Language planning as warrant of authenticity

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Abstract

In this paper, I focus on the phonologicy of revived languages. Previous studies agree that a revived language always differs from the original one, because of the influence of the substrate language. Furthermore, a structural compromise between the target language and the learners' first language enhances the chances of a successful revival. On the other hand, such changes involve contestations about issues of authenticity, which discourage learners. Consequently, mismatches between substrate influence and a possible yearning for authenticity slow down the revival process.

In this paper, I intend to show that revivalists' definition of authenticity does not exclude changes. In some cases, it even generates them. Consequently, I assume that substrate influence and authenticity are not necessarily opposed. A revived language is considered as authentic if it is derived from the target language via regular sound changes. In order to both achieve a structural compromise and warrant the authenticity of the revived language, I propose to replace each sound of the target language, missing in the learners' first language, with its evolution in borrowings. By reconciling structural compromise and authenticity, this method enhances the chances of a linguistic revival.

Keywords: language revival, language reclamation, authenticity, language planning, phonology, phonetics, Old Norse

0. Introduction

In this paper, I deal with the issues of authenticity and substrate influence with regard to the sound systems of reclaimed languages[1]. Following Bentahila & Davies (1993: 372), I assume that a revived language is always influenced by the learners' first language. Hence a problem arises: such a compromise between the respective structures of the target language and the first language (henceforth: 'structural compromise') seems to be incompatible with the puristic attitude of some revivalists.

I aim to argue that the pronunciation of a revived language is viewed as authentic by revivalists if it is derived from the oldest known form of the language via regular changes. It does not need to be similar to the latter. Consequently, I propose a method to reclaim the phonological system of a long dead language via regular sound changes attested in borrowings, not via theoretical reconstructions. The outcome of this method reconciles structural compromise and authenticity, and consequently enhances the chances of a successful revival.

In section 1, I introduce the potential mismatches between authenticity and substrate influence. In section 2, I show, based on the cases of Revived Cornish and Landsmaal (i.e. older Nynorsk)[2], that the authenticity claimed by at least some revivalists allows for changes, and, in some cases, even generates them. Then, I adopt the definition of authenticity proposed in Haugen (1933) about the work of Ivar Aasen. In section 3, I argue that only language planning can satisfy this definition of authenticity. Finally, I present a method to reconcile structural compromise and

1 I follow the terms of Tsunoda (2005: 168): language revival concerns extinct languages. Language reclamation is a subtype of language revival based on earlier materials on the language. In this paper, I am interested in language reclamation, but I refer to previous studies dealing with all types of language revival as well. Note that, throughout this paper, the language that is being revived and the learners' mother tongue are respectively referred to as 'target language' and 'first language'.

2 Landsmaal is not a revived language, but in fact an attempt to create a written standard variety based on the western dialects of Norwegian. Nevertheless, the work of Ivar Aasen is relevant for this study, because **i.** it is based rather on etymology than on living pronunciation (Haugen, 1933: 567-568), and **ii.** it deals with issues such as authenticity (Haugen, 1933: 579, 597).

authenticity with regard to the sound system. It consists in replacing each sound absent from the learners' first language with its regular evolution in borrowings. The outcome is suited to the learners' linguistic competence, and it is authentic in that it undergoes regular attested changes.

1. Mismatches between authenticity and substrate influence

The substrate influence

Following Bentahila & Davies (1993: 372), Thieberger (2002: 325) and Zuckermann & Walsh (2011: 119-121)[3] (among others), I assume that revived languages are always influenced by the learners' first language(s). This constraint on the results of language revival is formulated in (1).

(1)

A revived language is influenced by the learners' first language(s)

This substrate influence is given an explanation in Lado (1957). Following the latter, learners make errors in areas in which the target structure differs from the structure of the first language (Lado, 1957: 59)[4]. In the case of language reclamation, such errors are likely not to be corrected, due to a lack of models. Consequently, the structure of a reclaimed language often partially matches the structure of the learners' first language (see Bolozky [1978: 15] and Zuckermann [2005] for Israeli Hebrew[5]; Mills [1999] for Modern Cornish; Amery [2000], Amery [2001: 208] and Zuckermann & Walsh [2011] for Modern Kaurna).

