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STANDARDIZATION OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES

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STANDARDIZATION BEYOND THE STATE:
THE CASES OF YIDDISH, KURDISH AND ROMANI

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1. Introduction

Until some centuries ago, literary standards in many communities throughout the world were predominantly the sum of codified religious texts. Their style and grammar were memorized and reproduced and finally copied and transferred into further literary activities. The language variety of prayer, law and chronicles thus became an important cultural asset in its own right. In our modern era, endeavors to set a standard norm for a national language code have often accompanied the emergence of national states. Determining what the norm is became a privelege of state institutions using the unified code as a medium for regulated mass communication. A standardized "national language" is still considered to be an important identity card of a sovereign national community. It reflects and transmits what people regard as their "national heritage" or "national culture". But what is the role of modern standardization other than to cater as a medium for state institutions, and how can a "national language" emerge without being able to rely upon the authority of government organs ?

We shall deal with this question, comparing three ethnic minority languages: Yiddish - a language of Medieval German origin spoken by Eastern-European Jews; Kurdish - a Northwest Iranian language spoken by some 20 million people in the region of Kurdistan, within the state boundaries of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and the Soviet Union; and Romani - a language of Northwest Indian origin spoken by an estimated number of 10-15 million Roma (Gypsies) in Europe and in the Americas. We shall look at the way standardization becomes a function of the speakers' own initiative after generations of intensive contact with several different administration and state languages used when dealing with the population and institutions of various host-countries or occupying forces, respectively.

We shall also consider some essential differences between several background factors: For example, Yiddish and Romani have never been centered in one geographic area, except at the very beginning of their existence. They are therefore typically "diaspora languages". Kurdish, on the other hand, is one of the most important languages of the Middle East, and despite various attempts on the part of the occupiers to assimilate and deport the indigenous population of Kurdistan, it is still the majority language of the region. Its dialects are dispersed along a language-geographical continuum, merging ultimately with related languages such as Luri and Farsi. It is due to political circumstances during the last century that standardizers of one of the main Kurdish varieties, Kurmanji, have been reluctant to achieve their goals within their country and that the center of literary activity has been shifted into exile communities in Western Europe.

As a further example for the diversity of the three standardization processes consider the degree of literacy in the cultures involved. Yiddish manifests the development of a standard literary variety in a highly literate culture, in which the bulk of institutionalized cultural activity consisted of studying and transmitting the scriptures. Kurdish and Romani each show a predominantly oral tradition of a population the greater part of which is still illiterate, i.e. not at all familiar with the techniques of a written codification of language. Thus, the majority lacks both literary documents of collective or cultural knowledge and written records of their own personal history.

2. What is a "standard" ?

Ferguson (1961) defines a standard as a single, widely accepted norm, used with only minor modifications or variation for all purposes of language use. He explicitly distinguishes between this general notion of "standard" and the degree of native literacy ("writing") in a speech community. The maximum degree of native literacy is manifested within a speech community when original scientific research is published regularly, while at the top of the standardization scale we find communities in which there is minimal variation of form in both the spoken and the written language. Following Ferguson's definition, standardization should thus be regarded as the process of language unification in a given community, affecting written as well as oral communication. Ray (1963) is not as strict with respect to the possibility of a co-existence of varieties or different vernaculars within the speech community, alongside the "standard". The standard itself, however, is considered to be a language variety the use of which is unified in writing, grammar and the lexicon.

The need for a normative language usage correlates according to Haugen (1966 [1972], 1969 [1972] and elsewhere) with the function of writing as the medium of communication between speakers separated in time and space and unable to rely upon prosodic, extra-linguistic or even plain linguistic explanatory strategies in order to smooth out misinterpretation. Language standardization and planning involves preparing normative rules for the guidance of writers and speakers especially in non-homogeneous speech communities. A "standard" is thus a set of widely accepted rules serving as a norm primarily in writing. Its emergence and distribution is dependent upon several phases, the first of which is defined as "norm selection" or the choice of the variety that is to become the standard. The second, "codification" (developing a writing system), presupposes norm selection. Once both these steps are fulfilled, the "stabilization" of the norm can begin. Most unification efforts may actually be inserted into this slot for it is during this phase that the production of dictionaries, grammars, style manuals and other normative instruments is most important. Finally, the future of the standard will depend on its "implementation", i.e. its acceptance by institutions, writers, publications and especially mass-media communication (Haugen 1969 [1972]; see also Cobarrubias 1983).

In the following we shall look at the emergence of written varieties of Yiddish, Kurdish and Romani and compare the motivations underlying literary initiatives in the native language, the choice of variety, codification, stabilization and the extent to which the written variety developed is implemented. Standardization will be regarded as the sum of these phases. Owing to the distinct circumstances of emergent ethnic minority languages with no government agencies behind them, we shall pay special attention to the role played by the initiators of each of the processes.

3. The standardization of Yiddish: Extending traditional literacy

Our following description is by necessity historical: Due to the Nazi genocide commited on European Jews during *World War II there are now only few Yiddish* speakers and hardly any Yiddish-speaking communities left in Europe. Worldwide, the largest Yiddish-speaking communities are found among first-generation Jewish immigrants in North as well as South America and in Israel. The Orthodox communities in Israel, the United States and elsewhere partly use Yiddish as the primary language of cross-generation family communication; they may be said to be the only communities to do so nowadays.

Yiddish had been the spoken language of Eastern-European Jewry for many centuries. During the Middle Ages, persecution of Jews led to a mass exodus from the German--speaking areas of the Lower Rhine into Slavic-speaking Eastern Europe. The refugees took their languages with them: Hebrew, their traditional sacral language, and Yiddish, which at the time was still the Jewish variety of Middle High German, containing a great number of words of Hebrew origin. Cut apart from the German speech community, Yiddish continued to develop independently. Until the beginning of the 20th century Eastern European Jews used both languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, in a stable diglossia. Each language had its established functions: Hebrew was the written language of religion and philosophy, of learned correspondence, documents and contracts. Yiddish was the spoken language of daily conversation.

