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## **Issues in the standardization of minority languages: challenges and pitfalls**

### *Abstract*

A crucial role in standardization is played by *Ausbauization*, i.e., the process whereby an *Ausbau* language (Kloss 1967) is established. I claim that the basic motivation behind *Ausbauization* is maximization of differences, whereby the structural differences between the language to be “*Ausbauized*” and the concurrent languages will be maintained, fostered, sometimes created *ex nihilo*. At the same time, differences *within* the language have to be wiped away or at least minimized. In this sense, *Ausbauization* consists in the establishment and maintenance of linguistic barriers.

The presentation will discuss the problems facing *Ausbauization* with examples from different sociocultural contexts. Issues range from the orthographic choices (and in quite a few cases the choice of the writing system), to morphosyntax, lexicon and phraseology.

The hurdles *Ausbauization* must overcome are all the more higher with minority, endangered languages (possibly all endangered languages are minority languages, but certainly not all minority languages are endangered): in this case, a substantial portion of the community has already shifted to another medium.

A special case of endangered minority languages is provided by languages traditionally spoken in a situation of diglossia, where identity is weak and the high domains are already covered by a variety in which, as is often the case in Europe, literacy is widespread (these are often “Contested Languages” — cf. “CLOW: Contested Languages in the Old World”, Bangor, September 2013).

As is well-known, puristic tendencies are often stronger in a situation of heavy encroachment, because stronger will be the need to linguistically express and affirm a weak or vanishing identity. If not accompanied by adequate status planning at the community level, this may result in the speakers — often semi-speakers actively engaged in codeswitching in a major language — being further alienated from their original language. On the other hand, status planning is weak or downright impossible in the case of unrecognized, endangered languages. In such cases, the net result is often *Ausbauization* failure.