

CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES TO MINORITY LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

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Abstract

The challenges faced by minority languages in the contemporary linguistic landscape have been a relevant topic for several years. With global languages claiming an increasing share of speakers, smaller, community-based languages have been neglected in favour of the lingua franca. The paper aims to present several possible ways in which this linguistic exposure can be transformed into a potential boon for language education and maintenance in smaller languages, rather than being a hinderance. These new methods are based on using commonly consumed media as a medium to achieve increased language usage and recognition.

Keywords: sociolinguistics; language maintenance; minority; media; music; workshop.

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1. Introduction

Language development as a concept itself has been tied to monolingual development almost universally, despite the estimations that bilingual speakers make up more than half of the global population (Grosjean, 2010). Multilingualism is the norm worldwide. Thus, the monolingual view to language development is inadequate to approach language acquisition from a global perspective. In addition, the viewpoint that multilingual language development mirrors monolingual language when only one of the child's languages is considered is also a misguided assertion (Brice and Brice, 2009; Grosjean, 1989). Therefore, Multilingual or Multilanguage acquisition differs from monolingual development (Brice and Brice, 2009).

Learning a second language (L2) or multiple languages is not a straightforward additive process to English. It does not involve a simple one-to-one correspondence. In 1989 Grosjean wrote that a bilingual speaker does not consist of two monolingual speakers. Rather a bilingual speaker is an individual who has access to two languages that interact with each other constantly, even when one language is the primary mode being activated (Grosjean, 1989). When young children acquire two languages simultaneously from birth, their first language is "bilingualism". Their two

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languages interact in positive and sometimes negative ways from the very first day they are exposed to the two languages (i.e., language transference and interference).

The concepts of language proficiency and language dominance are notions that seem to imply that one should consider each language separately not in a combined representation. Therefore, proficiency should be investigated in terms of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) and proficiency utilizing a combined approach as is seen in vocabulary studies where total vocabulary and total conceptual vocabulary measures are obtained (Pearson and Pearson, 2004). Dominance varies across speech and language domains (phonetics, phonology, morphology, semantics, pragmatics, etc.) and seems to vary within each speech domain. Grosjean's (2010) notions of language modes fit this paradigm. Language modes refer to what extent L1 and L2 are activated and to the continuum of activation among the languages. Therefore, dominance in a multilingual child is not an overall ability assigned to L1, L2, or L3 but one that seems to vary according to language, language domain, and task.

There is increasing evidence of the benefits of mother tongue and multilingual education (Cummins, 2000) and, at the same time, an increase in the use of English as a medium of instruction across various levels of education globally (Dearden, 2014). Mother tongues, as well as local languages, are often viewed as having value as languages of cultural identity, whereas international languages such as English are perceived as being valuable for social and economic mobility (Crystal, 2003). Skills in different languages will thus be viewed as valuable for different reasons and the desire to develop skills in a particular language can influence the language policies adopted within education. The international development community has often come under criticism for giving little attention to language and language policy (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017, Skutnabb-Kangas, 1997).

2. The importance of language regarding national identity

Jenkins (1996:4) defines identity as the multitude of ways by which individuals and collectives themselves distinguish the myriad social relations, both with other collectives, and with other individuals. Bloom (1990:52) approaches the notion from the point of symbolism: he argues that identity stems from the internalization of symbols tied to a nation itself. Katzenstein (1996:59) uses a very simplified definition, by which he connects the images of oneself and the perception of others as the mutually built tie for identity. Herrigel's (1993:371, qtd. In Fearon and Afif, 2020) description approaches the notion from a novel perspective: he focuses on desires towards a concrete, well-established group within history, including its structure and general characteristics.

Whether we want it or not, we are defined by the language(s) that we speak. Our mother tongue plays an especially important role in the growth and development of our identities, as it serves as the channel through which we get to know and understand the world surrounding us, through which our socialization progresses, and eventually develops into an identity. Consequently, safeguarding and nurturing one's mother tongue is of critical importance, as it has been stated by Alzayed (2015) that the more a minority assimilates into an environment, the more likely they are to forsake their mother tongue – on the flip side, the same is also true: minorities that hold onto their mother tongue are less likely to assimilate, and they instead keep their identity.

