

# Introduction: *Ausbau* is everywhere!

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## 1. A (rather longish) introduction to the introduction

An *Ausbau* language, to repeat Kloss's (1967: 30) original definition, is a language that has "deliberately been reshaped so as to become a vehicle of variegated literary expression." It is a language because "it has been made" such. Its opposite is an *Abstand* language, a language that is there, so to speak, "by nature," and that would be recognized as such "no matter what" by virtue of its inherent distinctiveness. With his dichotomy Kloss brought to the fore and highlighted, to use Fishman's words (this issue), "the importance of organized human intervention into the natural language-change processes." Still, between the two terms of his dichotomic opposition, it is *Ausbau* that has received the greatest attention, and it is to the concept of *Ausbau* that Heinz Kloss owes his place among the great linguists of the past century. The reason is easily spelled out: as Fishman (this issue; here and below emphasis in the original) again notes, "*Ausbau* and *Abstand* are not really on one and the same dimension," and "the latter term, *Abstand*, is entirely unneeded in any language planning typology because it lacks any reference to human agency."

But there is more: if, as Fishman elaborates, reshaping, or *Ausbauization*, is a matter of degree, a continuum rather than a pole within a dichotomic opposition, I suspect the same to hold true of *Abstandness* too. If *Abstand* languages exist (and they do!), we know all too well how their borders are generally fuzzy: we can recognize the "languageness" of X and Y, but we cannot pinpoint where one ends and the other begins. They are recognizable if seen from a convenient distance, but trouble begins when we zoom in and (the devil is in the detail!) find all kinds of disturbing elements: diglossias involving so-called dialects (which often dialects are not), bi- and multilingualism and their by-products of intermediate and mixed varieties, code switching, and dialect continua.

Fishman (this issue) further proposes that the true opposite of *Ausbau* should rather be *Einbau* — defined as "the concern for fostering

*similarity*-focused emphases”; but then he is at pain finding genuine examples of *Einbau* languages and concedes that “*Einbauization* has been a much rarer phenomenon in Europe.” Fishman (this issue) speculates that in Latin America and Africa the spreading of literacy and the officialization of indigenous languages “may encourage the amalgamation of smaller entities. Ultimately, some of the latter may need to institute self-saving *Einbauization* toward some of their own more minor varieties.” I doubt it. I suspect that the quest for distinctiveness and separateness are much more entrenched in our behavior (linguistic and not) than the aspirations to likeness, homogeneity, and uniformity. And just as the latter generally do not need any conscious effort on the part of language communities (all is needed is the readiness to be amalgamated into a larger community), so they are less likely to be the object and aim of planned effort.

We are therefore left with *Ausbau* and with the many different strategies aiming at bringing about, fostering, increasing, exaggerating differences — at the same time that they downplay, depress, obliterate similarities. All the articles in this issue, one way or another, focus on identity as seen through the mirror of language difference. It may take sharply different forms:

One may be different and *re*-assert one’s distinctiveness, as in the case of Croatian (Katičić); but the struggle to become or remain different may also involve the creation and maintenance of separate patrillects in western Arnhem Land (Garde); it lurks in the fear of contamination and the struggle for purism in Tamil (Schiffman) as much as in the Frenchization of written Piedmontese (below). It lies behind many proposals, often as much ingenious as fanciful, of ethnic scripts in Africa as well as in the “religiolects” of Sango (Pasch). It has asserted itself with force in the failure of a proposed multiethnic Omoto variety in southwest Ethiopia and has crept in, in a subtler way, in the notation of the pharyngeal fricatives in the orthographies of the Horn of Africa (Savà and Tosco). In short, similarity is accepted when perceived as harmless and weak or when it is tolerably far away — but not on my doorstep, please.

## 2. A detour on definitions (or: why *Ausbau* matters)

To speak about *Abstand* and *Ausbau* languages *in previously reported and unreported settings* (as in the proposed original subtitle of the present issue) means, by and large, to speak of “minor,” “small,” “regional,” or “newly recognized” languages. More generally, it means to speak of language settings in which speakers (or a portion thereof) feel their language to be “threatened” — and therefore in need of assistance.

The rather liberal use of scare quotes in the preceding passage is, I feel, justified: a language may be not small at all in absolute terms, and still be a minor language — or perceived so by the speakers. The “threat” posed by the outside may be not quite as real or imminent: Schiffman (this issue) reports on the puristic attitudes in Tamil, a language with possibly 70 million speakers — not a small language by any count.

