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FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSERVATISM AND PURISM IN LANGUAGES OF NORTHERN EUROPE (NORDIC, BALTIC, FINNIC)

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Abstract

This paper shows common extralinguistic factors influencing conservatism and purism in languages of Northern Europe (Nordic, Baltic, Finnic). Users' motivation, environment, culture, history and conscious policy are the keys to understand some tendencies in the slower rate of change of these languages.

This article is based on my studies about the rate of changes in languages (Piechnik 2014) in order to further develop some questions that have arisen from those deliberations, with the main focus on languages in Northern Europe. It demonstrates that the fast erosion or archaic character of languages has not been taking place much due to geographical and chronological factors or intralinguistic reasons, but mainly due to other extralinguistic factors. It turns out that languages of Northern Europe are more conservative than the southern ones. However, some of them have been evolving faster, while others more slowly. I have decided to look at this phenomenon more closely in this study,¹ focusing on two hallmarks in languages of this northern area: conservatism and purism, which always go hand in hand. I will try to show their roots, actual state and prospects for the future. My considerations

¹ I am very grateful to two anonymous reviewers who gave me precious remarks and comments. Thanks to them, this study is now improved and hopefully more comprehensible. Here, I have to point out too that this study is rather a handful of observations in some languages in the northern area of Europe than a proposition of any rules. Observed phenomena still need further studies on different factors in order to find out degrees in the rates of change in languages.

are limited to three main groups of languages spoken in Northern Europe: Nordic (North-Germanic), Baltic and Finnic.

There are many publications dedicated to the above mentioned languages, but they treat them separately or compare their mutual lexical influences or concentrate on the grammatical impact on an internal level without attempting to look for parallels in their external conditions of evolution, which – because of their position – stay on the sidelines. The point is that these parallels concern mostly extralinguistic factors, which could have an impact on intralinguistic features. This phenomenon remains very interesting and worth further investigation.

If we take a look at languages spoken only in Europe (i.e. mostly Indo-European and Finno-Ugric) we can see that the rate of their change within the same sub-groups is not the same. We can classify several languages on the basis of their rates of evolution, e.g.:

- Faster erosion: English, Swedish in Sweden, Latvian, Spanish, French, Estonian, Hungarian, etc.
- Slower rates of change: Icelandic, Swedish in Finland, Lithuanian, Sardinian, Corsican, Finnish, Csángó, Basque, etc.

At least three of the above mentioned languages, which are considered conservative and even archaic – Icelandic, Lithuanian and Finnish – stand out from other languages within the same families. Thus, if they have their non-conservative sisters, we have points of reference. Also, they are solely spoken in their native countries, and therefore they are not dependent on any dominant language – their speakers are mostly monolingual.

Thus, there are two criteria that languages must meet if they are to be suitable for our purpose of investigating the factors influencing the rapidity of linguistic change:

1. there must be a closely related language with a noticeably different rate of change, e.g. Basque could not be a good example as it has no known cognate language (at least theoretically speaking), so we cannot compare it with anything.
2. the language should be dominant in the culture it is spoken, so once again we have to exclude Basque (under Spanish and French domination, despite the large autonomy of the Basque Country) or minor Romance languages (in the territory of other dominant Romance or Germanic languages) and the current Celtic languages (mainly in Great Britain and Breton in France),² because they often live on the territory of the dominant languages, and their speakers are bilingual and often do not have a clear identity.³ In such conditions, a language tries to preserve its identity, but cannot avoid foreign influence if it wants to progress. The foreign influence is too strong and evident.

² The Irish language is an exception: it has its own country, but in general it is abandoned, mainly due to the very long, strong political and social influence of English.

³ For instance Bretons = Frenchmen at the same time, or Welshmen = British men. And similarly in some regions of Spain.

What are the factors that create favourable conditions for the conservatism of languages? Some linguists maintain that the key is in the geographical position of a language. Within this opinion there are two views: some linguists claim that the languages in peripheral position keep most of the archaisms (e.g. Bartoli for the Romance languages); the others say that languages in a central position have more archaic features (particularly Mańczak for Romance, Slavic and Germanic languages; see references in Piechnik 2014). But this principle of lateral or central areas is not always really relevant, as many counter-examples exist, if we look more carefully at, for instance, the languages in Europe, so closely interrelated.

Thus, the keynote of the phenomenon of the rates of change is, in fact, the **language users' motivation**, although their motives can be of different origins. All of them are extralinguistic.

Let us list three main examples of conservative languages from two different families: Icelandic and Lithuanian (Indo-European languages) versus Finnish with some Saami languages [Lapp] (Finno-Ugric languages belonging to the Uralic family).⁴ We will see that their origins are different, however geographically they are situated in the North of Europe, mostly in contact with their closely related languages, which are a bit less archaic and conservative. Icelandic is more archaic than Faroese (which is insular too) and other North-Germanic continental languages: Norwegian or Swedish. Lithuanian is more conservative than Latvian. The Finnish language is situated in the neighbourhood of other Finnic languages, but they evolve faster. Among Saamic there are more conservative and less conservative languages as well.

It is also interesting to note that in general northern languages evolve more slowly than their southern sisters and have purist tendencies. We will try to find out the source of this phenomenon.

1. Roots of conservatism and purism in languages of Northern Europe

1. Isolation and/or vicinity of sister languages vs. external influx

Environment can play a significant role in the maintenance of the relative status quo of languages: in Northern Europe the languages live in the homogenous vicinity. Earlier, immigrants from other countries were hardly known; even visitors from outside were rare. Besides, the insular or peninsular situation of these languages favoured their seclusion or even isolation. Let's look at it more closely:

a) Icelandic and North-Germanic

Icelandic is the best example as it lives in insular isolation and mainly thanks to this fact it has not changed much over the centuries: there is only a minimal difference between Old and Modern Icelandic. Lexicon and grammar are still preserved very well. Only the pronunciation changed a little (see Karlsson 2013). Thus, the Icelanders can easily read the old sagas.

⁴ Both of the families also have their conservative sisters in Asia: Indo-Iranian (Indo-European family) and Samoyedic (Uralic family).

Its insular sister, Faroese, changed a little more at all levels: in pronunciation, in grammar (simplified morphology), and in vocabulary, which absorbed words mostly from Danish, from Celtic languages, and, recently, from English (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2004: 369, 445–465). This difference may be attributed to a greater proximity of Celts (they were actually the first inhabitants of the Faroe Islands) and to stronger influences of the Norwegian and Danish rule: the islands were annexed by Norway as early as 1035, and later came under Danish influence when in 1380 Norway and Denmark became united. It should also be emphasised that when people live in an archipelago, their communication cannot be homogenous. Therefore, the Icelanders were in a better position than the people from the Faroes: they could focus more easily on one common attitude towards external influences and to protect themselves.

Icelanders constituted quite a harmonious and close-knit community from the beginning and they jointly organised life on their own: in 930 they founded their parliament (it is the oldest parliament in the world!), called *Alþingi*,⁵ and in 1000 they decided to embrace Christianity collectively. They were free right up until 1262 when they became Norway's lieges, and from 1380 Denmark's.