But Yiddish had also quite soon developed into the written language of the uneducated, especially women. Uneducated in the sense of the Jewish educational hierarchy were those who were unable to read or write Hebrew. Since practice of the Jewish religion had always been connected to reading and discussing the scriptures, an educational system was created that taught every boy to read the "holy language". However, the language in which lessons were conducted was Yiddish, and girls were taught to read and write in Yiddish only. Thus even the so-called uneducated were able to read and write. Early documents of written Yiddish consist of private letters, translations of the Old Testament or collections of fairy-tales, to name but a few examples. Yiddish was written from the very beginning using those characters that served the medium for written communication within the Jewish community - the characters of the Hebrew alphabet. For this purpose the Hebrew alphabet underwent certain changes and was transformed from a basically consonant representation to a lineary phonemic system, as was the case with Judeo-Persian and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino).

The diglossic situation began to dissolve towards the end of the 18th century. Following the impoverishment of the Jewish population in Eastern Europe the number of the uneducated increased. More and more people could read and write only in Yiddish. The Yiddish language became the subject of ideological discussions. Chassidism, a religious movement based on Jewish mysticism, regarded Yiddish as an authentic expression of the simple people and therefore also as the appropriate language for religious practice. For the Jewish enlightenment, the Haskala, Yiddish was a spoiled jargon which was to be abolished. The Jewish labor movement, especially the "Bund", made the promotion of Yiddish language and culture part of its platform. Zionism regarded Yiddish as a stigma of the despised diaspora culture which had to be replaced by modern Hebrew. Language awareness arose, combined with religious and political opinions.

The expansion of the press during the 19th century played a most significant role in the development of the literary Yiddish language. Eastern Europe's first Yiddish periodical appeared in Warsaw in 1823. In 1877 the first Yiddish daily newspaper appeared in Bucharest and by 1912 as many as 100 Yiddish periodicals were being published across Europe, including 20 dailies (cf. *Jüdisches Lexicon*, "Jüdische Presse"). A Yiddish literature emerged and was oriented from its very beginning towards a popular medium, the press. The novels of the most famous Yiddish writers such as Mendele, Sholem Aleichem and Sholem Ash first appeared as serialized novels in newspapers.

Thus, a modern Yiddish written language already existed when the efforts to establish a unified standard began. From the very beginning, standardizers were confronted with the problem of dialect diversity. We distinguish the North-Eastern Yiddish dialect (NEY) centered around Vilna in Lithuania, the South-Eastern Yiddish dialect (SEY) spoken in Wolhynia, Podolia, Bessarabia and Romania and the Central-Eastern Yiddish dialect (CEY), concentrated in Poland (the western Yiddish dialects spoken in the German-speaking areas underwent a gradual assimilation process which led to the emergence of Jewish-German varieties, cf. Weinberg 1969). The three dialects differ in certain aspects of their phonology and lexicon, but also in morphology. Modern written Yiddish emerged in all three dialects, though each dialect acquired its specific institutional use: In the 20th century, SEY was the language of the theater, NEY dominated the press, and prose was written in a combination of SEY and CEY. These functions were connected to the geographic distribution of the centers of cultural activity and, of course, to the native dialects of the respective authors (cf. Schaechter 1977:38-39).

Which variety was to be given priority for standardization and unification? Judging by the majority, the use of SEY seemed to dominate. In 1925 teachers and scholars established the Jewish Scientific Institute YIVO (yidišer visenšaftlixer institut). Based in Vilna, its explicit program was to standardize and unify the use of the Yiddish language. Most YIVO members, e.g. Max Weinreich, spoke NEY and intended to establish the NEY-dialect, as spoken by the intellectuals of Vilna, as a norm (Schaechter 1977). YIVO made important contributions to the standardization process: It drafted a standard orthography and was successful in promoting the development or "Ausbau" (see Kloss 1967) of the Yiddish language in relation to German. German influences on Yiddish orthography - such as marking the etymological correspondence to a German long vowel by *h* following the vowel - were to be abolished. Yiddish orthography was to follow pronunciation, though Hebrew words within the Yiddish vocabulary maintained their Hebrew spelling, despite their different pronunciation in Yiddish. Diglossia was thus preserved within the system of orthography.

However, YIVO's standard orthography disregarded the existing modern Yiddish literary language, which was based predominantly on SEY and CEY. Despite its status among many scholars, the YIVO-standard did not succeed in drawing wide acceptance. Schaechter (1977:36) estimates that it is probably less than 1% of the native speakers - no statistics are available - who actually use the Standard Variety in everyday situation.

In the Soviet Union efforts were made during the 1920's to reform Yiddish orthography. These were the only efforts to standardize Yiddish carried out with the support of state agencies. The Soviet reform attempted to apply phonetic principles

throughout the spelling system. Thus, Hebrew words were no longer to be written following Hebrew orthographic rules, but according to their pronunciation in Yiddish. Traditional circles resisted this reform which ultimately failed owing to changed language policies in the USSR, sacrificing the promotion of minority languages in favor of assimilation into the Russian-speaking majority.

4. The Kurdish experience: The diversity of standards

As a result of migration, Kurdish is not only spoken in the region of Kurdistan, divided between Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and the Soviet Union, but it is also the language of some half a million Kurdish immigrants in Western Europe. The process of standardization of the Kurdish language is still very young. In fact, the majority of Kurds in Iran, Syria and Turkey are illiterate in their native tongue. In these countries official policy has prevented the autonomous development of a literary variety by denying Kurds education in their own language as well as the right to distribute printed material in Kurdish. Linguistic and literary projects have thus been restricted to clandestine activities of opposition movements.

In the Soviet Union and in Iraq Kurdish did enjoy, at least for some years, the status of a minority language, and standardization has enjoyed official support. Considerable dialect differences between the varieties spoken in South and North Kurdistan and the cultural pressure exerted by the respective state administrations led to seperate standardization processes. We may thus distinguish three literary varieties of the Kurdish language:

a. The Suleimaniye variety. A well-established literary standard, this variety is based on the Sorani dialect of the southern parts of Kurdistan in Iraq and Iran, as spoken in the city of Suleimaniye. First literary activities in the dialect included poetry published in the 19th century, while the first periodicals appeared at the turn of the century. Standardization was encouraged by the British administration, most notably by the British governor and researcher E. Soane, and it was due to British pressure that Sorani was recognized as the second official language of the Kurds in Iraq in 1931. It is written in a modified form of the Arab-Persian alphabet, turning the consonantal script into a lineary phonemic system in much the same way as Yiddish modifies the Hebrew alphabet. Sorani was the language of Kurdish schools, an extensive literature, media and even universities in the Kurdish parts of Iraq, until Kurdish cultural autonomy was abolished by the government in the 1970's.