Still, and scare quotes notwithstanding, such “minor” languages need to be somehow defined.<sup>1</sup> Is a linguistic entity a minor language when perceived as such by its speakers? In other words, is the definition a function of their awareness? In this case, a lot, possibly literally thousands, of the world’s languages are *not* minority languages. If Francoprovençal is a language, by the way “most robust in Italy” (Sherzer and Sherzer 2003: 173), then how is it that 78.3% of Valdôtains claim their “mother tongue” to be Italian (Dal Negro 2005: 119)?<sup>2</sup> Will then a minor language be defined as such externally, by the linguists?

Obviously, we can define a minor language only after we have made up our minds on what is, *tout court*, a *language*. And here we can adopt, broadly speaking, either an *internal* or an *external* definition: by the former I mean not only a definition based upon some language-internal characteristics of the languages themselves (its relative *Abstandness*), but also one that takes into account mutual comprehensibility — which is to a large extent a consequence of the formers. An *external* definition will on the contrary turn around the perception of the language setting on the part of the speakers. An example of such a definition has been provided by Croft (2000: 26), who, following Hull’s (1988) work in biology, has proposed to define a language as “the population of utterances in a speech community.” “Population” is used here in its biological meaning as a spatiotemporally bounded set of actual individuals, such “that every speaker perceives every other speaker as someone he or she should be able to communicate with by using what they perceive as the same language” (2000: 18).

As Croft’s definition is meant to be evolutionary and not static, structural features, genetic relationship, or mutual comprehensibility play no role in it. Croft’s definition is essentially based upon a population’s (here in its commonsensical meaning, i.e., the speakers) definition of itself and its language behavior. Bold as Croft’s attempt may be, it leaves open more questions than it solves: it is a definition of a community’s *view* of its language(s), rather than of the language itself. And trouble starts as soon as Croft (2000: 16; emphasis by MT) defines as *sibling languages* “two linguistic varieties that are structurally so similar that they are considered to be ‘dialects of the same language’, yet are perceived by the speakers — or at least by one group of speakers — as distinct languages.”

Examples of sibling languages would be, among others, Macedonian and Bulgarian, Serbian and Croatian, Hindi and Urdu, etc. Immediately afterwards, Croft is forced to notice that opinion must not be unanimous across the speaking community: e.g., “many Bulgarians tend to see Macedonian as a dialect of Bulgarian, but the reverse does not hold. Of course, this reflects different perceptions about the social and political separateness of the communities that speak these linguistic varieties” (2000: 16). Is this a statement about the languages, or about the communities speaking such languages? How much powerful, influential, and vociferous must an opinion be in order for *siblingness* to be established? Finally, what about the well-known cases when attitudes change and two varieties that were considered by the speakers (even by *all* of them) as “dialects of the same language” come to be considered as two separate languages? Is this a statement about the varieties (dialects, languages) or about the *perception* of such varieties?

The mirror case of the sibling languages is provided, in Croft’s view, by the *polytypic languages*. These are “linguistic varieties that are structurally so diverse that linguists would characterize them as different languages, yet their speakers perceive them as dialects of the same language” (2000: 16): examples are the Chinese “dialects,” the situations of diglossia, as in the Arab countries, and the post-creole continua, as with Jamaican creole and Standard Jamaican English. Also, the “traditional dialects of English, German, Italian and other western European languages may be instances of a lower degree of polytypy, depending on the degree to which their speakers identify themselves as speakers of English, German, etc., albeit nonstandard speakers” (2000: 17). I feel that a good measure of oversimplification has been applied here: speakers may still identify themselves as speakers of X while being well aware that communication between their and another, “standard” variety not only practically does *not* occur for social reasons (because certain topics or speech contexts bar the use of one of the varieties), but is also *impossible* for strictly linguistic (structural) reasons, because mutual comprehensibility falls below any acceptable lower limit. Let us imagine a particularly “aggressive” and demographically powerful community of X-speakers which, any linguistic (structural) difference notwithstanding, considers the neighboring, demographically weaker variety Y as a “dialect of the same language” (X, obviously). Would we still have here polytypic languages?<sup>3</sup>

All this of course has not even addressed the quite common case in which speakers simply cannot or do not want to make up their mind about what is what, a dialect, a language, or whatever. Croft’s definition of language closely resembles Connor’s (1978) well known definition of a nation: while an ethnic group can be objectively defined from the outside

by an external observer, a nation is nothing more than an ethnic group that “has discovered itself” and defines itself as such. In short, it amounts to “seeing oneself as X.” Neither Croft nor Connor can escape an obvious paradox: while biological populations are defined externally (by the biologist), for linguistic/ethnic populations the observer should be content with registering the — often volatile — opinion of the community itself, i.e., the mutually inconsistent opinions of its members. What counts as a language becomes a *statistical* truth.