With the undoubtedly advantageous nature of language learning, it is apparent that languages also contribute a great deal to one's identities, especially in today's world of constant multicultural impulses. These impulses, while not necessarily classified as harmful, very often cause a great deal more harm than improvements in the society that they influence. As such, it is crucial to reinforce the linguistic identity of people, especially in our times where they are constantly exposed to a variety of influencing factors from the info-media. This notion is of course not a novel one, as numerous great minds have already stated this, and discussed it at length. In our case, perhaps the most important individual regarding this issue was István Széchenyi³ to whom the famous saying *A nation lives in its language* is attributed to.

Keeping all this in mind, it can be declared that one's language is perhaps the most important part in forging one's identity – thus, it only seems logical that we always consider our mother tongue sacred, thus we can always rely on it to provide a sense of belonging. Indeed, in the event that someone goes abroad, the first thing that others will likely recognize about them is not the colour of their clothes, their height, but the language they are speaking. It is by default the first basis of identifying people – all other aspects of their characters are less important.

2.1 Multiculturalism in England

Regarding the notion that a region can only truly be united if they speak the same language, let us take a look at one of the most prominent examples in this case: England.

English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish - quite a cavalcade of languages, cultures, and folk to take under a single umbrella, yet that is what the United Kingdom's very notion did. Regarding its unique tribes, let us first examine England itself, followed by Ireland. Taking a look at mainland England, we can determine that the vast majority of the population speaks British English, and as such the majority of people identify

³ István Széchenyi (1791 – 1860) was a Hungarian politician, writer, and one of the country's greatest statesmen. Within Hungary, he is still known as “the greatest Hungarian”.

themselves as English – however, as we move towards the Northern edge of the island, there begins to manifest a sharp difference in both identity and language: Scotland stands ever firmly with its nigh-impossible to understand speech, and it is somewhat the characteristic disdain of the “Southerners”. As irrelevant as it may seem to some, Scottish Gaelic is in fact quite an important relic – even though their country basically is considered to be *de jure* an English-speaking one, they continue to this day to hold onto their unique language, accents, dialects and ways of speech. Based on the 2011 census (National Records of Scotland, 2015)⁴ ~60,000 people (roughly 1% of the population) reported being able to speak Gaelic, which is more than a thousand speakers less than in 2001. Despite the decrease on this front, the number of speakers under age 20 showed no decrease between 2001 and 2011.

As insignificant as that may seem, Gaelic essentially forges an incredibly tight bond between the speakers themselves - even if they mock and squabble among themselves, Scots will immediately come together should you criticise their country, make fun of their language, or God forbid dare to insult them. Without knowing one another, their only “identification” is that they speak Scottish English, or even in rare cases Scottish Gaelic. Of course, this argument can be made for almost any language in any region, regardless of what part of the world it happens to be situated in.

Along the same reasoning, there is of course more to the UK than just the Scottish tongue – even though it is not as common as it once was, the Welsh tongue is perhaps one of the most iconic ones to have challenged English in its region. Welsh has enjoyed a steady increase in the number of language speakers; based on data reported from the Annual Population Survey, the 2011 census (Office for National Statistics, 2012)⁵ reported 562,000 speakers above the age of 3 – this number has grown to 892,00 according to census data published in 2021 (Office for National Statistics, 2022)⁶. This massive growth in speaker numbers serves to validate the status of Welsh – as of 2011, it is the only *de jure* official language in the United Kingdom, alongside English being the *de facto*.

Last but certainly not least, we can examine the Irish, or *Gaelige* language for additional information regarding its position. As per the Irish Constitution, Irish Gaelic is established as the national language, as well as the first official language of the Republic of Ireland alongside English). Despite this, the majority of official

⁴ Scotland’s Census Report, 2015 https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/media/cqoji4qx/report_part_1.pdf Accessed on 01/10/2022.