However, despite the foreign administration under the extensive Norwegian and Danish rule, the conservative Icelandic spirit survived and is still alive. The key lies not only in geographical isolation, but also in cultural and linguistic seclusion. A particular role in this process and in conscious cultivation of language purity was played by Arngrímur Jónsson (1568–1648), one of the most eminent Icelandic humanists. As says about Arngrímur:

He attributed the preservation of the language to the existence and circulation of old manuscripts and to his country's geographical isolation. He warned his countrymen against German and Danish influence on their Icelandic, whether spoken or written. Texts published or revised by Arngrímur show that he reduced the number of loanwords in them and amended their syntax to more natural Icelandic patterns (Karlsson 2013: 36).

As early as 1609, Arngrímur, emphasised in his work *Crymogæa*,⁶ written in Latin that Icelandic alone is close to the language of its Scandinavian ancestors. Jenson summarises Arngrímur's message in this way:

Arngrímur argues in Latin that contemporary Icelandic is the ancient tongue of the North, i.e., of Northern Europe, and not simply a vernacular. Only Icelanders use it unspoiled, he claims, while neighboring peoples have corrupted it, and thus it behooves Icelanders to preserve its pristine state. It was here the doctrine of Icelandic purism – perhaps the single most characteristic feature of Icelandic culture today – was first articulated in print (Jenson 2008 : 2).

⁵ Etymologically: *all + thing* (in Old Norse *þing* 'meeting, assembly', later in English 'matter').

⁶ *Crymogæa* is Iceland's Greek name as the equivalent of Hrímland (Icel. *hrím* 'hoarfrost, rime') – one of numerous names of this country in Icelandic (we can find several ones also in other languages, e.g. in Latin).

Thus, already in the past, Icelanders had a very conscious attitude towards their language and were in a better geographical position. This double isolation may have helped them to keep their language relatively intact.

b) Lithuanian and Baltic

Even if Icelandic is archaic, the language considered as the most archaic from among all the living Indo-European languages is Lithuanian⁷ that is the only living Baltic sister of Latvian, which is more “eroded”. From the beginning, despite their split, which could suggest progressive changes, Baltic languages remained quite conservative thanks to their environment:

(...) the Balts lived for many centuries, secluded from others, in the distant depths of the forests of Northern Europe. They were untouched by the stormy historical events that took place during that time in the south and southwest of Europe.

When people live under such conditions, they always preserve, with great devotion, the traditional way of life of their ancestors. Language also changes slowly. During long centuries in a closed society, the language of the Balts simply froze in the past (Zinkevičius et al. 2006: 75).

Although Lithuanian and Latvian belong to the eastern Baltic languages, they are spoken at present on the territory of their extinct western sisters. On the eastern periphery of their area, there were also some shifts: “the whole of present-day Latvia was once inhabited by Finno-Ugric tribes, who entered the Baltic area in the 3rd millennium BC. They were probably pushed back to the North around the 12th century by Baltic tribes coming from the south-east” (Balode, Holvoet 2001a: 9, cf. also 2001b). The Latvians must have also borne the brunt of this contact with Finnic tribes, as well as coming into contact with Eastern Slavic tribes, German-speakers⁸ as well as with Danish- and Swedish-speaking people (because of their conquest of the Baltic shores). Consequently, Latvian has evolved further than Lithuanian.

Lithuanian had more favourable circumstances and hence remained more conservative:

In the north, the Eastern Balts were later inhabitants of Finnic territory, but in the south, they dwelled in old Baltic lands in which they had been for millennia. Here, the Balts did not experience great Finnic influence. The remote ancestors of these Balts had encountered the Finns, but those contacts had been weak. Thus, the language of these Balts had changed little; it remained as it had been until the age in which the Eastern Balts became more clearly differentiated, i.e. in the 7th century.

The linguistic differentiation of the Eastern Balts must be understood as the gradual evolution of the north away from the conservative south, where the ancient situation had remained almost unchanged (Zinkevičius et al. 2006: 98).

⁷ However, the archaic character of the Lithuanian language is not the same at all levels: its conservatism is the strongest in phonology, weaker in morphology (Erhart 1995), and still weaker in vocabulary (cf. Mańczak 1995).

⁸ In the beginning because of the crusades of the swordknights, i.e. Livonian Brothers of the Sword, and the Order of Teutonic Knights' state.

In the south and southwest, Lithuanians bordered since long ago on Western Baltic tribes – the Prussians and Yotvingians – whose language was archaic, closer to the old Baltic protolanguage.

The archaic nature of these tribal languages affected Lithuanian. (...) In this way were formed the modern southern dialect of western Aukštaitija and the sub-dialects of former Prussian Lithuania, which gave a start to standard literary Lithuanian. This dialect later gave Lithuanian in general the aura of a very old language (Zinkevičius et al. 2006: 100).

As a result, Lithuanian owes its archaic character to the influence of its related languages, which surrounded it in the past. However, it should be noticed that the archaic character of Lithuanian survived over so many centuries and with historical vicissitudes. Obviously, its initial peripheral situation was favourable, but, over several centuries, its multilingual neighbourhood was not very stable and peaceful. Despite all these circumstances, fierce resistance on the part of Lithuanian constitutes a miracle and rouses the interest of linguists.

c) Finnish and Finnic with Saamic

The Finnish language is the most archaic and conservative among its Finnic sisters. Korhonen (1996: 215) says: “if one considers the total structure and development of all the Finnic languages, very many conservative features are to be found in some West Finnish dialects.” This Finnish archaic character is most evident in the sounds, as Laakso (2001: 182) says: “The Finnic languages, especially Finnish, are often called phonologically conservative.” Thanks to this hallmark, the condition of the Finnish vocabulary is excellent: in this language we can find many basic forms of Uralic or Finno-Ugric words, which have been preserved almost intact (Häkkinen 2006: 31–32). Due to this conservatism, Finnish is often called a “refrigerator”. In this language we can even see the oldest loanwords being well preserved. They remain in a better condition than their descendants in donating languages⁹ and are proofs of contact with many peoples from other families (not only the Indo-European one) at different periods of time.

Thus, almost like Icelanders, Finns preserve the legacy of their ancestors. However, it should be emphasised that although Finnic languages live together in close proximity on the Baltic shores, they have Russian, Latvian and Nordic neighbours. Cohabitation was not always peaceful because of their domination. Fortunately, they did not break up Finnic community (despite some little exceptions, see below), mainly due to the fact that people in the countryside continued speaking their native languages.

⁹ E.g. Fin. *kuningas* < Germanic **kuningaz* ‘king’. Nowadays in other Germanic languages: German *König*, Eng. *king*, Swed. *konung* ~ *kung*, Norw. *konge*, Icel. *konungur* (compared with the Old Icelandic [Old Norse]: Nom. *konungr*, Gen. *konungs*, Dat. *konungi*, Acc. *konung*; cf. Bord 2004: 25), etc. Even Karlsson, in his book on Icelandic language, says that we know a lot about early stages of Germanic not only thanks to old inscriptions carved on wood and stone in Iceland (because the earliest preserved written Icelandic sources date from the second half of the 12th century), but also due to loanwords in Finnish, in which they “still remain, little changed” (Karlsson 2013: 8).

