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Language death and revival with particular focus on Celtic languages

Master's thesis

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1. Introduction

Death is omnipresent. No matter where we are and what we do, it always finds a way to get our attention. The Internet, television, radio, etc. broadcast news about death across the globe. Deaths of the human kind are, unfortunately, the most common news nowadays. Such news makes people always feel empathetic. Wars, epidemics, natural catastrophes, etc. are responsible for millions of deaths across the world. Raising public awareness on the matter and helping the people in need is the first thing we must do in such situations. Fortunately, there are plenty of organizations and individuals helping people in their hour of need. The amount of help invested, however, is not always sufficient. Helping people in need is the top priority – secured shelter, food and medical aid are a must do. As time goes by, other matters like language often get left behind. People are simply not aware of how much a language influences its speakers and how important it is for their survival. Without a language a major part of the people's culture and their identity goes missing, and without culture there are also no people. That is precisely the reason why I chose language death and revival for my master's thesis.

Language death is also omnipresent – it just lacks public attention. The goal of this thesis is to show people how important a language is for the future of its people. Language and language death are often taken for granted. People think it is not a big deal to lose their language, but they are not aware of how much they lose with it. They do not realize how interconnected their lives and their languages are. If it is not their language that is in danger of disappearing, the amount of attention given is even smaller or does not exist at all. It is, therefore, time for something to be done on the matter, because if we do not start doing something right now, there is a strong possibility that there will not be enough time to do turn things over in the future. Languages are dying on a weekly basis; their speakers end up either dead or assimilated into big communities. The history of these speakers and their ways of life die together with their languages. In order to stop this, we must raise awareness about language death across the globe. It is not a problem affecting countries and cultures miles away from ours; it is a problem we can find in our own backyard, best example being Celtic languages – languages which once covered a vast area of Europe, but languages in danger of disappearing today.

2. Language death and revival

2.1 Language death

2.1.1 Language endangerment

It is difficult to give a precise number of languages in the world, due to their many varieties and dialects. Some of the world's languages have no special names at all; others have a few different names. Sometimes, the same name is used for two completely different languages (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 27). There are also many undescribed and not officially recognized languages. New languages are being discovered too. It is, therefore, also very difficult to give a precise number of endangered languages in the world. According to Austin and Sallabank (2011: 1), a language is classified as endangered if it is not being learned by children as a first language. As a result, domains and functions of use and the number of speakers of an endangered language decrease.

Estimates on the number of languages in the world vary and none of these are globally agreed upon. Some estimates go up to 10,000; more conservative ones mention some 6000-7000 languages. According to the 18th edition of *Ethnologue*[1], there are 7,102 languages in the world (www.ethnologue.com). Nine of these have more than 100 million speakers: Chinese, Spanish, English, Hindi, Arabic, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian and Japanese. On the other hand c. 500 languages have less than 100 speakers. Also, languages are unevenly distributed across the world, with c. 3% spoken in Europe, c. 15% in the Americas, c. 30% in Africa, c. 19% in the Pacific and c. 33% in Asia (Austin and Sallabank 2011: 5). Asia and Africa are continents with the highest number of indigenous languages.

Half the known languages on earth have died during the last five hundred years (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 2). There are some estimates on the number of languages which will die out due to current rate of disappearance, which, however, varies from community to community. Some communities abandon their languages quicker than others. Therefore, Krauss claims that 90% of the world's languages will disappear in the course of the 21st century. Others estimate this number to be around 50%, which is nevertheless a troublesome fact, meaning that some 3,500 languages will vanish from the face of the earth during this

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[1] Ethnologue is a comprehensive publication by SIL International. It came out in 1951 and gathers since then information about all of the world's known living languages, such as the number of speakers, location, dialects etc.

century. One of the main reasons for such estimates is the fact that the world's population continues to grow constantly and thereby intensifies the process of globalization. This, however, heavily influences communication and transport technologies, and as a result increases language contact. A handful of the world's languages can thereby influence the whole world, English being the best example. Minority languages are marginalized in the process and put into a situation in favour of language shift, which causes endangerment and eventually death (Crystal 2003: 70).

2.1.1.1 Level of language endangerment

The level of endangerment across languages depends on various factors. According to Grenoble (2011: 38), these factors can be divided into three categories: 1) nature of the speaker base, i.e. number of speakers, generational distribution of speakers and the proportion of speakers within the entire population; 2) domains of use, i.e. whether a language has official status, whether it is stable and used in all domains, or restricted to home and ceremonial use; 3) internal and external support for or pressure against language use, i.e. attitudes towards a language coming both from within a target community and a wider community. Languages of the world do not find themselves in same positions of endangerment. Several distinct classifications of languages exist – from simple ones classifying languages into categories *safe*, *endangered* and/or *extinct*[2], to more complex ones such as EGIDS[3].

UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment Framework, based on nine factors, with intergenerational transmission as the most important factor, specifies five degrees of language endangerment:

- safe: all generations speak the language, with no interruptions of intergenerational transmission;

- vulnerable: a majority of children speak the language, but potentially only in specific areas of use, such as home usage;

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[2] Krauss adds moribund languages to this classification, namely languages no longer being passed on to the next generation (Crystal 2003: 20).
[3] The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) distinguishes 13 kinds of languages, each higher number on the scale having a larger disruption of the intergenerational transmission of a language.

- definitely endangered: the language is not learned as a mother tongue by children at home;

- severely endangered: only grandparents speak the language; parents may understand it, but do not speak it to their children or among themselves;

- critically endangered: grandparents, speaking the language partially and occasionally, are the youngest speakers;

- extinct: no speakers[4] (Austin and Sallabank 2011: 3).

  Concentrating on weaker languages, Stephen Wurm distinguishes between:

- potentially endangered languages: languages which are socially and economically disadvantaged and under pressure from larger languages;

- endangered languages: languages with few or no children acquiring the language; young adults are the youngest good speakers;

- seriously endangered languages: speakers aged 50 or older are the youngest fluent speakers;

- moribund languages: only a few fluent speakers speak the language; they are usually very old;

- extinct languages: languages without speakers (Crystal 2003: 21)

Taking speakers of endangered languages into account, Grinevald and Bert (2011: 49) identify seven types of speakers specific to language endangerment situations:

1) fluent speakers: fully acquire a language, without any language loss and with high proficiency in an endangered language;

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[4] According to the *Atlas of the World's languages in Danger (2010)*, 57.02% of the world's languages are safe, 9.97% are vulnerable, 10.77% are definitely endangered, 8.8% are severely endangered, 9.6% are critically endangered and 3.85% are extinct- since 1950 (http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html).

2) semi-speakers[5]: partially acquire a language, with possible loss. This category includes all members of a community with proper receptive skills, but different productive skills, from rather high to low language fluency. Semi-speakers use the dominant language more than the endangered language, without regular conversation patterns in the endangered language;

3) terminal speakers: limited acquisition or acquisition with advanced loss; speakers have passive knowledge of the endangered language; their productive skills are limited;

4) rememberers: speakers forced to hide their knowledge of an endangered language as a result of traumatic experiences;

5) ghost speakers: speakers denying the knowledge of an endangered language, even though they are competent in it to a certain degree. This denial is caused by negative attitudes towards the endangered language;

6) neo-speakers: people learning an endangered language in the context of language revival programs, including outsiders too;

7) last speakers: individuals, usually old fluent speakers of an endangered language.

2.1.2 Definition of language death

Put simply, a language is dead when it is no longer spoken (Crystal 2003: 11). It is considered dead even if there remains a last speaker of a language, because he/she is unable to demonstrate his/her fluency, having no one to speak it to. The *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (2002: 288) defines language death as the disappearance of a living language, because its speakers begin to use other languages and children do not learn it as their mother tongue. A language may be documented and continue to exist in that way, but with no speakers left it is considered not to be a living language.