⁵ Annual Population Survey data, 2012 <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/Annual-Population-Survey-Welsh-Language/annualpopulationsurveyestimatesofpersonsaged3andoverwhosaytheycanspeakwelsh-by-localauthority-measure> Accessed on 01/10/2022.

⁶ Annual Population Survey data, 2021 <https://gov.wales/welsh-language-data-annual-population-survey-2021#:~:text=Main%20points&text=For%20the%20year%20ending%2031,equates%20to%20around%20892%2C200%20people> Accessed on 01/10/2022.

topics such as business deals and governmental debates are held in English. Based on data from the 2016 census (Central Statistics Office Ireland, 2017)⁷, 40% of the population, roughly equalling 1,761,000 persons over the age of 3 reported being able to speak Irish Gaelic. Further narrowing this data, roughly 600,000 speakers used the language less often than weekly, around 111,000 respondents claimed to speak it weekly, while the smallest speaker group comprised of about 73,000 individuals reported using the language every day.

A very peculiar bit of data that I happened to come across while performing research was the following: As of November 2016, more than 2.3 million people⁸ have started using the popular language learning app Duolingo in order to learn Irish Gaelic.

Despite only having roughly 100,000 native speakers who actively use the language in everyday life, this incredible boost in learners is very beneficial towards the maintenance of the language. Irish president Michael Higgins officially presented honours for several volunteer translators as a reward for developing the Irish course within the app, and also said that the push for Irish language rights remains an unfinished project.

2.2 Language revival attempts

The most relevant example of a successful language revival effort is that of Irish Gaelic in Belfast – the language was spoken natively in parts of Northern Ireland up until the 1950s, but then slowly disappeared from this area in the following years. By 1965 there were approximately 36 families still using the language for everyday conversations in Belfast, with the addition of 5 reported young couples choosing to adapt their families to Irish Gaelic, including raising their children with Irish Gaelic as their L1. None of them were native speakers, and almost all of them learned the language as a passion project in adulthood. Their collective efforts resulted in an Irish-medium primary school being established in 1971 (Maguire, 1991).

Over the years the school developed steadily and eventually attracted children from other parts of the city, whose parents were language learners of Irish Gaelic. As the popularity of the Irish medium education grew, an additional Irish-medium primary school was established in 1987, with two more secondary schools and a number of nurseries having been set up in the following years; this surge was accompanied by a large number of Irish Gaelic language evening classes for adults, which were run by volunteers all throughout Northern Ireland in an effort to keep up with the

⁷ Central Statistics Office census data, 2016

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp10esil/p10esil/ilg/#:~:text=Open%20in%20Excel%3A,the%202011%20figure%20of%201%2C774%2C437> Accessed on 01/10/2022.

⁸ <https://www.thejournal.ie/duolingo-ireland-3100715-Nov2016/> Accessed on 01/10/2022.

demands (Mac Póilin, 1997). A vibrant programme of cultural and social events regarding Irish Gaelic has also developed in later years, and an Irish language daily newspaper was printed from 1984 to 2008, with a modernized online version still being published to this day. There have been short daily Irish language broadcasts on BBC Radio Ulster since 1986 (Maguire, 1991) and an Irish language community radio station, Raidió Fáilte, was launched in 2002.