There seems to be no way out other than to stick to an internal definition of language, essentially resting (many problems notwithstanding) upon the criterion of mutual comprehensibility. With a *caveat*, and it is here that Kloss and the concept of *Ausbau* come to rescue: mutual comprehensibility may be created. As well as *lack of mutual comprehensibility*.

### 3. Three easy steps in *Ausbauization*

When Kloss introduced the concept of *Ausbau* languages, he had in mind mainly the reshaping of the dialects of many modern nations in nineteenth-century Europe, and we are only gradually learning how reshaping took and takes place in a whole range of other contexts. As discussed by Murray Garde in this issue, in western Arnhem land *Ausbauization* has operated at the micro-level in the form of deliberate language elaboration: unsurprisingly, in a social context in which difference was prized and considered a central aspect of identity, lexical manipulation and downright invention had the goal of fostering and maintaining clan diversity. As a result, “certain lexical markers of clan affiliation have been deliberately invented and adopted by each of the patriclans in the region.”

The first step in corpus planning in modern (western-style) *Ausbauization* has to do with orthographic choices. To write down one’s language and to consciously make it as distinctive as possible is the goal. An autochthonous script has been a very common solution in the first phases of contact between illiterate and literate societies, as documented by Pasch (this issue) for Africa. Choices between scripts are likewise dealt with in the other article on Africa in this issue (Savà and Tosco).

The centrality of the orthographic choices is also seen, *e contrario*, in the problems posed by the pre-contemporary, traditional orthographies of certain minority languages. These orthographies, being the heritage of a period of stable bilingualism or diglossia, when distinctiveness was much less pivotal than in their current situation of endangerment, may suffer of *too much* resemblance to the orthography of a national language. Piedmontese (a Romance language of northwest Italy discussed at length

Table 1. *The spelling of /u/ and /y/ in Piedmontese*

Spelling	Meaning	Piedmontese phonological string	Italian phonological string
<i>economia</i>	'economics'	/ekunu'mia/ (<o> = /u/)	/ekono'mia/ (<o> = /o/)
<i>utopia</i>	'utopia'	/yту'pia/ (<u> = /y/)	/uto'pia/ (<u> = /u/)

further below) may illustrate this point. The dominating language in the area where Piedmontese is spoken is Italian, which has no rounded front vowels /y/ and /œ/ and where orthographic <o> and <u> stand for /o/ and /u/, respectively. In Piedmontese <o> stands for /u/, while <u> stands for /y/, as in French (also /œ/ is written <eu>); as for /o/, it occurs in stressed syllables only, and is conveniently spelled <ò>. The net result is an orthography that is both confusing to the speakers (all of whom are literate in Italian, while few can read Piedmontese and still fewer can write it), and oblivious of the phonological differences between the two languages (see Table 1).

In a way, to a foreigner written Piedmontese is easier to follow than spoken Piedmontese; but it also looks much more like “some kind of strange Italian.” In a society and culture where the visual aspects of language are of paramount importance, this is certainly a handicap, as it diminishes distinctiveness.

The second step has probably to do with the choice of the variety to be implemented and reshaped. The problem is raised in this issue by Savà and Tosco in the description of two opposite tendencies in Ethiopia: on the one hand, among the Ometo peoples of the southwest, a strong sense of ethnic separateness overshadowed minor linguistic differences and caused the failure of a proposed common written medium. On the other hand, among the Oromo a certain sense of ethnic unity has been stronger than dialect differences and has led to the successful adoption of a common written standard.

The third stage has to do with corpus planning *stricto sensu* and language enrichment. In his seminal paper, Kloss (1967: 33) stressed how “any conscious effort to reshape a language will have to concentrate largely on its written form.” He added, “it is not so much by means of poetry and fiction that a language is reshaped (and perhaps salvaged) but by means of non-narrative prose.” These considerations were developed by Kloss in the early 1950s. Anyone who has ever pondered on (and bemoaned) the folkloric taste of much written material in “regional languages,” “dialects,” and the like, cannot but be struck by their modernity: writing in a minority language can be the final proof of its dialectal, inferior status, if the styles and genres of its written material reflect the traditional division of roles between high and low varieties.