b. Standard Kurdish in the Soviet Union. Based on the northern Kurmanji dialect as spoken in the southern part of the Armenian Republic, around the city of Yerevan, written Kurdish in the Soviet Union uses the Cyrillic alphabet introduced in the 1940's. The Soviet-Kurdish alphabet was drafted by a circle of linguists working at the Leningrad Institute of Iranian Studies, based on intensive research of dialect-material. It is thus characterized by a fairly exact orthographical representation of phonological oppositions. However, its use is largely restricted to the linguists and intellectuals among the estimated 100.000 Kurds in the Soviet Union. Publications include prose, several school books as well as Kurdish dictionaries and grammars. A number of publications deals explicitly with orthography and standardization (Kurdoev 1957, E'vdal 1958, Bakaev 1983). One might go as far as concluding that there is a distorted proportion between the work done in the Soviet Union on describing

Kurdish varieties and adopting an orthographical standard, and the popular attention this work has received both in and outside the country. Kurdologists, of course, owe a great debt to this Soviet enterprise.

c. The Bedir Xan variety. Also known as the "Hawar" variety, this written standard was first introduced by Mir Celadet Bedir Xan in the Kurdish-language periodical "Hawar", published in Damascus and Beirut between 1932 and 1943. It is based on the Kurmanji dialect as spoken in the districts of Cizre and Hakkari, along the Turkish-Syrian and the Turkish-Iraqi border. The dialect itself has a long tradition as a written medium ranging back to the epics of the 11th century. Its emergence as a modern literary vehicle can be traced back to the appearence in 1898 of the periodical "Kurdistan", published by Kurdish exile intellectuals in Cairo and Istanbul, using Arabic characters.

Bedir Xan's modern alphabet uses the Latin script as adapted for Turkish by the Turkish language reform of 1928, with some additional characters. It was spread among Kurds in Turkey and Syria by a number of periodicals published in these countries and in exile, and was later adopted by clandestine Kurdish organizations challenging the official ban on Kurdish publications. Since the military coup d'état in Turkey in 1980 there has been a halt even of such clandestine literary activities. The further development of the Kurmanji written language has since been restricted to exile movements in Western Europe, mainly in Sweden, West-Germany, Belgium, France and The Netherlands. Several dozen periodicals based on the "Hawar" norm now appear regularly in these countries. Most of them are published by exile nationalist organizations and usually only reach their member population.

Due to the restricted possibilities of spreading literacy in the mother tongue among migrants in exile, lack of official support and of recognized as well as qualified language institutions, Kurdish journalists, writers and readers are confronted with a series of orthographic dilemmas not solved by the "Hawar" variety. Dialect diversity and the intensive influence of the languages of literacy in the respective countries of origin and in the countries of migration lead to irregularities, to an arbitrary spelling in many cases and to the lack of unified orthographic conventions among Kurds living and writing in Western Europe. Forms affected by irregularities of spelling include both phoneme representation and word boundaries (cf. Matras 1989). Confusion often arises as lexical innovations are introduced by single authors.

The lack of unity may be said to have been a handicap in the emergence of modern Kurdish literacy, since it severely restricts any exchange of experiences and literary material among the different literary varieties. Nevertheless, considering the circumstances of its emergence in the various countries, one must acknowledge the efforts made by language planners to adapt the respective literary variety to its socio-political and linguistic surroundings. Kurdish literacy inevitably correlates with bilingualism and biliteracy: Kurdish is never the primary literary language and Kurdish literacy is rather a luxury. There are therefore no monolingual Kurds who are literate in Kurdish, nor are there monolingual Kurds who are literate in any other language. Kurdish literacy is acquired through literacy in the official state language and literary varieties differ according to their states of origin, both historically (the choice of a dialect to be used as the standard variety and the choice of a writing system) and synchronically (the use of loan words).

Future perspectives are not likely to disentangle especially the "Hawar" variety, which never enjoyed any form of government support, from such factors. In the long term exile literary activities may give rise to a political and cultural elite, which, given the chance to establish a cultural autonomy in Kurdistan, will probably re-import the literary language and establish institutions needed to regulate spelling and lexical problems. In the shorter term Kurdish immigrant organizations aim at spreading literacy among the younger generation living in Europe. However, there are only few such projects, little cooperation on the part of the authorities in the migrant countries and little interest on the part of Kurds who are already caught between literacy loyalties to the state languages of their country of origin on the one hand, and to those of the migration countries on the other.

5. Romani: Challenging the odds

Romani arrived in Europe as an Indic dialect as the Romani people were deported from their original homeland and transported as slaves to the Byzantine Empire in the early Middle Ages. It has retained the basic morphological and lexical structure common to the North-Indic languages, though experiencing some unique innovations and considerable syntactic and lexical influence form the Balkan languages. For centuries the Roma have remained a persecuted, discriminated and impoverished people throughout the European continent. Literacy was, until this century, unknown to Romani culture, and oral tradition was the only cultural bind for Europe's largest non-territorial minority.

First attempts to use Romani as a written language began in the Soviet Union during the 1920's and 1930's, as part of a general policy promoting minority language use. Upon state initiative an educational institute was established in order to qualify teachers, and phonetic research was intended to help unify orthographic norms for school usage. A number of publications appeared and there was a growing language movement active in education, film, theater and translations (cf. Puxon 1981). However, Romani standardization in the Soviet Union remained isolated and unknown outside the country. The Romani language movement in the Soviet Union perished as a result of the Romani Holocaust during World War II.

After the war, written Romani emerged again as a poetic language of Romani intellectuals mostly in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. A coordinated language movement was not established until 1971, when the International Romani Union was founded in London. For the last two decades, until very recently, written Romani was used exclusively by a circle of several dozen linguists, intellectuals and activists connected to the International Romani Union. Some of them, such as Ian Hancock, Marcel Cortiade, Jusuf Šaip and others, have been engaged both in descriptive and in normative linguistic activity. At its conferences, the International Romani Union discussed drafts for a unified alphabet to be used in correspondence, in literature, dictionaries, grammars and bible translations. The journal "Roma" connected with the International Union has only occasionally published poems and several summaries of contributions in Romani since its establishment in 1974. There are only several dozen publications in Romani, contrasting with many hundred works about the language. In Yugoslavia there is a somewhat more extensive use of written Romani, partly inspired by weekly radio and television broadcasts. There is also a number of school

books and child as well as adult literacy programs in Sweden, Norway and recently also in Hungary.