Subsequently, a new Irish-speaking community has been re-established in areas of Belfast and Northern Ireland. Maguire (1991) and Hindley (1990) argue that the revival of Irish in Northern Ireland has not been as successful as some enthusiasts claim, nor that it has much relevance or provides much hope for Irish Gaelic as a whole – this viewpoint supports the notion proposed by Carnie (1995), who regards Irish Gaelic as a sort of consolation prize – despite official recognition, and status, the actual usage of the language falls very short of expected numbers. In the Republic of Ireland, Irish Gaelic is an official language, has been a compulsory subject in Ireland's schools since 1922 and its mastery is required for a number of positions in civil service. Despite these points however, only a minority of those who study Irish Gaelic in schools become fluent, and many have negative impressions of the language (Hindley, 1990). As indicated by contemporary census data discussed in previous paragraphs, this lack of everyday language usage is still a major problem for language revitalization efforts. Moreover, since the initial wave of Irish-medium education schools, the number of institutions has grown rapidly and there are now over 200 so called *Gaelscoileanna* (Irish-medium schools) throughout Ireland. However, despite the promising numbers, many such schools were started by local families as small-scale projects and have since then faced numerous difficulties in securing official recognition and funding (Ó Néill, 2013).

In the following paragraphs, several other examples will be presented as examples of other notable language revitalization efforts. In North America, a place where most of the indigenous languages are vulnerable, endangered or already close to language death, there are revival movements for many of them (Zepeda and Hill, 1991). In many cases Native American languages are well in their terminal stages of decline by the time language revival efforts begin, notably that generational exchange has ceased, most or all of their speakers are elderly, or even if the language is present, it is restricted to fringe cases of usage. In more concise terms, they have reached stage 7 or 8 of Fishman's 1991 Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (qtd. in Lewis and Simons, 2010) or fall under the endangered classification according to the UNESCO criteria (UNESCO, 2003).

In areas near Montreal, the Mohawk language lost more than half of its speakers during the mid-1900s, and as such, cross-generational exchanges all but disappeared from the speaker base. During the 1970s Mohawk lessons were first introduced in local schools, and Mohawk-medium education began in its earliest manifestation towards the end of the decade. In contemporary times, roughly half of the community

send their children to Mohawk-medium education institutions, alongside which the parents are required to sign an agreement to participate in activities organised by the institution and are actively encouraged to speak the language at home with their children, while also being offered courses to learn the language themselves, should they not speak it (Williams, 2013). Thanks to these efforts and initiatives, Mohawk is now considered a viable language, despite its small speaker base (Williams, 2013).

Another example of a vulnerable language is Cornish, which largely disappeared as a communal language towards the end of the 18th century. When the Cornish revival began at the start of the 20 century, the revived language was based on fragments of Late Cornish, which had been based on surviving documents or remained in people's memories, alongside Middle Cornish literature, and words borrowed from or modelled on Welsh and Breton. No recordings exist of native Cornish speakers, so the pronunciation of the revived versions of Cornish had to be reconstructed based on surviving texts (Hicks, 2005). According to MacKinnon (2000), today Cornish boasts no more than a few hundred active speakers, plus several thousand people with some knowledge of the language; it is taught in some limited capacity in schools and in language classes for adults; people are writing poetry, songs, short stories and novels in Cornish, and there are regular, short radio broadcasts in Cornish. One of the biggest setbacks of the Cornish language revival effort is the presence of multiple variations of the language. The most notable one, Common Cornish, is the most widely spoken and studied (Hicks, 2005).

Immersion education for children is used to a different extent in many language revivals and revitalisations processes. In New Zealand, for example, hundreds of the so called *Kōhanga Reo*, or language nests, are used as a contemporary example of the workshop-based approach to revitalization, where young children are immersed in the Māori language (King, 2001). In some revitalization efforts, the programmes are not exclusively aimed at younger generations, but are also inclusive towards adult speakers as well. An example of this lies in the Basque country, where the language is still relatively strong, therefore it is possible for civil servants to spend a year or two learning the language while on full pay – if the speakers achieve fluency after their studies, all their tuition fees are refunded. There are also numerous small gatherings of adults with shared linguistic interests, who meet regularly and speak Basque as often as they can. Such groups are usually spearheaded by one or two native speakers, who volunteer to spend time helping learners to improve their language skills. Thanks to these and other initiatives and language efforts, the speaker base of the language has been steadily gaining more and more traction. Another major factor in the successful implementation of the Basque revitalisation efforts is linked to the willingness of the people to invest money in the language, not just for education, but also for general language infrastructure such as signs, product labels, and so on (Hualde, 2007).