People may or may not be aware of language endangerment and language death, but they are not aware of how fast and at which rate these two processes happen. There are no indigenous languages in some parts of the world at all. Language death is mostly present in developing countries. This is yet another reason why it lacks public attention, because it is

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[5] The term 'semi-speaker' was introduced by Nancy Dorian and it describes people who are not fully fluent in a language, but who have rather learned it to a certain level.

seen as a Third World problem (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 24). However, modern European societies face the problem too, Celtic languages being an example. More is known about and done for saving e.g. rainforests and endangered animal species than for saving languages. To save a language is not more important than saving the other two and vice versa; they should all be given the same amount of attention and treated equally. All species of animals and plants together with human cultures and their languages on earth are equally important, because they all have specific sets of functions and, as distinct as these may be, they always find their ways to interact with each other. Preserving *biolinguistic diversity*, a term used by Nettle and Romaine, is thus very important, when confronting language death.[6]

Language death has been around for ages. Alongside cultures, languages have also risen and fallen in the past as they do today. According to Crystal (2003: 68), there are approximately 75 extinct languages that were spoken once in Europe and Asia Minor of which there is some kind of historical record. One can only imagine the number of languages without any record once spoken around the world. Languages of the world have dramatically declined in their number over the past 500 hundred years, e.g. from 1,175 languages spoken in Brazil in c. 1500 AD only 200 or even less are spoken today (Crystal 2003: 70). More than 250 aboriginal languages, once spoken in Australia, are dead today. Uruguay no longer has an indigenous Indian language. Indigenous people and their languages end up either dead or assimilated into wider communities. One of the reasons for today's language death is the establishment of centralized nation states from the 15th century onwards[7]. These states were based around the standard, official language, giving minority languages less and less rights, marginalizing them to the extent that they were nowhere to be found in legal offices, media, education etc.

2.1.3 Language contact as the key prerequisite for language death

Languages mostly die out due to language contact, defined as the contact between groups of people speaking different languages (O'Shannessy 2011: 78). One language usually has more economic, political and social prestige and power than the other, which gradually leads to language change in terms of structure, lexicon and use. In order to measure culture contact, one can take the degree to which foreign words have been adopted into a language

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[6] Papua New Guinea is biolinguguistically the most diverse country in the world, with 80% of its territory covered by forests (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 80) and 839 living languages, according to *Ethnologue (2015)*.
[7] France, Brittain, Spain, Netherlands and Sweden are amongst the first nation states formed in Europe.

(Nettle and Romaine 2000: 55). According to O'Shannessy (2011: 79), outcomes of language contact can be *language maintenance, language shift and language creation.* Language maintenance is defined as the situation in which a language continues to be spoken, often with influence of one language on the other, both structurally and lexically. The language is maintained, but with some changes, which usually means lots of borrowings. Language shift is the situation in which community members stop speaking the pre-contact language and mostly speak the post-contact language. Changes in the pre-contact language occur through the process of language attrition, loosing phonological distinctions in the post-contact language, reducing syntactic and morphological patterns and obligatory rules becoming optional. Language creation through language contact happens in three ways: creating pidgins, creoles and bilingual mixed languages.

2.1.4 Factors causing language death

It is impossible to single out one main cause of language death, because there are many factors influencing it. Crystal divides these factors into two major groups:

- Factors putting speakers in physical danger

- Factors changing the speaker's culture

Factors putting speakers in physical danger include various forms of natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, volcanic eruptions etc. Also, the environment can stay intact, but there may be some unfavourable climatic and economic conditions, e.g. famine or drought, resulting in death or migration. In order to survive in new environments, people adopt as much of the new language as they can and gradually lose their cultural identity. Diseases put speakers of a language into physical danger too. It is estimated that 200 years after the arrival of first Europeans in the Americas, over 90% of the indigenous population died due to diseases brought by people and animals from Europe. Reasons can be political and religious too - military conflicts, such as those in Colombia, can denote the end of many language communities.

Factors changing the speaker's culture do not directly influence the physical well-being of a community. Its language, on the other hand, is the main object of influence. This is the process of the so-called cultural assimilation: a dominant culture influences another culture, eventually resulting in identity loss of the second. According to Grenoble (2011: 33),

these factors are based around imbalances in prestige and power between minority and dominant languages and cultures. Cultural assimilation can be a result of vast immigration, e.g. North America and Australia during the period of colonialism. The language of immigrants, in this case English, is declared official and expands its dominance at the expense of indigenous languages. Geographical distance does not necessarily play a significant role in the process. Urbanization is yet another factor leading to cultural assimilation, with more and more members of rural areas migrating to urban centres in search for better lives. In order to improve their life standards they have to learn and use the dominant language. By doing so, fluency in their mother tongue declines gradually, but steadily. There are three stages in cultural assimilation affecting endangered languages: a) huge social, political or economic pressure to speak the dominant language in form of top-down, e.g. legal regulations, or bottom-up initiatives, e.g. modern trends within the society. This pressure results in b) the appearance of bilingualism, defined as the ability to use two or more languages. At the early stages of bilingualism both languages are being used equally. Afterwards, c) the dominant language filtrates into the domains of the indigenous language and takes them over, which leads to the situation where younger speakers become fluent in the dominant language and identify themselves more with it than with their ancestral tongue. If there is something to be done to slow down, stop or reverse this process, it must happen during the early stages of bilingualism, where the languages are complementary to each other, because the first stage is nearly impossible to influence, and at the third stage it is mostly too late to make significant changes. This, however, requires lots of effort and financial aid (Crystal 2003: 70).

2.1.5 Types of language death

Language death can be sudden or gradual. Nettle and Romaine (2000: 90) identify three types of language death. First, a language can die by population loss, i.e. when there are no speakers left to speak the language. However, population loss can be, but is not necessarily the only reason why languages die. The population may be stable, but a language shift from one language to another can also occur. Language shift is the conventional term for a gradual or sudden move from the use of one language to another, usually a politically, socially and economically more powerful language. As such, language shift is the primary cause of language death (Crystal 2003: 17). Language shift and death are the result of social, economic or political pressures on a community. A language gradually loses ground to another one, having less and less domains to function in and losing its complexity and vocabulary. When a

dominant language takes over all the domains of function of the dominated language and when the chain of intergenerational transmission in the second is broken, death occurs (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 7). Language shift usually includes bilingualism as a phase leading to monolingualism in the new language. As Romaine (2006: 395) states, a community, once monolingual, becomes bilingual as a result of contact with a language, which has more power and prestige than its own. Later on, it becomes transitionally bilingual in the new language until it eventually gives up its native language.

There are two kinds of language shift – forced and voluntary, a significant difference between them being the option for people to stay within their habitats and continue with their everyday lives, given in the process of voluntary shift, as in the case of Cornish. Forced and voluntary language shift represent the second and third type of language death. Combinations of these three types of language death are possible. Voluntary shift occurs gradually. Some domains of the dominated languages give up their space to the dominant languages earlier than others. Thus, Nettle and Romaine (2000: 91) distinguish between language death from the top down and language death from the bottom up. *Top down language death* takes place by the retreat of a language from official institutions, public domains, church etc., leaving it space to manifest itself at home as its last resort. Breton is an excellent example of top down language death. *Bottom up language death* occurs when a language retreats from everyday usage, surviving in ceremonial or school use. Latin serves as a good example of bottom up language death.

2.1.6 Responses to language death

There are two choices we can make in response to language death: do nothing about it and let languages fall into oblivion, or do everything in our power to stop or even reverse language death. In order to accomplish the second, raising public awareness on the matter is very important. Linguistic diversity needs to be portrayed as a treasure of human race, and not as an obstacle to communication and development. In general, Grenoble (2011: 36) specifies at least three sets of reasons for caring about languages:

- they are valuable to heritage communities themselves

- they are valuable to the scientific community

- they are valuable as a part of world's cultural heritage.