A new phase in the standardization of the Romani language is currently beginning with the emergence of Romani political and civil rights organizations in both Eastern and Western Europe. Since 1989 there has been more extensive correspondence between the unions as attempts to coordinate and unify Romani civil rights activities across Europe increase. There is a number of periodicals and news bulletins published partly in Romani and an increasing number of leaflets and letters adressed to the member population of Romani unions in their mother tongue. On the whole, conventions for orthography are based on those of the respective state language. This fact often imposes great efforts on the part of adressees in order to follow international correspondence and it tends to restrict the distribution of publications to the national level.

All Roma are bilingual, but only a minority among European Roma are actively literate. Romani culture has until now been strictly oral. In fact, many Romani communities fear language standardization as it might facilitate access to the community on the part of non-Roma, especially on the part of administration officials aiming to continue traditional supervision and harassment measures against the Roma. Indeed, Romani literacy is now emerging as a function of changing attitudes toward cultural and political needs, trying to promote political and cultural self-organization in the various countries and in Europe as a whole (cf. Hancock, forthcoming). As is the case for Kurdish, Romani literacy is thus based on active literacy in at least one other language (and therefore restricted to intellectuals) and it correlates with nationalist or rather with civil rights activities.

Spreading Romani literacy among the majority of European Roma might at the moment seem illusory, given that this majority is still often denied access to the very basic forms of education and qualifications. The political and social situation of the Roma at present hardly enables the majority of them to approach the institutional frameworks needed to acquire literacy, and the existing Romani institutions lack the means and resources needed in order to expand their activities. Further development is dependent upon the chance the intellectual elite will have to establish its own cultural autonomy as non-territorial minorities in Europe. It seems that many years of tiring and frustrating agitation aimed at the non-Romani majority population and its administration will be required in order to achieve basic recognition as a cultural and linguistic minority.

6. Towards a typology of non-official standardization

6.1 Why standardize ? Shifting from oral to literate tradition

Fishman (1989) points out the close connection between the standardization of ethnic minority languages and the need or motivation for authenticating linguistic heritage and linguistic behavior. Standardization is connected to the process of modernization, which is often pursued by nationalism, given the change in social structures and identification patterns and the need to consolidate a broader common denominator in society. Now, this process is in a certain sense circular, since nationalism, once triggered by modernization, often aims at returning to the origin or to ethno-cultural

"purity". Its linguistic or sociolinguistic correlative is in this case language maintenance, at least in those instances, in which modernization threatens to promote language shift and consequent language loss, and where language maintenance must be secured through organized initiative.

In all three languages examined there seems to be no direct "danger" of complete language loss. Before the Holocaust, Yiddish had survived many centuries of language contact since its function within the Jewish community was well defined. Industrialization and migration into the urban centers established a Jewish migrant working class which was not yet sufficiently familiar with the majority, non-Jewish language - Polish, Russian, Hungarian, etc. - to be able to participate actively in daily social and political affairs. With the emergence of this Yiddish-speaking, urban, Jewish working class there arose a need for a secular press in Yiddish. It was the deeply rooted literary tradition of European Jewish communities that motivated the first initiatives in this domain, for it seemed unacceptable not to have a written communication medium serving the alienated first generation of urban migrants. Hebrew, the traditional written medium, could no longer assume this function, as proletarization changed educational structures: Workers did not have the time or the resources to afford many years of intensive religious schooling needed in order to acquire literary competence in the sacral language.

The Roma, whose social segregation continues until this very day, have retained their language as the main vehicle carrying cultural experience, though certain dialects have been subject to extensive influence and borrowings from contact languages. Formal education, however, has always been conducted in the state language and the domains relating to it have not entered Romani. Written communication within the Romani community is rare or practically non-existant. Literacy is rather restricted to interaction with the majority administration and the majority culture, using the majority language. Literate Roma thus practice their literacy only outside their own speech and cultural group. They may have not assimilated, but much of their experience is made and "stored" in the second language (cf. Hancock, forthcoming).

Linguistic assimilation in Kurdistan - we will restrict the following evaluation to the Kurmanji variety spoken in Turkish and Syrian Kurdistan, since it is the Kurdish written language of these areas (the "Hawar" variety) which never received official recognition - is common among second-generation immigrants into the non-Kurdish cities, both in the western parts of Turkey and in Europe. In Turkey and in Syria, adopting the state language as the primary language is thought to be approved of by the majority and its institutions and is thus connected with improving one's chances for success. In Europe, many immigrant families from Turkish-Kurdistan adopt Turkish as the primary family language in order to enable their children to interact with the official authorities of their country of origin, should they wish to or be forced to return. Linguistic assimilation also partly affects intellectuals who have widened their educational horizons in a second language and are unable to discuss, to transmit or to develop their new ideas in their native vernacular. Kurdish students, for example, usually code-switch into Turkish as soon as the subject of conversation involves knowledge or techniques acquired within majority institutions (cf. Redder & Rehbein 1987).

Rather than preserve the *oral* language from being lost to the community as a whole, standardization in the cases examined is intended to broaden the domains of native

language use to include those functions occupied traditionally by the state or majority language. In this sense standardization aims at integrating the creativity of literate intellectuals into the native community, rather than "losing" them to the majority. At the same time it also attempts to introduce new cultural activities and attitudes into the speech community itself.

Introducing literacy into a language with only an oral tradition involves a certain shift in cultural values and an extension of cultural activity. In the case of Yiddish this meant challenging traditional rabbinical authority and its rigid educational structures restricting written communication within the community to religious affairs. In the case of Romani the notion of a "secret language" protecting the community from outside control is gradually giving way to a new form of overt, institutionalized community protection. Civil rights activists are trying to promote the use of Romani as a written language in order to facilitate and elaborate international communication between their unions. Along with this process there is a tendency to reject the traditional authority of community leaders whose power consisted of the oral recognition granted by the non-Romani administration, and to elect a new political leadership whose authority is based on popular support for a formulated political platform. For example, a ten-page document - one of the first programatic documents written in Romani - was presented as a motion at the first conference of the European Romani Federation "EUROM" in November 1990.