The issue of authenticity

Following Reid (2010: 300) and Zuckermann (2012), some revivalists have a conservative position and reject the differences between the revived language and the target language (Reid, 2010: 301). For instance, Amery (2001: 176) advocates a 'vital' minimised influence of English pronunciation in Modern Kaurna, because the latter sometimes brings about criticisms from other aboriginal communities.

To some extent, even the desire of getting the old language back can be viewed as the expression of a pursuit of authenticity. Following Reid (2010: 301)[6], I assume that this claim for authenticity is a constraint of language revivals, formulated in (2).

(2)

A revived language must be considered as authentic

Mismatches

As pointed out in Reid (2010: 301), we observe mismatches between the substrate influence and

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3 *"[…] inevitable hybridity of the emerging language."* (Zuckermann & Walsh, 2011: 119).

4 "*Since the learner tends to transfer the habits of his native language, we have here the major source of difficulty or ease in learning the structure of a foreign language*." (Lado, 1957: 59).

5 The case of Israeli Hebrew is complex because it involves more than one first language: Yiddish, Arabic, etc. See Zuckermann (2009: 55).

6 *"Aboriginal language revivalists have to negotiate potential mismatches between the rhetoric of getting the old language back, and the reality of the acquisition of a variety that is quite different to the old language"* (Reid, 2010: 301).

the pursuit of authentic languages. Dorian (1994: 485)[7] supposes that compromise and authenticity exclude each other. A revived language cannot be influenced by the learners' first language, and considered as authentic.

Following Dorian (1994: 479), Thieberger (2002: 319) and Zuckermann (2012), I assume that such incompatibility slows down the revival process.

Consequently, two approaches are advocated. First, Amery (2001: 176, 208-209) argues that it is 'vital' to preserve the original grammar of the target language, in order to avoid potential discouraging criticisms. On the other hand, Powell (1973), Dorian (1994: 489) and Thieberger (2002: 325) argue that a structural compromise may enhance the chances of a successful revival, because the outcome has a better learnability (Dorian, 1994: 492), it involves fewer resources (Thieberger, 2002: 324-325) and less time from the learners (Powell, 1973).

Reid (2010: 304) offers a more nuanced view about the relationship between compromise and authenticity. While the author argues for the proposition of Thieberger (2002), he does not exclude the issue of authenticity. He argues that, with respect to pronunciation, even a change-friendly revival project can provide, in the context of some orthographic choices (see Reid, 2010: 304), some degree of faithfulness to the target language. This is the position that I defend in this paper: structural compromise and authenticity are not incompatible, and both are desirable.

Following Dorian (1994: 489), I assume that 'more than one kind of authenticity' exists. In Reid (2010: 300), a revitalised language is considered as authentic if it is 'closest to the oldest remembered form'. In the following section, I argue that the 'authenticity' of revivalists is not a synonym of sameness. In some cases, at least, authenticity and changes are compatible.

2. Authenticity is not synonymous with sameness

Authenticity and changes are compatible: the case of revived Cornish

In this section, I present two situations where a pursuit of authenticity is attested, but the latter is not incompatible with some deliberate changes.

First, I discuss the case of the Unified Cornish variety of Revived Cornish, based on medieval sources[8], and proposed by Robert Morton Nance in the half of the last century. Mills (1999: 13) states that the Medieval Cornish word *nija* meant « to fly » and « to swim ». He points out that Nance and Smith were aware of this fact, as both these meanings appear after the headword *nija* in their dictionary published in 1934. Nevertheless, Mills (1999) shows that the authors propose also the neologism **nüfya* to translate « to swim ». According to the author, the purpose of this neologism is to avoid any ambiguity that does not occur in English. This case suggests that the authenticity claimed by the revivalists of Cornish is not necessarily incompatible with changes.

Authenticity involves changes: the case of Landsmaal

In the case of Landsmaal, authenticity is not only compatible with potential changes, it even involves them.

7 About the modern Standard Irish, the author states that *"compromise was necessary, but the result was inevitably artificiality"* (Dorian, 1994: 485)

8 Unlike Henry Jenner, Nance bases his work on Medieval Cornish, not on Late Cornish. See Deacon (2006) about the correlation between purism and the Revived Cornish varieties based on Medieval Cornish.

