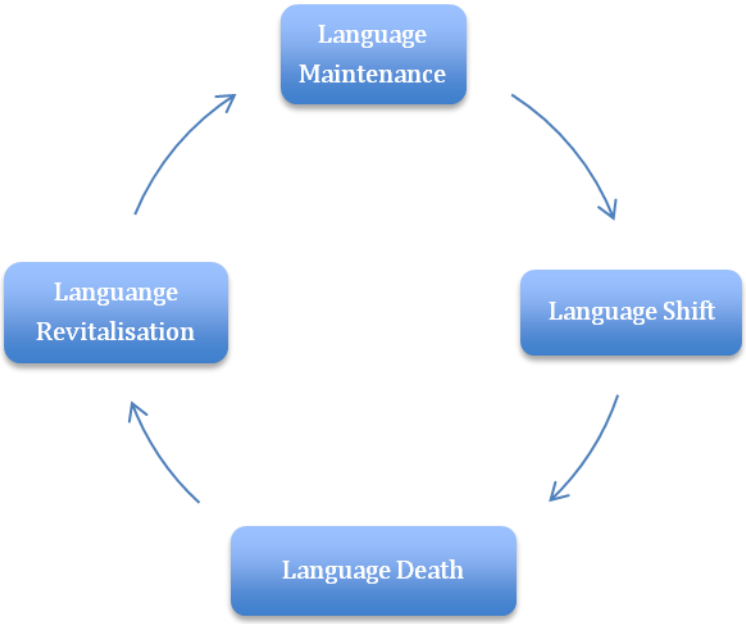
Language Revitalisation

> The whole question of language revival is inextricably associated with what might be termed the 'internal manifestations of external influences' and, on that basis alone, is complex and fraught with difficulty. (Edwards, 1994:124).

The process of language revitalisation is the reversal of language shift (RLS). Reference has already been made to the fact that the maintenance of language vitality and language shift are two sides of the same coin. Language maintenance, language shift and language death can obviously be presented as a linear continuum of *diminishing* linguistic vitality. Just as discussing language shift cannot be easily separated from language vitality, so language death is inextricably linked to language shift in its causal relationship. However, the more positive aspect of language revitalisation, along with current world-wide concerns and efforts in this direction, would perhaps suggest that we should see all four dimensions as part of a *possible* cycle as shown in Figure 6:

Figure 6



Language "revitalisation" strategies can, theoretically, be adopted at any point in the cycle, even when a language is already very strong if it should find itself unable to penetrate a limited number of domains which

are the preserve of another language (scientific research being a particular example) since its absence can be the early signs of language shift. Revitalisation, however, usually applies to languages which have already undergone a fairly major process of language shift or even reached the point of language death. The student is encouraged to revisit the way various academics have categorised languages according to their varying levels of vitality at the beginning of this handbook.
Although one cannot provide a detailed account of specific languages in a handbook such as this, the student is recommended to compare the fortunes of languages such as Hebrew and Cornish, for example.

For the remainder of this Guidance Handbook, the discussion of language death and revitalisation will be combined since they share common ground. As previously mentioned, language revitalisation is an area which currently engages the efforts and concerns of organisations and academics world-wide for reasons which have already been outlined at the start. The need to protect languages under threat of extinction has become widely recognised on an international scale, as has the need to protect wild life. In 1992, Krauss made the following statement:

> I consider it a plausible calculation that – at the rate things are going – the coming century will see either the death or doom of 90 per cent of mankind's languages. (Krauss, 1992: 68: 4-10)

As Crystal (2000) mentions, in 1992 in the following statement, the International Linguistics Congress held in Quebec called on UNESCO to act to protect languages from extinction:

> As the disappearance of any one language constitutes an irretrievabl loss to mankind, it is for UNESCO a task of great urgency to respond to this situation by promoting and, if possible, sponsoring programs of linguistic organizations for the description in the form of grammars, dictionaries and texts, including the recording of oral literatures, of hitherto unstudied or inadequately documented endangered and dying languages.

UNESCO responded by establishing the "Endangered Languages Project" in 1993 which included the “Red Book of Endangered Languages”.
In 1995, an International Clearing House for Endangered Languages was also established at the University of Tokyo as well as the Endangered

Language Fund in the USA whose committee made the following opening statement:

> Languages have died throughout history, but never have we faced the massive extinction that is threatening the world right now…The cultural heritage of many peoples is crumbling while we look on. Are we willing to shoulder the blame for having stood by and done nothing?

