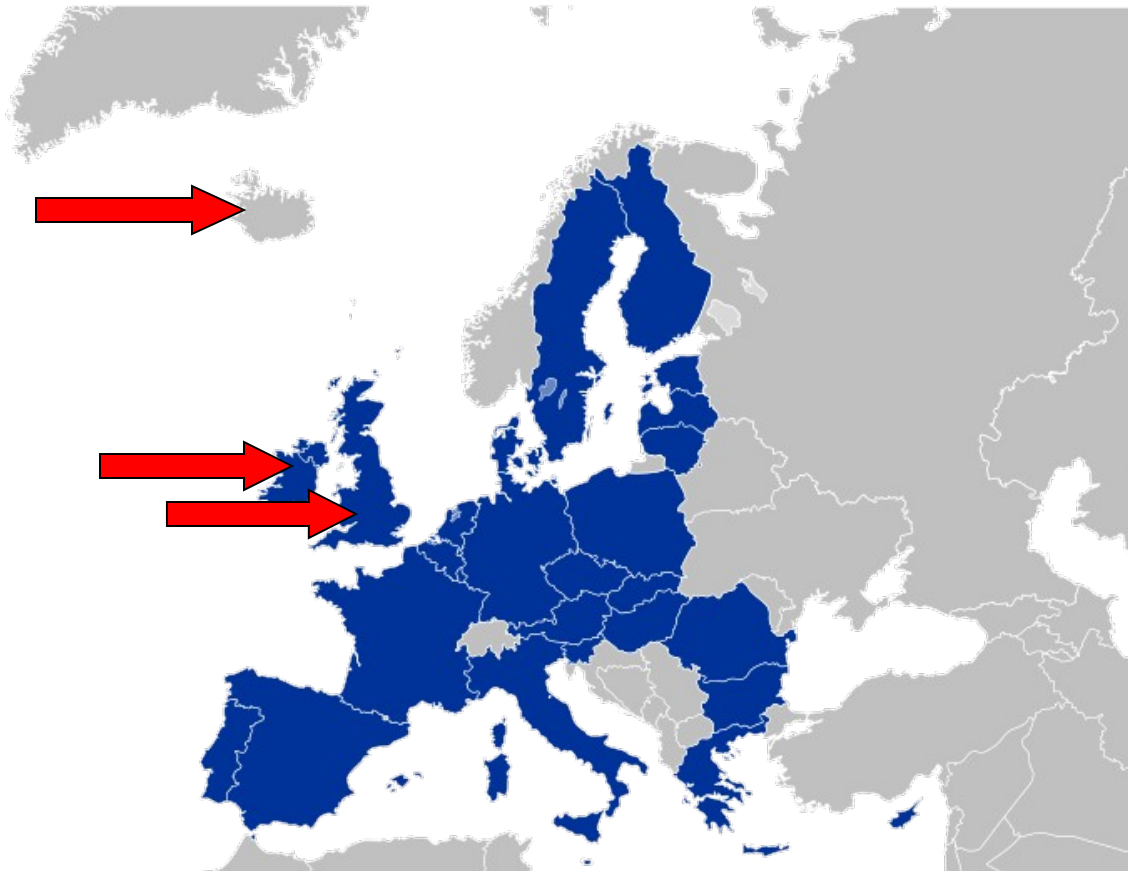


# **From the history of standardization and multilingual policies in Iceland, Great Britain and Ireland**

Alexander Haselow  
Universität Hamburg

Monolingual Multilingualism? Standard languages and their impact on multilingual policies and practices in Europe: a historical perspective

# The European Union: Focus on three different linguistic areas



Iceland

Ireland

Wales

# Goal of this contribution

An assessment of the effects of standardization and multilingual policies on the linguistic behavior of a speech community:

- Iceland: standardization under specific political and social conditions and its effects during the past 40 years
- Wales, Ireland: multilingual policies under specific political and social conditions and their effects during the past 80 years

# The language policy of the Council of Europe

Although Europe has grown together as a political, economic and cultural room, monolingualism tends to predominate among its citizens.