But that traditional role division is often part and parcel of the culture and values which traditionally found their expression in a situation of diglossia and which are now endangered by the encroachment of the dominant language on the domains of the minority one. To reshape a language becomes then tantamount to a partial rejection of the original culture and an implicit adoption of the culture of the “other.” The extreme purism, the refusal of loans, and the struggle for a “return to the origins” that mark the *Ausbauization* of a minority language may be seen as the sign of the refusal to accept this cultural shift. To go fishing in the pool of the native vocabulary, either resurrecting old words and giving them a new meaning, or deriving new words through the use of the native morphological machinery: this is so well attested a strategy, and so extensively studied in countless situations, that we will restrain from giving examples; again, this is well exemplified in this issue by Schiffman with reference to purism in Tamil. Excesses of purism are obviously a well-known phenomenon: discussing purism in Romani, Iglá (2003) points to what she calls “the Indianizing syndrome” and the excesses (and downright mistakes) of much proposed Romani lexical enrichment.<sup>4</sup> Moal (2004: 89–90) refers to much lexical innovation in Breton as “the production of armchair neologist — often one-man-operated — factories” and addressed at a “largely virtual” generation of Breton-speaking teenagers.

We are now in the position to understand why, very often, the acceptance of loans will be an inverse function of the endangered status of the minority language: the more endangered the language, the less will foreign influence be tolerated. While the excesses of purism are certainly found also in relatively powerful and healthy languages (as exemplified at length in this issue by Schiffman for Tamil), it is often the case for severely endangered languages to revert to extreme *Ausbauization*.

Another version of this tendency is seen in the reaction to the international vocabulary, whose acceptance will often be inversely correlated to its presence in the dominating language. Savà and Tosco (this issue) show the application of this in the case of Oromo in Ethiopia: an Arabic loan for “politics” is used and the “western” word is avoided — the apparent reason being that it is the western word (actually, a loan from Italian *politica*) that has made its way in Amharic, the dominating language.

#### **4. Minor languages, major *Ausbauizations*: the case of Piedmontese**

An interesting variation on this theme is found in Piedmontese, a Romance language (unrecognized as such, and therefore officially a dialect)

spoken in Piedmont, northwest Italy.<sup>5</sup> The typical form taken by *Ausbauization* in Piedmontese is the selection of a neighboring foreign language (French) in order to distance itself as much as possible from Italian, the dominating language. While Piedmontese shares with neighboring varieties a great number of isoglosses, its greatest originality — and the reason of its general incomprehensibility to speakers of other local languages (not to mention speakers of Italian) lies perhaps in its lexical stock, which abounds with items borrowed from French at different historical periods and other words not found in the Italian cultural area. All this is obviously a reflex of the peripheral position of Piedmont, in both geographical and political terms, throughout much of Italian history. Moreover, and different again from a normal “dialect,” Piedmontese evolved over the centuries a koiné (essentially based upon the variety of the capital, Turin), which was extensively used by speakers of different varieties in belletristic literature and, to a limited extent, “high prose.” Literature in the local varieties has always been very scanty (and is possibly more common today than in the past). From a sociolinguistic point of view, a rather typical diglossic situation prevailed: literacy in Piedmontese has always been limited, and Italian has been the high variety since the sixteenth century. Still, French was widely known or at least understood, especially among the bourgeoisie and the higher classes, well into the nineteenth century; French remained the language spoken at court, and Prime Minister Cavour, the “Bismark of Italy,” while being highly proficient in both French and English, was obliged to have his speeches at the Italian Parliament checked and corrected in order to make them pass as “reasonably good Italian.” In short, Piedmontese is a typical case of a failed language, a variety that never quite made it, that never underwent *enough* *Ausbauization*.<sup>6</sup>

The traditional language repertoire in Piedmont included:

- a. a local variety (a Piedmontese variety in the lower parts of the Alps and the plains, often a form of Provençal or Francoprovençal in the higher valleys);
- b. the koiné, generally simply called “Piedmontese” and used as a common medium in the marketplace, in the army, and wherever speakers of different varieties came into contact; it was also used, to a limited extent, as a written medium, but never as the “neutral” or more common one;
- c. a certain knowledge of Italian as an official and “high” variety and as a written medium. Italian was acquired at school, but was otherwise not a spoken language, although a liberal attitude to borrowing from Italian was the rule;



- d. a varying amount of exposure to French, spread horizontally from across the Alps and reinforced from above (through the court and the higher classes).

