

# Minorities on the Web: The applicability of digital media for Reversing Language Shift



# West Slavic minority languages

- **Sorbs: Upper Sorbian (ca. 12-15.000 users), Lower Sorbian (less than 5.000 users) – north-eastern Germany**



- **Kashubian (100.000-300.000 users) – northern Poland**



- **Silesian (over 500.000 users, not recognised), southern Poland, parts of Czech Republic and Slovakia**



# West Slavic minority languages



# **Joshua Fishman: Reversing Language Shift**

- **8 stages of rebuilding broken intergenerational transmission (8 to 1)**
- **Final steps: use of minority language in the media and governmental services on local (2) and national level (1)**

# Minority language media problems

- Insufficient technical infrastructure (recording studios, printing offices etc.)
- Limited finances
- Strong connections to official institutions
- Limited accessibility (low circulation figures, inconvenient broadcasting time)
- Narrow thematic spectrum



# **Mass media or „new media”?**

**MEDIA (3 types)**

**≠**

**VEHICLES for conveying information  
(press, radio, television etc.)**

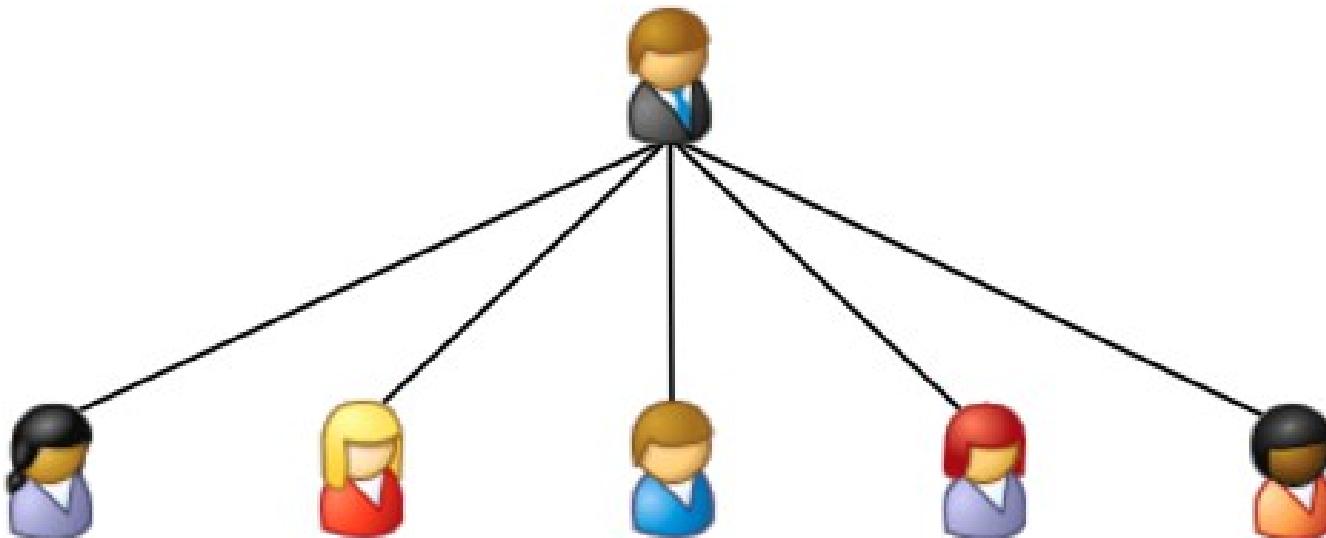
**(Crosbie 2006)**

# Interpersonal communication



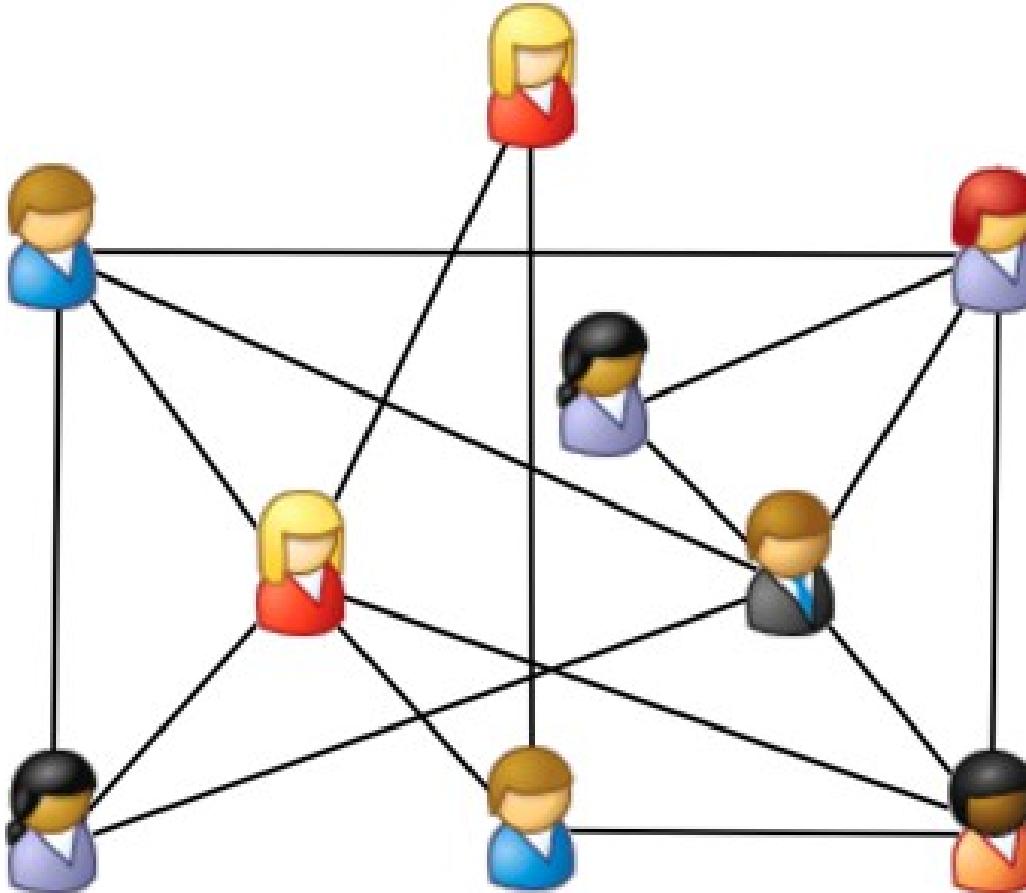
**(one-to-one)**

# Mass media



**(one-to-many)**

# New media



**(many-to-many)**



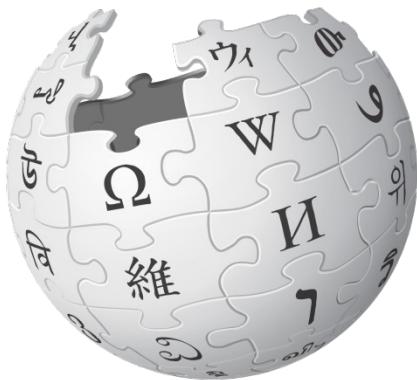
**INTERNET**

**NEW  
MEDIA**

# The concept of Web 2.0

- **User-created content**
- **Easier contact between the users**