In 1995, the Foundation for Endangered Languages was established in Britain which maintained in a newsletter that over half the world's languages were moribund in that they were not being transmitted to the next generation with the result that most would die within two generations (Crystal, 2000).
Such awareness, however, seems to be confined to the academic fraternity with public oblivion being widespread:

> We are at a critical point in human linguistic history and most people don't know. (Crystal, 2000: ix).

As previously mentioned, Garcia (1992) expresses this in terms of the "language garden" analogy and the consequences of the "environmental" disaster of being eventually surrounded by only one botanical specimen, thus reducing the quality of human life.

Both the European Union and the United Nations by now emphasise the importance of maintaining and defending the linguistic and multicultural riches of the world. Since language and culture are attributes of identity, the government of each country has a duty to defend them.

As we have seen, amongst various efforts to revitalise languages in Europe, for example, is the relatively recent strategy for the Irish language. The "Statement on the Irish Language" was published in 2006 by the Irish government and followed by the "20 year strategy for the Irish Language" (Fiontar, 2009) on behalf of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the intention being:

> …to institute a language planning process to increase the number of daily or active users of Irish from the current level of approximately 77,000 to 250,000 in 20 years time. (Fiontar, 2009: 7)

Three key elements were noted in the process:

> "Extrapolating from a large body of evidence, we have concluded that language maintenance is enhanced when the conjunction of three processes is supportive: the *ability*(capacity) to use the language, *opportunities* to use it; and *attitudes* towards its use.(Fiontar, 2009: 5)

Its aim, therefore, is:

> …to convert the objectives into mechanisms to expand and develop ability in Irish, to expand and deepen the opportunities for its use and to foster positive and accepting attitudes which aim to encourage the use of Irish in all public life.(Fiontar, 2009: 24)

This may seem to *suggest* a logical progression and a *causal* relationship between the three so that one stage almost inevitably leads to the next, similar to the causal progression in Strubell's (2001) 'Catherine wheel' cycle as illustrated in **Chapter 19** in Baker (2011: 425-26) **which the student is advised to read.** However, as previously stressed, the *psychological* component which underpins linguistic behaviour involves variables too complex to make precise predictions. Can one in the first instance accept without contention the linear progressive nature of this model? Arguably, it is a change in *attitudes* towards a language (stage 3) which initially creates the desired increase in language capacity, thus creating a *cyclic* model as in Strubell (2001). However, this raises the obvious question, "what causes a change in attitude?" Even if we were to accept increasing capacity as a starting point, would this lead inevitably to greater opportunities for *using* a language? Creating greater capacity does, of course, create theoretical "opportunities" since there are consequently more people with whom to communicate; however, this again raises the issue of the difference between *ability* and *actual use* or degree and function (Mackey, 1962), which, in turn, again suggests an *attitudinal* component. This particular component, third step in the *proposed* chain of revitalisation, however, is arguably the most fundamental.

Appel & Muysken (1987) refer to the problematic methodological aspect of ascertaining people's attitudes and the need to differentiate between *behaviourist* aspects (which can be researched by adopting observational methods for example), and *mentalist* aspects which cannot be reliably researched as easily. Edwards (1994) furthermore in Reading 3

distinguishes between *attitude* and *belief.* The example given, however, seems to indicate only a difference in terminology, Edward's (1994) differentiation between *attitude* and *belief* corresponding to Appel & Muysken's (1987) *mentalist* and *behaviourist* aspects respectively, which may be explained simply as the difference between *thought* and *action.* A key point made by Edwards (1994) is that attitude comprises three components: feelings (affective element), thoughts (cognitive element) and a predisposition to act in a certain way (behavioural element). Again we see that the first two elements correspond to Appel & Muysken's (1987) mentalist aspect while the other clearly corresponds to the behaviourist factor. Edwards, however, states that there is often an inconsistency between assessed attitudes (i.e. thoughts and feelings) and the resultant behaviour (action) quoting the study of a Chinese couple touring the USA in the 1930s. This seems to lead us to the difference between *overt* and *covert* behaviour which again leads us back to the differentiation which Appel & Muysken (1987) make between *mentalist* and *behaviourist* aspects of attitude.

Whereas, attitude is an *affective* component which can be said to operate on the level of the individual, it clearly operates on a societal level also, thus affecting a language's social (but not necessarily legal) status and vitality. As Edwards (1994: 97) states, "the basis for language evaluation rests upon social convention." In terms of the complicated *interaction* of numerous variables (which is often emphasised as being crucial to understanding the concept of language vitality in this module), a further consideration is, to what extent are the various components of attitude also influenced, modified or changed by a subtractive or an additive linguistic context (see above).