Crystal (2003: 32) goes a step further and specifies five reasons why we should care about languages. That's because:

- We need diversity in general. The same diversity is now under threat and cannot be replaced if a previously undocumented language dies. C. 7000 different ways to express ourselves make us as a species rich when it comes to diversity. Decline in this number should therefore be undesirable and inadmissible;

- Languages express identity. If a language dies, a major part of the cultural identity of a community dies with it. Expressing cultural identity via another language is not the same as expressing it via a person's mother tongue. Language thus forms an integral part of identity;

- Languages are repositories of history. As such they encompass the history of their speakers;

- Languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge. There are different kinds of detailed knowledge so unique to a particular language. This knowledge, passed down for thousands of years, shows us how the human mind works. It would be a real pity to lose it and put us into position never to use it again. Efforts to preserve this knowledge are therefore the first thing we must do. In order for future generations to do more about the matter, it is us who have to start taking care about the preservation of this knowledge;

- Languages are interesting in themselves. They contain vast numbers of information which disappear as soon as a language dies. Contrary to Western beliefs that indigenous languages are undeveloped, backward, primitive, inadequate and animal-like, there are plenty of examples of indigenous languages around the world as complex as e.g. French or English. This, however, is not a globally known fact.

If there is something to be done to reverse or slow down language death, there has to be a major change in global attitudes towards endangered languages. In order to do so, there is a need for funds, governmental or private ones, to ensure more information on the number and state of endangered languages, i.e. a need for linguistic documentation of the endangered languages. If people were more informed about the problem and rate at which it happens, whether through books, mass media or numerous organizations, global awareness about

language death would be much higher and more could be accomplished in favour of the language revival movement.

2.2 Language revival

As Hinton (2011: 291) claims, language revival deals with attempts to bring an endangered language back to use after it had reduced in usage over a period of time. Language maintenance, on the other hand, is a term used for attempts to support and strengthen a language which is still alive - a language which still has young speakers, but with signs of reduced usage beginning to surface. There are many ways to bring an endangered or extinct language back to use:

- learning a few words, e.g. greetings or short speeches

- gathering linguistic publications, field notes, audio- and video-recordings to form an archive

- developing a writing system and creating dictionaries and grammars

- documenting a language to form a corpus of various materials

- language classes and camps, summer schools

- full immersion schools for children (Hinton 2011: 292).

According to Hinton (2011: 293), two main goals of language revival are:

- to teach a language to those who do not know it

- to increase the number of situations where a language is used.

2.2.1 Language revival movement

During the 1990s, especially with the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights[8], primarily focused on language, public awareness of language rights grew substantially, especially in Europe. According to Nettle and Romaine (2000: 173), people

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[8] The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, also known as the Barcelona Declaration, is a document that supports and protects linguistic rights, primarily those of endangered and minority languages. It was signed in Barcelona, Spain in 1996 by the International PEN Club and various non-governmental organizations.

across the world should have the inalienable right to exist and the right to practice and reproduce their own language and culture. The issue of language rights began to be discussed at international, national, regional and local level. Organizations, such as UNESCO and the UN, also started devoting their attention to the problem of language endangerment and, alongside local communities, invested some effort into the preservation of linguistic diversity. Adopted on 13 September 2007, the United Nation's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states in Article 13, section 1, among other things, the following:

> *Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons (Grenoble 2011: 36).*

Efforts towards the matter resulted in the foundation of a number of organizations specifically concerned with endangered, indigenous languages and their revival, such as the International Clearing House for Endangered Languages (ICHEL), the Endangered Language Fund, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, etc. Today, the global community responds to language death by increasing linguistic documentation efforts, supporting i.e. funding language documentation and revival efforts, and paying attention to indigenous rights and cultural heritage (Austin and Sallabank, 2011: 12). According to Crystal (2003: 92), top priority in language revival models is information gathering, i.e. information about the number of speakers, context of their life environment, attitudes towards language, fluency and age levels. Also, languages are not at the same level of endangerment - some are alive and kicking; some are at their final stages. It is therefore very important to determine those languages in urgent need for some action. With no information, i.e. documentation on a particular language left, revival attempts are unfortunately impossible. Woodbury (2011: 159) defines language documentation as the creation, annotation, preservation and dissemination of transparent records of a language. Records are products of language documentation, and they come in forms of writing (compiling dictionaries and grammars), video- and audio-recordings etc. However, language documentation does not alone ensure the survival of a language, best example being Latin. It is very important to change surprisingly common negative attitudes towards a language between members of a community. This can only be done by intriguing their emotions, both towards their language and their culture. In order to make significant progress in the preservation of an endangered language, there has to be:

-        a community ready to obtain help

-        a positive attitude towards language preservation

-        a positive political environment

-        available professional help (Crystal 2003: 102).

Any language revival model must be coordinated and planed right down to the last detail. Plenty can be done in order to stop language death, perfect examples being successful outcomes of language revival models across the globe, such as the revival of Hebrew, Hawaiian, Māori etc. However, miracles or significant improvements are not to be expected that easy. Language revival is a hard and long process. Setting realistic priorities and collecting accurate information on resources is crucial if any success is to be achieved. Often, language revival programs tend to start from the educational system, which can be, but is not necessarily the best approach, especially if a language is spoken by speakers already past school age. The revival of Irish can serve as an example of an 'unsuccessful' language revival model focused on the educational system. Unlike many endangered languages, Irish has financial support from the state, but did not manage to significantly improve its position over a period of almost 90 years. The main reason behind it was the fact that Irish was not the language of home. It was artificially learned at schools, as a second language, without being transmitted in natural environments. Education accomplished relative success and led to knowledge of Irish as a second language, but could not lead to its intergenerational transmission and its use in everyday life. Investing time and money into education had proved itself not to be successful in this case, mainly because the attempt to revive Irish did not come from within the community and therefore lacked community support. On the other hand, the revival of Hawaiian and Māori also started from the educational system, but the idea of revival came from within their communities, which made it a lot easier for revival models to succeed. State support also did not lack. It is therefore very important to take into account the big picture of the situation a language finds itself in, i.e. social, political and economic factors, attitudes towards languages etc. (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 187).

The idea to revive a language must come from within a community. Language use must be encouraged from within community and home. Intergenerational transmission is the key to language revival. This is the bottom up approach to language revival, i.e. starting from more easily controllable domains like home use and slowly, but steadily improving the

position of a language. A top down approach to language revival would be to start with general activism on behalf of the environment. Languages share the same fate as animals and plant species, which are being erased as a result of environmental destruction. Organizations such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International, etc. have to be convinced that language revival falls also within their realm, as these three mutually influence each other. They should therefore start devoting their attention to the preservation of languages too. The second top down approach is to establish language policies on local, regional and international scale as a part of the overall political planning, i.e. to establish agencies whose tasks would be language maintenance and development (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 177).

2.2.2 Types of language revival

Language revival can be school-, community- and family based. One could also add adult language learning as the fourth revival method (Hinton 2011: 294). Schools became part of language revival efforts in the 1970s and their programs provide examples of most successful language revival cases. School-based programs teach endangered languages commonly in form of language classes, an hour one to five times per week of language teaching, from preschool to university level. Endangered languages are also taught in form of bilingual education – a subject is taught in a child's native tongue as well as in the dominant language of the school system. Immersion schools, also known as language survival schools, formed in Canada in 1965, provide another way of language revival. Within these schools, the language of instruction is the endangered language itself, and in some varieties the dominant language is not used at all, except as a foreign language. All the classroom books and materials, even playground activities are in the endangered language. Some schools also have programs combining immersion and bilingual education. Revival of Hawaiian or Māori is an example of most successful language revivals trough immersion schools. Community based language revival comes in form of e.g. language and culture camps, offering intensive language input during summer. Adult language learning is often not available at all levels of education. Some languages like Hawaiian and Māori have university classes for adult language learning and training centres preparing young adults to become teachers, improving thereby the position of their language constantly. On the other hand, a majority of indigenous languages are not taught at universities. If they are taught at all, it usually happens in evening classes once a week, which is not enough to make a significant difference in endangered

language use. Language use in home is the final goal of any language revival program. Endangered language use needs to surpass the boundaries of school and camp use and usage among elders. It must become the daily language of the whole community, i.e. the language of family. It is very difficult to accomplish this and many language revival programs have unfortunately lacked support for language use within the family. One of the few languages which managed family-based language revival is Hawaiian. Second-language-learner parents, who wanted their children to go to a Hawaiian-medium preschool, were given a choice not to pay the tuition fee if they volunteered to work within the classroom. There, they had to be silent or learn to speak the language, which they eventually did through evening or university classes. As the result, Hawaiian is used today within the family, by both parents and their children (Hinton 2011: 304).