The Kurmanji-Kurdish experience provides a parallel case, manifesting efforts on the part of the elite of exile intellectuals to establish a new cultural dialog with their community on the basis of new social and political ideas which the elite itself acquired outside its native community. In the following section we shall look more closely at the tasks assumed by bicultural intellectuals in language standardization processes beyond state institutions.

6.2 The task facing bilingual literates

On August 30th, 1908 the famous Conference on the Status and Standardization of the Yiddish Language began in Chernovitz, the capital of Bukovina (now USSR). The meeting's initiator was Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937). Born and raised in Vienna, his native language was German. After completing law school in Vienna in 1887, Birnbaum became an active journalist. In the early years of his career he was a devoted Zionist; it was Birnbaum who introduced the (German) term "Zionism" ("Zionismus") to designate the young movement. During the 1880's and 1890's he published the periodical "Selbst-Emanzipation" in Vienna. He finally parted with Zionism because of its rejection of Jewish diaspora-culture.

Birnbaum regarded Eastern European Judaism and especially its language, Yiddish, as an authentic expression of Jewishness. A modernized Yiddish language, he believed, would provide protection from assimilation pressures. The Yiddish language ought therefore to be expanded and standardized. Birnbaum himself first had to learn Yiddish. In 1904 he began publishing articles in Yiddish, and between 1908 and 1911 he lived in Chernovitz, where he edited the periodicals "Dos Folk" and "Dokter Birnboyms Voxnblat". He held his talk at the Chernovitz conference in Yiddish, but welcomed the guests to the banquet in German (see Fishman 1980:53). Birnbaum (who taught himself the Central-Eastern Yiddish dialect!) was not the only "Yiddishist" who had to study the language. Another example is Vladimir Medem

(1879-1923), a prominent politician in the "Bund" movement (cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1972:1175-1176).

The biographies of Birnbaum and Medem may be extreme with regard to their command of the Yiddish language and their motivation for acquiring it and promoting its use. Nevertheless, modern education attained outside the Yiddish-speaking environment can almost be considered as the common denominator of many of the activists of the Yiddish language movement. Max Weinreich, co-founder of the YIVO, received his degree at the German University of Marburg; Mordkhe Schaechter, a prominent representative of YIVO's younger generation, submitted his dissertation at the German-speaking University of Vienna. These are only a few examples for the way standardization emerges as a function relating modern education, science and thinking to "authentic" or native tradition, applying to the native vernacular the tasks normally restricted to recognized national standards. Individuals who are familiar with both the native and the outside environment form an intellectual elite which is capable of transmitting and transferring experience and knowledge.

The Kurdish language reformer Celadet Ali Bedir Xan was born in Istanbul in 1893 into a respected family originating from Cizre in the district of Botan on the Turkish-Syrian border. The Bedir Xan family had led several uprisings against the Ottoman rule in their region in the middle of the 19th century. When the Ottoman emperor Sultan Abdul Hamid II took power, he introduced a new reconciliation and integration policy toward the Kurdish notables. Members of the most influencial Kurdish families were educated in Istanbul and assumed important positions within the Ottoman administration (cf. Kendal 1984). In exchange for their loyalty to the Islamic-Ottoman state, they were granted greater freedom of cultural activity. Living in the diaspora, either as students or as civil servants, the Bedir Xans were introduced to the ideas of European national movements and to the concepts of modern national and cultural self-determination. They began to publish bilingual Turkish-Kurdish periodicals in which they tried to encourage their countrymen to apply some of these ideas to their own native land, Kurdistan.

This family enterprise was passed on to the brothers Celadet and Kamuran, who were driven into exile after the establishment of the new nationalist Turkish Republic in 1922. During the following decades Celadet and Kamuran both published a number of periodicals as well as grammars of the Kurdish language (Celadet's main work, "Grammaire Kurde", was published in Paris after his death by Roger Lescot; see Bedir Khan & Lescot 1970), based on their own Ceziri or Botani dialect and introducing a new alphabet using Latin characters. Its close affinity to the modern Turkish alphabet ensured at least its passive comprehensibility to Kurdish intellectuals educated in the only official language of the republic, Turkish.

The Kurdish language was thus experiencing a growing inventory of both structural descriptions based on modern linguistic methods and a political press operating as an informative as well as agitating medium. It was not until the mid 1960's that such media were imported back into Turkish Kurdistan itself by an elite of political activists who were inspired by and involved in the emergence of a left-wing opposition movement in Turkey. Reluctant to draw the attention of the larger Turkish opposition groups to the specific cultural and social oppression in Kurdistan, a number of activists left their organizations and established their own Kurdish

federations and political parties. Still following similar agitation strategies, they began to distribute printed material in Kurdish, hoping to mobilize popular resistance to government measures. Clandestine political mass media also inspired cultural creativity, and a small number of literary works, grammars, dictionaries as well as traditional prose was printed (see Badıllı 1965, Anter 1967, Şemo 1977, inter alia). The distribution of such material became more difficult after the military seized power in March 1971, and was stopped altogether after the second coup d'état in September 1980.

Now based in Western European exile, distribution of such popular printed material in Kurdish mainly follows the same pattern. Nearly all of it is published by political federations aiming at mobilizing the Kurdish immigrant population for its cause. The editiorial staffs of the periodicals involved consist of bilinguals, who have usually become engaged in opposition activity while studying either at a Turkish (or Syrian) university, or abroad, and who were politicized - at least the older generation - in a non-Kurdish environment. Courses in Kurdish literacy are offered almost exclusively as part of the political activities of these exile federations, which is also the case with regard to any distribution of printed material in Kurdish: Books and periodicals, whether strictly political or literary, are introduced and sold at political gatherings.

In most European countries Kurdish immigrant federations have so far not been successful in persuading authorities to grant Kurdish immigrant children the opportunity to enjoy native language instruction within the official school network. Only in Sweden, where native language instruction is a constitutional right, do such programs exist. But even there, instruction material is very scarce. Most of it is therefore a product of the personal initiative of bilingual teachers prepared to translate or at least to adapt the concepts of existing majority-language textbooks in order to teach Kurdish. The small number of "professional" Kurdish authors, i.e. those who have been engaged in extensive literary activity for some years now and whose works are both original and reflect a rather "authentic" Kurdish tradition and way of life, are usually only known to Kurdish intellectuals already engaged in cultural or political activities. Thus, there is an intellectual group "translating" educational and political norms and methods of the literate societies they have met with into Kurdish for popular distribution, and there is a much smaller group catering for the first one and furnishing it with new and "authentic" products of native literacy.