- **„Social” character of websites**
- **Simple and accessible form**

# Web 2.0



2001



2005



2004



2006

# **Joshua Fishman and the „New Media”?**

**New media allows for the reestablishment of direct interpersonal communication – they are not equivalent to the media as described by Fishman.**

# Traditional Media vs. The Internet

- Insufficient technical infrastructure (recording studios, printing offices etc.)
- Limited finances
- Strong connections to official institutions
- Limited accessibility (low circulation figures, inconvenient broadcasting time)
- Narrow thematic spectrum

- Simplicity



- Relatively low cost
- Higher level of independence
- Available on-demand
- Wide range of topics

# The Internet – pros & cons

- Simplicity
- Relatively low cost
- Higher level of independence
- Available on-demand
- Wide range of topics



- Anonymity – internet trolling, „false prophets” etc.
- Once on the Web, always on the Web
- Surface-deep interest in minority issues (passive users)
- Fragmented policy, no main group representing the minority



# Minority language website models

**QUANTITY < QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION**

(Dębski 2008)

## REVITALISATION



**language as a symbol**

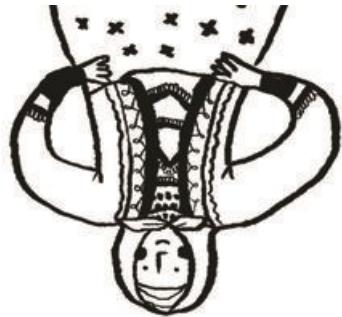
**language as a means  
of communication**

# Grassroot activism on the Internet



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Göt bycoł's jüh!

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