2.2.3 Language maintenance

It is very difficult to determine how many speakers a language needs to be maintained, have an ensured life and be considered safe. Some linguists argue that even major languages, including English, cannot be considered safe over a long period of time. People think the fewer speakers a language has, the more it is at risk, which is not necessarily the case. If there is great external pressure on them, languages with high numbers of speakers can be in danger too. On the other hand, a small language can be safe, if there is a functional community and a stable environment (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 41). One is sure: it is pointless to determine the absolute number of speakers needed to maintain a language which can be applied globally, because of various contexts and situations a language can find itself in. In many Pacific areas, a population of five hundred speakers is a reasonable figure when it comes to ensuring the life of a particular language; the same number of speakers in e.g. Europe or North America is far away from even having a chance to accomplish similar results. Population size is thus not necessarily a reliable indicator of language situation (Crystal 2003: 11). It has to be linked to other factors like social, political and economic contexts. Relating to minority languages, John Edwards identifies the following 11 factors influencing a language, its speakers and their life settings: demographic, sociological, linguistic, psycholinguistic, historical, political, geographical, educational, religious, economic and technological factors. Grenoble and Whaley, focusing their attention on endangered languages, add literacy as another factor and extend Edwards' framework to include local, regional, national and international influence on languages (Crystal 2003: 94).

2.2.4 Community roles in language revival

Conditions for maintenance and revival of an endangered language are favourable if its members use it proudly whenever and wherever they can, if they feel that their language is a part of themselves and their identity, and if there are opportunities made for a language to be heard. On the other hand, if people feel embarrassed about their language and use the dominant language almost the entire time, if they have negative attitudes towards their language and avoid using it or even doing something with it, if they see it as a burden, conditions for maintenance and revival are not so promising. In order to live, a language needs a community that will use it. It cannot live outside human communities. Only a community can save a language. It may obtain help from outside, but ultimately, the desire to save its language must come from within the community itself. On the other hand, a community can only survive where there is a sustainable environment for it to live in, both linguistically and economically. In places where a community cannot advance, its language is in danger (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 79). There are different attitudes towards language preservation within communities. Some encourage attempts to preserve their language; some are not interested in such action. Some may be proud of their cultural heritage; others may deny it. Some may have improved their standards of living by switching to a dominant language; others may have not. It is very important to determine the causes of negative attitudes towards a language, how common they are and to assess their impact on a community (Crystal 2003: 103). Inferiority of indigenous languages as opposed to 'modern' European languages, imposed by Western governments and missionaries, played a significant role in creating these negative attitudes. People are simply not being born with the feeling of shame towards their language. Later on, prohibition of indigenous languages in boarding schools also contributed to the overall feeling of embarrassment about one's language. Parents didn't want their children to experience the same shame and problems as they did, and therefore used the dominant language in conversation with their children at home, pushing their mother tongue further into decline.

The role of a linguist in language maintenance and revival is to persuade communities their languages are worth saving and to ensure the future of their languages. There are three tasks in order to accomplish this: a) diagnosis and assessment, b) description and analysis, and c) intervention and re-assessment (Crystal 2003: 145). Even if communities agree for something to be done to save their language, they often think they themselves do not have to

do the job, leaving it all to organizations, schools, linguists etc. On the contrary, the whole community, or at least a significant part of it, in all of its everyday activities must be involved. Other cultural marks, such as art, music, dance, clothing, crafts, etc. cannot be omitted, as they provide ground for language manifestation. Language may be the most significant cultural mark, but without space to be used in, it does not play its full role. Culture as a whole must therefore be taken into account, in order to save or revive an endangered language. There are also beliefs among community members their languages would drastically change, once they are handled by 'outsiders'. Truth is, endangered languages do not have to remain unchanged, as language change is a natural and constant process in the lifetime of a language. According to Moriarty (2011: 449), languages change because speech communities change. To ensure their future, communities need to keep up with these changes, so that they can develop a vocabulary to express contemporary society aspects.

2.2.5 Language policy and - planning in language revival movements

As Sallabank (2011: 277) states, language policy and language planning, originally associated with promotion of national languages and practice of treating multilingualism as a problem, once viewed as the keystone of nation-building and unification, start supporting language diversity as something positive since the 1990s. Language policy involves top-down decisions, principles and strategies, while language planning involves bottom-up basic measures and practices for language support. Language policy legally determines how languages are to be used and ensures support, promotion and protection for languages. According to Sallabank (2011: 289), there are two main structures in language policy with regard to language revival: *domain expansion*, which relies on schooling for language transmission and includes standardization and modernization, and the *phatic route*, which promotes home use of endangered languages and identification with a language. Regarding language planning, two kinds are to be distinguished: *corpus planning*, concerned with the language itself, i.e. documentation, codification, graphization, standardization, modernization and orthography development, and the production of dictionaries, grammars and language-learning materials, and *status planning*, concerned with the environment of language use, i.e. assurance of official recognition, expansion and confirmation of domains and functions of use and obtainment of funds for a language (Sallabank 2011: 278). There is also a third kind of language planning, namely *acquisition planning,* concerned with the ways how to implement corpus and status policies, i.e. how the language is to be acquired (Wright 2006: 165).

2.2.6 Mass media and their role in language revival

To improve its position within a wider community, an endangered language needs to become visible again, whether through newspapers, television and the Internet or through increased use in community settings such as town halls, churches etc. Another important objective is to make the language visible in public domain sectors, such as law and public administration. Of all of these the Internet is the most unexplored and perhaps the most promising area for an endangered language to be expressed, because, unlike newspapers or television, it demands much less financially and gives everyone equal service. To create a website in e.g. Breton costs the same as to create it in French. The Internet and IT thus provide the opportunity to increase the public profile of an endangered language. By doing so, they bring together scattered speakers of endangered languages. In communication, geographical distance might have presented problems. The Internet and IT transcend these problems, making it possible for speakers of a language to communicate with each other via various tools. Speakers feel encouraged to use their language and are given another domain where they can learn their language. José Ramos-Horta, a Nobel Peace Prize Winner and the former President of East Timor, states the following on the Internet:

> *The Internet is hard to intercept and almost impossible to censor... [It] has revolutionized the fight for human rights. It has broken down the barriers erected by dictatorships, and put an end to the silence and isolation felt by the victims of oppression (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 149)*

However, it must be acknowledged that many endangered communities may not even have electricity. They cannot do much when it comes to making a language more visible via the Internet (Crystal 2003: 142). The task of ensuring a public profile on the Internet befalls then their community members who live in areas with internet connection and language activists across the globe. According to Holton (2011: 376), this can be accomplished by certain products, such as multimedia, computer-assisted language learning tools, electronic dictionaries, web portals, and by certain online technologies, such as discussion groups, interactive websites, podcasts, web-based language courses etc. Nowadays, there has been a dramatic change in access to technology. It is, therefore, presumable that endangered communities and their languages will have better or equal opportunities to fight for their language in near future.

3. Celtic languages

Celtic languages are a part of the Indo-European language family. They once covered a vast area of Europe, from Britain to Asia Minor. The Celtic language family is subdivided into Continental Celtic and Insular Celtic. Gaulish, Celtiberian, Galatian and Lepontic, languages once spoken in continental Europe, today without living native descendants, belong to the Continental Celtic languages. Goidelic languages (Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx) form one branch and Brythonic languages (Welsh, Cornish and Breton) the other branch of the Insular Celtic languages. Goidelic and Brythonic are both Celtic languages, but they are unintelligible to each other. Some linguists also distinguish between P-Celtic and Q-Celtic languages, because one branch uses a "p" sound where the other one uses a "q" sound, represented by *c* or *k*. P-Celtic corresponds to Brythonic languages and Q-Celtic to Goidelic languages[9]. Today, Celtic languages are mostly spoken in Northwestern Europe, i.e. in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Brittany, Cornwall and the Isle of Man. English is the language that advanced the most at the expense of Celtic languages. Language shift spread rapidly, affecting urban areas sooner than rural ones. Celtic economy simply could not keep up with the opportunities provided by English in terms of economic welfare. Celtic languages were neglected, pushed to peripheral areas and policies were made to undermine their position, e.g. the *Welsh Not* (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 139). However, despite all the difficulties Celts were burdened with, they managed to preserve their languages, their culture and their identity up to present times.