To conclude this section let us briefly look at the role of Romani intellectuals in promoting literacy in this language. On the whole we encounter a similar pattern: Romani culture being strictly oral, the first to write Romani are those who attempt to transfer their experience made in a non-Romani environment in order to enrich their own community culture. Again, the context is that of political or civil rights activities. The first intensive use of written Romani involved the beginning of what Hancock (1988) terms "reunification" attempts on the part of the founders of the International Romani Union. Curiously, most work done on the problems of Romani standardization was not directed toward the Romani population itself, but rather distributed among linguists and interested persons outside the community.

It was not until the beginning of the restructuring period in the Eastern European states that the Roma were able to establish their own unions. These unions now publish periodicals circulated among their member population. Those containing contributions in Romani are all bilingual and most of their material appears in the

state language. Authors are, as in the case of Kurdish, intellectuals many of whom have attended state schools or universities and become politically active within the popular movement for democracy, before turning to establishing a Romani civil rights movement. Romani literacy is still not spread to the Roma as a whole, but mostly to the activists among the unions' members. In some Western European countries, civil rights work among Roma immigrants and refugees from different Eastern European countries relies on Romani as the only common language. Leaflets and news bulletins distributed to the members by the union activists are therefore occasionally written in Romani. Romani unions seeking contact with one another correspond in English or German, sometimes in French, provided translators are available. In many cases, however, union activists choose to write in Romani. Written Romani is thus a minority medium of correspondence even among literate, intellectual Romani activists. However minor the influence of the International Romani Union is among the general Romani population, there is no doubt about the fact that its literary activities reach and inspire union activists across Europe and encourage them to write in their native language.

Looking at the cases discussed, we see that there is a circle of bilingual, bicultural and literate members of non-literate speech communities who have been inspired by techniques of mass distribution of ideas which they have acquired while coming into contact with certain institutions and ideological movements of the majority society. Acknowledging their specific group interests, they try to transmit some of these ideas to their own people, turning to the use of similar means of agitation. The first task after solving some of the most preliminary technical questions such as the choice of a writing system - we will deal with those questions further below - is to allow for the emergence of a permanent circle of individuals promoting native literacy. Members of this circle will then enrich one another's scopes of interests, ultimately establishing a varied inventory of printed material available in the language: press, political literature and manifestoes, and translations. A minority within this circle will try to create a synthesis between literacy and oral native traditions, writing down such cultural assets as folk tales or songs for printed distribution. It is at this point that native literacy becomes qualitatively more firmly installed within the community culture, although we are still dealing with a very small group of actively native-literate persons.

Throughout this process, the bilingual activists involved are concerned both with spreading specific ideas which have to do with community identity, and with spreading the feeling or consciousness of community identity itself via the use of native literacy as a medium. Thus, they face both the challenge of finding the adequate contents to arouse public interest and the task of establishing a distribution network for written material. In this regard the extent to which institutional structures are already available proves to be very significant.

6.3 *The role of institutions*

One must consider two main types of institutionalized promotion of emergent written minority languages. The first involves attaining access to a wide "consumer" or reader population, the second aims at unifying the use of forms in the written variety. Typically, periodicals and radio programs (setting a spoken standard) will show a higher distribution than scientific instruction manuals published by language academies, though the latter will probably involve more careful planning of language

use by professionals. To what degree does popular distribution combine with academic research and unification attempts in the cases we are examining ?

We shall begin with Romani, which shows the youngest and still least developed standardization process. Many - perhaps most - activists who publish in written Romani also participate in the conferences of the International Romani Union and in its debates on unifying Romani orthography, grammar and lexical use. However, they all continue to use a state language-based orthography for Romani in their periodicals because of practical considerations: Since they usually distribute their material on the national level, state language orthography is more accessible to the reader population. A unified Romani orthography is still a hobby shared and practiced by the linguists among the members of the International Union. It cannot be implemented since the International Union does not have any access to mass-communication media.

We already mentioned the role assumed by the Yiddish press and the Yiddish literature in establishing a modern literary Yiddish language. The distribution of written Yiddish in Europe had one main advantage, compared with the case of Romani: Yiddish was the popular medium of instruction in traditional Jewish schools - the "xeyder" (elementary school), the "talmed-toyre" (secondary school) and the "yešive" (institute of religious higher education). However, Yiddish in such schools was only an instrument for transmitting knowledge, not a subject of classes, and it did not receive much attention.

Modern Yiddish schools were established in Eastern Europe following initiatives on the part of the labor movement, especially "Bund" activists. After the First World War the Yiddish educational system of Eastern Europe had its flourishing period: In Ukraine and White Russia there were 1165 Yiddish-speaking schools in the years 1921-1931. As a result of changing language policies in the USSR during the 1930's, the majority of these schools were closed down. In Poland 60 Yiddish elementary schools and 35 nursery schools existed in 1921 in 44 towns. In the same year the Central Jewish School Organization ("Tsentrale yidiše šul-organizatsie" or "Tsišo") was established. By 1929 the organization ran 219 institutions, including 114 elementary schools, 46 nursery schools, 52 evening schools, three secondary schools and a seminar for teachers. Another organization in Poland, the Association for School and Culture ("Šul- un kulturfarband"), ran seven elementary schools. Several dozen schools also provided instruction in Yiddish in the Baltic regions in the early 1930's (cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1972:433-437).

It is unknown whether these schools followed a standard language norm, either that of YIVO or that of the Soviet reform. The Yiddish school movement was dissolved either by changing state policy in the Soviet Union, or else by Nazism and war in the other parts of Eastern Europe. Today, there are several Yiddish schools in the United States, Argentina and Israel. Most of them are traditional schools which provide instruction via Yiddish, but do not teach Yiddish as a subject. Generally, such institutions ignore endeavors to standardize Yiddish orthography. Normative efforts based on the YIVO-norm are still carried out by the Committee for the Implementation of Standardized Yiddish Orthography (CISYO), established in the United States in 1958 (cf. Gold 1977:318-319).