Landsmaal is not a revived language, but in fact an attempt by Ivar Aasen to create a written standard variety based on the Western Norwegian dialects. Nevertheless, note that Aasen bases his work on etymology rather than on living pronunciation (Haugen, 1933: 567-568), and he employs 'genuineness' as a criterion to select standard forms (Haugen, 1933: 579, 597).

Haugen (1933) shows that Aasen adopts the suffix -i for the definite strong feminine singular, while this form is one of the most unusual in the dialects in comparison with the vernacular form -a. Following Haugen (1933: 563), the reason why Aasen adopts such an unexpected form is the lack of 'legitimacy' of -a compared with the Old Norse -in (3).

(3)

> "[...] around 1850, he [Aasen] completely rejected this form. It was not legitimately descended from Old Norse, because it had entered the strong declension by analogy, not by the regular sound laws. […] Aasen's chief difficulty lay in the fact that among the 'legitimate' descendants of the ON [Old Norse] -in there was no single strong contender."
>
> (Haugen, 1933: 563)

What is implied here with the term 'legitimacy' is the concept of authenticity or genuineness that Aasen employs as a selection criterion (4).

(4)

> "[…] the first consideration was always that a form should be 'genuine'; i.e., regularly descended from Old Norse […]." (Haugen, 1933: 579)

In this case, the principle of genuineness adopted by Ivar Aasen involves the selection of a form which does not occur in the target language, but which is regularly derived from the oldest known form of the target language.

A definition of authenticity: Haugen (1933)

Consequently, the usual definition of authenticity is unsuitable to account for the cases depicted above. Indeed, the concept of authenticity is found not to be synonymous with sameness. In both cases, changes and authenticity are not incompatible. The case of Landsmaal is even more striking, because Aasen proposes changes which are supposed to be more 'genuine' than the original data. Thus, a definition of authenticity is crucial to define which parts of the language constitute a target for language revival programmes (see Thieberger, 2002). Henceforth, with respect to sound systems, I adopt the definition proposed in Haugen (1933: 579) (see [4]) about Aasen's work (5).

(5)

Authenticity: regular derivation from the oldest known form of the target language.

The word 'regular' refers here to sound changes which are conditioned by phonological factors only. Thus, it excludes analogy.

Following this definition of authenticity, the latter and substrate influence are not

irreconcilable. The pronunciation of a revived language can be influenced by the learner's first language and regularly derived from the target language (see the definition in [5]). Consequently, structural compromise and authenticity are not antithetical.

3. Language planning as warrant of authenticity

Unintended changes

Following Dorian (1994: 479), I assume that structural compromise may enhance the revival chances, because it involves a better learnability (Dorian, 1994: 489). In this section, I focus on the pronunciation, and I present two types of structural compromise. Either compromise results from unintended changes, or it results from intended changes. The latter is the solution advocated by Powell (1973), Thieberger (2002) and Reid (2010). I show that, unexpectedly, deliberate changes are more likely to satisfy the definition of authenticity given in (5).

First, unintended changes occur when the learners transfer the structure of their first language to the foreign language (Lado, 1957: 59). For instance, the pronunciation of the Kernewek Kemmyn[9] variety of Revived Cornish is an example of it. Mills (1999: 11) mentions that the letter < u > ([y] in Medieval Cornish) is generally pronounced like the English < u > (i.e. [ʌ]) by Kernewek Kemmyn speakers. Indeed, the vowel [y] is absent from English phonology. We consequently expect, following Lado (1957: 59), that the pronunciation of the learners is influenced by English phonology or spelling pronunciation.

However, I point out three problems with this solution. Firstly compromise via unintended changes still implies that the learners make efforts to acquire a pronunciation which will be influenced by their first language (Thieberger, 2002: 325). Secondly, y > ʌ is a typologically uncommon change which is unattested in Cornish. Third, unintended changes are likely to involve irregular changes conditioned by the learners' spelling pronunciation (this is the case depicted above), but not by phonology. Following the definition of authenticity in (5), such irregular changes are not viewed as authentic.

