

“Death” of Minority Languages: A Social Threat?

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Some developments in society can be perceived as social threats if they entail drastic changes to the traditional social status or relations that the people concerned consider a disadvantage for themselves. Even very slow evolutions like the substitution of the language use in more and more domains or a complete language shift, which might imply the death of a language, are considered as a social threat. As these changes generate the feeling of an essential loss of traditional values and of a threat to important parts of the minority speakers' social identity, many people demand public interventions or, at least, a social and political commitment in favour of the minority or endangered language.

A lot of these diglossic situations are a main topic of discussion not only in many regions with two or more languages (regardless of their official status), but also in national politics where these language conflicts lead to political discussions and decisions (as has been the case in Catalonia). In this talk, some examples from the Romance-speaking world will be presented and compared to the local contexts in Schleswig-Holstein. The general aim of the talk is to debate whether these topics should be dealt with in language classes at all and how teachers and pupils would have to be prepared beforehand in order to be able to discuss these aspects in class.