2.3 Linguistic suicide: the case of Ireland

It should be obvious that languages come and go – not one thing survives forever throughout the ages. However, to willingly sacrifice a language is for the most part unheard of, or so would one think. This chapter will aim to provide a recollection of events that led to the extremely steep decline in Irish native speakers, while providing some measure of explanation as to why such an incident could have happened.

To understand the phenomenon, we must first go back to the very beginning of Ireland's colonial period. When Ireland officially became an English territory under the Treaty of Windsor in 1175, one of the longest subjugation plans in history began. Though seemingly beneficial overall, the urbanization and relative modernization of Ireland carried many hidden dangers behind the process. After the 13th century a Gaelic revival began, which caused the rolling back of the Anglo-Norman sphere, the (re-) Gaelicization of many parts of Ireland, and the cultural assimilation of some Anglo-Norman lords. By the end of the period the direct power of the English Crown was limited to the *Pale*, where the first ever English colony was established. The Statute of Kilkenny of 1366 was enforced to protect the Pale from Gaelicization by prohibiting the English settlers of Ireland to speak Irish, intermarriage and fostering children with Irish families. Aiming to preserve "Englishness" throughout the land, it could not reverse a phenomenon already in effect – the multilingualism of Ireland. Varying based on location, the country effectively had 3 official languages: Irish Gaelic spoken by its natives, Norman French carried over in Eastern counties and English was used as the language of government, official business, and generally spoken in the Pale. The entirety of this chain of events meant that the cultural and linguistic sovereignty of Ireland had been violated – the invasion and colonisation efforts of the English had caused a language shift at state level.

Further efforts were put into suppressing, and gradually replacing the local culture through means of linguistic origin – caretakers of local culture (such as bardic schools) were removed and replaced with English schools, alongside a steady stream of English plantations popping up throughout the land. With the language of power being English, this period marked the end of the Gaelic world: cultural and linguistic assimilation or Anglicization was considered vital to the success of permanent colonization (lesson of Norman Conquest: assimilation of Anglo-Norman settlers to native culture). By the end of the Tudor Times, the irreversible language shift was set in motion. English acquired a dominant position in the main spheres of power, and Irish was forced to a subordinate status in its own country.

2.4 Elfdalian

The Scandinavian language of Elfdalian has faced extinction for the better part of its contemporary lifespan, with an estimate of roughly 3,000 people in a tiny community

in central Sweden keeping it alive. Now, speakers are attempting to revive the historic tongue by bringing it back to schools and the digital world before it vanishes completely (Sapir, 2005).

The dialect of Elfdalian was in a much better place in terms of language usage up until the later part of the 20th century. With its novel and unique sounds, those listening to Elfdalian would often be reminded of languages like that of the Elves from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* – despite the language being based on Old Norse (Sapir, 2005). Unlike other Scandinavian languages, Elfdalian is unique in some ways – variations between tones and sounds, even its grammar and vocabulary are very different compared to Swedish. As such, while speakers of the three major Scandinavian languages (Swedish, Norwegian, Danish) can generally understand each other, this is not the case with Elfdalian. Despite tracing its roots to the same region, it is completely unintelligible even for the Swedes in the area. Originating from the forested region of Älvdalen, Sweden, and the language retained a robust status for centuries – it served the local populace in all general areas – as trade and economic networks were mostly local – so there was little need for a different tongue (Garbacz and Bondi, 2015).

However, this isolation would not hold up in the 21st century. With the majority of languages, and society itself shifting towards the internet and the online world, Swedish would slowly but surely make its way into this small community. With the influence and general push of the Swedish language, Elfdalian was eventually drowned out in contemporary life – schools shifted to teaching the curriculum in Swedish, which has become the preferred common tongue, even giving Elfdalian a stigmatization that almost all minority languages face.