Loss of the original Indo-European sound "p" is the feature of Celtic languages that most evidently differentiates them from other Indo-European languages. Thus, Latin *porcus* is *orc* in Goidelic. Also, there is no correspondence between spelling and pronunciation, and initial consonants change according to the final sound of the preceding word. Thus, in Welsh *tad* ("a father") becomes *fy nhad* for "my father" (http://www.missgien.net/celtic/languages.html).

3.1 Goidelic languages

3.1.1 Irish

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[9] Welsh: son- *map;* head-*pen;* Irish: son- *mac;* head- *ceann.*

Irish (*Gaeilge*) is, alongside Scottish Gaelic and Manx, a part of the Goidelic, also known as the Gaelic branch of the Insular Celtic languages. The Irish language spread to Scotland and the Isle of Man in the 5th and 6th century due to the establishment of Irish settlements in those areas. As a result, Scottish Gaelic and Manx, languages closely related to Irish, developed. These three languages have a similar grammar and vocabulary, but their pronunciation and spelling are quite different. Irish is spoken today mostly in Ireland, but also in the UK, Canada, the USA and Australia. Three dialects of spoken Irish persist to date: Connacht Irish in the west, Ulster Irish in the north and Munster Irish in the southwest. According to the Atlas of the World's languages in Danger (2010), Irish is classified as *definitely endangered* (http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html). It is an official language in the Republic of Ireland.

After the arrival of Normans in Ireland in 1169 and during the following several centuries, Irish language and economy started being influenced by English. Irish was at the time influenced mostly lexically, in fields of architecture, administration and warfare. Not until the middle of the 16th century did English gain a higher role in society at the expense of Irish. Through military actions and economic exploitation, the Tudors wanted to destroy institutions in Ireland not so fond of English rule and to establish new ones, based on English models. In order to carry out their plan completely, they populated the lands with English-speaking individuals, displacing the Irish population. As a result bilingualism emerged and grew, but Irish did not lose much ground to English, at least not until the late 17th and early 18th century, when an immense shift away from Irish occurred. The shift was mostly due to the Industrial Revolution, which was based around English speaking areas in the east, thus causing massive migration of Irish speakers from the west. At the time, a compulsory primary education system was also introduced. Teaching was conducted through the medium of English, and use of Irish was prohibited (until 1871). English was the language associated with power and prestige, and Irish with poverty. Irish was the language of peasantry and those speaking it were mocked and humiliated. The Famine of 1840, which hit rural Ireland- the heartland of Irish, followed by vast emigration put the Irish language into a situation near disappearance (Ó hlfernáin 1998: 200).

In 1921, Ireland was divided into two states: the Irish Free State (Republic of Ireland since 1949), formed in 1922, and Northern Ireland, which remained a part of the UK. The

Irish Free State, inspired by the *Gaelic League*[10]*,* showed strong commitment towards the Irish language and its revival. Its goal was the preservation and development in places where it was still spoken as the first language, as well as its reintroduction as a community language in places where this was not the case. Irish, although present in primary education since earlier, was now made compulsory in schools. Areas where Irish was still spoken as the native community language were called *Gaeltacht*[11]. These areas are positioned in the remote, economically undeveloped west of the country (Ó hlfernáin 1998: 203). Today, there are 96,628 people in the *Gaeltacht*, of which 66,238 reported they could speak Irish, with 23,175 people (35%) using Irish daily, outside school. The number of Irish speakers who use the language weekly and less than weekly increases year over year. Outside the *Gaeltachtaí*, the ability to speak Irish was and is to present day fairly low. Irish was recognized as the state's first official language in 1937, alongside English as the second. The 1950s and 1960s have seen the development of standardized Irish, known as *The Official Standard*. This form, based on the three dialects and the pronunciation of Connacht Irish, is taught at schools.

According to the 1851 census, the first that included a language question, there were 1.5 million speakers of Irish (23.3% of the population), with 319,602 monoglot Irish speakers. This number was in a continuous decline until the census of 1926, when a higher number of Irish speakers was reported. This increase in number was due to the acceptance of Irish as a symbol of national identity. According to censuses, Ireland's population experienced an increase since then, and the number of Irish speakers also followed the trend. However, it must be acknowledged that the censuses were based on self-examination, and that the level of proficiency was not reported; one was only asked if he/she can read, write and/or speak Irish (Ó hlfernáin 1998: 203). These censuses are therefore not a fully reliable indicator of the language situation. The census of 2011, also based on self-examination, reports 4,588,252 people in the Republic of Ireland, with 1.77 million claiming knowledge of Irish. Approximately 130,000 are native Irish speakers. This census, unlike the above mentioned, also asked how frequently a person used the language. Accordingly, 1.8% of the population spoke Irish daily, outside schools and 18.7% spoke Irish daily (within schools), weekly or less often.

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[10] The Gaelic League is an organisation founded in Ireland in 1893, with the purpose of promoting the Irish language wherever it is spoken.

[11] The Gaeltacht, formed in 1926, covers today about 7% of the state and has less than 3% of the state's population. Areas where Irish was the native language of more than 80% of the population were called *fíorGhaeltacht* and areas where it was the native language of at least 25% of the population were called *breacGhaeltacht*.

Since the partition of Ireland, Irish in Northern Ireland lacked support from the state. It had no legal protection and was taught less and less at primary level. In 1998, by the *Good Friday Agreement*, the position of Irish in Northern Ireland started improving. Irish gained access to broadcasting media and the Government started funding Irish-medium primary schools, formed in Belfast. The 1991 census, the first one in Northern Ireland to include a language question since the partition of Ireland, reported 142,003 people with some knowledge of Irish. The census of 2011 reported 1.8 million people in Northern Ireland, with some 10% able to speak Irish or claiming to know it to some degree. Some 65,000 were native Irish speakers. The dialect of Irish spoken in Northern Ireland is Ulster Irish. Since 2001, Irish in Northern Ireland is under the protection of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). It has, however, no official status in the UK.

Attitudes towards the Irish language and its revival are positive throughout the Republic, although only around a third of the population claims knowledge of it. Irish has political and economic support from the government; it is taught as a compulsory subject in schools. Besides, Ireland is a member of the European Union since 1973, and as such it benefits much in terms of support for Irish. This, however strange it may seem, given that most endangered languages lack state or any other kind of support, is not enough to ensure the life of Irish. Irish is not the language of home; it is artificially learned in schools, with little chance to use it within society and as such it is forgotten soon after leaving school. The revival of Irish was based only on education instead on home, community and workplace usage as well as on education, and as such proved itself not to be successful for various reasons. First of all, a language cannot be revived by learning it an hour per day. It must be used in and outside education, in every aspect of life. Secondly, pedagogical methods and materials used in the process were poor- the accent was on translation and reading exercises, rather than on conversation. Due to bad language policy, people in the Republic felt forced to learn Irish and developed negative attitudes towards it. Irish was stigmatized as a useless language, since English was seen by the speakers of Irish as the language of future. They supported the language for political reasons, but when it came to the revival of Irish, they did not want to be involved with it or even learn the language (Carnie 1996: 11). Attitudes are, however, recently changing in favour of Irish, mostly due to a revival based on new publications in the language, i.e. books, weekly and monthly newspapers, as well that based on television and radio services in Irish, such as *Teilifís na Gaelige (TG4), Raidió na Gaeltachta*, also some independent radio stations, etc. Although these cannot compete with

English ones in terms of quality, availability and funding, they provide a new ground for Irish to be seen and heard and as such maintain Irish. The future of Irish is not doomed, but it is also not flourishing. Recent trends have been in favour of the language, but no one can guarantee its preservation.

3.1.2 Scottish Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic (*Gáidhlig*) belongs to the Goidelic branch of the Insular Celtic languages. It is closely related to Irish and Manx, and came into existence as a variety of Irish, which spread from the north of Ireland to the west of Scotland in the 5th century. Nowadays, Scottish Gaelic is a separate language from Irish and is mostly spoken in the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland. Besides Scotland, it is spoken in Canada, Australia, the USA and New Zealand. According to the Atlas of the World's languages in Danger (2010), Scottish Gaelic is classified as *definitely endangered* (http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html). It has no official status in the UK.

