

## **Lessons from Brittany for the revitalisation of the Liv language**

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Activists among linguistic minorities are increasingly concentrating their efforts to revitalise their languages on the school systems in their respective countries, since intergenerational transmission of such languages can no longer be assumed to be happening in a family setting. This is due to a whole host of reasons, among them the pressures of globalisation and political upheavals and changes in the latter half of the twentieth century. Tensions can arise in situations of linguistic minoritisation, since the means of language transmission and the variety of the language that is developing as a result are often not seen as “traditional” and “authentic” by older members of the speech community in question.

This view is, of course, as much based on personal ideologies of language as it is on external linguistically-based criteria, the most prevalent ideology being that of the “standard” (Gal 2006). This paper attempts to compare the situations of two minority languages – one Celtic, one Finno-Ugric – which are undergoing revitalisation attempts in the twenty-first century. The Livonian language in Latvia, with the number of native speakers in single figures (Hint 1998), is experiencing something of a come-back with a small but dedicated number of young Livonians who are attempting to revive the language, with the help of Tartu University in Estonia. Grass-roots language planners in Livonia now face the same problems about the standardisation of Livonian as did their counterparts in Brittany some fifty years earlier and recent fieldwork I have carried out in Latvia reveals the emergence of debates over the nature of the changes happening in the language. Such changes are much more extensively documented in the case of Breton (Abalain 2004; Jones 1998; McDonald 1989; Rohou 2007; Timm 2003) and, given the greater knowledge and analysis of the linguistic transformations this particular regional language of France is currently undergoing, Breton might reasonably serve as an example of a yet unclassified but necessary stage in language revitalisation.

What such transformations might mean in both situations of linguistic minoritisation are explored in the concluding section of the paper.