We should also mention Saamic (Lapp) people – the linguistic cousins of the Finnic people, because their case is quite interesting too. Saamic speakers' ancestors probably inhabited the whole of Fennoscandia, particularly the territory of present-day Finland (its first inhabitants, even though they were nomadic), but they were pushed out towards the far north by the Finnic tribes. Due to the intensive contact with them, Saamic people adopted their language, and now Saamic languages are related to Finnic ones. Nowadays, Saamic people constitute quite a mixed minority which is dispersed not only under the rule of four different administrations (Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Russian), but also over a vast and sparsely populated area. That is why there are strong dialectal variations of Saamic. Nowadays these languages are divided into several types. Geographically speaking, they demonstrate archaic features mostly in peripheral areas:

Lapp is a textbook example of the effect of the lateral area principle within an oblong language area. The dialects spoken in the two extreme ends of the area, South Lapp in Central Scandinavia and East Lapp dialects, are more conservative than the central dialects. The extreme dialects show archaisms e.g. in consonant quality and in syntax. Besides, morpheme structure and morphology have retained more archaic features in South Lapp than in the other dialects. Isoglosses on the dialect map showing the spread of innovations that have come into existence after the split of Proto-Lapp are most frequent in the area of Central Lapp. Here both Central Lapp innovations and innovations spreading from the east and the south-west overlap, whereas the isoglosses in the South Lapp area principally show south-western and the Kola Lapp area eastern innovations only. Only a few Central Lapp innovations have reached South or Kola Lapp.

However, it is remarkable that there are not very many conservative features common to both the extreme dialects. They are archaic in different ways. E.g. they are not mutually intelligible (Korhonen 1996: 214).

This central position of innovations may be due to the influence of the administrative languages (Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Russian) – this influence was weaker on the borders of the inhabited lands. Moreover, the attitude of the Saami autochthones to their dominant neighbours was not favourable (frequent conflicts resulted from a long oppression and from constraints of forced assimilation). Furthermore, the demographic density was lower, so the frequency of contacts and exchanges was lower too.

As we have seen, environment – i.e. isolation and/or close neighbourhood – could be in favour of the conservative nature of the above mentioned languages, although it cannot be a crucial factor. Icelandic has thrived for 12 centuries in isolation, which favours its conservatism, but its isolation is not only geographical, but also conscious in order to preserve national identity and, most of all, language which is considered as a treasure by its speakers. Faroese is in a similar insular situation (although the archipelago could not reinforce the solidarity of its people), but it was also more under intensive Celtic and Danish influences. Other North-Germanic languages live in peninsulas (Norwegian and Swedish in the Scandinavian, while Danish in Jutland and on a few isles). Such a situation limits contacts with outsiders

and allows for the intensification of inner contacts within the sister community.¹⁰ Finnic languages live in this kind of neighbourhood too. In such a situation differences between languages cannot be significant, as they are almost like dialects which do not diverge very much, but actually become similar.¹¹ Neighbours talk and are mutually intelligible. The situation of Saami is at the opposite extreme: they are dispersed over a vast area and their environment is multilingual. As far as the Baltic languages are concerned, they had different situations: conservative Lithuanian first lived in the very neighbourhood of its sisters and later in certain isolation to which socio-political reasons also contributed (see more below), while Latvian evolved more because of its very close contact mainly with Finnic and Slavic as well as with Germanic peoples.

We will also mention other circumstances, which seem crucial for the conservatism and purism of the above mentioned languages.

2. National consciousness and struggle for independence vs. passive and lengthy dependence

All the above mentioned languages – Icelandic, Finnish, Lithuanian – are spoken by small communities, which in the past belonged to strong “colonial” powers: Icelandic – to Norway and Denmark, Finnish with Saamic – to Sweden and Russia, Lithuanian – in different hands, but mainly under long Polish influence, later under Russia (imperial and soviet). In general, cohabitation was not peaceful. Minor languages were underestimated: in all three cases, the elite mainly spoke the languages of the rulers (in Iceland: Danish, in Finland: Swedish, in Lithuania: Polish) as a sign of social success and cultural refinement, but also as a key to education. Native languages were spoken mainly by the lower class and in the countryside. Sometimes they were also oppressed. This situation stirred up a revolt and built up a sense of national identity.

Mostly with the 19th century – the age of major transformations around the whole world – everything changed. There were revolutionary movements in almost every European country. National consciousness awoke among oppressed people, leading to revival.

¹⁰ At present, we have a meaningful proof of this solidarity, i.e. the Nordic Council (established in 1952). On its website we can read: “The fellowship of language is one of the things that binds Nordic co-operation together. Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are so closely related that with relatively little effort, you can learn to understand all the languages, if you speak one of them” (www.norden.org/en/the-nordic-region/language). It should be emphasized that those three are the official languages during meetings of the Nordic Council (interpretation is offered for other languages). It should be also noticed that from 1st March 1987, when the Nordic Language Convention came into force, citizens of the Nordic Union countries have right “to use their mother tongue to the greatest extent possible in dealings with the authorities and other public agencies of another Nordic country” (www.norden.org/en/about-nordic-co-operation/agreements/treaties-and-agreements/language/the-nordic-language-convention). Languages covered by this Convention are Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish.

¹¹ Such a situation can also be noted among other peoples, e.g. Turkic ones. I am grateful to Prof. Marek Stachowski for this suggestion and all of his useful remarks.

We can find some parallels between Icelandic- and Finnish-speaking peoples: they realised that their country remained under foreign occupation and that they had never had their own state, thereby they understood that ethnically and linguistically they had a separate identity. This awareness made them want to retain the purity of their languages, as closely to the native tongue of their ancestors as possible. Under the invaders' yoke, people treated their language as a tool of patriotism, as an aspiration for independence. A mother tongue was not only a means of communication, but also an intrinsic element of identity: they started to build up the idea of the nation as inextricably related to the language. Then writers and journalists tried to use the correct and classic language, and to develop it – both in a literary¹² and professional sense (medical, physical, etc.) – often in quest for a common standard to all the regional variants.

Icelanders started to show hostility towards Danish influence, which was strongest in towns, i.e. in administration and in education. Danish loanwords were swept away from Icelandic, even in public discourses. Danish was considered as a threat to Icelandic (see Hauksdóttir 2013).