Between the 9th and 11th centuries, a largely Gaelic-speaking Scottish kingdom was established. In the 11th century Scottish Gaelic started losing ground and influence to Norman French and afterwards to Scots, i.e. English-based language varieties, which developed in Lowland Scotland at the end of the 15th century. Scottish Gaelic developed into a distinct dialect of Irish towards the end of the 13th century. In the 17th century, it developed into a language separate from Irish and a Scottish standard emerged. At this moment, Scottish Gaelic retreated to the Highlands and Western Isles, having a great deal of their political independence, culture and social structure preserved. This was a thorn in the flesh to the rest of Scotland and later on to the British state, so that different measures were taken and policies created from the 15th to the 18th century to alter this situation (MacKinnon 1998: 176). Despite the promotion of English-language education across the country, a voluntary Gaelic Schools system was developed in the Highlands in the 19th century. It was, however, replaced by a national English-medium school system in 1872. Since then, English was promoted as the language of literature; Scottish Gaelic was at the same time ignored and prohibited in the classroom. Gaelic was only taught in Catholic schools, which received little or no government funds. The Education Act of 1918 altered this situation. Catholic schools were now sponsored by the state's education authorities, which meant that Gaelic was to be taught in Gaelic-speaking areas. In 1958, it became an initial teaching medium in early primary stages of

education, and an examination subject at the secondary stage. Around 1980, many Highland schools introduced Gaelic as a second language. In 1985, the first Gaelic-medium primary schools were established in Glasgow and Inverness. Today, there are Gaelic-medium and bilingual primary schools, Gaelic-medium primary schools and schools where Gaelic is taught as a second language. Education through Gaelic at secondary stage is far less developed than at primary stage (MacKinnon 1998: 184). At tertiary stage, there are no degrees taught completely through the medium of Gaelic. It appears that Gaelic in Scotland owes its preservation to the educational system as the area where it developed and was revived the most. Recently, its position in the media also improved, but it cannot even be compared to that of English. Publishing, cultural gatherings in form of local festivals called *fèis*, arts and traditional music festivals called *ceòlas,* etc. contribute to and improve the overall position of the language. Scottish Gaelic does not have an official status in the UK, but it is protected and promoted by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages since 2001. The future of Scottish Gaelic in Scotland is by no means secure, but at current trends, the language is definitely on a good path towards preservation.

The census of 1991 reported 65,978 Gaelic speakers in Scotland. At the time, Gaelic was spoken typically in the Western Isles, the Highland and the Argyll & Bute District, places coinciding with the traditional Gaelic-speaking area, also known as the *Gaidhealtachd.* The census reported also that the number of Gaelic speakers in Lowland and urban areas, such as Glasgow and Inverness, was growing. According to the census of 2011, there were 5,295,000 people in Scotland, 57,375 of which were Gaelic speakers. Although there is an overall decline in the number of Gaelic speakers since the 1991 and 2001 censuses, the census of 2011 reports an increase of people under 20 who spoke the language, which shows nevertheless a positive trend of language acquisition among the younger generation. Investments in the educational system begin to pay off and language situation will hopefully change in favour of Scottish Gaelic. Today, speakers of Scottish Gaelic are scattered across the country, not only in the outer areas, but also in the mainland, traditionally non-Gaelic areas. Almost all of them are bilingual.

3.1.3 Manx

Manx (*Gaelg*) is a member of the Goidelic Insular Celtic languages. It is spoken on the Isle of Man, a dependent, self-governing territory of the British Crown, not being a part of the

UK[12] (Clague, 2009). Manx is closely related to Irish and Scottish Gaelic, and it developed around 500 A.D. the same way as did Scottish Gaelic, by the establishment of Irish settlements on the island. By the 14th century Manx emerged as a dialect distinct from Irish; it developed into a language separate from Irish in the early 17th century. According to the Atlas of the World's Language in Danger (2010), Manx is classified as *critically endangered* (http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html).

Until 1765 almost the entire population of the island spoke Manx. In 1765 the British Crown bought the Isle of Man, and from this point onward speakers of Manx started decreasing in their number. Manx economy could not keep up with that of Britain, which resulted in emigration of Manx speakers. At the same time speakers of English were immigrating to the island. The situation Manx found itself in the 19th and early 20th was disastrous, rapidly decreasing in number of speakers, losing prestige, being displaced by English and shifting to it. In 1830, the island was connected with England by a regular steam ship service and became a desirable holiday destination for English-speaking tourist throughout the rest of the century. Thus, knowledge of English paid out to Manx speakers (Clague 2009: 170). In 1872 a compulsory education system was established, with English as the medium of instruction in all schools. All of this resulted in growing negative attitudes towards the language and Manx began to be seen as useless by its own speakers. Edward Maddrell, the last speaker of Manx, died in 1974, and Manx was officially declared extinct.

The census of 1901, the first one with a language question, reported the Isle of Man had the population of 54,752, with 4,419 speakers of Manx, only a handful of which were monolingual Manx speakers. The number of Manx speakers continued to drop until the language eventually 'died'. The census of 1981 did not even ask a question on Manx; however, that of 1991 reported, surprisingly, some 700 people able to speak, write or read the language. The census of 2011 reported 84,497 people on the island, with 1823 people claiming they could speak, write or read Manx. A few hundred are considered to be fluent speakers of Manx, which is a real success, given that the language had 'died' some forty years ago. Manx was declared extinct in 1974, but its revival started much earlier, probably as early as 1899, when the Manx Language Society, an organization aiming at the promotion and protection of the language, was formed. The Manx language society started publishing some language materials for Manx to be taught and learned. The language continued to be used by a

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[12] The Isle of Man is a member of the British Commonwealth, represented by the UK in international affairs.

handful of individuals. Since the 1970s, the population of the island grew substantially, mostly as the result of immigration from Britain. These immigrants, planning to stay and work on the island for several years, accepted and supported Manx as a part of their own and their children's future (Clague 2009: 172). Revival of Manx is, however, mostly due to its introduction in schools as an optional subject in 1992. Interest in the language grew and, today, it is taught as an optional subject to children aged 8 and above, as well as in secondary schools. In 1991, there were 148 speakers of Manx under the age of 20; in 2001 their number was 744. A class operating almost entirely through the medium of Manx was established in a primary school in 2001. It had nine students at the time. In 2003, their number was 24. By then the class was known as the Manx Gaelic primary school and was given its own building. The island's school system has been producing new native speakers of Manx ever since. This trend in favour of the language continued in other areas too. Manx was made more present and available via the internet and multimedia, radio stations, newspapers, music, bilingual street signs etc. It receives support from the government and is also protected by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages since 2003.

Despite all the improvements Manx has experienced, it is not the language of home. Even Manx speaking parents report they use the language with their children only sometimes. People who identify themselves with the language form only a minority of the island's population. The future of Manx lies within children attending the Manx Gaelic primary school. The situation Manx found itself from the 1990s up to present times has improved significantly. Manx went from being taught half an hour a week to becoming the medium of instruction in a primary school. At the rate its position is changing, improvements regarding secondary and tertiary education in the language are the next step on the way. Intergenerational transmission, discontinued for such a long period of time, could be restored, producing the next generation of native Manx speakers. This is an ambitious project, but if things happen according to current trends, it is a probable outcome.

3.2 Brythonic languages

3.2.1 Welsh

Welsh *(Cymraeg)* belongs to the Brythonic branch of the Insular Celtic languages. It is closely related to Cornish and Breton, the other two Brythonic languages[13]. Welsh started developing as a separate language in the 6th century A.D. Today, it is mostly spoken in west and north Wales, but also in England, the USA, Canada and Argentina. According to the Atlas of the World's Language in Danger (2010), Welsh is classified as *vulnerable* (http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html). It has an official status in the UK.

