Revitalization: Definitions & Approaches

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Endangered Languages
From Documentation to Revitalization
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quick & dirty overview of revitalization

1. Defining revitalization
2. Approaches & models
3. Stakeholders
4. Assessment
5. Resources & support
6. Moving forward: goals & outcomes

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- the participants
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- the indigenous organizations which have spoken with me, in particular ICC, RAIPON, and the other Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council
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1. Defining revitalization

Revitalization: efforts to halt the process of language shift and to promote the usage of a heritage language (Grenoble & Whaley 2006)

"The movement to revitalize Indigenous languages attempts to facilitate the transmission and survival of Indigenous languages despite pressures to assimilate, and is one of the key efforts in the preservation of global linguistic diversity" (De Korne 2010:116).

De Korne, Haley. 2010. Indigenous language education policy: supporting community-controlled immersion in Canada and the US. *Language Policy* 9.115-141.

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Language maintenance: efforts to support vitality to prevent shift

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Further note: in this definition, the goal of revitalization is **not necessarily** the creation of new speakers. I return to this point in #6.

2. Approaches & Models

2.1 Language-nest model

2.2 Schools

2.3 Teacher-Apprentice Model

2.4 Revitalization in the home

2.5 Awakening sleeping languages

2.1 *Te Kōhanga Reo*
The Language nest model

2.1 Language nest model

- first developed in the late 1970's and early 1980's for the revitalization of the Māori language (New Zealand)

- later adopted for Hawaiian revitalization

- language "nests" were first created in pre-schools, bringing fluent elders into the pre-schools to work with the children

- the success of the pre-schools drove the need to change primary and secondary education
  - 1985 the first Kura Kaupapa Māori, a total-immersion program, is created
  - a foundational principle: the commitment to teaching within a Māori philosophical framework, to "affirm Māori culture"

2.1 Language nest model

- Note: this is a kind of school-based model, although some groups require parents to sign a contract to learn the language and speak it at hom

- factors which increased the likelihood of success:

  "catching" the language while there were still enough elders to teach in the pre-schools

  building the program incrementally, as the children move from grade to grade

  commitment of the community; some help from New Zealand language & education policies (Māori Language Act of 1987 gives the language national status)

  long-standing written tradition, which meant: (1) considerable documentation available; (2) shift to written culture had already occurred

2.2 The Schools

Many revitalization programs focus on formal education in the schools

- wide-range of mdels: total-immersion, partial-immersion
- bilingual programs
  - → transitional bilingualism
- distinguish between instruction in the language (immersion) and instruction of the language, as a secondary subject
- combination: school-based training during academic year; summer months spent with elders/grandparent generation, often engaged in traditional activities, on the land, using the language

- adult education: classes in schools, community centers, etc. (not schools per se but stemming from a model of formal education)

2.2.1 Nomadic schools (кочевые школы)

Basic types:

- preschool in village where children live
- combination of traditional schooling in villages & home schooling by parents
- nomadic network schools, moving from one herd to another; combines with home schooling
- private tutor accompanies herds

targets: Even, Evenki, Yukaghir, Chukchi

October 2008: first school opened in Taimyr

Law for nomadic schools in the Republic of Sakha; 22 July 2008

government is required:

to update and publish textbooks and other pedagogical materials

to create and publish teacher training manuals, not only on language but also on teaching traditional culture.

2.2 The Schools

- why the prevalence of school-based models?

this is where people outside the family have regular, predictable access to future generations of speakers

in many regions, formal education is the single most obvious way to teach anything

this is the area where there is government control, where resources are already being employed: the infrastructure for development and delivery is already in place (to varying degrees)

Note: this represents a fundamental shift in how first language is taught & acquired, and almost certainly affects the language that is learned.