In bilingual Finland (the upper class spoke Swedish, which was a language of administration, whereas the lower class and people in the countryside spoke Finnish), the “emancipatory language shift” took place over the whole 19th century (see Lindgren et al. 2011) and the question of language was one of the most crucial for “Finnicity”: “In its strictest form, the demand of the nationalist programme was «one nation, one language». Language conflicts continued in Finland up until the 1930s” (Ollila 1998: 132).¹³

As far as Lithuanian history is concerned a Lithuanian revival occurred mainly in the 19th century too,¹⁴ when Lithuanians were under the yoke of tsarist Russia. Earlier too, when they lived in union with Poles, which lasted for more than two centuries, they were their weaker partners (higher society spoke Polish, while Lithuanian was spoken by the lower class and by people in the countryside). Later, the situation worsened, when Lithuania became an independent country, and among other occurrences Vilnius was annexed to Poland:

¹² It should also be noticed that Icelanders already had a long tradition to read literary works in family, as a manner of “pampering” the Icelandic national identity (cf. Taylor 1995); this tradition was still strengthened from the end of the 18th century, with Enlightenment, or Romanticism (Sigurðsson 2010) and “played their part in the preservation of the lexicon and inflexions of the ancient language” (Karlsson 2013: 64). Still in the 1990s, reading books was popular, although in accordance with age and other factors (cf. Gudbjörnsdóttir, Morra 1997). Nowadays, in the reality of the omnipresent media, this tradition has become more neglected among younger generations (cf. Broddason 2006; Kristinsson 2013).

¹³ Even many people that bore Swedish surnames changed them to Finnish ones (e.g. writer Aleksis Kivi whose real surname was Stenvall) or published their writings under Finnish pseudonyms (like Wolmar Schildt who, as Volmari Kilpinen, coined a lot of neologisms that entered perfectly into Finnish language).

¹⁴ First Lithuanian journal *Auszra* was founded in 1883. Lithuanian Literature Society was created in 1879 (a little later than its Icelandic and Finnish counterparts: in 1816 and in 1831, respectively).

As a result of all this, the mutual ill-feeling of the two nationalities was to reach the highest possible point. Already during World War I the Lithuanians concretized their negative stance to the Polish traditions by reforming their graphemic inventory: they abandoned (...) Polish-based digraphs and the diacriticized <ż> and replaced them by the diacriticized graphemes (...). The whole political and sociocultural background of the change (...), leaves no doubt of the essentially puristic basis of the reform of the Lithuanian graphemic system (Vachek 1989: 144).

This “nationalist” factor is of great significance in relation to the present-day condition of languages. If speakers of a language had to fight for their identity (national, ethnic and linguistic at the same time) and if they managed to gain independence of their territory, they very often treated their language as a treasure which they respected and kept in the purest conditions possible.

When finally in the 20th century, “young” countries gained their independence (Finland in 1917, Iceland in 1944 – both of them for the first time; Lithuania regained it in 1918, later again in 1990), they placed a strong emphasis on the language as an integral part – even the essence – of the nation’s identity,¹⁵ although they could not become clear nation states and they still have other ethnic and linguistic minorities. But these brave new countries achieved success.

However, luck sometimes plays its own role. Let’s take a look at other examples: languages that do not have their own countries and whose speakers have lived in diglossia for years, even for centuries. This can be seen in minor Finnic languages.¹⁶ Among them, only Finnish and Estonian have their independent countries. Other languages – i.e. Karelian proper,¹⁷ Aunus Karelian [i.e. Olonec, Livvi], Lude Karelian and Veps – have bilingual speakers, who communicate more often in Russian, mainly in formal situations. Apart from that, these languages were naturally under a long process of russification, and they absorbed Russian words and changed their grammatical constructions. It should also be noted that minor Finnic languages were transmitted mainly orally for a long time. Another two very minor languages from this group: Votic and Ingrian [Izhor],¹⁸ which are neighbours, are hardly spoken and are in mutual competition both at a linguistic and social level (cf. Markus, Rozhanskiy 2013), whereas Livonian [liivõ keel, raandakeel] (in Latvia) – the most

¹⁵ E.g. for Finnish: Ollila (1998), Lindgren et al. (2011); for Icelandic: Auður Hauksdóttir (2013), Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir (1997); for Lithuanian: Baločkaitė (2014), Ramonienė (2007).

¹⁶ This fact concerns also – although partly – their Saamic cousins. Partly only – because nowadays the Saamic languages gained a special status of autonomous and protected minority (also with European Chart), which is nowadays binding in three countries (Finland, Sweden, and Norway), except in Russia.

¹⁷ In the Republic of Karelia, which belongs to the Russian Federation. Despite the name of this autonomous republic, its only official language is Russian.

¹⁸ The Ingrian language is a descendant of Old-Karelian (when a wave of Karelians settled in Ingria in the 9th century), but in the 17th century it mixed with Finnish language of Finnish immigrants. Since then, there is question of Ingrian Finns (Lutherans) and of real Ingrians (descendants of Karelians, Orthodoxes). Nowadays more often, these two groups are linked together linguistically and culturally. It results from the fact that in this area, through the centuries, there were numerous contacts of languages (immigrants, mixed marriages, etc.).

innovative Finnic language! (Viitso 2006: 96) – can be already considered as extinct, despite the involvement of linguists and other people to preserve it.¹⁹ With the passing of time, the speakers of these languages abandoned them in favour of other dominant languages: Russian and Latvian, respectively.

Here it should be noticed that religion is, next to the language, the second important element of the identity. For instance, we can mention not only Ingrian Finns – Lutheran islet on the orthodox Russian sea (Sihvo 2002), but also Csángós – ancient Hungarian-speaking people who live on linguistic and Catholic islet east of Romania (in the region of the historical Moldavia), where the majority of inhabitants is orthodox too (cf. e.g. Peti, Tánzos 2012).²⁰

In this respect we can notice some significant social tendencies, e.g.:

- a) local patriotism, without aspirations for the solidarity of the whole ethnic group, as there are often mixtures of nationalities and languages among inhabitants of these regions, e.g. in Karelia:

Amongst Karelians a distinctively Karelian identity group or group solidarity which would cover the entire ethnic entity “we, Karelians” is extremely weak (...). Furthermore, group identities appear to be based on locality rather than ethnic background: people feel a keen solidarity towards their close network (family, kin, friends and neighbours) with no special regard for ethnicity or nationality. (...) there are naturally also a vast number of families in which one of the spouses is Karelian and the other Russian or something else (Sarhimaa 2009: 169).

- b) these languages are “*ésotériques par excellence*” (according to the French expression by Johanna Laakso): they do not interest speakers from outside of this small community (except e.g. mixed marriages) – this community maintains this means of communication for its internal needs. These communities are closed, i.e. “isolated” (cf. Laakso 2005: 187).
- c) the aged are often passive, docile, accustomed to the conformism (completely imposed) of the Soviet epoch, whereas younger generations – more free, but not less conformist and opportunist, well-disposed to approve globalisation trends – want to live their lives easily and to communicate in a language, which, in their eyes, is more prestigious than is Russian.

Such situations occur also in other republics of the Russian Federation and everywhere in the whole world.

However, in opposition to these cases, we can mention two very minor languages, which are daughters of Finnish: Kven (Kväänin kieli) and Meänkieli. Meänkieli is spoken by around 70,000 speakers in Tornadalia in Sweden, whereas Kven is spoken by several thousands in the north of Norway. Their status is protected by the

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Grünthal, Kovács (2011), Laakso (2000), etc.