The European Commission has established a language division which formulated the following goals:

1. The Council of Europe accords special importance to fostering the linguistic and cultural diversity of its member states. Its activities in the field of languages aim to promote plurilinguism and pluriculturalism among citizens in order to combat intolerance and xenophobia.

(in: Mar-Molinero & Stevenson 2006: 239)

# Language Policy of the European Council

2. Its activities are aimed at "encouraging all Europeans to achieve a degree of communicative competence ability in a number of languages and to continue their language learning on a lifelong basis."

and

3. "diversifying the range of languages on offer and setting up appropriate objectives for each language."

(in: Mar-Molinero & Stevenson 2006: 239).

# Language Planning

... refers to all institutionally organized activities that aim at affecting the sociolinguistic (as well as linguistic) development of a language (or, as in this case, several languages) into a predefined direction.

# Processes and goals of language planning

**Selection      Codification      Implementation      Elaboration**

Purification

Revival

Reform

Standardization

Spread

Lexical modernization

...

Cross-tabulation of Haugen's processes with Nahir's goals (from Nahir 1984)

# Corpus Planning: Iceland



ca. 290,000  
speakers



# Iceland - The background

Settlement between 870-930

Main source of evidence: *Landnámabók*

Origin of the settlers: Norway, British Isles, Ireland

Independent state: 930 (foundation of the *Alþing*)

„birth“ of the language: 930 or late 12th c. or 14th c.

Earliest linguistic sources: 12th c.

clerical texts, code of law (*Grágás*), fragments of Sagas

# The development of a written standard

Two phenomena were particularly important for the standardization process in Iceland:

(3) The religious discourse took place mainly **in Icelandic**.

Consequence: no diglossic situation as in other parts of Europe

(2) The written standard was defined by **oral heritage** (indigenous story-telling).

Holy translations were written in the popular style.

# Language Preservation in Iceland



# Language Preservation in Iceland

First attempts to carry out a systematic language preservation program arose during the 16th century and were inspired by two phenomena:

- The fact that the Icelandic language had remained almost unchanged for centuries whereas Norwegian, from which it derived, had undergone important changes.  
Icelanders were still able to read original texts from the 10th century.
- Increasing influence from German and Danish on Icelandic, which might lead to unwanted changes of the original, „pure“ language of the first settlers.

# Language Policies

Foundation of the *Lærdómslistafélagið*  
(‘Society for learned arts’) in 1779-96:

## Goals

- "vardveita norræna Tungu" ("to preserve the Nordic tongue")
- "vidleitaz at hreinsa ena saumu fra utlendum Ordum og Talshaattum" ("try to purify it of foreign words and idioms")
- the use of "onnur gaumul edur midaldra norræn heiti" ("old or middle aged Nordic terms") to denote new concepts, as long as such terms are to be found

(Ottósson 1990: 42)

# Modern Icelandic Language Policy

- Formulation of proposals by the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Iceland
- Directives or government papers from the Ministry of Culture
- Realization in public institutions (schools, the National Theatre, the State Radio)

# Modern Icelandic Language Policy

Principles that guide the choice of variants

- Maintain the correspondence between written and spoken language  
(=preservation of the phonological system and the grammar)
  - Transmit the language as unchanged as possible to new generations
- (3) *Nýyrðastefna* (Neologism movement) - keep the language free from loan words

# Icelandic

- Conservative with respect to morphology, but:
- Phonological changes, above all

diphthongization of long vowels (e.g. *átt* /au<sup>ht</sup>/)

prespiration (e.g. *takk* /ta<sup>h</sup>k/)

prestopped nasals and laterals (e.g. *calla* ka<sup>t</sup>la/)