Potential hazard: creating a school language, i.e., a language that is used only in the schools

2.3 Teacher-Apprentice Model

Leanne Hinton

pairs fluent elder (master) with adult second-language learner (apprentice)

- one-on-one instruction
- aims for total immersion
- low-tech
- designed for situations with few fluent speakers

2.4 Revitalization in the home

language acquisition from birth (“on the mother’s knee”) is the tried-and-true method of language transmission

some school-based programs (e.g. Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) at Kahanawà:ke) require parents to commit to learning the language & speaking it at home

some revitalization programs, and resuscitation programs, begin with dedicated parents speaking the language to their infants

combination programs: parent generation speaks of importance of summer time with grandparents (e.g. Alaskans)

still, this is an area which might profit from more thought

2.5 Awakening sleeping languages

"Sleeping" languages which have not been spoken for generations are awoken or resuscitated

These projects rely heavily on:

- existing documentation of the languages
- linguistic comparative work, historical reconstruction
- strong leadership
- serious commitment of those involved

2.5 Awakening sleeping languages

The Myaamia Project
(or Miami-Illinois)
[Algic, Algonquian, Central]
Daryl Baldwin

Wôpanâak Language Revitalization Project
(or Wampanoag)
[Algic, Algonquian, Central]
Jessie Little Doe Fermino Baird (MacArthur recipient, 2010); featured in the movie *We Still Live Here*

The Myaamia Project

The Myaamia Project, created in 2001, is a tribal initiative located within an academic environment to advance the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma's language and cultural revitalization efforts.

The Myaamia Project has two main purposes. The first is to conduct in-depth research to assist tribal educational initiatives aimed at the preservation of language and culture. This research is used to create a wide range of educational models and materials for community language and cultural programs.

The second purpose is to expose undergraduate and graduate students at Miami University to tribal efforts in language and cultural revitalization. Student experiences are gained through a wide range of activities including visits to Oklahoma, direct involvement in research initiatives, class visitations by Project staff, and access to Miami Tribe language and cultural resources.

The Myaamia Project

The role of the linguist:

Dr. David J. Costa is a contract consultant to the Myaamia Project and also serves on the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma's language committee. He completed his B.A. in linguistics at UCLA in 1985, and his Ph.D. in linguistics at U.C. Berkeley in 1994 with his dissertation the Miami-Illinois Language.

http://www.myaamiaproject.com

http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/1924

Wôpanâak Language Revitalization Project

Today, thanks to the efforts of Jessie Fermino, who was guided by Kathleen Bragdon and Ives Goddard ("Native Writings in Massachusett," The American Philosophical Society, 1988), a standardized alphabet and writing system has been established and classes are held for members of the Wampanoag Nation.

www.wampanoagtribe.net

3. Stakeholders

Note: this is a varied group and not homogenous. Different stakeholders may have different goals and desires. These may be conflicting.

Community members

(External) linguists

Governments

Speakers of other languages

Other local/indigenous groups

3. Stakeholders

Community members

- language activists
- speakers
- teachers
- learners
- linguists
- stakeholders across generations

Linguists (external)

- academic linguists/researchers
- linguists as activists
- “parachute” linguists
- community-based external linguists

Governments

NGOs, Watch groups, Indigenous organizations

Speakers of other languages

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Neighboring communities/Others

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4. Assessment

- prior to revitalization — Grenoble & Whaley (2006: 160-176)

4.1 Why assessment?

to understand

- current resources
- possibilities & options
- possible impediments & challenges
- causes of shift

- How much assessment?
- Is assessment necessary, or does it slow things down? (assess, or just jump in and do it?)

Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium (Tromsø 2008)

Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council call for assessment of Arctic Indigenous Languages:

c) Through the Sustainable Development Working Group, undertake an assessment of Arctic Indigenous Languages to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the state of Arctic indigenous languages which will inform future action aimed at maintaining their diversity and vibrancy. Such assessment should include:

- collection of adequate and accurate data on the current status of Arctic indigenous languages;
- specific indicators of language endangerment in the Arctic context which, if they are observed, should mandate state response.

Particular attention should be paid to seriously endangered languages.