²⁰ This phenomenon can be seen in other countries too: Local churches (Catholic or Presbyterian ones) can be “last bastions” also for Celtic identity, e.g. in Scotland they “seem to be bound up with the Gaelic language” (Macdonald 1997: 166).

European Chart of minority languages. Their users live in isolation in a multilingual environment (Swedish and/or Norwegian and/or Saamic). However, these languages cultivate their identity by slowing down in their evolution: they keep several archaisms, but they also borrow a lot of words from neighbouring languages. Despite this fact, recently, with more favourable political conditions, they can see a new wave of revitalisation (cf. Pietikäinen et al. 2010).

3. National customs and temperament in relation to the frequency of use

We can assume that every nation has its customs and habits, which can bring a significant influence on its language. As early as the 18th century Rousseau,²¹ and mostly W. von Humboldt²² in the 19th century observed such a phenomenon. Nowadays, we can read more publications on this subject thanks to ethnopsychology and ethnolinguistics or linguistic anthropology.

One of the Icelandic writers, Hallgrímur Helgason, in his recent novel *Konan við 1000°* (The woman at 1000°), talks about the Icelandic national “tradition” of remaining silent. He says that silence is a pillar of the Icelandic culture, therefore Icelandic has not changed over a thousand years: Icelanders “did not use it”, and it remained mostly in the written tradition, especially in sagas. Hallgrímur Helgason says that this “Latin of the North” is a treasure and is “not for everyday use.”²³ He also points out another similar nation, namely Finns – Icelanders’ “main competitors in silence”.

One can find many studies on Finns and on their habits to stay silent and to hide emotions. These studies are written not only by Finns themselves (e.g. Lehtonen, Sajavaara 1985; Sajavaara, Lehtonen 1997), but also by foreigners (e.g. Sloan 2013), and many are based on international cooperation (e.g. Carbaugh et al. 2006).²⁴ Introversiveness and reticence seem to be an inherent feature of Finns, who are distinguished also by the *sisu* – persistence and internal force (cf. e.g. Sinkkonen 2013). They are a bit different from their brothers – Estonians and their other fellow Finnic neighbours who are more open (Ryabina 2008). Sometimes, the role of this Finnish reticence is emphasised in everyday politeness, as tact and caution, yet it can often be misunderstood by foreigners who feel disorientated by this (Sloan 2013).²⁵

It should be noticed that all the Nordic nations more or less share this feature – in their culture, silence is appreciated: “talkativeness is an indication of slickness, which serves as a signal of unreliability” (Sajavaara, Lehtonen 1997: 270). Some

²¹ In his *Émile ou de l'Éducation* (1762).

²² His *Über den Einfluss des verschiedenen Charakters der Sprachen auf Literatur und Geistesbildung* (1821), and particularly his *Über den Nationalcharakter der Sprachen* (1822–1824).

²³ Hallgrímur Helgason presents also his reflections about different languages. E.g. French is a “sauce” that Frenchmen want to keep in mouth as long as possible, whereas English “is not language anymore” – it is “universal phenomenon, like oxygen or sunrays”.

²⁴ For more see Piechnik (2014: 377).

²⁵ However, statements about silence and taciturnity of Finns are often denied by Finns themselves, who consider these opinions as false stereotypes. See e.g. Tiittula (1994) and Mauranen (1994).

studies even show that people from the Finno-Ugrian languages group are less garrulous than people from Germanic Scandinavian countries (Tulviste et al. 2003; Tryggvason 2006).

Of course, it is difficult to measure the impact of taciturnity on a language, but this is food for thought: logically a low frequency of language use slows down its “erosion”, because the rate of social interactions is low. So, maybe one could introduce a new factor, which is not very linguistic, but rather psycho-cultural: correlation of national temperament? The point is that Icelanders or Finns do not speak very much, and their languages are in quite a “good condition”. Therefore we could say that silent and taciturn speakers from the north have conservative languages (like “refrigerators”) with low use frequency, whereas people from the south have languages with dynamic changes, which can be observed e.g. in Romance languages. Romance populations are talkative, open, easily entering into contact with other nations; they borrow words quite often and generally it occurs with a high degree of phonetic adaptations. It should be noticed too that migration of populations in southern areas is higher than in the north.

Thus, maybe: the more taciturn the users of a language are, the more archaic their language remains, because it is used less, which means: its rate of change is lower.²⁶ Certainly, we can talk only about a certain tendency; it cannot be a rule.²⁷

4. Purist linguistic policy and users’ attitudes vs. liberalism

Generally speaking, Scandinavian countries are distinguished by the strongest resistance against foreign influences and mainly by multifaceted purism (cf. Vikør 2010), the most visible form of which is lexical purism. Nordic countries constitute quite a coherent community, which historically shares a certain nationalist ideology (cf. Östman, Thøgersen 2010) from the 19th century Romanticism, despite strong tendencies to modernisation – these countries were perceived as the “avant-garde of modernity” (Jalava 2013: 251). Furthermore, they cooperate closely, not only in promotion of their linguistic intercomprehension (closely-related Nordic languages, except for Finnish, allow for this relatively well), but also have common programmes for the protection of their languages; the most important was *Moderne importord i språka i Norden* (cf. e.g. Graedler 2004).

Institutional purism goes generally hand in hand with users’ attitudes. But of course, the force of Nordic purism is not the same in all these countries, because

²⁶ Change does not mean necessarily erosion, but let us remember that every language changes; it is in its nature. However, the frequency is the key to this process, because the most frequent words (those in basic vocabulary, in everyday use) evolve more slowly and remain the longest time in language (as for their possible lexical replacement), but their phonetic development is irregular – as we can see from lexicostatistical researches of Mańczak (e.g. 2000), and Dyen et al. (1967), Pagel et al. (2007), Vejdemo (2010). Of course, this observation mainly concerns the vocabulary. See also Piechnik (2014: 378–380).

²⁷ E.g. Turkic languages evolve rather slowly, but these peoples are quite talkative (I thank Prof. Marek Stachowski for this information).

of different historical, political and social conditions (as we have seen above). Vikør (2010) proposes a scale between a maximum of purism and a maximum of liberalism:

Icelandic – Faroese – Nynorsk – Finnish – Finland Swedish – Bokmål – Sweden
Swedish – Danish (Vikør 2010: 27).

Thus particularly in Icelandic, one can feel a strong and conscious (!) resistance to the introduction of foreign elements in lexicon. One can look in vain for words, which in form could be similar to Greek-Latin internationalisms, like *mathematics*, *history*, *music*, *theatre*, etc. In Icelandic we have instead: *stærðfræði*, *sagnfræði*, *tónlist*, *leikhús*, etc. Icelanders create their own lexical equivalents.²⁸ Many professional circles even have their committees that meet to discuss propositions of neologisms. New words are created on the basis of indigenous lexemes. Sometimes, they are born from the words which had already fallen into disuse. A new word can be a direct translation from foreign words or a descriptive construct (Thráinsson 1994: 188; Hilmarsson-Dunn, Kristinsson 2009: 367). We can give such examples of popular Icelandic words, which in most European languages have a Latin-Greek or English origin:

sími ‘telephone’ (< *síma* ‘thread’), *tölva* ‘computer’ (< *tala* ‘number’),
útvarp ‘radio’ / *sjónvarp* ‘television’ (< *út* ‘out’ / *sjón* ‘vision’ + *varpa* ‘to throw’),
geisladiskur ‘compact disc’ (< *geisli* ‘ray’ + *diskur* ‘disc’),
sjónvarpsskjár ‘TV screen’ / *tölvuskjár* ‘computer screen’ (< *skjár* ‘plastic film placed
in a window instead of glass’, etc.

