

Chapter 10:

Criteria and measures for successful status gain and for successful language planning of NDVs

This chapter defines and deals with measures and criteria that help NDVs to achieve a higher status and to carry out successful language planning. The research question is: What measures can be taken on the side of NDVs to get a higher status and better acceptance in their language community?

1. Criteria for status gain and successful language planning of ND-varieties

The following list of criteria tries to answer the question that arises from the different language situations of NDVs presented in chapter (4): What are the reasons for the differences in status of different NDVs? The list presents the criteria in descending order from most important to less important.

1. *Official recognition as an official, co-official national language or a regional language.* The most important criterion is the official recognition as an official or co-official state language with equal rights vis-à-vis the other state-language(s) of the same nation. This leads to (high) prestige and resources for codification. Examples are: *Finnish Swedish, Belgium Dutch / Belgium German / Belgium French, South Tyrolean German, Canadian French, Catalan in Spain.*

2. *The NDV serves as a strong symbol of identity:*

If the NDV has a strong function for the cohesion and identity of a language community, this not only leads to the preservation of the variety, but also to measures that promote codification and language maintenance.

Examples: *French in respect to the Dutch-speaking community in Belgium, French in Canada in respect to the English-speaking community, Western Armenian in respect to the language(s) of the host country and Kurdish in respect to Turkish etc.*

3. *The NDV is also a symbol of the successful struggle for national / social independence:* This leads to the maintenance of the NDV or the creation of new languages.

Examples: *Irish English, Austrian German, Belgium Dutch, Canadian French, Kosovar Albanian, South African English vs. Afrikaans, Catalan in Spain, Bosnian / Croatian vs. Serbian etc.*

4. *There is positive ethno-linguistic consciousness, language pride¹ and language loyalty (especially by the elites). This leads to a strong attachment to the language and to language maintenance.*
Examples for this are: *Western Armenian, Irish English, Canadian French, Yiddish, Kurdish etc.*
 5. *The NDV practices corpus planning and status planning, codifies the native characteristics, standardises them and makes them usable in written language: the existence of electronic corpora leads to documentation and codification which are the basic prerequisites for gaining prestige.*
Examples: NDVs that have (large) language corpora: *Belgium Dutch, Australian English, New Zealand English; Canadian French, Belgium Dutch, Finnish Swedish etc.*
 6. *The dominant variety has accepted the existence of the NDVs and contributes positively to its codification:*
Examples: *Dutch (towards Belgium Dutch), English, Swedish.*
Canadian French has no such support but it is an “old” NDV since the first settlements in early 17th century and is geographically sufficiently distant to keep its idiosyncrasies preserved and codifies them.
 7. *The NDV is geographically distant and not in the neighbourhood: geographic distance reduces the amount of language contact with the dominant / mother variety and enables linguistic self-definition.*
Examples: *Australian English, New Zealand English etc.; Canadian French, African, American Portuguese, South American Spanish etc.*
Examples for the opposite are: *Swiss Italian, Belgium French, Swiss German, Austrian German², Belarus Russian, Ukrainian Russian etc.*
 8. *The NDV belongs to a language with a low degree of centralization: a low degree of centralisation leads to a better acceptance of national variation and to its subsequent codification over time.*
Examples for languages with a low degree of centralization: *English, Portuguese, Spanish etc.* Examples for the opposite: *French, Italian, Greek, German, Russian etc.*
- 2. Possible solutions of status gain for NDVs with low status: What can be done to survive as a national variety and gain a higher status and support?**

¹ See Fishman (1996): In praise of the beloved mother tongue.

² For the strong influence of German German on Austrian German due to satellite TV and language contact via the electronic media see Muhr (2003) and the resulting language shift see Muhr (2006).

If an NDV is under severe pressure from the DV and is at risk of being levelled, there are various strategies for coping with and overcoming the situation:

Strategy 1: Set up a national language policy enshrined in laws and statutes:

As the examples of *Swiss German, Swiss French, Swiss Italian, Ulster Irish, Finish Swedish and Canadian French* (among others) show, a language policy enshrined in laws provides a solid basis for the promotion of the NDV (status planning and corpus planning). Usually, this can only be achieved through a long societal discussion process, which, however, can fail due to the resistance from various conservative forces.

Strategy 2: Properly codify your variety according to the real use, irrespective whether this changes the language or even creates a new language:

The central aim is to achieve a degree of alignment between the actual use of language and the codified or written language, in order to strengthen linguistic and national identity. This could lead to a new language in the long term, but also to linguistic and cultural independence.

Strategy 3: Embrace systematic bilingualism and teaching both norms (your own and the former dominant one) in school:

Whether this option is viable depends on different factors that are difficult to predict. In any case, a self-confident, egalitarian minded, culturally progressive political class seems to be an essential prerequisite for taking the necessary steps to achieve such a fundamental change in language policy.

Strategy 4: Leave everything as it is:

Maybe you codify the variety without paying too much attention to your own variety as the unity of the language and the participation in a large language community is the dominant goal. In this case, exonormative codification will be the right strategy.

The successful examples of *Finish Swedish, Belgium Dutch, Australian English and Quebec French* show that it takes about 40-50 years until language awareness and efforts for identity building have reached a level that leads to sufficient codification and the acceptance of the national norm by the general public and the elites. In this regard, many non-dominant varieties still have a long way to go.

Apart from that – the following measures could be helpful to neutralise or to overcome linguistic dominance of DVs to a certain extent:

- (1) Changing the language ideology and moving away from the idea that there is only ONE correct language standard – there are many simultaneous standards linked to different functions and domains of language use;
- (2) Adding qualifying adjectives to the term “standard” and allow linguistic plurality by ensuring functionality – eg. *national* standard, *pan-regional* standard, *media presentation* standard, *regional* standard etc. This destigmatises “normal” everyday language and other varieties, recognising that they are also “standards” that serve a purpose in the specific contexts where they are considered to be absolutely “normal” linguistic behaviour;
- (3) Changing the attitudes of the cultural and linguistic elite to promote the interests of the own nation and avoid social devaluation by adhering to exonormative norms;
- (4) Changing of the policy framework by adopting laws and setting up language policy institutions to provide a solid basis for language planning, corpus and status planning and codification;
- (5) Democratisation of standard language by promoting native norms and avoid discrimination via language by no longer using the term “dialect” for regional varieties of the NDV;
- (6) Promoting a multilingual approach to variation within a language and abandoning negative attitudes of so called “non-standard” varieties;
- (7) Accepting inner-linguistic multilingualism and considering it as a *linguistic capital* and not as a *social burden*.