Intended changes

Replacement via phonetic proximity

On the other hand, intended changes occur when a language planning is attempted to make the target language suited to the learners' linguistic competence (see for instance Powell [1978] and Thieberger [2002]). Following Lado (1957: 59), we can predict that the sounds absent from the learners' phonological competence (henceforth 'exotic sound') are likely to be influenced by the first language. While language planning offers a wide range of possibilities, we will deal with only two of them. First, an exotic sound can be replaced by the nearest sound attested in the first language. Second, an exotic sound can be replaced by a reflex attested in a further stage, provided that this reflex is attested in the learners' first language too. I discuss these solutions below.

The first solution consists in replacing each exotic sound of the target language with the nearest sound (in terms of phonetic features) attested in the first language. I will now return to the case of the Medieval Cornish vowel [y]. This vowel is absent from English phonology. Following Lado (1957: 59), it is likely to undergo the influence of English spelling pronunciation. Consequently, the replacement of this sound with a sound of the first language can avoid

9 Revived Cornish has more than one variety, depending on the stage of Cornish which is the target for language revival. Kernewek Kemmyn is the variety introduced by Ken George in the second half of the last century.

potentially irregular changes. For instance, [y] is [+high], [+anterior] and [+round]. Thus, the nearest sounds are [i] (+high, +anterior, -round), [u] (+high, -anterior, +round) and [ø] (-high, +anterior, +round). The contrast is minimal in every case (i.e. only one feature differs). Only [i] and [u] are attested in English. Thus, [i] and [u] are good candidates to replace the Medieval Cornish [y] in a revived form of Cornish.

However, two problems soon become visible with this solution. On the one hand, this method does not provide any reason to favor one of the possible substitutes: [i] or [u]. On the other hand, substitutes are determined according to the phonetic features of the target language. Thus, a precise theoretical reconstruction of the target sound system (i.e. not only the distinctive features) is previously needed. Such a reconstruction is often obvious (see Mills [1999] for Cornish).

Replacement via attested changes

The second solution consists in replacing an exotic sound by a reflex attested in both the further stages of the target language and the learner's first language. In the case of the Medieval Cornish [y], we know that it came to be pronounced as [i] in Late Cornish (17^{th}-18^{th} centuries). Following this method, [y] has to be replaced by one of its further evolutions, provided that the latter is attested in English. This is the case with [i]. Thus, [y] has to be replaced by [i].

This solution has two major advantages. First, the resulting change is regular (i.e. conditioned by phonology), and consequently authentic according to the definition in (5). Second, this solution does not necessarily require the reconstruction of non distinctive phonetic information. The distinctive features are sufficient to determine the exotic sounds of the target language.

In conclusion, only intended changes can be restricted to regular changes. I have argued that the optimal solution consists in replacing each exotic sound of the target language by a reflex attested in the first language. This solution involves empirical data (attested changes), and no theoretical reconstruction.

4. Sources of attested changes: borrowings

The advantages of borrowings

Nevertheless, the difficulty with replacing exotic sounds by attested changes is to find sources of such changes, and, moreover, changes whose result is attested in the first language. The case mentioned with Late Cornish in section 3 is rare, since the target language is often the last stage of a language before its death. This is the case with Wampanoag, Miami, Palawa Kani, Nynorn, etc. Likewise, there is no guarantee that the evolution of an exotic sound in the further stages of the target language will be suited to the learners' phonological competence. For instance, it is only a happy coincidence that the evolution of Medieval Cornish [y] (i.e. Late Cornish [i]) is attested in English. This change can certainly be explained by an influence of English phonology, but it is not guaranteed that such an influence will occur systematically.

In order to avoid the problems mentioned above, I propose to use, as a source of attested changes, borrowings from the target language found in the learners' first language (henceforth referred to simply as 'borrowings').

Extinct languages often have words preserved in onomastics or in the vernacular language. These borrowings show reflexes of the target language's sounds which are, by definition, attested in the first language. The method I propose consists in replacing the exotic sounds of the target language by their reflexes attested in borrowings (i.e. loanwords and onomastics).

A practical example: Norman Old Norse reclamation

A presentation of Old Norse

The method presented above is employed in the Franco-Norse Reclamation Project, started in 2006. This small project aims to reclaim the variety of Old Norse which was spoken in Normandy in the tenth century.