By the time the Anglo-Saxons invaded south eastern Britain (today's England) in the 5th century, Brythonic was still used as the community language in the area. After the invasion, it started being replaced by Anglo-Saxon, eventually losing a vast territory in southern Britain. Celtic people were pushed westwards. As a result, Brythonic was restricted only to Wales and some border countries in the 6th century. This was the time when Brythonic experienced major linguistic changes, and from this moment onward it is considered that the language used in Wales was no longer Brythonic but Welsh. Welsh was the language of literature and learning in Wales throughout the Middle Ages. It was the language of the whole society because Wales successfully resisted English attacks. However, the English kingdom eventually seized the opportunity which opened up by disunion and rivalry within Wales, establishing domination all over its territory. In 1536, Wales was annexed to England by the *Act of Union,* and English was given the official status. Translation of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer into Welsh, decreed by Elizabeth I in 1563 and done in 1588, is the only thing that prolonged the life of Welsh and saved it from disappearing. Welsh kept its prestige in the domain of religion, which proved to be enough to save the language. Until the late 19th century, the majority of the population in Wales communicated only through Welsh. Due to economic differences, migration, disregard in the educational system etc., Welsh gradually lost prestige among its own speakers and was identified with poverty; English, on the other hand, was seen as the language of success. There were not so many attempts to change the situation of Welsh in Wales until quite recently. Education is the area where first changes were made in favour of Welsh. As a matter of fact, schools were established to educate Welsh children. These, however, had little success, since they functioned through the medium of English, meaning that children speaking only Welsh could not benefit from the education. The Church and nonconformist chapels were the first to educate Welsh speaking children, as well

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[13] Cumbric, once spoken in todays northern England and southern Scotland, is yet another language of the Brythonic branch. It is, however, extinct since the 12th century.

as their parents in their own language. Thanks to these, speakers of Welsh became literate in their native language. However, not until 1907 did Welsh start being taught as a classroom subject in primary education (Awbery 1988: 156). 1947 saw the opening of the first Welsh-medium primary schools. In 2000, their number was 445, and they were positioned both in Welsh- and English-speaking areas. English is introduced in Welsh-medium primary schools at the age of 7. In 1956, the first Welsh-medium secondary school opened, and their number is increasing since then (52 in 2000). Welsh was included as a subject in the National Curriculum in 1988. In 1990, Welsh was made compulsory for all students aged up to 14; in 1999 all students in Wales had to learn Welsh as a first or second language from the ages of 5 to 16. A number of colleges provide courses in Welsh; there are, however, no Welsh-medium colleges. However, despite significant improvements, Welsh-medium schools formed only 27% of the primary education sector in 2001, i.e. 18% of primary school children were taught in Welsh. 78% of children in primary schools learned Welsh as a foreign language. Welsh-medium secondary schools formed 23% of the sector, i.e. 18% secondary school children were taught in Welsh. Welsh language strongholds lose their speakers year over year; Welsh is used less and less as a first language. On the other hand, there has been a positive trend of increase both in the number of Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools, and the number of students attending them and speaking the language. Also, opportunities to use Welsh in areas such as business have increased, making people with bilingual skills desirable in the job market (Mercator-Education 2001: 34).

The position of Welsh in areas other than education was also to be improved. The ultimate goal was the recognition of Welsh as an official language in Wales. In the second half of the 20th century, two Welsh Language Acts were passed (in 1967 and 1993), demanding equal treatment for English and Welsh. These improved the position of Welsh significantly, but did not secure official status for the language. In 2011, Welsh was eventually declared official by means of the *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure*, and as such it is the only Celtic language with official status in the UK. It is also the most vital language of the Celtic branch of the Indo-European language family. Since 2001, Welsh is under the protection of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The position of the Welsh was also improved due to the establishment of *S4C*, a Welsh-language television channel, *Radio Cymru*, weekly newspapers, the *Welsh Books Council*, publishing some 400 books a year in Welsh, the *National Eisteddfod*, an annual cultural festival celebrating and promoting the Welsh language and heritage through music, dance, literature, arts, etc.

The census of 2011 reported 562,000 people in Wales (19% of the population) who could speak Welsh, mostly living in the traditional west and north-west part of the country. According to the census, there is an increase in the number of Welsh speakers in non-traditional Welsh areas, such as Cardiff. The census was, however, based on self-examination; nothing was reported about the level of proficiency. There are certainly people using Welsh in most situations of their everyday life activities, but there are also people using Welsh as a second language, i.e. people not enough proficient in the language to be called speakers of Welsh. The final number of Welsh speakers in Wales is therefore to be taken with precaution.

Welsh is supported by the majority of the population in Wales. Increase in the number of Welsh primary and secondary schools across the country is only one example supporting this claim. Governmental support to acquire Welsh and the opportunities provided to use the language on daily basis are yet another example in favour of this claim. Education seems to have regenerated Welsh over the past twenty years. Its role in the future of the language is surely of great importance. However, the educational sector, i.e. schools cannot be the only place for a language to be learned and heard. Usage within families, activities in the language for children and young people, a firm position within the community, opportunities for language use in the workplace, better language services and a stronger infrastructure for the language are therefore also areas the Welsh Government values and aims to improve the most in order to secure a future for Welsh, or at least to give it a chance to fight for its future. Welsh is currently positioned the best among the Celtic languages, but by no means does this fact ensure its survival. Overall, measures have been taken to save the language. These measures, supported by the majority of the population, proved to be successful, but there is yet a great deal of time and effort to be invested into preservation of Welsh in order to call it 'safe' (http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/122902wls201217en.pdf).

3.2.2 Breton

Breton is one of the three preserved Brythonic languages. It is spoken mostly in Lower Brittany[14] (northwestern France). According to the Atlas of the World's languages in Danger (2010), Breton is classified as *severely endangered* (http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html). It has no official status in France.

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[14] Brittany is the name Celts, who migrated from Brittain, mainly from Cornwall, Wales and Devon in the 6th century, gave to the mainland area known as Armorica. It literally means 'Little Brittain'.

Since 1789, Brittany was fully annexed to the French nation-state. Linguistically, this represented the promotion of only one language- French. All the other regional languages were neglected. From 1880 to 1951 Breton was banned from schools. In 1880 education was made compulsory in France; French was the only medium of instruction. Educational policy and political ideology discouraged the use of regional or local languages, including Breton. Children caught speaking Breton were punished- they were forced to carry a wooden shoe around their neck for the entire school day; sometimes, they were also punished corporally. This was a humiliating experience for the children and resulted in development of negative attitudes towards Breton, encouraging thus shift to French. In 1951, by means of the *Loi Deixonne[15]*, Breton and other regional languages were introduced into schools for an hour a day as optional subjects. However, they were taught only if a teacher was prepared to volunteer to teach them. Until WWII, Brittany was predominantly a rural and agricultural area; Breton was still the language of the home and community. However, by 1975 Brittany, as well as other parts of France, was significantly modernized. This period in time saw a strong determination of bilingual parents not to transmit Breton to their children too, either because they did not want their children experience the same humiliation they experienced, or because it was in vogue to speak French as the modern language and thereby avoid being described as backward. Brittany became a desirable tourist destination too, which contributed to the major change in language situation. As a result, the number of Breton speakers declined drastically. Also, the language was heavily influenced by French in terms of lexis, but not in terms of syntax. Despite all, traditional Breton continues to be used today, typically among the older generation in domains such as family, neighbourhood, work etc., being a symbol of their solidarity and intimacy. There are some 200,000 Breton speakers today who use the language on everyday basis, the majority of which is aged 60 or more. Compared to a million Breton speakers reported at the beginning of the 20th century, there has been a dramatic decline both in their number and proficiency ever since (Timm 2003: 34).