# Example 1: Flámæli

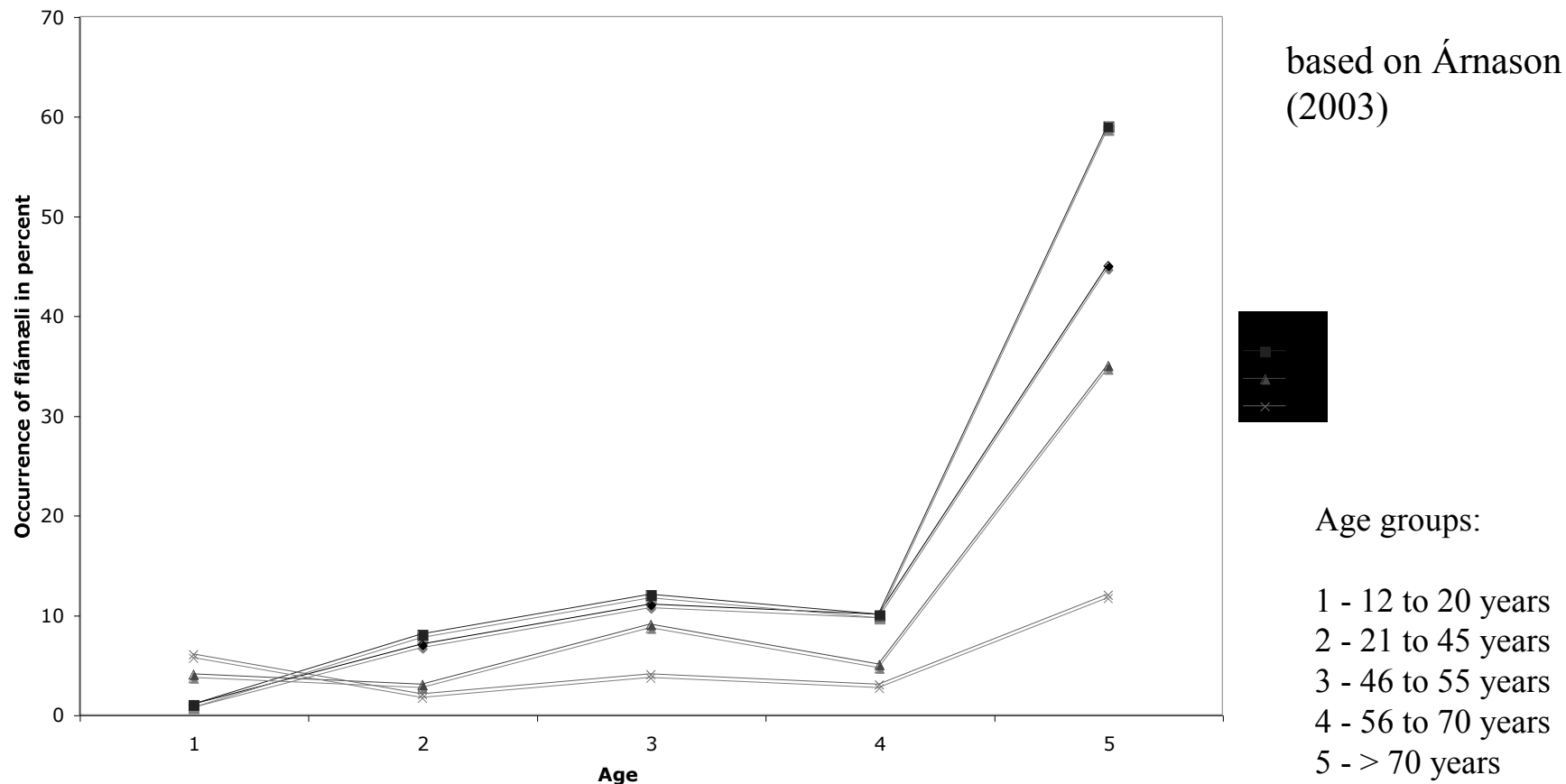
= the lowering of mid high vowels /i/ and /u/ and merger with /e/ and /œ/:

	<b>flámæli</b>	<b>standard</b>
<i>bíddu við</i> 'wait a minute'	[viɛð]	[vi:p]
<i>flugu</i> 'fly-DAT'	[flyœ:ʏy]	[fly:ʏy]

(Árnason 2003: 206)

Guðfinnsson (1946): 52% of all speakers “suffer” from flámæli  
geographical areas: east, south-west, north-west

