treaty on European Union 2012).

Outside the realm of the EU there has been other work since the 1990s on protecting linguistic minorities in the EU. In 1992 the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECMRL) was introduced by the Council of Europe to protect the rights and promote the use of regional and minority languages, and that same year it was signed by 12 countries. In 1995 the Parliamentary Assembly strongly recommended that the other member states of the EU also sign the charter (Parliamentary Assembly 1995). Today this charter has been signed by 33 countries and 25 have ratified it (Council of Europe 2014a). Another document on the rights of minorities and their languages is the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1998) (FCNM), which has been signed and ratified by 39 countries (Council of Europe 2014b). The reason for increased willingness to sign this document likely lies with the fact that in the FCNM the goals are not formulated as narrow and specific as in the ECMRL. For example, where the ECMRL formulates what a regional or minority (language) is, the FCNM fails to define what is to be understood as a national minority. Also, member states that have signed the FCNM are only evaluated (i.e. monitored by the Council of Europe to examine whether the countries follow obligations set out in the document) every five years, whereas member states that have signed the ECMRL are evaluated every three years.

In addition to protecting the rights of minorities and their languages, the EU has also been concerned with protecting linguistic diversity in the EU and promoting multilingualism amongst its citizens. This is illustrated by a proposal in 1995 under which European citizens should acquire at least two additional European languages alongside their native language (L1) (White paper on Education and Training 1995). In 2004, the topic of Multilingualism entered a European Commission for the first time when it was included in the Commission of Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism. For this reason, in 2005, the Commission of the European Communities published "A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism", in which it listed a number of actions that should be undertaken in order to further strengthen multilingualism in Europe (Commission of the European Communities 2005). One of these actions was to set up a High Level Group on Multilingualism (HLGM) which was supposed to investigate the progress made by the EU member states in supporting multilingualism and

to give further advice on how to conduct a clear policy for multilingualism in the EU. In 2007, the HLGM published its final report in which it advised the EU to promote multilingualism in education and trade, to strengthen regional networks, to investigate new fields of "interlingual communication" and to secure the position of regional and minority languages in order to maintain language diversity in the EU (High Level Group on Multilingualism 2007).

Several projects on protecting minority languages and sign languages and supporting multilingual education have been funded by the EU during the periods of the past three commissioners that were concerned with multilingualism (for an overview cf. European Commission 2014). For example, the Mercator Research Centre on Multilingualism has created Regional Dossiers on minority language education in Europe, which provide an outline of the educational systems in minority regions (Mercator Research Centre 2014). A recently launched scientific project co-funded by the EU is the project for Mobility and Inclusion in a Multilingual Europe (MIME 2014). This project investigates language policies in the EU on a large scale by combining several disciplines and cooperating with 22 organisations in 16 countries.

On 13 June 2013, the TABU Dag, an annual conference on general linguistics organised at the University of Groningen, organised the workshop *Minority Languages in a Multilingual Europe* in cooperation with the Fryske Akademy, its Mercator Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, and the Department of Frisian Language and Culture of the University of Groningen. The workshop was co-sponsored by the European Centre for Minority Issues. The main question addressed during the workshop was how minority languages in the EU can be maintained in a period of globalisation, where English is increasingly used as a lingua franca. The EU regards one of its most prominent responsibilities as being the protection of minority languages and linguistic diversity in the EU, though in the past two decades it has not as yet succeeded in writing a coherent policy which was signed and ratified by all member states. In 2013 the report of François Alfonsi on Endangered European Languages and Linguistic Diversity in the European Union was published (Report on Endangered European Languages 2013). This report was widely accepted by the Commission but has not led to a change in policy or programmes yet. There are many documents describing the EU's goals concerning minority languages and multilingualism, but the formulations leave much room for interpretation for the countries that have signed or ratified them. Despite the

efforts of the EU and according to the Unesco Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (2014), today no less than 49 regional and minority languages in the EU are severely or critically endangered.