Icelandic is very resilient to foreign influences not only due to the centuries-old purist attitude of Icelanders, but also because the policy of the Icelandic government is explicitly protectionist and purist.²⁹ Language is planned and kept in as pure a form as possible (cf. Wahl 2008) in order to preserve and strengthen it. Icelandic linguistic policy imposes prescripts against the influence of other languages, especially that of English (Hilmarsson-Dunn 2006),³⁰ but earlier, Icelandic especially tried to reject Danish influences (Hauksdóttir 2013). A trace of the past Danish domination still remains, which is confirmed by the fact that this is the second language in Icelandic schools currently. In addition, Danish surrounds Iceland, because its closest neighbours – Greenland and Faroe Islands – belong to Denmark (as its autonomous territories).

As far as Finnish is concerned, foreign words entered into it more easily over the centuries, mainly from Swedish (because of a long domination), but also from other

²⁸ Elements *fræði* ‘science, study, -logy’, *tónn* ‘tone’, *list* ‘art’, etc. Of course, certain loanwords must remain in their original form, after phonetic and graphic adaptation, e.g.: *banani* ‘banana’, *vín* ‘wine’, *te* ‘tea’, *kaffi* ‘coffee’, *mínúta* ‘minute’, *banki* ‘bank’, *bíó* ‘cinema’ (< Danish *biograf*), *diskur* ‘disc’, etc. However *pizza* is rather called *flatbaka* ‘flat cake’.

²⁹ The official policy of the Faroe Islands is almost as purist as in Iceland.

³⁰ Even in information technologies inundated with English that leads sometimes to clashes between planners and everyday reality of users of computer developments (Hilmarsson-Dunn, Ari Páll Kristinsson 2009).

languages: Germanic, Slavic and Baltic. Sometimes, even indigenous words were used in new expressions under the influence of loan constructions (cf. e.g. Hakulinen 1969). Internationalisms started to enrich Finnish on a larger scale from the end of the 19th century, whereas since the 1960s, the largest penetration was that of English. However, at the beginning, English compound words were often translated, “domesticated”, such as *weekend*: Fin. *viikonloppu*, or *skyscraper*: Fin. *pilvenpiirtäjä*. English influence has become more intense since the 1990s, when Finland became a member of the European Community. Thus, Finnish purism is already rather a thing of the past.

The history of the Finnish language shows purism mixed with cautious reception of foreign influences. When in the middle of the 16th century, Mikael Agricola published *ABC-kiria* and translated the New Testament, he invented a lot of words on the basis of indigenous words. Around 60% of this vocabulary remain in present-day Finnish (Lehikoinen, Kiuru 2001: 139). It was an important epoch for the purist sense of Finnish language users (although in the beginning, it only concerned religious vocabulary). The second, even a more important epoch, started towards the end of the 18th century and lasted throughout the 19th century (as we have seen above): development of the language was the most intense, and purism at its strongest. There was a tendency to make calques, i.e. to translate foreign words (at first Swedish ones), even internationalisms, e.g. *geography* = *maantiede*, etc. (cf. Lehikoinen, Kiuru 2001: 139–150; Hakulinen 2000: 426–485). Sometimes, like Icelanders, Finns also took old words and reused them in a new context, e.g. *juna* ‘train’, while its sister-form is *jono* ‘tail, queue’ (Lehikoinen, Kiuru 2001: 145; cf. also Hakulinen 2000: 482–483).

Even in present-day technical Finnish vocabulary, we have many indigenous words, which are equal to internationalisms in many European languages:

puhelin ‘telephone’ (< *puhua* ‘to speak’), *tietokone* ‘computer’ (< *tieto* ‘knowledge’ + *kone* ‘machine’), *kuvaruutu* ‘screen’ (< *kuva* ‘image’ + *ruutu* ‘box, frame’), *CD-levy* ‘compact disc’ (*levy* ‘disc’), etc.

However, in Finnish, the number of loanwords is generally larger than in Icelandic. Thus one can see: *matematiikka*, *historia*, *musiikki*, *teatteri*, *radio*, etc.³¹ A tendency to receive foreign words is growing in Finnish, which means that purism is in regression.

Let’s also talk about strict linguistic policy in Lithuania, which aspires to strengthen its national language and culture. With huge nationalist vigour, Lithuania promoted purity of language mainly during two periods: 1918–1940, and since 1990. Between these periods, there was ideological planning with russification (Piročkinas 1996), but, at the same time, stagnation. Baločkaitė (2014), in her excellent article, written on the basis of archival materials of Lithuanian linguists, summarises the last periods in this way:

³¹ E.g. in North Saami: *matematiikka*, *historjá*, *musihkka*, *teáhter*, *ráđio*; whereas *telephone* and *computer* is: *telefovndna* and *dihťor*. However, e.g. in Hungarian: *matematika/mennyiségtan*, *történet*, *zene/muzsika*, *színház*, *rádió*; *telefon* and *komputer/számítógép*.

(...) the concept of a good, proper language is a purely political idea, produced for the sake of governance by both the Soviet authorities as well as the pro-nationalist governments. The nationalist version of a “good language” is sanitized from foreign effects; the socialist version is sanitized from bourgeois remnants and capitalist influence. In both cases, the proper language is assigned a moral value, but the ideological construct masks inequalities of power. During the post-Soviet years, due to democratization, liberalization, and growing diversity, the idea of one “good, proper language” forfeited its social significance; it remained purely a linguistic ideal. With the development of multiple language cultures and subcultures, it stands increasingly as a metaphor for the totalitarian Soviet period for its omnipresent uniformity and homogeneity (Baločkaitė 2014: 41).

Liberalisation takes place mainly in everyday language use, whereas official policy still remains strict – it had and still has dark sides, e.g. it creates a lot of obstacles in the way of free expression of linguistic minorities in Lithuania. One cannot even use other transcriptions of names than the Lithuanian ones. Maybe something will change soon as we notice more tendencies towards transformation, even within this purely Lithuanian society, e.g. women do not want surnames containing suffixes that indicate their marital status any more (Ramonienė 2007). Such a process has already gone out of use, for instance, in Hungary. Nowadays, a strict linguistic policy in Lithuania is challenged by Europeanisation and internationalisation (see also Hogan-Brun et al. 2007).