"Attitude*",* therefore, seems to be a term adopted far too superficially and loosely in relation to language vitality since it is often used synonymously both in relation to *motivation* and *a liking for,* whereas these can, theoretically, be at odds with one another. A person can be highly motivated *instrumentally* to learn a language (due, for example, to economic needs) but have an extremely negative attitude towards it. Another factor often adopted as a sub-dimension of the evaluation of attitudes to a language is the level of *desire* to learn it (that is, *a liking for*), whereas the true indicator of attitude in terms of motivation is *need.* Desire emanates from within an individual and has a *self-activated* dimension. *Need,* in terms of communication, emanates from *external* pressures beyond the control of the individual and to which he/she must respond.

As we discussed earlier in relation to Maslow's "hierarchy of needs", need is a highly motivating component but which operates at various levels. In terms of learning a language, for some this will often operate at a higher level of esteem and self-actualisation (see Figure 5 above), which, it has been argued, can be related to *integrational* aspects of motivation. However, efforts to engage the majority of people in language revitalisation, must ultimately incorporate an *instrumental* and materially *self-benefitting* aspect of motivation which emanates, for example, from economic needs reflecting the more basic, essential, physiological and safety levels of Maslow's theory.Unless this is done, the motivational level will only address the higher order aspects in Maslow's framework which, as Edwards (1994) points out, might only engage those who *desire* such additional advantages, reflecting possibly an educational or social elite.

Williams (2000) maintains that the successful revitalisation of a minority language reflects a five-stage process:

1. **idealism.** This is driven by a vision of language revival and is often underpinned by an awareness of its past glory in better political and /or economic circumstances; an awareness of what has been lost and deserves to be re-gained and revived
2. **protest** and the mobilisation of those who share this vision of a more prosperous future
3. **legitimacy** to ensure rights for minority language speakers so that protest and action (characteristic of the previous stage) are enshrined in law
4. **institutionalisation** and the use of the language in key establishments and domains of public life
5. **parallelism** and the extension of the minority language to other social and non-establishment domains (e.g. sport, entertainment, private industry).

This final point, which Williams (2000) refers to as *parallelism* is arguably the most valid test of revitalisation success since it reflects the *voluntary* use of a minority language amongst a population, as opposed to the *institutionalisation* stage which is more often than not a given *statutory right* but does not necessarily reflect widespread public *usage.* Furthermore, minority language penetration into the domains of the private sector is not usually legally enforceable in many countries, thus placing it at the mercy of economic considerations.

Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages

Fishman (1991) adopted his "Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale" (GIDS) with a view to applying it to the process of language revitalisation and reversing language shift (RLS); the concept being that languages can be placed on one of eight different levels of the scale according to their current vitality so that further needs can be addressed (see Baker, 2011:60). The higher the level on which a language can be placed, the more likely its chance of revival:

Stage 8: Speakers of a minority language are mostly old and socially isolated. They have only a few opportunities of using the language and their proficiency has diminished considerably as a result. There is a need to record the language for later possible reconstruction.

Stage 7: As a community language, the minority language is used by the older but not the younger generation. The inter-generational transmission has ceased to all intents and purposes, with most speakers beyond child-bearing age. There is a need to multiply the use of the language amongst the younger generation.

Stage 6: The minority language is passed on from generation to generation and used in the community, especially in informal domains. There is a need to support the family in intergenerational continuity (e.g. the provision of minority language nursery schools). Fishman (1991) maintains that this is the most crucial step in the process of reversing language shift (RLS).

Stage 5: Literacy in the minority language exists in the home, the school and the community which facilitates communication between the speakers. There is a need to support literacy movements in the minority language, particularly when there is no government support.

Stage 4: Formal, compulsory education (in the lower sectors of the education system) is available in the minority language. Sometimes this needs to be financially supported by the minority language community.

Stage 3: There is use of a minority language in less specialised work areas involving interaction with majority language speakers.

Stage 2: Lower government services and mass media are available in the minority language.

Stage 1: Some use of the minority language is available in higher education, central government domains and the national media.

Fishman's (1991) GIDS model again seems to adopt a questionable *linear* progressive rationale to language revitalisation, a kind of "bottom-up" approach with the criteria applied to each step being general indicators of vitality and each stage leading to the next. However, as Baker (2011: 60)

mentions, Fishman (1991) himself is careful to point out that each stage is not necessarily dependent on a previous stage, stating later that the "eight stages must be seen as overlapping and interacting. In language revival, it is not the case of going one step or stage at a time" (Baker, 2011: 61).