The TABU Dag workshop focussed on the questions as to which efforts should be made to protect the languages in question, and the extent to which language policies can help maintain minority languages. These questions can be addressed from an educational, political and methodological point of view, and the outcomes of some of the aspects of our workshop are in this issue in front of you. With the scientific and political background, touched upon above, posing as a backdrop, this issue of Us Wurk presents seven authors dealing with four topics related to European indigenous minority languages: the cognitive aspect of minority language bilingualism; the educational aspect with minority language usage in schools; the aspect of national language policy and planning; and the aspect of sociolinguistic theory often applied to studies of minority language speech communities.

In Chapter 1, *The early bilingual acquisition of a minority and a majority language*, Jelske Dijkstra, Folkert Kuiken, René J. Jorna† and Edwin L. Klinkenberg report on a study in which they investigated whether the acquisition of a minority language, in this case West Frisian, can endanger the acquisition of a majority language, in this case Dutch. They tested the receptive and productive vocabulary in Dutch and West Frisian of 80 participants aged between 2 years and 6 months and 4 years, in three rounds. They also tested the language exposure of the participants at home and outside the home. Their conclusion is that the acquisition of Frisian does not form a danger in acquiring Dutch. This is an important outcome that is in line with previous investigations of bilingualism: a second language can be acquired additively and does not constitute a danger when acquiring Dutch.

In Chapter 2, *Maintenance and Promotion in North Frisian language instruction on Föhr, Germany*, Alison Eisel Hendricks investigates minority language teaching on Föhr, an island off the coast of Germany where one of the nine North Frisian dialects, Fering, is spoken. In primary schools on Föhr, North Frisian is taught on a voluntary basis. The classes contain students with different levels of North Frisian, from beginners to students that have already learned North Frisian at home. Hendricks tested elementary school students from different age groups with different amounts of North Frisian input at home. Her results show that the home language is a factor that plays an important role in the acquisition of a minority language, and that language classes can help maintain the language. However, Hendricks argues that it is important not only to teach North Frisian, but

also to use North Frisian as language of instruction in other courses in order to further maintain North Frisian through minority language teaching. Hendricks thus highlights the important role that education plays for language survival or revitalisation, a role that Fishman (1991) as well as the more recent UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003) have also stressed in previous work.

In Chapter 3, *Language Policy and Nationalism in the Republic of Macedonia*, Milica Petrushevska describes the different language policies that Macedonia has known from the 1940s onwards. Macedonia was part of Yugoslavia until 1991. At the end of World War II, the language policies in Macedonia were dominantly centralistic, with Macedonian as the only official language of the country. From the late forties onwards, however, the language policies in Yugoslavia became more and more pluralistic, recognising an increasing number of nationalities and their rights. In the final ten years of the existence of Yugoslavia, Serbian nationalism took over and moved again towards centralistic language policies. In 1991, Macedonia became an independent country. Since then its language policies have become more pluralistic, paying more attention to the regions that different ethno-linguistic groups live in and acknowledging their rights. Petrushevska's article paints a comprehensive picture of a setting that has received relatively little attention in previous work. The piece is a modern view on a situation that is equivalent to those described in Haugen (1966) and Kloss (1967). A situation that raises extremely interesting questions about the relationship between political and linguistic ideology, and the importance of the nation state for the survival, or loss, of a language.

Finally, in Chapter 4, *Macrosociolinguïstisch onderzoek naar historische taalminderheden in tijden van globalisering – pleidooi voor een vernieu-wing van binnenuit*, the plenary speaker of TABU Dag 2013 Jeroen Darquennes argues that the macro-sociolinguistic tradition of Fishman is no longer sufficient for sociolinguistic theory. Whereas other disciplines are no longer bothered by national borders due to globalisation pressures, traditional minority language studies regard linguistic minorities as minorities within national borders. Darquennes argues that this does not fit into the process of globalisation where national borders disappear and that macro-sociolinguistic research therefore needs to formulate a new 'unit of analysis'. Darquennes proposes to use methods from macrosociology for this. His contribution is an extremely welcome call for modernisation of sociolinguistic theory that must apply to a world that has become superdiverse, and in which the nation state and regional identity could

perhaps be of decreasing importance. We hope Darquenne's paper thus sparks further contribution from other theorists in the field, and end our special issue with this call for theoretical rejuvenation.

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