

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

.....  
**SOCIOLINGUISTICS**  
.....

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**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

## CHAPTER 39

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# LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

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### REVITALIZATION AS RESPONSE TO LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT

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The ongoing issues of language shift and attrition have evoked different responses from different groups. Linguists have become increasingly engaged in language documentation, working to record languages while they are still spoken. Speaker communities often turn to revitalization programs, attempting to strengthen the speaker base of their ancestral languages and make them vital again. The exact nature of such programs varies greatly, depending on the dynamics of the individual communities involved and on the specific sociolinguistic situations in which they find themselves. This chapter addresses the factors that enter into the decision of what kind of revitalization to pursue and then discusses different kinds of models for language revitalization.

Language revitalization, by definition, takes place in communities that are undergoing language shift. Thus, revitalization is necessarily situated within a complex context and, in order for revitalization efforts to have any hope of success, that context needs to be understood, and certain elements within it need to be addressed. Teaching the language is generally not enough to revitalize it; in general, programs need to address the underlying causes of language shift. Some of the factors in shift are generally beyond the control or influence of the speech community, such as the dominance of a language of wider communication in the government or in education. Yet an awareness of these

factors and some adjustment of how community members react to them may be key to successful revitalization. Finally, it is important to recognize the differences between revitalization and maintenance. Although in practice it may be difficult to sharply differentiate between the two, revitalization programs are needed when the language is undergoing shift, with the single biggest indicator of attrition being that children—most or many—are no longer learning the language. In contrast, maintenance programs are intended to foster language use when there is already a speaker community in place but that community feels pressure from other languages.

One of the most influential theoretical frameworks for language revitalization is Joshua Fishman's (1991) work on Reversing Language Shift (RLS). The very first step, before beginning a revitalization program, is what Fishman calls *prior ideological clarification*, an important part of what I call *assessment* here (Grenoble & Whaley 2006). Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998: 63) argue that one of the key obstacles to successful revitalization may be attitudes and beliefs held by community members about their language; failure to achieve prior ideological clarification—"an open, honest assessment of the state of the language and how people really feel about using and preserving it"—can be detrimental, even fatal, for revitalization. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer point to a disparity between a community's expressed desire to revitalize their language and deep-rooted, or even unconscious, fears and biases about the language, often stemming from colonial attitudes, all of which can be serious impediments to revitalization. In addition, it is not uncommon to find a general sense that revitalization would be a good idea, without a full understanding of or commitment to the sustained level of effort required to actually achieve it. The Dauenhauers write about their firsthand experience in Alaska, but their observations apply to many communities elsewhere, and their work has been significant for reshaping how people confront such ideological issues.

Fishman's stages of reversing language shift are divided into two phases: the first to attain diglossia, the second to transcend diglossia (1991: 395). Fishman's definition of diglossia places genetically unrelated languages on a continuum of usage; he argues that bilingualism, and not diglossia, must be achieved in order to achieve RLS. These stages in RLS should be read from the bottom up; thus the first stage is to reconstruct the language, with Xish here used to represent the language being revitalized, and Yish the language that is encroaching upon it. This framework is intended as a general blueprint for RLS, not a rigid formula.

- 1 Education, work sphere, mass media, and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels.
- 2 Local/regional mass media and governmental services.
- 3 The local/regional (i.e., non-neighborhood) work sphere, both among Xmen and Ymen.

- 4b Public schools for Xish children, offering some instruction via Xish, but substantially under Yish curricular and staffing control.
  - 4a Schools in lieu of compulsory education and substantially under Xish curricular and staffing control.
- II. RLS to transcend diglossia, subsequent to its attainment
- 5 Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.
  - 6 The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood: the basis of mother tongue transmission.
  - 7 Cultural interaction in Xish primarily involving the community-based older generation.
  - 8 Reconstructing Xish and adult acquisition of XSL.
- I. RLS to attain diglossia (*assuming prior ideological clarification*)

The role of linguists in reversing language shift can be complicated: linguists can make important contributions to reconstructing a language but are not well equipped to motivate communities to revitalize their language. One major change in the last 20 years or so since the publication of RLS has been the increasing awareness on the part of linguists of the need to partner with community members, applied linguists, and language pedagogues in order to accomplish this work.

Fishman's conceptualization of RLS has had a major impact for different communities working to revitalize their languages and has provided a framework for them to work with. The educational system is an integral part of his approach to RLS; the role of the schools begins at stage 4 and increases in the move to transcend diglossia. One of the important parts of his theory is that it explicitly lays out a series of stages to reverse shift, rather than suggesting that it can be an instantaneous kind of achievement. This means that communities can and should recognize achievements along the path to full revitalization. In fact, attaining Fishman's Level 1 is unrealistic for the overwhelming majority of endangered language communities, who cannot reasonably hope to get their language used in national governments or in national media, for example.