Kurdish already possesses three written varieties based on dialectal differences, each adopting the alphabet of its main contact language. Within the Bedir Xan-based

"Hawar" norm there is still a considerable degree of orthographic and lexical variety, though adopting Bedir Xan's Cizre dialect solves many morphological and lexical problems. It is interesting to note that several orthographic conventions have emerged and have been widely used within the Bedir Xan-based variety in Europe during the past two decades, although they contradict Bedir Xan's own usage (for details see Matras 1989). This is obviously a result of spontaneous exchange between writers and editors over a certain period of time, rather than the implementation of rules offered by an academy, which does not exist. With the basic decision to follow "Hawar", periodicals narrow the scope of possible variation or ambiguity while at the same time distributing and introducing the norm to potential readers and writers. With more detailed problems, however, unification is a gradual and non-systematic process. The Kurdish Institute in Paris is considered to be the most competent authority on language matters, but its suggestions and recommendations usually do not reach the majority of editors in the more widely distributed periodicals.

Returning to Haugen's (1969 [1972]) language planning phases, one may conclude that in standardization processes beyond state institutions there is a disturbance of the logical order of steps taken elsewhere by centralized and publicly authorized agencies. First, norm selection often differs within the speech community, since the implementing institutions - periodicals, publishers and, in the case of Yiddish, the popular school system - do not necessarily wait for a central decision to be taken concerning the choice of a standard variety. Ad hoc codification and implementation thus precedes collective norm selection, stabilization often being neglected altogether. Only later does a small group of "standardizers" meet on their own individual intiative. Its proposals may or may not enrich the process already in progress, but they will certainly not return it to an elementary stage and will therefore not succeed in attaining control over its development.

Second, the authority of groups or institutions assuming the task of norm selection, codification and stabilization on behalf of an entire community does not necessarily rank higher than that of the respective implementing institutions. This results in a constant, rather free and unresolved competition between all sides involved in the standardization process. Academic authority is certainly a respected resource in this competition, but access to a wide public of consumers is likely to have a definite advantage.

Thus, YIVO's norms for Yiddish were largely ignored by authors writing and publishing in the central and southern dialects. The school system was usually run by social and political federations which had their own cultural and academic elite, and there was no place reserved for YIVO in this hierarchy either. In Romani, the diversity of written forms runs almost parallel to the number of authors, assuming each author adopts his or her own regular convention, which is not always the case. Paradoxically, Kurdish, a language manifesting a non-reconcilable gap between three basic literary varieties, also shows greater consistency within the respective norms implemented. This undoubtedly results from the fact that norm selection and codification actually preceded implementation. Variability within the "Hawar" variety is mostly due to the lack of stabilization measures, a phase that was "skipped", since neither clandestine nor exile activity could provide for adequate access to normative guidance. Throughout non-governmental standardization processes, lack of authority restricts the exchange between implementing and stabilizing institutions to a rather peripheral position.

6.4 *Codifying speech: Some technical problems*

The diversity of what we term "basic Kurdish literary varieties" reduces grammatical and morphological variability within each of these varieties. Exile authors aiming at the Bedir Xan norm will nevertheless occasionally deviate from the Cizre dialect while using words uncommon in "Hawar" itself, deriving their spelling from the phonological patterns of the author's own Kurmanji-Kurdish dialect. Thus, even after basic norm selection, writing still involves ad hoc coding of the spoken language, with its implications for the unification versus diversity of linguistic forms. While diversity in written Yiddish is due to the selection of different norms, written Romani entirely follows the pattern of coding the spoken language. Adopting a norm variety versus coding (individual) spoken language is therefore the preliminary essential upon which the development of standardization depends.

Beyond the question of norm selection, languages vary with regard to the extent to which they show dialect diversity. Of our three cases, Yiddish ranks as the lowest on the dialect diversity scale. All its dialects are mutually intelligible; they differ especially in vowel phonology, occasionally in gender and case assignment, in some lexical items and in the use of loanwords borrowed from the various European contact languages. The Kurdish dialects spoken in Turkey and Syria all belong to the northwest Kurdish or west Kurmanji group (with the exception of Zaza, which we regard, however, as a separate language closely related to Kurdish). Despite considerable dialect variation, the Ceziri dialect used in "Hawar" seems intelligible to all speakers. Dialect diversity alone should therefore not pose a serious obstacle to readers not yet familiar with it. Again we have Romani ranking fairly low on the scale of factors influencing the efficiency of standardization: Dialect diversity in Romani can be extreme in just about all domains of grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon). There is also an extensive use of loanwords, especially in the written language, due to cultural borrowing in the domains discussed in writing. Considering that there are also very different contact languages serving as a source for lexical borrowing, diversity of written forms reaches a maximum.

We find the choice of a script correlating with the practical factor of accessibility. The alphabet serving the most accessible form of existing literacy is thus adopted. The most obvious example is that of the different Kurdish written varieties, adopting the alphabet of the respective state languages. Yiddish uses the Hebrew alphabet common in the written tradition of all Jewish communities around the world, regardless of their spoken language. Since education and literacy were internal institutions of the Jewish communities, the Hebrew script was the most accessible writing system. Romani uses different orthographic conventions, but in international correspondence it is always the Roman script that is chosen due do its wide distribution in Europe and the Americas.

The relationship of phoneme and grapheme is subject to greater creativity on the part of individual authors. Regardless of the orthographic conventions they use as an orientation, Romani writers mark the aspirated counterparts of non-aspirated voiceless stops by adding the grapheme *h*. Since no other European language, with the exception of Albanian, possesses such a phonological distinction, we may consider this to be an original Romani innovation based on the writers' intuition of phonological structure and graphic availabilities. Kurdish exile authors have added to the Bedir Xan norm the characters /rr/, marking a rolled (as opposed to a flapped)

phoneme /r/, and /'/ , representing a voiced pharyngal fricative. On the other hand, retaining diglossia in the writing system of Yiddish by keeping to the Hebrew spelling of words of Hebrew origin runs contrary to phonological intuition. Nevertheless, it is grammatical (lexical) knowledge and consciousness of literary tradition and etymology that stimulate authors in this case.

Finally, the conflicts around the issue of lexical innovation symbolize more than any other debates the way in which language movements are caught between modernization and nationalism, between importing techniques and cultural values from a contact environment and maintaiing purity or authenticity. For the Yiddish language movement, asserting the independence of Yiddish from the closely related German language was at the top of its agitation priorities. Nevertheless, modern terms were borrowed from German as Yiddish became the language of mass-communication media. This process may have been compensated for to a certain extent by the presence of an "authentic" Hebrew vocabulary, which avails Yiddish of a permanent special inventory for lexical borrowings.