However, there is also another, standardized variety of Breton alongside traditional Breton - the variety taught at schools, spoken in all parts Brittany, but a variety not universally accepted, because it is perceived as unintelligible to traditional Breton speakers. This is the so called Neo-Breton. It developed in the 20th century thanks to attempts to revive Breton. Breton became once again the symbol of identity. Neo-Breton was heavily influenced by French in terms of syntax, but not in terms of lexis, where many new Celtic words have

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[15] Loi Deixonne is the law that authorised the teaching of Breton and other regional languages in France.

been produced. Its speakers are aged 45 or less, whereas speakers of traditional Breton are aged 60 or more. Also, Neo-Breton speakers see their language as something positive; they speak it because they want to and they identify themselves with the language. It is the variety acquired by the younger generation. Neo-Breton is taught in *Diwan*, i.e. private immersion schools in Breton founded in 1977, but also in bilingual schools (since 1982), private Catholic schools and at the Universities of Rennes, Brest, Lorient and Nantes. Neo-Breton is thus a variety of Breton more likely to survive than traditional Breton. In order to do so, it must, however, become the language of family, neighbourhood and work, i.e. it has to be transmitted intergenerationally (Hornsby 2007: 205).

The language situation regarding Breton is difficult. Native Breton speakers, mainly coming from rural areas are repulsed by Neo-Breton of the urban, middle class, rejecting it as a language they would use, because '*it is no one's native language*'. Furthermore, they do not even regard it as a variety of Breton, since it is heavily influenced by French in terms of syntax and as such distinct from traditional Breton. Neo-Breton is termed unauthentic. In order to change this situation, *neo-bretonnants* have to transmit the language to their children, i.e. use the language every day within family, with friends etc. Neo-Breton would thus have a basis to become a native language and as such it could have a future. Traditional Breton is, on the other hand, spoken less and less regularly, mostly by the older generation, and is not transmitted within family since the 1950s. As such, it is near disappearance.

Breton is broadcasted on state and independent radio, as well as television stations, but there is no station broadcasting fully in the language. There are also weekly and monthly newspapers in Breton. In 1993, the French government refused to recognize the linguistic rights of Breton, by not ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. French is the only language of the state by constitution. Recently, the position and presence of Breton has been slightly improving. Bilingual road signs, the *Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient*, an annual festival celebrating the language and its culture, active campaigns in favour of Breton, the Internet etc., give their contribution to the language. Whether that is enough to alter the situation, i.e. change the law and opinion of the French government, is yet to be seen. Breton is still a minority language and its future is by no means secure.

3.2.3 Cornish

Cornish (*Kernewek*) is a Brythonic language that developed as a distinct language in the 6th century A.D. As such, it is closely related to Breton and Welsh. It is spoken in Cornwall in south-western Britain. The language is recognized as a regional language by the British Government, i.e. it is protected by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages since 2003. As such, Cornish is the only minority language in England with such status. However, it has no official status in Cornwall. According to the Atlas of the World's languages in Danger (2010), Cornish is classified as *critically endangered* (http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html).

Since the Anglo-Saxon invasions in the 4th and 5th century up until the Tudors and the Reformation, Cornwall was predominantly Cornish speaking. The *Prayer Book Rebellion* in 1549, the resistance of the Cornish against the use of English in services[16], was a major turning point in the history of the language, since c. 5000 Cornish died in battle. English domination was established throughout the territory; English was introduced in all the religious services. The Book of Common Prayer and the Bible were translated into Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, but they had not been translated into Cornish. Cornish was stigmatized and totally neglected by the British Crown. As a result, at the beginning of the 17th century Cornish was only spoken in several areas in the west. Dolly Pentrey, the last monoglot Cornish speaker, died in 1777. By the early 19th century Cornish died out as a community language (http://www.magakernow.org.uk/default.aspx?page=24).

Efforts to preserve Cornish were undertaken as early as in the 17th century by a handful of intellectuals who translated parts of the Bible into Cornish. Edward Lhuyd, a renowned Welsh linguist, also contributed to the preservation of Cornish. He conducted a research on the language at the beginning of the 18th century, and provided precious information about the language used at the time. The 19th century had witnessed some determination acting in favour of Cornish; however the 20th century marks the beginning of actual attempts to revive the language. Henry Jenner's *Handbook of the Cornish Language[17],* based on Late Cornish and published in 1904, started the revival. There was, however, a need for a spelling system of Cornish. Hence Robert Morton Nance developed *Unified Cornish* in the 1929, a version of the language based on Middle Cornish (15th and 16th century). Richard Gendall, dissatisfied by flaws of Unified Cornish regarding the spelling system and its

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[16] At the time religion based around the Catholic Church was the main domain where Cornish was used.

[17] The purpose of the handbook was language learning for people interested in Cornish.

foundations, developed *Modern Cornish* in the early 1980s, another variant of Cornish, based on Late Cornish (17th and 18th century). *Common Cornish,* based on the pronunciation of Middle Cornish, was developed by Ken George in the late 1980s. This version became very popular among Cornish speakers. In 1995, Nicholas Williams introduced an improved version of Unified Cornish, based on Middle Cornish and called it *Unified Cornish Revised.* All four versions are mutually intelligible and used among speakers[18]. There was, however, the need to develop an official, universally accepted spelling system, a system which was to be used in public life and education. As a result, the *Standard Written Form* emerged in 2008. It is used for official purposes and formal education, while the other forms continue to be used in private spheres of life. Cornish started being taught in schools in 1930s; the number of children taught was, however, very small. In 1988, there were only six schools teaching Cornish (an hour a week). The position of Cornish in schools improved towards the start of the 21st century, but this improvement was by no means significant. Twelve primary and four secondary schools taught the language in school year 2000-2001; only 120 of 39,000 primary school children attended Cornish classes[19]. Despite the slow progress, Cornish speakers continued to invest into education. The first Cornish bilingual pre-school opened in 2010. Children as well as their parents are being taught Cornish. There are also evening classes in Cornish for adult learners. Presence of Cornish in media is also limited. Some monthly magazines such as *An Gannas* are published mainly in Cornish; the language is also present in some English publications. Cornish is occasionally broadcasted on television and radio stations such as BBC Cornwall (Ferdinand 2013: 219).

The use of Cornish increases, but it is still a minority language. The census of 2011 reported only 500 people from the total population of 530,000 in Cornwall, who listed Cornish as the language they used most frequently. Only a few thousand understood it. However, support for the promotion of Cornish among general population is relatively high. Cornish gained some official recognition; is introduced in more and more schools; it receives funding from the state. Whether it will continue to be used depends on future generations and their willingness to learn the vernacular of Cornwall.

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[18] Unified Cornish Revised and Common Cornish are the versions used most often.
[19] Generally, Cornish was used to theach the Cornish language; other subjects were taught in English.

4. Conclusion

Language death is nowadays a very real and serious problem. It can affect any language and society across the world. There is not one language which can be considered safe over a long period of time. Some of them, e.g. English have really good chances to ensure their survival, but even their future cannot be guaranteed. Such languages should not, however, be concerned about their future for the time being. It is the small, minority languages which are under threat of disappearance and exactly these languages should be given a great deal of public attention and help in order to prevent them from disappearing. Each of the current 7, 102 languages in the world is equally important. Each of them has its own history, culture and communities, and none of these should be neglected. There is no backward or primitive language, because each language is beautiful in itself. To lose a language means to lose its speakers' history passed down for generations. Language is also a very important integral part of its speakers' identity – to lose one's language would mean to lose one's identity; losing a language would also mean losing a culture – crafts, clothing,

dance, art, music, etc., all mutually interconnected via language, would be forgotten and lost if it was not for the language and the opportunities it provides for them to be used. Language diversity should not be seen as an obstacle to progress, but rather as a treasure – a treasure which is to be cherished and valued. If there is something to be done in order to slow down or even reverse language death, it is high time to roll up our sleeves and start working. Some people take the problem of language death for granted because the languages at risk are languages they may not have even heard of. They are not, however, aware of how fast their own languages can end up in same situations. Endangered or 'safe', precaution measures have to be taken to avoid language death. Revival models are the best precaution measures, because they try to slow down or stop language death. In order to succeed, these must be supported by both government and community. In cases where this union was formed, languages have been saved successfully. The six living Celtic languages described in this thesis find themselves at different levels of endangerment. Their future is by no means secure, mostly because they live for centuries next to the world's most powerful language. On the other hand, if it was not for the revival movements, no matter how successful or unsuccessful they were, the position of the Celtic languages would definitely be much worse. Language revival models should therefore be supported no matter where, because they are the first step towards long term preservation of a language.

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