5. Centre(s) of linguistic influence

The criterion of centre, which makes norms uniform and influences the speed of changes, does not concern any institution (its influence can be rather in the written language). In living and spontaneous language, the point is about a certain leadership among society, which means that some social groups or leaders (even local ones) create speaking “habits” (see e.g. Szmrecsanyi 2005 for the spoken English). The spread of language diktat is strengthened by all types of media (mainly TV as well as Internet) and literature.

In Iceland or in Finland, the norm is dictated by the community of the capital city (because the majority of inhabitants live there). We could already conclude that a small size of population favours monocentrism, but it is not true in every case, because, for example, in small Estonia there are two centres: in the North and in the South.³² Norway also is bicentric, with Nynorsk and Bokmål. Swedish can be called bicentric too, having Sweden and a Swedish-speaking community in Finland.³³

³² Standard Estonian (*eesti keel*) is the language of the capital city, which is situated in the North of Estonia, whereas in the South of the country there is another variant that is subdivided into three types (*võro, seto, mulgi*). The type that is becoming stronger as a separate language is *võro kiil* (cf. e.g. Pajusalu 2009). It is curious that these variants situated in the most southern peripheries of all the Finnic languages reveal a lot of striking archaisms.

Certain languages in the world are polycentric (and this concerns languages with rather large populations). Italy still remains polycentric after its long historical divisions. French, English, Spanish, or Portuguese are even more polycentric, not only because of their numerous former colonies,³⁴ but also due to the fact that in their countries there are strong regional differences, further intensified by the influences of other nations (that lived there for ages, e.g. Basques in Spain, or there are newcomers, like immigrants in France, etc., cf. Garde 2005). Major Asian languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Korean, or Hindi have many centres too (cf. Clyne 1992). Saamic languages are polycentric too for a few reasons: they remained oral during a long period of time and most of them have not established norms,³⁵ they live on the multilingual and cross-border territory of four countries, which have different administration languages (see e.g. Pietikäinen 2010). Even the dominant North Saami has local variations.

In polycentric languages, erosion occurs faster, whereas in monocentric languages (which are also spoken by smaller communities), one can more often see stagnation, even ossification.

II. Current tendencies in communication and prospects of conservative languages

Nowadays in Northern European languages, one can observe many phenomena, which are almost the same world-wide due to globalisation. Thus:

- a) Currently the position of English is increasingly important as an international means of communication. Almost all languages of Northern Europe are “English-positive” in private and in public life, e.g. conversations with visitors on radio or on TV programmes are held without any translation, in addition to which, TV broadcasts films in their original versions. In school this language is already obligatory. At the same time, it slips into national languages, not only in the speech of young people due to popular culture and media,

³³ The Swedish language of this community is not exactly the same as the language of the mother country. Finnish Swedish is “afraid” of being invaded by Finnish, therefore it secludes itself and keeps maximal purism, whereas Swedish of Sweden gives itself more liberty and is more receptive to changes (Mattfolk et al. 2004).

³⁴ In the majority of the former colonies, the mother country was considered the source of standard language, an attitude that still persists, though mainly among conservative (often older) speakers (therefore there are many archaisms in their language). But naturally local variants came into being. Some of these new languages seem more archaic than the mother country language, e.g. the *joual* in Québec (cf. Kircher 2012), whereas others evolve faster and diverge more from the “good” language, e.g. Brazilian Portuguese, which wins popularity in comparison with European Portuguese that seems fossilised and heavy (cf. Dębowiak 2012).

³⁵ The minor Saamic languages are sometimes “standardised” towards a common model (similar to the system of the North Saami, which is a majority and acts as lingua franca) and are often abandoned in multilingual and multiethnic reality of the present-day Fennoscandia, despite efforts to awake the national sense, which could link different Saami groups into a cross-border common homeland (cf. Elenius 2010).

commercials and advertisements (slogans and catchwords), the Internet and video games, but also thanks to travelling. Almost every citizen of Northern Europe can speak English very well. We can say that people in these countries have become bilingual.

- b) At the same time, we can observe the promotion of multilingualism (the European Union contributes to it) and sometimes this can have an impact on national languages, because their speakers tend to construct mixed words and structures. In addition to these processes, there is an intense migration of people, mainly towards more developed European countries (thus from the south towards the north), and often these immigrants mix up languages and bring new words to local languages.
- c) Public life is internationalised and goes hand in hand not only with the communication by new technologies, but also with the interconnection of economies (e.g. transnational enterprises, societies with management and workers who speak mainly in English) and with the diffusion of merchandise and their trademarks.
- d) At the same time, we can observe a growth in liberalism and in tolerance (down-turn of xenophobia). The emphasis is placed on being receptive to cooperation and contacts, not only between countries within the European Union, but almost in the whole world: nets of partnership agreements, common development programmes, interinstitutional exchanges (e.g. between universities at the level of teachers and students), diverse common projects and itinerant internships, etc.
- e) Within all languages spoken in civilised societies, there are professional languages, i.e. languages for specific purposes. Their increasing popularity is lately prodigious, because of the growing importance of: socio-economic factors, omnipresence of the media, expansion of public life and of politics, technological progress, facility of communication and requirements of globalisation. These languages become internationalised and are taught more often on foreign language courses (see e.g. Uber Grosse, Voght 2012). However, we can see that their formation is complex as they develop their nomenclature in different domains, which often intersect. Moreover, they alter words of ordinary language, whereas some of these words can squeeze back into the common language once more, with a whole host of new meanings and/or new forms. Of course, in most European languages, domains such as medicine have always drawn from two main sources: indigenous language (e.g. names of diseases in popular medicine) and the common treasure of Greek-Latin vocabulary. Recently, however, one can find a strong expansion of languages for specific purposes with a deluge of anglicisms, as in business or computer languages or communication as a whole may be carried out entirely in English. Hence:

The global language of medical science is English, to the extent that more than 99 per cent of all medical dissertations in the Nordic countries are written and published in English (...). A mastery of English is required both for the purpose of publishing original research for the international readership and in order to

participate in professional development (...). The dominant position of English is so strong that there is a real danger of loss of the medical register from the national languages of many countries (Taavitsainen, Pahta 2008: 31–32).

This phenomenon occurs even in conservative societies and languages, because their users do not want to stay behind the others in the march for civilisation.

- f) In our global world, individualism is appreciated too, particularly by young people. In reality, for example on Internet web sites, it is easy to be sociable, but it is equally easy to “melt” into the mass. Thus people try to get out of “ordinariness”, to break some rules and to emphasise their originality, also by means of new forms, which they create in language. Thus people often play with language.