Kurdish authors from the Turkish part of Kurdistan attempt to resist Turkish lexical borrowings common in their spoken language. This often results in an increase in the presence of Arabic or Persian loanwords, which are felt to be more "authentic" since their presence in Kurdish preceded intensive language contact with modern Turkish. Taking a decision for a potential inventory of loanwords is thus affected by emotional attitudes and personal experience with the respective contact language. In Romani, building abstract nouns from adjectives and compound nouns through complex genitive constructions uncommon in the spoken language gradually renders a distinct literary style. Such innovations are usually spontaneous, i.e. not planned, and intelligible to all readers. In debates on lexical borrowings proposals range from simply regulating the orthography of European loanwords to consciously introducing "authentic" Sanskrit terminology (cf. Joshi 1991).

6.5 *Comparing background conditions, motivation and outcome*

In the previous section we showed that a comparison of codification procedures should take into account the following factors: dialect variety and mutual intelligibility in the language concerned, norm selection versus coding the spoken language as the adopted procedure, the accessibillity of writing systems, the relationship between phonological intuition and graphic availabilities, and finally the status of contact languages in the conflict between "modern" and "authentic" language usage. In this section we summarize some of the most important background factors influencing the process of standardization beyond state agencies by relating them to a comparative scale for standardization assessment:

1. *Dispersion of the speech community*
   Yiddish: Diaspora
   Kurdish: Oppressed majority, exile
   Romani: Diaspora

2. *Presence of literacy in the cultural tradition*
   Yiddish: Widely spread
   Kurdish: Only the religious elite
   Romani: Non-existent

3. *Degree of non-native literacy*
    Yiddish: In the religious-sacral language
    Kurdish: Only young generation
    Romani: Minority among young generation

4. *Role of modernization in promoting native literacy*
    Yiddish: Urbanization and need for secular mass-communication
    Kurdish: Contact with European nationalist movements and with opposition
    Romani: Democratization and institutionalized self-organization

5. *Role of nationalism in promoting native literacy*
    Yiddish: National workers' movement
    Kurdish: Clandestine and exile resistance
    Romani: Coordinated civil rights movement

6. *Institutional use of native literacy*
    Yiddish: Press, political parties, schools, theater
    Kurdish: Exile federations
    Romani: Civil rights unions

7. *School instruction*
    Yiddish: Partly exstent
    Kurdish: Non-existent (except individual projects)
    Romani: Non-existent (except individual projects)

8. *Unification initiatives*
    Yiddish: YIVO
    Kurdish: Personal initiative (Bedir Xan)
    Romani: International Romani Union

9. *Interaction between academic language unification intiative*
    and implementing institutions
    Yiddish: Partly existent within the press
    Kurdish: Within "Hawar" both instances unite; later - weak interaction
    Romani: Regular interaction, but with weak effect

10. *Main linguistic domains of variability in the written language*
    Yiddish: Vowel notation, borrowings from contact languages other than
           Hebrew
    Kurdish: Phonology, word-boundaries, borrowings, lexical innovations
    Romani: Phonology, morphology, lexicon, borrowings, innovations, syntax

7. Summary

In standardization beyond state institutions, language planning deviates from the sequence of steps which can be taken in coordinated standardization processes in order to ensure the effectiveness of normative measures. It is therefore questionable whether one may speak of "language planning" in such cases at all. The popular (non-governmental) emergence of native literacy in non-literate speech communities rather involves parallel interaction and, to a certain extent, even competition between

implementing institutions on the one hand and normative institutions on the other. Whereas implementing institutions are concerned with a wide distribution of both native literacy and specific ideas in order to promote a new form of community consolidation, normative institutions attempt to unify writing conventions. Although there is no apparent contradiction between their respective goals, implementing the drafted norm requires a hierarchical relationship which allows a normative authority to direct the implementing institutions. Such a stable hierarchy, however, does not exist when standardization is a popular enterprise.

The course of the specific standardization process and its outcome are thus largely dependent upon a set of background factors determining its starting position. A careful analysis of such factors may enable us to make at least some general predictions as to the character and the effectiveness of both features of the process - spreading native literacy and implementing a unified norm. Among those factors we have looked at the dispersion of the speech community, the presence of literacy in the cultural tradition, and the degree and function of non-native literacy in diglossic communities. We mentioned the shift in social structures and opportunities (modernization) and the emergence of new institutions and community authorities as factors triggering and promoting the use of native literacy. Political and nationalist movements often turn out to be the carriers of institutional use of a written form of the native language. Upon their initiative, school instruction may be conducted in the language, in which case the distribution of native literacy acquires new dimensions.

The success of unification initiatives is found to depend on the degree of interaction between academic, normative agencies and the implementing institutions. Here too, one must pay attention to linguistic and sociolinguistic conditions: Normative variety selection will provide greater consistency in the written language than simply coding spoken language, though in cases of mutual incomprehensibility and extreme dialect variety in the language concerned access to such a norm may be more difficult. Apart from the "technical" problems of codification - norm selection, the choice of a writing system, orthography and lexical innovation - popular standardization faces a special challenge trying to spread native literacy. Conditions being those of a non-territorial minority or a majority denied the right to promote its own culture and language, spreading native literacy is most difficult to coordinate.

Again we must point to the status literacy and especially institutionalized literacy enjoys in the community. The Jewish communities always cultivated a literary tradition based on the role of the Hebrew scriptures in everyday community life. Literacy as such was not a luxury, but rather a convention. This convention was retained, but following social changes, a growing number of people could no longer afford to master the grammar and the entire lexicon of a second language in order to acquire literacy. This led to the choice of the Hebrew script to represent the spoken language. In the non-literate cultures discussed, Kurdish and Romani, the acquisition of literacy is connected to the acquisition of the state language and thus dependent upon access to the majority culture and its institutions. Native language literacy is promoted by a small elite operating at first within the cultural framework of the majority society. Spreading native literacy therefore involves transmitting at least certain elements of a foreign culture. As the institutional conditions for doing so are usually not available, native literacy is restricted to the context of nationalist or civil rights acitivities.

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