Just what kind of revitalization program is realistic depends on an interplay of available resources, commitment from community members who will be involved in revitalization, and their overall goals. All of these can and often do change over the course of time. Moreover, there is a great range of potential resources and obstacles. Resources here are understood broadly but include, first and foremost, speakers who can teach the language; finances for creating and publishing pedagogical and reference materials; funds for teacher training programs for hiring teachers; and dedicated community members to organize and harness these resources. On one end of the spectrum are communities where language shift is in its early stages, with

relatively large numbers of fluent speakers across generations. If speakers in these communities are enthusiastic about language usage, have financial resources, and sufficient administrative and/or political influence to assure the creation and implementation of language policies that will address the causes of shift, it may be possible to institute larger, more ambitious revitalization programs. These aim more at arresting language shift before it has progressed further and (re)creating a situation where the language is fluently spoken across all generations and in all domains. From a global perspective, such circumstances are more the exception than the rule. In many more cases, however, communities are at the other end of the spectrum and lack at least some of these basic resources. Moreover, it is often the case that communities do not recognize the need for revitalization until attrition has advanced so that there are considerably fewer speakers for building a language program. Where basic resources—be they financial or human—are lacking, and/or there are serious impediments to language revitalization (such as hostile language laws or education policies), communities are often required to address these issues before beginning a revitalization program, and their initial goals are more modest than those of communities that are better positioned in terms of resources.

This points to a need to assess resources, attitudes, and obstacles at the very onset of language revitalization. A frank evaluation is invaluable to setting realistic language goals and building a successful program. The next section presents an overview of relevant factors and variables in moving from language shift to a vital language community.

## FROM SHIFT TO REVITALIZATION

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Many communities embarking on revitalization programs face similar issues from the outset, although the particulars of these issues, as well as the possible resolutions, can differ radically. One of the key challenges for language revitalization programs is changing, or at least offsetting, the factors that led to language shift in the first place. This is not always possible, as some of these factors may be the result of national or even international circumstances and are beyond the community's control. Much depends on how vital a language is when a community decides to start revitalization. If attrition is caught early and there are still many speakers across generations, the situation is quite different than when the language is spoken only by the oldest generation.

This section outlines some of the most common factors in language shift that need to be considered for revitalization efforts to move forward. They

operate at different levels: global, extra-national, national, regional, and local (Grenoble & Whaley 1998, 2006). The strategies for working with or against them vary in accordance with these different levels. For example, the use of English as a global language puts pressure on many local languages; not much can be done by local communities to change this. This is an extreme example of the impact of a widespread, international lingua franca. Other examples at the extra-national (but not global) level include languages like Swahili in Africa, which has an estimated first-speaker population of just under 800,000, but some 30,000,000 people are cited as second language users (Lewis 2009). At a national level, language policies and laws and education laws can be favorable to local languages, hostile, or indifferent. Education policies of some countries, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in the United States and the Unified State Exam (*edinyj gosudarstvennyj èkzamen*) in the Russian Federation, which require nationwide testing in English or Russian, respectively, are examples of legislation that is a serious impediment to the development of local languages. Such factors can also play out at a regional level, depending on how such policies are instated and implemented within an individual country.

Changing aspects of the context that have led to attrition may be beyond what an individual community can accomplish. Many groups have found that partnering with other indigenous groups has given them a more powerful voice, nationally and internationally, which can leverage more influence over governments. A number of international organizations have been working to promote better language attitudes and policies. One such set of actions promotes the use of indigenous languages as a basic human right; this is the position of the United Nations and is clearly articulated in its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ratified September 2007 (United Nations 2007). UNESCO places safeguarding the use and documentation of endangered languages as part of its efforts to support Intangible Cultural Heritage. In addition to such global organizations are more regional, but still transnational, groups. For example, the African Academy of Languages (or, *Académie Africaine des Langues*) has as one of its goals the promotion of the use of African languages. To that end, it fostered the International Year of African Languages (2006) and implemented a pan-African plan to strengthen the use of the native languages throughout the continent. Similarly, pan-Arctic organizations, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which represents people living in Russia (Chukotka), the United States (Alaska), Canada, and Greenland, and the Nordic Council, promote the right to use Arctic indigenous languages.

These are just a sample of the kinds of organizations that encourage language use in regions cutting across national borders. We can now turn to the different factors that revitalization supporters must address to reverse language shift.