Old Norse was a Northern Germanic language spoken, mainly in Scandinavia, from the 9th century to the 16th century. During the Viking period (ca. 1000), Old Norse came to be spoken in Yorkshire, Lancashire, the Hebrides, the Isle of Mann, Ireland and Normandy. In the latter area, it survived about one hundred years and left a consistent number of borrowed words in onomastics (e.g. kaldr bekkr *cold stream* > Caudebec) and in the Norman French dialect (e.g. brúðr *bride* + maðr *man* > bruman *newlywed*).

I follow Gordon (1927) and Barnes (1999), for the representation of the sounds of Old Norse represented in tables (6) and (7). The exotic sounds are in bold[10].

(6) Old Norse consonants

	labial		dental		alveolar		retroflex		palatal		lab.-vel.		velar		glotal	
stop	p**(ʰ)**	b	t**(ʰ)**	d					(c)	(ɟ)			k**(ʰ)**	g		
fricative	f	(v)	**θ**	**(ð)**	s								**(x)**	**(ɣ)**	**h**	
nasal		m		n										(ŋ)		
trill				**r**				**ɾ**								
lateral				l				**(l̩)**								
glide										j		w				

The sounds between brackets are contextual variants. Voiceless consonants are on the left and voiced consonants are on the right. The voiceless liquids, the fricative variant of p and the palatal variant of h aren't mentioned, because they occur at later stages.

(7) Old Norse vowels

	front		near front		central		near back		back	
close	i, ii	y, yy								u, uu
near close			**(ɪ)**					**(ʊ)**		
close mid	e, ee	ø, øø								o, oo
open mid					**(e)**					
near open	ɛ, ɛɛ	œ								ɔ, ɔɔ
open									**ɑ, ɑɑ**	

10 Note that this inventory is not based on non-distinctive features only.

The sounds between brackets are contextual variants. Unrounded vowels are on the left, and rounded vowels are on the right. The nasal vowels of early Old Norse aren't mentioned.

The replacement of Old Norse exotic consonants

In order to ensure a regular transformation, we must replace these exotic sounds with their reflexes attested in borrowings. Table (8) provides some examples of Old Norse consonants which are absent from French phonology, and their reflexes in French borrowings.

(8)

	Old Norse	**IPA**	**gloss**	**Borrowing**	**IPA**	**gloss**
[pʰ]	pollr	[**pʰ**olːɽ]	*pool*	La Pôle	[la**p**ol(ə)]	*Toponym*
	píll	[**pʰ**ilː]	*willow*	Pitot	[**p**ito]	*Toponym*
[tʰ]	torf	[**tʰ**orv]	*peat*	torve	[**t**ɔʁv(ə)]	*peat*
	tundr	[**tʰ**undr]	*tinder*	tondre	[**t**õdʁ(ə)]	*tinder*
[kʰ]	kot	[**kʰ**ot]	*hut*	cote	[**k**ot(ə)]	*hut*
	Kolsteinn	[**kʰ**olstɛınː]	*Name*	Coutainville	[**k**utɛ̃vil(ə)]	*Toponym*
[θ]	þing	[**θ**iŋ]	*assembly*	Le Tingland	[**t**ɛ̃glã]	*Toponym*
	þang	[**θ**ɑŋ]	*seaweed*	tangon	[**t**ãgõ]	*seaweed*
[ð]	greiða	[grɛı**ð**e]	*outfit*	gréer	[gʁee]	*outfit*
	hurð	[hur**ð**]	*door*	hourde	[ʔuʁ**d**(ə)]	*hole for oar*
[x]	hvína	[**x**wiːne]	*whistle*	vignon	[viɲõ]	*widgeon*
	hvítr	[**x**wiːtɽ]	*white*	Vittefleur	[vitflœʁ]	*Toponym*
[ɣ]	vágr	[wɑː**ɣ**ɽ]	*wave*	vague	[va**g**(ə)]	*wave*
	hagi	[hɑ**ɣ**ı]	*enclosure*	La Hague	[laʔa**g**(ə)]	*Toponym*
[h]	hafn	[**h**ɑvn]	*harbor*	Le Havre	[ləʔavʁ(ə)]	*Toponym*
	haugr	[**h**ɔʊɣɽ]	*hill*	hougue	[ʔug(ə)]	*hill*
[r]	rás	[**r**ɑːs]	*race*	raz	[**ʁ**a]	*rapid flow*
	tjóðr	[tjoː**ð**r]	*tether*	tierre	[tjɛ**ʁ**(ə)]	*tether*
[ɽ]	lundr	[lund**ɽ**]	*hood*	londe	[lõd(ə)]	*hood*
	heri	[he**ɽ**ı]	*hare*	héri	[ʔeri]	*hare*