The linguistic Italianization of Piedmont, which as elsewhere increased its momentum in the twentieth century, resulted in the following:

- a. Italian became the only high variety;
- b. knowledge of “Piedmontese” (in the sense sketched above, i.e., the koiné) became less and less useful and therefore common, and the koiné itself is more and more perceived as “the dialect of Turin;”
- c. knowledge of the local variety persisted and still, to a certain extent, continues today;
- d. French simply became a “foreign language” (nowadays much less taught in schools than English, although more than in the rest of Italy).

Interestingly, a previous, still relatively healthy stage of the language did not care much about Italianisms: the whole Piedmontese literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries literally teems with Italianisms, at all levels: lexical, morphosyntactic, phraseological. On the contrary, faced with the rapid demise of the language, a number of Piedmontese intellectuals have been trying over the past decades to stem the tide of progressive Italianization in the lexicon, phraseology, and morphosyntax. Piedmontese, a koiné that was rapidly being reduced to a dialect, had to be developed into a modern language. To do so, and in an effort to be as much different as possible from Italian, written and “official” Piedmontese reverts to Frenchization.<sup>7</sup>

Although many French loans are part of the common vocabulary or, although obsolete by now or restricted to local usage, are attested in dictionaries and the old literature, in other cases a French-like neologism has been created. In quite a few cases a loan from French is preferred to a more recent, and possibly nowadays more common, loan from Italian: this is the case, e.g., for *avion* /a'vjuŋ/ for ‘airplane’ (French *avion* /avjɔ̃/) versus *aeroplan* /aeru'plɑŋ/ from Italian *aeroplano* (/aero'plano/).<sup>8</sup> This pattern is repeated endless times: *busta* ‘envelope’ is homographous with Italian *busta*, although in Piedmontese it is /'bysta/ versus Italian /'busta/; *anvlòpa* (/aŋ'vlopa/) is therefore preferred (cf. French *enveloppe* /ɑ̃vlɔp/). Equally preferred is *adresa* /a'dresa/ ‘address’ rather than *indiriss* /iŋdi'ris/ (cf. Italian *indirizzo* /indi'rittso/ and French *adresse* /adʁes/). You write a *litra* /'litra/ ‘letter’ (cf. French *lettre* /lɛtr/ versus Italian *lettera* /'lettera/), with a *crajon* /kra'juŋ/ ‘pencil’ (cf. French *crayon* /kʁɛjɔ̃/ versus Italian *matita* /ma'tita/) or an *ordinator*

(/urdina'tur/ 'computer' (cf. French *ordinateur* /ɔʁdinatœʁ/), and so on. The latter shows again how minority languages can be stricter than national languages in their acceptance of international words: Italian generally uses *computer* (pronounced /kom'pjuter/), as well as *mouse* (pronounced /'mawz/) for 'mouse' (in the context of computing), while in Piedmontese one can read *giari* (/dʒari/), i.e., needless to say, 'mouse'. Subtler interventions include, e.g., the insertion of *-n-* in certain clusters that have historically been reduced in Italian; e.g., *instrussion* instead of or alongside *istrussion* (/i(ŋ)stry'sjuŋ/) 'instruction; education' (cf. Italian *istruzione*).

Place names and ethnonyms are always a nuisance to language purism, as they usually enter the minority language through the intermediary of the national one: in written Piedmontese, the old *alman* /al'maŋ/ is used to the preference of *tedesch* /te'desk/ for 'German' (Italian has *tedesco* /te'desko/), and for 'Belgium' the definitely French-like (and, I suspect, largely incomprehensible to Piedmontese with no knowledge of French) *Belgica* /'beldzika/ has been used (cf. French *Belgique* /belʒik/; Italian has *Belgio* /'beldʒo/).

As is well known, lexical innovation can be the matter of unplanned, individual creation. While discussions were being held on the Web about the Piedmontese Wikipedia,<sup>9</sup> somebody came up with *ragnà* (/ra'ŋa/), the usual word for 'spider web', in order to cover the specialized meaning of 'internet web'. It was a rather simple and logical choice, and it easily gained acceptance — possibly precisely because Italian does not use *rag-natela* (/ra'na'tela/) 'spider web' for 'internet web', and once again prefers English *web* (as /wɛb/).