In an effort to save the rapidly disappearing language, a number of activists weaponized the very source that was threatening the language – the digital world. Starting an online awareness and revival campaign, the group, called *Ulm Dalska* (“We need to speak Elfdalian”) have garnered much needed support, which granted them some measure of success in their long-term goal to stabilize and revitalize the language. To include a new generation of speakers, a number of children's books have been translated into Elfdalian, and numerous programs have been introduced in schools encouraging and incentivizing the learning of the language (Sapir, 2005).

Elfdalian has been taught in Älvdalen's schools since 2015. The revival tendency had been strengthened by the First Conference on Elfdalian in Copenhagen, raising awareness of the language which acts as a window into bygone times. With that in mind, in 2016 the language saw its first major victory when it was assigned an ISO language code (ISO 639-3), officially classifying it as a language on the internet. This milestone meant that future efforts would be much more achievable in the digital space – which would come into fruition the following year. As a large step towards the future, a group of international participants from countries including the

USA, Czech Republic, Germany, Norway, and Denmark had the opportunity to participate in a course held entirely in Elfdalian. This further international recognition gave the language an even greater reach, and perhaps it was this extended reach which led to the second major event in 2017. The language reached an even wider audience when it was introduced to the popular online game Minecraft, through the in-game recreation of the village of Älvdalen, alongside an added option to switch both text and audio to Elfdalian.

3. Media

Music has always been an integral part of societies, and more importantly of culture. In the words of Okiya, “*There is no doubt that music has a direct correlation to culture. Music can be defined in and of itself as culture, rather than just a cultural influence*”. (Okiya, 2016) Indeed, through the ages there have been stark contrasts regarding music in different cultures. Generally speaking, one can easily distinguish between Western and Eastern music, simply based on instruments alone. This strong identity provided by music can act as a helping hand for people who need reassurance, or in general, as items to which they can “bind” their identity. “The unconscious music of the folk has all the marks of fine art: that it is wholly free from the taint of manufacture, the canker of artificiality; that it is transparently pure and truthful, simple and direct in its utterance”. So wrote Cecil Sharp in *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*, originally published in 1907.

The term “folk music” itself did not appear in English dictionaries until 1889, when the Century Dictionary (William, 1889) defined it as “*A song of the people; a song based on a legendary or historical event, or some incident of common life, the words and generally the music of which have originated among the common people, and are extensively used by them*”. Interest in folk music and other buried aspects of national culture tend to be reawakened at moments when there is a perceived danger of things being lost forever. Successive folk revivals of the 20th century drew their impetus equally from the two historical landmarks that most permeate the collective unconscious: the industrial revolution and the First World War. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the fear of annihilation, technological progress and a vision of alternative societies filtered through popular and underground culture, conspiring to promote the ideal of “getting back to the garden”.

To give a notable example regarding the musical revival phenomena, we do not need to look far - Hungary is a perfect example. The Hungarian Recording Industry Association (Commonly abbreviated to MAHASZ) is the Hungarian music industry association – MAHASZ issues the Hungarian Music Awards and maintains the music charts for Hungary. Perhaps one of the best-known folk bands from Hungary is Dalriada, a Hungarian folk metal band formed in 1998. As a proof of their widespread popularity, the band’s 3rd studio album, *Kikelet* and all subsequent albums were in the top ten of the official MAHASZ charts. All of Dalriada’s songs

are based on Hungarian folklore, or famous historical events - from old shepherd songs to local fairy tales, famous battles throughout history. This not only attracts those who enjoy this musical genre, but serves to further deepen their identity in this way - learning from the past can only benefit the future, not to mention the power of the digital technologies, which allow access to visiting sites, and listening to music in one's mother tongue from different diaspora in the world.

On a global scale, quite possibly the best-known folk band is Eluveitie – a Swiss folk metal band formed in 2002. Their first major album, *Slania*, ensured the band's fame in 2008 - the album reached #35 in the Swiss charts and #72 in the German charts. Their style is heavily based on European and Celtic motives – not only in lyrics, but also in the type of the instruments used. Almost all of their songs utilize the hurdy-gurdy, bagpipes, alongside with more common items such as guitars, while the lyrics of their songs are heavily inspired by Celtic mythology.