Following the examples in (8), the exotic consonants of Old Norse are replaced as in (9). The exotic sounds of the target language are in the first column ; their respective substitutes are in the second column.

(9)

Target Old Norse	Revived Old Norse	context
p^h	p	-
t^h	t	-
k^h	k	-
θ	t	-
ð	-	intervocalic
	d	after a consonant
x	-	initial
ɣ	g	-
h	ʔ	-
r	ʁ	-
ɾ	ʁ	intervocalic
	-	after a consonant

The adaptation of Old Norse exotic vowels

Table (10) provides some examples of Old Norse vowels which are absent from French phonology, and their reflexes in French borrowings.

(10)

	Old Norse	**IPA**	**gloss**	**Borrowing**	**IPA**	**gloss**
[V:]	háfr	[hɑ:vɾ]	*sac*	have	[ʔav(ə)]	*net*
	díki	[di:kɪ]	*slope*	dic	[dik(ə)]	*slope*
	húnn	[hu:n:]	*masthead*	hune	[ʔyn(ə)]	*masthead*
[ɑ]	akr	[**ɑ**kr]	*arable field*	acre	[**a**kʁ(ə)]	*acre*
	krabbi	[kr**ɑ**bbɪ]	*crab*	crabe	[kʁ**a**b(ə)]	*crab*
[ɪ]	merki	[merk**ɪ**]	*mark*	merque	[mɛʁk**(ə)**]	*mark*
	kriki	[krik**ɪ**]	*cove*	crique	[kʁik**(ə)**]	*cove*
[ʊ]	angul	[ɑŋ**ʊ**l]	*hook*	angue	[ãg**(ə)**]	*hook*
[ɐ]	gata	[gɑt**ɐ**]	*road*	Houlgate	[ʔulgat**(ə)**]	*Toponym*
	englar	[eŋl**ɐ**ɾ]	*englishmen*	Inglemare	[ɛ̃gl**ə**maʁ(ə)]	*Toponym*

Following the examples in (10), the exotic vowels of Old Norse are replaced as in (11).

(11)

Target Old Norse	Revived Old Norse	context
Vː	V	-
ɑ	a	-
ɪ	(ə)	-
ʊ		-
ɐ		-

The result of this planning is a phonological system which is both suited to the French speakers' linguistic competence, and authentic according to the definition of authenticity adopted in (5) (repeated in [12]).

(12)

Authenticity: regular derivation from the oldest known form of the target language.

Language recreation via borrowings and language contact

The point with this method for language reclamation is that the dying languages often evolve following the same changes as the vernacular language. Thus, there is a probability that the last but unattested stages of a target language showed the same changes that are found in borrowings. In the present case, the changes summarized in (9) and (11) are early attested in Old French. Consequently, if Old Norse evolved in a specific way in Normandy (which is uncertain), it is likely to have evolved in accordance with Old French.

5. Conclusion

I have proposed a language reclamation method which reconciles substrate influence and authenticity. To give weight to this proposition, I have shown that there are cases where authenticity and changes are not incompatible. Following this observation, I adopt the definition of authenticity proposed in Haugen (1933) about Aasen's work with Landsmaal. According to this definition, a sound form is considered as authentic if it is regularly derived from the oldest known form of the target language. Consequently, structural compromise between the target language and the learner's first language are possible if the changes involved are regular.

The method I advocate consists in replacing each sound of the target language absent from the first language by its reflex in borrowings. The result of such language planning is suited to learners' competence, authentic, and is likely to match the last unattested changes of the target language.

As a conclusion, by reconciling authenticity and structural compromise, respectively advocated in Amery (2001: 176) and Dorian (1994: 479), a language reclamation project has more chances to succeed.

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