In still other cases, a pun caught on: many years ago, amid much talking on "preserving the Piedmontese language and culture," it came to be realized that there was actually no ready-made equivalent for 'to preserve': *\*tutelé*, which does not exist but could easily be created on the basis of Italian *tutelare*, smacked too much of an Italianism; *dësfende* 'to defend' and *protege* 'to protect' are not exactly the same thing (and the latter, too, moreover, is apparently a loan from Italian *proteggere*). Playing on an old noun *tua* (/tʏa/) 'protection', somebody came up with the verb *tué* (/tʏe/) — the pun lying in the homophonous French verb *tuer* 'to kill'. The obvious message was that, while talking of safeguarding the language, too many people were actually killing it. The pun went unnoticed, and since then *tué* has been steadily used in publications on language policy.

Phraseology may likewise be, although less commonly, the target of puristic intervention: faced with Italian *grazie* /'grattsje/ 'thank you' and its modern, everyday Piedmontese counterpart *grassie* /'grasje/, the re-shaped variety of Piedmontese reverts to French *merci* in the form of

Table 2. *Third person subject marking in Piedmontese, French, and Italian*

Piedmontese	French	Italian	
<i>a seurt</i> /a=sœrt/ but also:	<i>il sort</i> /i(l)=sɔʀ/	<i>esce</i> /'eʃe/	'he goes out'
<i>l'òm a seurt*</i> /l=om a=sœrt/	<i>l'homme sort</i> /l=ɔm sɔʀ/	<i>l'uomo esce</i> /l=wɔmo 'eʃe/	'the man goes out'

\* The last sentence shows how in Piedmontese, as in other varieties of northern Italy, the clitics are obligatory even in the presence of a subject NP; French has *l'homme il sort* /l=ɔm i(l)=sɔʀ/ in the spoken registers.

*mersì*. But this was not enough, and one reads and hears the expression *mersì a . . .* 'thanks to', where French actually has *grâce à . . .*. The logic is that *grassie a . . .* would be too similar to Italian *grazie a . . .*, while *mersì a*, although wrong in French, *does* sound French — or at least "un-Italian." Or, to take a last example, the gerundial form is often supplemented with the preposition *an*, mirroring again French (e.g., *en allant*, Piedmontese *an andand*, versus Italian *andando* 'going').

In the field of morphology, the use of specific derivational affixes may ensure a sufficiently autonomous look to many Piedmontese neologisms. Again, the model of French may be followed. To take just an example, the derivational suffix *-eur* (/ʔœr/), being similar to the near-homophonous French *-eur*, tends to be preferred to *-or*, which is more similar to Italian *-ore*. Therefore, *controleur* (/kuŋtru'lør/) is preferred to *controlor* (/kuŋtru'lur/) 'controller' (cf. French *contrôleur* versus Italian *controllore*).

Turning to syntax, the subject clitics — common to most varieties of northern Italy — have been extended in Piedmontese to all the persons and are obligatory in both declarative and subordinate clauses.<sup>10</sup> Whatever their syntactic status (as grammatical subjects or as agreement markers), through their bare presence they act as a precious marker of distinctiveness vis-à-vis Italian (see Table 2).

The subject clitics are invariably found before the verbal form and can be separated from it only by other clitics, such as direct and indirect object ones; the postposed subject clitics found in interrogative clauses in many northern Italian varieties have been largely dropped.<sup>11</sup> For many speakers, postposed, interrogative subject clitics are today either unknown or limited to the auxiliary verbs "to be" and "to have," and their presence is a sign of rusticity (or rather it was, since they are rarely heard at all nowadays).

Not so in normative grammars and for many language activists, who struggle, at least in writing, to postpose the subject clitics in interrogative clauses, while preserving, for good measure, the preposed subject clitics. The result is often a doubled series of subject clitics, as in: *andova a van-ne?* (/aŋ'dua a='vaŋ=ne/) 'where are they going?' in which the 3rd person Subject Clitic appears twice: first before the verb (*a*) and then affixed to it (*-ne*). All this has no historical nor functional basis (the original form was rather *andova van-ne?* and the modern, spoken one *andova a van?*), but it looks like "genuine, old, uncontaminated Piedmontese."