Permanent Participants: Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, RAIPON: Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Saami Council

4.1 Why assessment?

Ongoing assessment of revitalization efforts to see if they are on track, if goals need to be recalibrated:

Honesty is crucial, because we want so badly for our efforts to succeed that it is not always easy to stand back and see if what we are doing is really working. It is important to look critically at the program and see what it is that it is actually accomplishing and what problems it has. Are the learners really learning the language as well as they could? Are the materials being developed really useful? Should new directions be taken? What is the next goal? Good ongoing programs, no matter how successful they are, never stop asking these questions.

Leanne Hinton, 2001 Language revitalization: An overview. The Green Book of Language Revitalization, p. 17.

4.2 What needs to be assessed

1.1. *Assessment of resources*
(1) financial resources; (2) language resources; and (3) human or emotional resources.

financial resources: the sources of money available within the community, externally, resources available for education and programming, the use of media, etc.

language resources: existing language materials, e.g.grammatical descriptions, dictionaries, textbooks, pedagogical materials, written and oral literatures, and so on. Available speakers of the language needing revitalization

human or *emotional resources* people who might be involved in creating and promoting language revitalization, and their skills; general level of interest of community members, both speakers and non-speakers, to using, teaching, and learning the language; availability of outside experts to assist in technical aspects of revitalization.

4.2 What needs to be assessed

1.2. *Assessment of language vitality*

How many speakers & proficiency levels; age of speakers

sources: Census data; Ethnologue; UNESCO; local knowledge

metrics: dangerous but necessary, or dispensible?

1.3. *Assessment of language variation*

1.4. *Assessment of needs, goals, and attitudes*

Attitudes:

1. attitudes toward the local language versus one or more languages of wider communication.
2. attitudes toward different variants of the local language
3. attitudes toward revitalization

Goals and Needs

3. who is being targeted primarily in the revitalization process
4. the level of language proficiency that revitalization is meant to bring about
5. the intended domains in which the local language will be used

4.2 What needs to be assessed

1.5. Language policies

1.6 Use in existing domains
1.7 Social networks

1.8 Acquisition by adult speakers versus children
Adult learners who are community members (heritage learners)
External adult learners

4.3 How do we assess?

Need quantitative data (especially on demographics)
Need qualitative data

Major Evaluative Factors of Language Vitality (UNESCO 2003)

Note: ***none of these factors should be used alone***

Major Evaluative Factors of Language Vitality (UNESCO 2003)
Note: ***none of these factors should be used alone.***

Factor 1: Intergenerational language transmission
Factor 2: Absolute number of speakers
Factor 3: Proportion of speakers within the total population
Factor 4: Trends in existing language domains
Factor 5: Response to new domains and media
Factor 6: Materials for language education and literacy
Factor 7: Governmental and institutional language policies, including official status and use
Factor 8: Community members' attitudes toward their own language
{Factor 9: Amount and quality of documentation}

Metrics

UNESCO's vitality ranking

VULNERABLE
Most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains

DEFNITELY ENDANGERED
Children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home

SEVERELY ENDANGERED
The language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
The youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently

EXTINCT
There are no speakers left

Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*
to attain diglossia

1 Reconstructing Xish and adult acquisition of XSL.
2 Cultural interaction in Xish primarily involving the community-based older generation.
3 The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood: the basis of mother tongue transmission.
4 Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.

to transcend diglossia
5a Schools in lieu of compulsory education and substantially under Xish curricular and staffing control.
5b Public schools for Xish children, offering some instruction via Xish, but substantially under Yish curricular and staffing control.
6 The local/regional (i.e. non-neighborhood) work sphere, both among Xmen and Ymen.
7 Local/regional mass media and governmental services.
8 Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels.