In these circumstances, can languages – even the most conservative ones by tradition and by their linguistic policy – keep their character? If we look at the above mentioned languages as examples of conservatism – Finnish, Icelandic and Lithuanian, so those with theoretically good prospects because of their status as official languages in their countries – the situation is as follows:

In Finland, spoken Finnish has already diverged considerably from standard (literary) Finnish, which can sometimes seem “comic” (!) (cf. Luutonen 2008: 77), thus “normal” language is at a crossroads. The place of English is already predominant in the Finnish society.³⁶ Finns enjoy speaking this language, thus they take on anglicisms readily,³⁷ both in public and in private life, as well as both in standard language³⁸ and in colloquial language (e.g. small words in private conversations and on TV talk-shows), not only in oral but also in written discourse, e.g. in sport magazines and/or in magazines for teenagers (cf. Taavitsainen, Pahta 2003, 2008; Leppänen 2007; Leppänen, Nikula 2007). In manners and in the way young people speak, particularly in the media, one can even see a “stylistic heteroglossia”, which is aimed at the mixing of languages and levels in order to gain more intense expressivity and build up an exceptional identity (cf. Leppänen et al. 2009). Similarly, anglicisms go hand in hand with Swedish and Russian words in urban slang (mainly in Helsinki). In addition to this, there is intensive immigration.³⁹ A strong internationalisation of communication can also be observed strategically in public institutions, like universities and colleges that want to be open on a global scale (cf. Saarinen 2012).

³⁶ Young Finns no longer want to learn Swedish, which is still obligatory at school as the second official language of the country. Swedish seems to them difficult and needless, not at all an obvious requirement, but something foreign. This feeling has lasted for years now.

³⁷ A kind of report on this is to be found in the book *Kolmas kotimainen. Lähikuvia englannin käytöstä Suomessa* [Third domestic language. Close-ups on the use of English in Finland] (Leppänen, Nikula, Kääntä 2008). Studies collected in this volume confirm the omnipresence of English in Finnish life as well as its role as a source of new words.

³⁸ Sometimes, English words and their indigenous equivalents coexist, although they may have different connotations and/or stylistic nuances (cf. Hiidenmaa, Nuolijärvi 2004).

³⁹ In 2014, the number of immigrants in Finland exceeded the number of Swedish-speaking minority (around 7–8%). Most immigrants come from Russia, Estonia, and Somalia.

In Iceland, the spread of English is a stimulus to more official control and care (Hilmarrsson-Dunn, Kristinsson 2009: 367). But even in everyday life, Icelanders generally continue being purist in order to preserve their language. This attitude is exceptional among Nordic countries which, in general, are interested in modernisation and more open to internationalisation of life and language. But something is changing little by little. In 2004 Thøgersen showed the continual resistance of Icelandic to foreign influences, although, in the same journal, two Icelanders – Ásta Svavarsdóttir and Guðrun Kvaran – showed the influx of English into the language of young people.⁴⁰ Furthermore, recently Kristinsson (2013) has found the reality more divergent from the theory. Non-standard languages are becoming more popular and there are some changes in pronunciation and in morphology (see Pétursson 1997). The purity of Icelandic begins to be in danger among Icelanders themselves in everyday speech. In addition, there are more immigrants, mainly from Poland (the biggest minority) and from other European and Asian countries.

The Lithuanian language that has always had its local dialects, nowadays has more subdivisions and diverse types of spoken language and slang, which is becoming more popular (cf. e.g. Kačiuškienė 2012). This is mainly due to the opposition of people to the linguistic policy of the authorities in the last decades. Baločkaitė (2014: 59) notices two recent tendencies in Lithuanian:

- 1) *linguistic paradox of totalitarianism* : degradation of public language, resulting from totalitarian language planning, led towards granting linguistic supremacy to the commoners and acknowledging failure of the state hegemony (...). Language planning was the first area where the Soviet authorities acknowledged their failure and the commoners' supremacy, preceded in further transformations of power relations between state and citizens on behalf of the latter, which has led finally towards the dismantling of the system itself.
- 2) *linguistic paradox of democratization*: whereas standardization of language is always linked to the centralization of political powers, in cases of rising nation states or totalitarian regimes, the decentralization of political power and democratization leads to diversification of linguistic practices and fragmentation of standard language. Linguistic homogeneity becomes largely incompatible with socio-cultural, political, and economic diversity. Slangs and sociolects, previously seen as linguistic impurities and deviations, have to be reconsidered as constitutive part of plural linguistic cultures and significant part of linguistic repertoires of the population.

Despite a strict national policy to protect the Lithuanian language and culture, the process of internationalisation continues with more vigour. Lithuanian society, mainly the younger generation, is more open, learns languages more quickly and travels often. Meanwhile, institutions need more time to open up, but under the influence of pan-European, or even global integrationist tendencies, Lithuanian

⁴⁰ In a dictionary of Icelandic slang, whose first edition was published already in 1982, we can find many English words, e.g. *happi* (< happy), *happening*, *káboj/kabboj/kafboj* (< cowboy), *meika* (< make), *pikköpp* (< pickup), etc.; but also a lot of Danish ones (cf. Árnason et al. 2010 [1982]).

isolationism may weaken itself. In this way, Lithuania, though afraid of losing something, may win a lot. For example, T. Bulajeva and G. Hogan-Brun (2014) say that thanks to the internationalisation of higher education, Baltic language studies could be developed and become better known at foreign universities.

Conclusions

As we can see from the examples of these three languages, which stand clearly apart from the rest of their families, there are some extralinguistic factors that can be in favour of keeping languages conservative or conversely hastening their erosion:

1. Geographical isolation and/or cultural seclusion in quite a homogenous community of sister languages.
2. Nationalism and purist ideology can stem from difficult history whose background still remains in common memory and reinforces the triad (collective identity + ethnicity + language). Finally, one nation and its territorial construction may lead to the national nature of its language. In Finland, Iceland and in Lithuania purist tendencies in language were integral parts of the nationalist programme.
3. Cultural and psychological hallmarks (e.g. talkativeness or taciturnity) can be related to social attitudes: A nation can have its customs related to the preservation of the language, but also to the frequency of its use (maybe if it is lower, language erosion is lower too, as the language can remain less “worn out”).
4. The official policy of the country is important too, if it is protectionist and favours the local language instead of an influx of foreign influences.
5. Within the local community there can also be social groups and leaders that play an important role in the evolution of a language, because they can introduce some new trends of speaking, which are then reproduced locally and/or spread by the media.

Finally, we have to say that tendencies and circumstances in modern societies are changing, which can have an impact on languages:

1. With new technologies, communication is easier and faster; geographical distance has become insignificant (and what is local can be known globally too).
2. In Europe we observe the tendency towards multilingualism and interculturality, transnationality and “Europeanity”, which is also maybe “politically correct” within the European Union.
3. English is widely spoken, so it is difficult to be linguistically emancipated and isolated. Almost all the languages of Northern Europe are “English-positive”, consciously and subconsciously, even Icelandic. In addition, English is more useful in languages for specific purposes.
4. Economics plays an important role too, because it leads to the commercialisation and internationalisation of public life, even in private relationships. The world really has become a global village which is at least bilingual (English + native language), although has different “districts”.

Thus, linguists must take into consideration the increasing importance of common circumstances: social, historical, cultural, psychological, and even economic. Geographical and chronological factors do not play a significant role any longer. Some developments of sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, ethnopsychology, psycholinguistics or even biolinguistics can help here. Even Eurolinguistics can take advantage of their acquisitions.

Languages do not live in dictionaries or handbooks, but in real life. Languages live with their speakers on a daily basis. Languages change with the way of life of their users.

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