Are these words, expressions, and constructions "real"? The question is beside the point. The real issue is rather: are these words understood by the community of speakers? How are they considered? And, more crucially, is all this going to be successful — i.e., will it help revitalize the language? While we have no data on the reaction of the "common, unsophisticated speaker" of Piedmontese, we know all too well what happens in similar cases. It seems certain that, if the language itself has very little prestige, the reaction will be negative, or simply there will be no reaction at all. We know that unrestrained *Ausbauization*, especially if not accompanied by adequate status planning at the community level,<sup>12</sup> may result in the speakers — often by now semi-speakers actively engaged in code switching in the major language — being further alienated from their original language. This all too familiar development has been seen in many language communities: Moal (2004: 95) has well described what he calls a "caricatural situation" in Breton, where one finds "on the one hand, language activists who want to defend Breton because it exists, while not liking it very much the way it is and therefore trying to remodel it to better suit their identity purposes; on the other hand, ageing native speakers who may well find that type of Breton incomprehensible, not only because their own register is dialectal and/or impoverished, but also because what they hear seems to them phonetically, syntactically and lexically unrecognizable." Similar concerns have been voiced by native speakers of Scottish Gaelic when listening to the speech of young native speakers of English who have learned Gaelic in second-language immersion schools: they have "developed a kind of jargon which uses Gaelic vocabulary most of the time, but with a semi-understood syntax [...] I have listened to some speakers of this kind, and while understanding every separate word uttered, had little idea of what was being said" (Thomson 1994: 233).

Furthermore, a too aggressive *Ausbauization* may result in the speakers becoming uncertain and anxious in their difficult struggle to avoid "mistakes" and speak "good X": a solution can then be to simply switch to the major language or at least to stick to a loan from that language and

refuse the neologisms. This tendency will be especially observable in a situation of complete bilingualism and exclusive literacy in the dominant language, as generally is the case in Europe.

Moreover, the subsidized status of much minority-language publications (as common in Europe) masks the widening gap between the language activists and the public: printed material is donated or undercut, and does not face the challenges of free market and the judgment of customers. In this regard, it is worth noticing that online publications, precisely *because* they can be produced, spread, and enjoyed at very little or not cost, may further veil the chasm between the minority of activists and the public at large.

If there is one thing all this teaches us is that the concept of a national language as a “roof” under which new regional, minority languages are recognized and develop (Hentschel 2003) is utterly misguided: from the point of view of their modernization and expansion, regional languages, if any, develop *against* such a roof — they try to topple it from below, as it were. Also dubious is the distinction drawn by Wildgen (2003: 15) between first- and second-order purisms: while the former “establishes and fosters ‘national’ languages,” the latter “tries to define an intermediate stable status for regional or ‘European’ languages.” The distinction, if it may be drawn at all, seems to apply to the external setting of a variety, not to the methods of its expansion. It falls within the realms of history and politics, not of sociolinguistics.

## 5. An overview of the issue

After Joshua A. Fishman’s theoretical contribution on *Ausbau*, *Abstand*, and the limits of Kloss’s dichotomy, the articles in this issue are arranged in a scale of decreasing magnitude and from the relatively better reported to starkly unreported settings:

Radoslav Katičić discusses what may aptly be called a scholarly misconception: the belief (or should we speak of faith?) in the very existence of a language (Serbo-Croatian), accepted as such because decreed to exist by political bodies, in the face of evidence and, most importantly, of the speakers’ awareness. It is a powerful antidote, I think, to our own delusions as linguists and to the hubris that may accompany our intellectual effort.

In line with Kloss’s (1967: 38) remark on India being “a particularly fertile field” of research on language reshaping, Harold F. Schiffman’s contribution is a meaty discussion of purism in Tamil, its historical rea-

sons, its challenges, and its *modus operandi*. And, the author adds, its ultimate failure.

Two articles on Africa follow: Helma Pasch offers for the first time an overview of indigenous writing in Africa, and of the ultimate success of the Latin script. In the second part the limits of the graphization of African languages are discussed and evidenced on the basis of Sango, the national — but still poorly reshaped — language of the Central African Republic.

A closer look at one particular African setting is provided by Graziano Savà and Mauro Tosco, who discuss the current state of language development and standardization in Ethiopia. Despite the enormous amount of effort deployed in recent years on language reshaping in one of the world's poorest countries, the results are again disappointing or, to say the least, only partially promising.