# Flámæli: From the 1940s to the 1980s



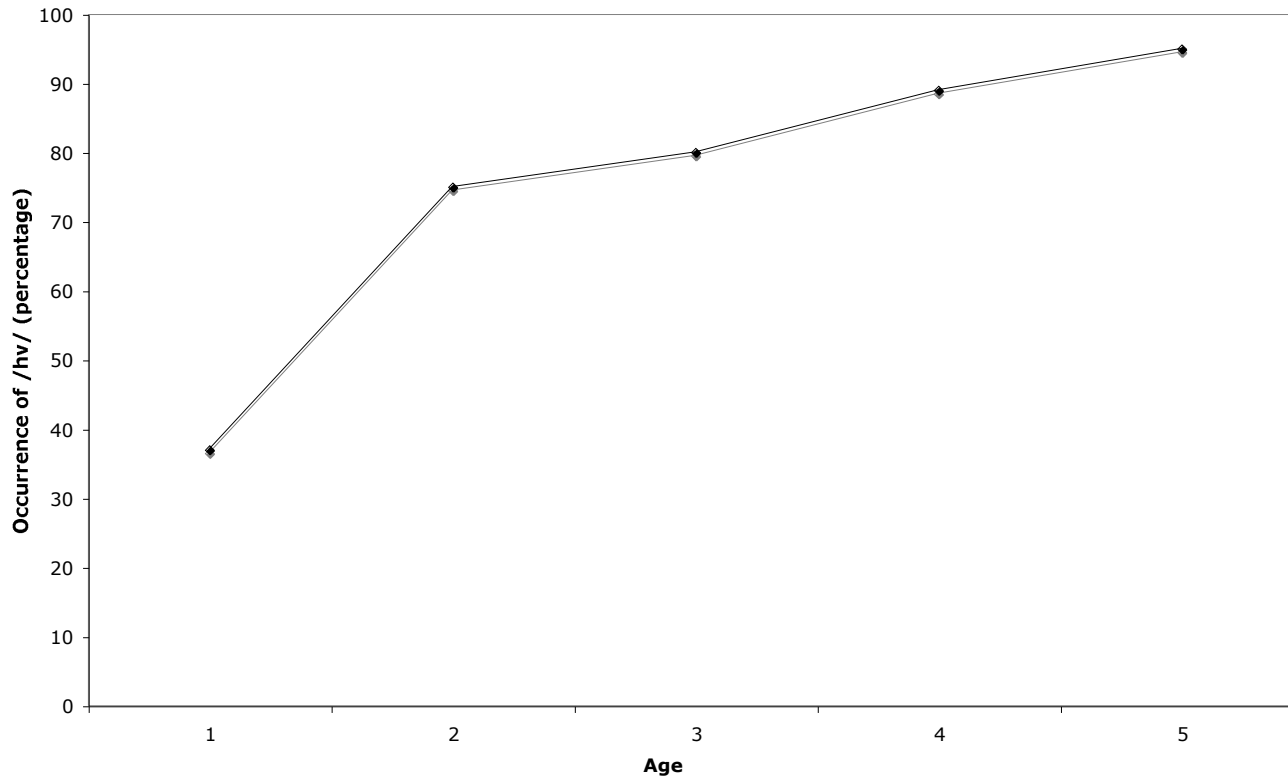
## Example 2: hv-pronunciation

speakers have the choice of pronouncing the word-initial sequence /hv-/ either as a fricative or as a stop:

*hver* 'who' (/h<sup>w</sup>e:r/ vs. (/kfe:r/)

*hvað* 'what' (/h<sup>w</sup>a:ð/ vs. (/kfa:ð/)

# hv-pronunciation: From the 1940s to the 1980s



based on Árnason (2003)

Age groups:

- 1 - 12 to 20 years
- 2 - 21 to 45 years
- 3 - 46 to 55 years
- 4 - 56 to 70 years
- 5 - > 70 years

## Example 3: "dative sickness" (*þágufallssýki*)

refers to the use of case forms with a particular set of verbs (experiencer verbs denoting feelings, physical sensations and cognition) that require an oblique subject case:

- (a) *Mig* vantar penna. (ACC)  
*Mér* vantar penna. (DAT - Dative sickness)  
'I need a pen.'
- (b) *Hann* langar til að fara ut í synd. (ACC)  
*Honum* langar til að fara ut í synd. (DAT - Dative sickness)  
'He wants to go swimming.'