The lyrics used in their songs are very often -a reconstruction form of Gaulish, a language that has long been lost to time. The band's name itself is based on a graffiti on a vessel from Mantua (c. 300 BC). The inscription in Etruscan letters reads *eluveitie*, which has been interpreted as the Etruscan form of the Celtic **(h)elvetios* ("the Helvetian"),- this has been interpreted as a direct reference of a Helvetian man who lived in the region of Mantua. The tunes present in their songs have been drawn from a variety of traditional folk sources, including traditional Irish reels. Even though the majority of their lyrics are in English, some are in the previously mentioned Gaulish; in some cases, both languages are present in the same song, intertwined in the lyrics. A notable mention is that in their 2009 release *Evocation I: The Arcane Dominion*, all lyrics of the songs are presented in Gaulish, with one exception. The lyrics of their songs are often based on, and are heavily inspired by Gaulish texts including prayers, invocations, and other spiritual material.

3.1 TV Series

Alongside music, perhaps the largest scale media are TV series. Given how readily available they have become with services like Netflix or Hulu, one can access anything anytime. It is with ease that an incredible amount of people choose to engage in series that are inspired by archaic events, such as History Channel's *Vikings*, BBC's *The Last Kingdom* or Sky and Amazon's *Britannia*.

Vikings, one of the biggest commercial successes in contemporary media draws inspiration from tales of the Norsemen from the aptly names Viking Age. The series deals with the exploits of the legendary chieftain Ragnar Lothbrok events laid down in the 13th-century sagas *Ragnars saga Loðbrókar* and *Ragnarssona þátr*, alongside with the Saxo Grammaticus's 12th century work, the *Gesta Danorum*. These sagas were often straying into fiction, with tales based on Norse oral tradition, and were only written down roughly 200-400 years after they actually took place. Other

sources include more reliable historical records, such as records of the raid on Lindisfarne, or Ahmad ibn Fadlan's 10th century account of the Varangians.

On the other end of England, *Britannia* is set in 43AD, during the successful Roman invasion of Britain. The 10-part drama sees the Roman Imperial Army to crush the Celtic heart of what was then Britannia, a land which is depicted with influences and folk motives greatly exaggerated from contemporary times. Despite this over-the-top presentation, the series does an excellent job of portraying and generally introducing the audience to the language, culture, and customs of a side of Britain which few are familiar with.

Last but not least, *The Last Kingdom* is a popular TV series loosely based on *The Saxon Stories*, a novel series by author Bernard Cornwell. Mixing elements of historical truth with some sprinkles of imagination and folklore, *The Last Kingdom* serves as an excellent gateway into the time of the Danelaw, where the viewers are presented with a snippet of history that is constructed with faithful homage to the contemporary language, and cultural aspects (garments, customs, etc.).

4. Conclusions

Ancient histories will always be there to remind people of what once was - and what one day could be. There may very well be other areas of life which are heavily influenced by cultural aspects of the respective population – with that said it is my belief that the two most influential areas nowadays are music and TV series, both of which are experiencing an ever-increasing number of folkish contents.

Considering the rapidly changing and evolving current world, measures which once might have seemed inefficient or otherwise unworthy of exploration may very well become proven and effective methods for language revitalization and maintenance. By introducing the general public to an (albeit exaggerated) depiction of a certain region's former linguistic history, the viewer may very well be influenced in a positive way by the music, artworks, series, customs, just to mention a few; prompting an increased interest towards the language in question. With the rising number of ways that people can connect with one another, many believe that communities that are based on the old ways will thrive, as they can get their message out to a much wider audience – possibly bringing new individuals into the fold. All things considered, it seems only natural that one should first and foremost be concerned with one's own culture, historical background, and spiritual belonging – such sacred attributes are to be untouched by the global message. Whether this phenomenon will go on to continue for many years to come, or simply disappear – only time will tell.

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