As a mechanism for language planning, for example, one could question the validity of preserving higher education for only the *final* stage in the revitalisation process and of basing its inclusion on *prior* indicators of sociolinguistic vitality. Although it might appear reasonable and logical to consider university instruction as the ultimate stage in the promotion of a language within any educational system, however, adopting a language as a medium of instruction at university level can also act as a precursor and a catalyst to *subsequent* linguistic developments further *down* the educational chain by providing an assurance of continuing availability at the later stage. Students at the earlier *secondary* level have been known to reject the opportunity of studying courses in their mother tongue due to their unavailability at university level.

As Baker (2011: 61-62) points out, Fishman's (1991) GIDS has been criticised by individuals such as G.Williams (1992) for being based on "the supposition that change is gradual, mechanical, evolutionary and mechanical" and for playing down conflict and ignoring power relationships; variables which, however, *are* recognised in Paulston's (1980) conflict (as opposed to equilibrium) paradigm (see Baker, 2011:402).

Language Planning

Language *planning* is, of course, a fundamental aspect of language revitalisation and a term which, perhaps, seems self-explanatory. It is a field, however, which historically has lacked theoretical rigour and been susceptible to rather experimental, "hit and miss" approaches. The title of a fairly recent book by Kaplan & Baldauf (1997), Language Planning: *From Practice to Theory*" seems to reflect this situation. This present course, Bilingualism and Multilingualism, includes an optional module which specifically addresses the aspect of language planning. (ECDA-7008: Language Planning Essentials). However, since this obviously has a direct impact on language revitalisation, we shall briefly refer to some key issues. These are again elaborated upon in sufficient detail in the book which accompanies this course, Baker (2011: 49-54) which students should read, as well as in Reading 2, for example.

Language planning has three key components:

- status planning
- acquisition planning
- corpus planning

Status planning

Language status was previously seen as a crucial component in frameworks dealing with language vitality (e.g. Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977). The penetration of language use in high status domains such as law courts, the media, public administration and education by virtue of achieving *official* recognition is generally recognised as an obvious fillip to the status of any language in the public's perception. Such an official status is usually seen has having, theoretically, a causal relationship with *opportunity* language planning as well as acquisition planning since penetrating wider domains creates greater opportunities for language usage and, *theoretically*, can increase motivation (see above) for language acquisition. This is a cyclic model which has been expounded at various times with, it seems, some degree of conviction. However, its *practical* application in the case of "low" status languages within *diglossic* societies does not always achieve the desired effect since the continuing ability to use an alternative language as a "lingua franca" does not create the *need*.

This again raises the crucial issue of the human factor in linguistic practice and which we can relate to Maslow's Theory of Motivation in relation to human behaviour. As Baker (2011: 51) states:

> …such actions are not guaranteed to change a language. To influence language change, status planning has to affect everyday usage in the home and the street, family and work relationships, and not just official usage.

Acquisition planning

Any increase in the number of speakers of a language usually has two primary sources:

- intergenerational transmission within families
- effective language teaching in school

Greater emphasis has been placed on the first of the two more recently in reaction to what seems to have been previously an increasing practice amongst parents in diglossic communities of bringing up children in the majority language. This was seen as a means of ensuring that their children enjoyed the economic and employment benefits which proficiency in the major language could provide. This attitude again

reflects the inter-connectedness of these language planning components since the importance attached to acquisition of the major language also further undermines the public perception of the *status* of the mother-tongue, being often associated with social deprivation rather than prosperity. The loss of language amongst the younger generation due to this practice often happens over a period of three generations. García and Díaz (1992) refer to this process as a "three generation shift" whereas Paulson (1994) describes a "four generation shift" in the case of Greeks in Pittsburgh, and Batibo (2005) a five stage shift.

Whatever the pace of intergenerational change, it means that efforts to maintain a language and to resist language shift consequently become heavily dependent (or over-dependent) on the effectiveness of *formal* language teaching within the education system, both in terms of maintenance-enrichment education for native-speakers and second-language instruction. The many organisational aspects of "bilingual" education will be studied in a later module (ECDA-7005). Interventionist strategies (even involving nurses and mid-wives who are in contact with expectant mothers) are currently adopted in many countries in order to raise awareness amongst parents of varying linguistic backgrounds of the cognitive, intellectual and vocational benefits of giving their children a bilingual education and of intergenerational language transmission. However, as mentioned earlier, this *educational*, persuasive or empirical-rational approach (Chin & Benne, 1976) to promoting bilingual education is often undermined by resistant forces which reflect the *political* dimensions of bilingualism and bilingual education expounded by Ruiz (1984); parents often seeing language as a problem rather than as a *resource* and being diametrically opposed to those who see language as a right.