# **Dative-sickness: From the 1980s to 2000**

Barðdal et al. (2001) conducted a one-year pilot project to measure the extension of the dative sickness in Iceland

Subjects tested: approx. 900 students born in the 1990s in 20 schools in Iceland.

Result: the dative sickness among the pre-adolescent population has increased for 25% since 1982 and is widespread in all parts of the country.

# Summary Iceland

1. Linguistic innovations are not always manageable by language planning.
2. The effects of corpus planning seem to be rather arbitrary.

## **Part II**

# **Status Planning: Welsh and Irish**



# Welsh in Great Britain

- long history as inferior language
- disturbing detail for Anglo-Saxonists
- threatened the emerging national identity after roughly 250 years of Norman-French rule in Anglo-Saxon Britain
- political changes during the 1960s induced a change of the status of Welsh into a positive direction

# Welsh: Number of speakers

---

	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
% of all persons speaking Welsh	37.1	36.8	28.9	26.0	20.8	18.9	18.7
% of all persons speaking Welsh only	6.3	4.0	1.7	1.0	1.3	0.8	

---

**Table 1.** Speakers of Welsh from 1921 to 1991 (Census 1981: 50)

# Language planning in Wales: Important steps

- The Welsh Language Act of 1967
- establishment of The Welsh Language Council in 1977
- The Welsh Language Act of 1993 (*Mentrau Iaith*)
- Education Act in 1988
- spread of bilingual education at primary and secondary school level
- foundation of a Welsh television service (*Sianel Pedwar Cymru*) in 1982
- establishment of a National Assembly for Wales in 1999

# Goals

- enable the Welsh language to become self-sustaining and secure as a medium of communication,
- increase the number of speakers,
- provide more opportunities to learn the language,
- encourage people to take advantage of the use of Welsh

(Welsh Language Board)

# Welsh-speakers by age (1992)

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Welsh speakers (as % of population, N)</b>	<b>Mother tongue speakers (as % of all Welsh-speakers)</b>
3-15	5,094	32.4 (157)	27.0
16-29	4,809	17.8 (92)	48.9
30-44	5,741	16.7 (97)	60.8
45-65	6,674	18.7 (124)	70.7
65+	5,335	24.2 (120)	79.3

(Welsh Office 1992)

# The status of Welsh in schools

Schools where:	1990/91	1993/94	1995/96	1996/97
(1) Welsh is the only or main medium of instruction	25.9% (445) 4.8% (11)	27.1% (460) 5.7% (13)	27.1% (455) 7.5% (17)	26.7% (499) 7.9% (18)
(2) Welsh is taught as a second language only	50.7% (870) 56.1% (129)	62.9% (1,068) 67.4% (153)	66.0 % (1,109) 69.7% (159)	67.6% (1,136) 70.3% (161)
(3) no Welsh is taught	14.2% (244) 9.5% (22)	3.2% (54) 3.5% (8)	0.7% (11) 0.9% (2)	0.1% (1) 0% (0)

(Welsh Office 1998)

# The results

- a more positive attitude towards bilingualism and the use of Welsh in a Welsh-English bilingual community
- recognition for linguistic plurality

but

- lack of practical usefulness of and the justification for bilingualism for the people
- Welsh tends to be regarded as a second language by the younger speakers, due to education policies

# Irish (Gaelic)

2006 census: approx. 1.6 million speakers

485,000 of them use the language in educational contexts only

53,000 (3.2%) speak Irish on a daily basis outside the educational context

Highest proportion of speakers in the age groups of 10-14 and 15-19, i.e. school-going population



# The decline of Irish

... was induced basically by 3 important events:

- (1) English is used in Church (1795)
- (2) English is used in schools (Education Act of 1831)
- The Great Famine (1846-48)

(Tristram 2003: 17)

# Language Planning in Ireland

1. Irish declared as national language (1939)
  2. Irish = compulsory subject in schools
    - Spelling reform (1948)  
publishment of a normative grammar (1958)
    - Language test for officials
  5. School of Celtic Studies in Dublin (1940)
    - Institúit Teangeolaíochta* (National Language Institute)
    - Buan-Choiste Téarmaíochta* (National Translation Department)
    - Irish Folklore Commission (1927)
    - Government support for the publishing of books in Irish  
loans for citizens fluent in Irish
- sending out of officials and children into Irish speaking areas

# Results

English remained the working language in Ireland.