Finally, Murray Garde discusses *Ausbau* in the context of Aboriginal Australia in western Arnhem Land. In the broader sense of *Ausbau* adopted by the author (which I endorse), neither writing nor the very existence of a “national setting” are necessary for conscious language reshaping: quite to the contrary, *Ausbau* may be discerned with even more startling clarity exactly at the micro-level of the different *patriclects* (the varieties of the patrilinear clans) of one and the same language, the Bininj Kun-wok dialect chain. Such differences are the result of “an intentional elaboration or invention” (Garde this issue) and are driven and sustained by “a covert language policy by Aboriginal people that values the equality of all languages and the norm of multilingualism” (Garde this issue). Reshaping applies in particular at the level of lexical elaboration, and “applies to all varieties in order to further the degree of *Abstand* among them and produce for each sociolinguistic group a very distinct identity” (Garde this issue).

The issue concludes with two reviews of Baldauf and Kaplan's recent volumes on language planning and policy in, respectively, Africa (reviewed by Dirk Otten), and, coming back full circle to the “previously reported settings,” Europe (reviewed by Stefano Manfredi).

In closing these lines, I want to thank all those who, volunteering to participate in this issue, have enabled me to take up Joshua A. Fishman's invitation and turn this project into reality. In the final part of his article, Heinz Kloss invited the community of linguists to actively take part in community language planning efforts. More modestly, I trust that our endeavors will further encourage interest in language reshaping processes: yes, *Ausbau* is everywhere.

## Notes

1. The problem of how to define a minority language is addressed in many contributions in Sherzer and Stolz (2003).
2. Sherzer and Sherzer (2003: 173) list many names under which Francoprovençal is known, but do not mention “Arpitan,” which is preferred nowadays by the ethnolinguistic revivalist movement (especially in Italy) and is used in the Francoprovençal Wikipedia (Vouiquipèdia arpitana, <http://frp.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reçua>, with approximately 2,000 articles or stubs written in four different orthographies in March 2008).
3. Such an aggressive and powerful community of speakers will obviously be in a position to marshal their own linguists, eager to “scientifically” support its opinion.
4. Particularly humorous is the case of a proposed word for “holiday,” which was only — and hesitatingly — understood by the speakers as meaning “unemployment” (Iglá 2003: 95). Other examples from a Spanish variety of Romani are provided in the same volume by Bakker (2003).
5. Confronted with the strong requirements of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Italian Parliament enacted Law No. 482 (15 December 1999). In Article 2 the minority languages (which the law promises to fund accordingly) are listed, and *ipso facto* everything else becomes a “dialect” (incidentally, the protection of the minority languages was traded with the proclamation, for the first time, of Italian as “the official language of the Republic” in Article 1). The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in its Article 1 (Definitions), expressly excludes the “dialects of the official language(s) of the State” from the Regional or Minority Languages — and offers therefore a precious escape hatch to the proliferation of minorities. The recognized minority languages and cultures in Italy are: Albanian, Catalan, “Germanic” (*sic!*), Greek, Slovenian and Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan, and Sardinian. After heated debates, Piedmontese and Venetian were refuted the coveted status of “minority.”
6. Cf. Parry (1994) for an overview on the history of Piedmontese and its present situation.
7. It must be stressed that politics, in principle, has nothing to do with all this. As for Scottish Gaelic (McLeod 2004: 37), and different from many other cases in Europe and beyond, language revitalization efforts in Piedmont are only partially and at best indirectly linked to autonomist or secessionist movements.
8. The transcription of Italian is broadly phonemic and reflects a northern pronunciation.
9. <http://pms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intrada>; started on 27 March 2006, with more than 14,000 entries and stubs in March 2008.
10. This is a relatively recent development, which started in the eighteenth century and was not completed until the first half of the nineteenth century; cf. Tosco (2002) for an overview.
11. It is possible that this happened as a result of the postponing of the object clitics in the past tense, which pre-empted a postverbal clitic slot. It is interesting to note that Friulian, too, has postverbal object clitics and no inversion of the subject clitics in the interrogatives. The generalization of the subject clitics to all persons and most syntactic configurations may also have played a role. In any case, it is unlikely that the demise of the postverbal, interrogative clitics has anything to do with Italian influence.
12. Status planning may of course come to the rescue here: McLeod’s (2004: 42) observations on the changing attitude vis-à-vis Scottish Gaelic neologisms going hand in hand with a changed perception of the language are illuminating here.

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