In Wales, addressing issues of language acquisition has also included *voluntary* adult language classes as well as statutory education. In the statutory sector, however, whereas one has seen a very substantial increase in the number of pupils from non-Welsh linguistic backgrounds attending Welsh-medium (first-language) education, the vast majority of non-Welsh-speaking pupils (approximately 80%) are provided with what has been alleged to be a totally inadequate model of second-language instruction, being delivered by an unproductive methodology in terms of speakers (Lewis, 2011) and designed only to ensure a state of "political equilibrium" (Paulston, 1992).

Corpus Planning

For any language to maintain vitality, it has to be able to react and adapt to changes and developments in its environment and be capable of being modernised. As mentioned earlier, most corpus planning involves moderisation in terms of its lexicon, often (but not always) in the face of technological and scientific developments. However, due to globalisation and the impact of international companies who only adopt the use of a few major languages, lesser-used languages are under the increasing threat of the spread of standardised terminology. Even major languages like Spanish come under the influence of English so that countries have established academies (notably France and the Académie Française) to try to rid their language of "impurities" and developments, such as "Franglais".

It is debateable, however, to what extent one can endeavour to stem such developments in common parlance. Rather than responding to the mandate of an *academic* agency, however official, everyday speech is more susceptible to the influence of the media which often put linguistic "correctness" and "purity" at the mercy of more *populist* communicative requirements.

The inter-connectedness of the various components of language planning is again reflected in the fact that languages which cannot keep lexical pace with technological and scientific developments and which become dependent on other languages for terminology are also susceptible to the gradual *loss of status.*

Another issue which involves corpus planning is language standardisation. As suggested previously, this is an aspect which has been a bone of contention in the case of attempts to revitalise the Cornish language, as reflected in the title of an aticle by Lowe (2010) "Four Spellings and a Strategy". Ensuring that a language has a common orthography which is acknowledged and practised generally strengthens its vitality and provides stability for its written form.

Usage language planning

The issues discussed above are acknowledged as key components in language planning (being itself, of course, an aspect of revitalisation). Nevertheless, it is a highly complicated process and often defies logic due to the inter-connectedness of the components and involving variables which, in terms of cause and effect, are often difficult to disentangle. Every linguistic context incorporates a unique combination of variables which impacts on linguistic behaviour, thus making it impossible to adopt

a common model for all situations. Language planning is ultimately about changing human *attitudes* which, in turn, leads to a change in human *behaviour*, of which the use of language is one factor. Baker (2011: 53) states:

> It is possible to plan for the status, corpus and acquisition of a language and yet not affect the daily language usage of ordinary people. Language planning has to impact on individual language life.

It is for this reason that, in Wales, language planning has attempted to incorporate a fourth component, namely language *usage* strategies designed to expand the domains of Welsh both socially and in the workplace and to empower local communities to revitalise it by establishing Mentrau Iaith (language enterprises).

However, as Baker (2011) makes clear, there is no model which can offer any certainty of success. Language planning operates within higher-priority, macro-political concerns which often work *against* rather than in tandem, reflecting the fact that:

- so-called language "planning" is often nothing more than "piecemeal political pragmatism"
- decisions affecting languages are usually driven by or are a bi-product of more important economic and political concerns
- as previously stated, language planning is ultimately about affecting human behaviour, rarely controllable, but nevertheless a crucial factor in ensuring success.

Baker (2011: 52) provides a list of factors (to which he has since added other status factors) which make up the approach to language planning in Wales and which draws together the components previously discussed.

Language Planning: TheWelsh Approach to Language Sustainability

ACQUISITION

- Family Language Reproduction
- Bilingual Education – pre-school to university
- Adult Language Learning

STATUS

- Institutionalization (e.g.use in local and national government and organisations).
- Language Rights.
- Modernity (e.g. technology, use on television, internet)
- Symbols (e.g. signage)

CORPUS

- Linguistic Standardization (e.g. by dictionaries, school, TV)
- Public Vernacular (e.g. Clear or Plain Welsh)

USAGE

- Economy, workplace (instrumental use)
- Culture, leisure, sports, social, religious, social networks (integrative use).