Fishman, J. A. 1991. *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. p. 395

EGIDS: Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (adapted from Fishman 1991)
Lewis & Simons (2010:110)

LEVEL	LABEL	DESCRIPTION	UNESCO
0	International	The language is used internationally for a broad range of functions.	Safe
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level.	Safe
2	Regional	The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services.	Safe
3	Trade	The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders.	Safe
4	Educational	Literacy in the language is being transmitted through a system of public education.	Safe
5	Written	The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form in parts of the community.	Safe
6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language.	Safe
6b	Threatened	The language is used orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children.	Vulnerable
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it among themselves but none are transmitting it to their children	Definitely Endangered
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.	Severely Endangered
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.	Critically Endangered
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community. No one has more than symbolic proficiency.	Extinct
10	Extinct	No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language, even for symbolic purposes.	Extinct

5. Resources & support

funding: increased funding for documentation (but is now decreasing)

??funding for revitalization

Indigenous organizations

international and transnational organizations (United Nations, UNESCO, Arctic Council, etc.)

Note: the extent to which any group relies on such organizations (governmental and NGOs, national and transnational) varies greatly from region to region

Assessing the availability of such resources AND the impact (supportive, negative, indifferent) is an important in determining how to proceed with revitalization efforts

6. Moving forward

6.1 some ongoing challenges

- lack of resources: teachers, pedagogical materials, reference materials, linguists (who are willing to work on revitalization, or at least who are willing to create the kinds of materials needed)

shortage of speakers, shortage of community members to do the work, shortage of time

very common complaint

impressionistically, community involvement and presence of a dedicated leader are critical

6. Moving forward

6.1 some ongoing challenges

- lack of resources: teachers, pedagogical materials, reference materials, linguists, speakers, workers, time
- language & education policies (No Child Left Behind in US, Unified State Exam in Russian Federation)

- need to leverage international organizations to push nation states to create language-friendly legislation, policies, and resources to make them possible

6. Moving forward

6.1 some ongoing challenges

- lack of resources: teachers, pedagogical materials, reference materials, linguists, speakers, workers, time
- language & education policies

- language variation: understudied; importance or effects of it are underappreciated
- disagreements about standardization, orthographies
- linguistic purism

6. Moving forward

6.2 assessment of revitalization

- how do we assess language revitalization?
- how do we know if it is successful?
- what does successful revitalization look like?
- how do we know when to shift goals, to refocus or change our programs because they are not working, or to reset our goals (because we have achieved them)?
- when do we move from revitalization to maintenance?

- where revitalization is not taking place (and why)

  is this connected with resources? basic needs? community attitudes?

6. Moving forward

6.3 the impact of revitalization

We think of revitalization in terms of increasing the

- number of speakers
- fluency of speakers
- domains of usage
- prestige (of language, of ethnicity)

We might expand this to think of

- community building
- revitalizing culture

6. Moving forward

6.4 broader impacts:

- training programs: summer schools like this one; graduate programs focusing on documentation; targeted training programs; graduate programs designed for community members
- increased number of indigenous/local people in linguistics programs; increased number of non-academic jobs for linguists
- increased and ever-increasing voice for indigenous peoples
- recognition of indigenous rights (United Nations, UNESCO)
- language attitudes: within community

?? language attitudes externally, across majority speaker populations

?? attitudes toward multilingualism

??changes in linguistics in the academy:

??recognition of importance of descriptive work, fieldwork, documentation

??applied linguistics

6. Moving forward

6.5 moving forward

- community-driven revitalization

  documentation for revitalization

  reshaping of linguistics

  focus on language pedagogy & acquisition

- community-driven research

  Arctic: government policies; education, second-language acquisition, pedagogical materials

  Assessment as a tool for setting goals and priorities (and not just for enumeration)

  the need to develop indigenous metrics

Language as part of quality-of-life; SLICA report (Surve of Living Conditions in the Arctic)

6. Moving forward

6.5 moving forward

new research needed:

- assessing models/approaches: is one more effective than another? to what extent is the success of any particular model tied to community particulars? or is success dependent on other factors (e.g. local commitment, leadership, government support)
- emergent languages: those languages which evolve after interrupted transmission
- variation studies of local languages
- language contact