The speakers cultivate their Irish English.

The use of Irish Gaelic is symbolic, but not instrumental.

# Reasons for the little success

- (1) Irish adopted a highly symbolic, but no communicative value
- (2) Teaching methods of Irish in school (out of date)
- (3) Demographic conditions on the island (emigration)
- (4) Geographical proximity to Great Britain
- (5) No strategy developed for the use of English

# **Conclusions**

Language Planning  
Multilingualism in Europe

# Corpus Planning & Status Planning

The outcome is unpredictable.

Linguistic behavior becomes symbolic, but the interpretation of the symbols does not depend on language planners, but on concrete sociolinguistic needs of the speakers.

# Language Planning in Europe

Language planning in Europe can be successful only if two conditions are fulfilled:

(1) Focus on sociolinguistic aspects of the speakers and their needs rather than on the languages alone.

(2) Overcome the effects of nation-state formation:

Nationalism thus turned the focus away from communication [...] in the direction of an idiomatically 'perfect' use of one politically favored language, viz. the national language. (Braunmüller 2008: 9)

# Recent developments in Europe

- (1) Immigrant languages
- (2) Tight political and economic relations
- (3) Geographical mobility of the citizens
- (4) Globalization and its effects on the new media and job opportunities



# Multilingualism in Europe

Learn to distinguish between political identity and cultural identity,  
“ethnos” and “demos”:

**A political unity is not identical with cultural, linguistic or religious  
homogeneity of different groups of citizens.**

# Literature I

- Aitchison, J. & Carter, H. 1997. *Language, family structure and social class, 1991 census data*. Area
- Altermatt, Urs. 2002. Sprachenmodelle in Europa. in: Christian Giordano & Jean-Luc Patry (eds). *Multikulturalismus und Multilingualismus*. Freiburg (Schweiz): Universitätsverlag Freiburg
- Kristján Árnason. 2003. Language Planning and the Structure of Icelandic. in: Kristján Árnason (ed). *Útnorður. West Nordic Standardisation and Variation. Papers from a Symposium in Stockholm October 7th 2001*. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 193-218.
- Barðdal, Jóhanna. The case of subjects with impersonal verbs in insular Scandinavian. <http://ling.uib.no/barddal/> (21.09.2009)
- Braunmüller, Kurt. 2008. On the relevance of receptive multilingualism in a globalised world: Theory, history and evidence from today's Scandinavia. Hamburg: SFB 538 (Arbeiten zur Mehrsprachigkeit B/90)
- Government of Ireland. 2006. *Census 2006. Principal demographic results*. Dublin: Government Publications Sales Office

# Literature II

- Mar-Molinero, Clare & Stevenson, Patrick. 2006. Language Policy in a Changing Europe - Introduction. *Language Policy* 5, 239-245
- Ottósen, Kjartan G. 1990. *Íslensk málhreinsun. Sögulegt yfirlit*, Reykjavík: Íslensk málnefnd
- Tristram, Hildegard L.C. 2003. "As she do be spoke, proper, like, ye know": (Post)koloniale Identität und Sprache in Irland. in: Peter Drexler & Andrea Kinsky-Ehritt (eds). *Identities and Minorities: Postcolonial Readings*. Berlin: Trafo, 9-32
- Welsh Office 1993. *Welsh social survey. The statistical section*. Cardiff: The Welsh Office
- Welsh Office. 1998. *Statistics of education and training in Wales: Schools 1998. The statistical section*. Cardiff: The Welsh Office
- Williams, Colin. 2001. Welsh in Great Britain. in: Guus Extra & Durk Gorter (Eds.). *The other languages of Europe*. Clevedon et al.: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 59-81