## Language Attitudes

More often than not, language attitudes are a factor leading to language shift; they can be an issue at both the local level and the national level. Low prestige is common. Clearly, more positive attitudes toward the language tend to strengthen its usage; and more negative attitudes, to weaken it. But communities are often not homogenous in this regard (or many others), and there may be language activists and supporters, as well as those favoring exclusive use of the language of wider communication at the expense of the local language. Revitalization programs often need to confront these attitudes and the concomitant false beliefs that are often found with them, such as the belief that the endangered language is not a language, does not have a grammar, or is simply not as good as the language of the national government. This is an important part of ideological clarification.

## Language Vitality

The overall vitality of the language, with specific attention to the numbers of speakers, the generational and geographic distribution of the speakers, and the domains where the language is used, is essential to understanding how to proceed with revitalization. Speakers are the single biggest resource a language has; an honest assessment of speakers is key to language revitalization. Historically, many communities have tended to overestimate the numbers of speakers, or rather, to underestimate the process of shift, and thus not recognize the need for revitalization programs until attrition has progressed beyond a point where it can be easily stopped.

Beyond the actual number of speakers across generations, language use across domains is important. In order for a language to be vital, it needs to be used by a community of speakers in a large number of domains. One of the key signs of language shift is the use of the language in dwindling domains; in order to revitalize it, the domains need to be increased. This is very challenging, as shift tends to occur when the local language has been replaced by the language of wider communication. The language of wider communication tends to be found in public domains such as government, education, and media. Where the community is embedded in a multilingual context, it is often the speakers of the local language who shift to the language of wider communication to accommodate the majority speakers. Such accommodation may be legislated or it may be voluntary; in either case, reversing it is very challenging. Revitalization programs need to carve out domains for language use and foster them intensely.

## Financial Resources

Financial resources include the kinds of funding available both within and outside the community to support revitalization. In most places, funding is needed for creating pedagogical materials, paying teachers, training teachers, and so

on. In some regions, money may be needed to build schools, equip classrooms, set up digital resources, and the like. If there is no funding available, that will fundamentally limit the kinds of revitalization programs that can be implemented. This does not mean that revitalization is impossible, but rather that the program needs to be developed with the financial constraints in mind. Models like the Master-Apprentice program (discussed later) have proven to be an accessible means for many communities with limited resources (financial or human) to start revitalization.

### Codification

Language codification is one of the thorniest issues communities face if there is significant variation. Codification is often seen as privileging one variety over another (or all others) and thus can be perceived as a threat to dialect diversity. It almost always means some sort of compromise and, if not carefully implemented, can be divisive and undermine revitalization efforts.

A key issue in codification, and in other issues of so-called language development, is determining who has the authority to make decisions regarding the language. Some communities are administratively organized in ways that make this clear; a tribal council or some other governing body either has the authority to make decisions or the power to appoint a body that does. In many cases this is less clear, and in some cultures the notion of a language committee may go against accepted cultural norms.

### Literacy

Literacy is an important component of many revitalization programs, and it is often mistakenly assumed to be a necessary part of them. This is not true for all programs: the Master-Apprentice program, for example, is built on the assumption that literacy is not only unnecessary, but is also an impediment to learning the language in a communicative setting, and uses an oral-only methodology for teaching and learning. But literacy can help raise the prestige of a language; in fact, speakers of many different languages have been reported to claim that what they speak is not a language since it has no written form, or that it has no grammar, for the same reason. Changing such attitudes is important for a successful revitalization program. In addition, school-based revitalization programs typically need to use a written form of the language in their curriculum; integral parts of building school curricula for many revitalization programs have included the development of textbooks and reference materials in the target language. Literacy is also important because it increases the domains in which a language can be used; for example, communities with computers and Internet access find the Internet a cheap, convenient way to create cyber



communities of language users. Texting is another way of increasing language use, in particular among younger speakers, and requires some written form.

At the same time, the introduction of literacy can be problematic. It has been argued, most notably by Peter Mühlhäusler (1990), that literacy facilitates acquisition of the majority language, and the majority language will already be better established in all domains, including the Internet, so the local language will be competing with it there as elsewhere. But that said, it is difficult to imagine that literacy in the majority language is something for a minority population to avoid. This would favor absolute isolation; that is not necessarily sustainable, nor is it something that all communities want. Many groups have found themselves disadvantaged if they cannot communicate fluently with the majority population, with the people they come in contact with, and with political officials and leaders. So it is probably more constructive to think in terms of bilingualism and active literacy in more than one language.

Yet there are other issues with literacy that need to be taken into consideration. Moving from an oral culture to a literate culture involves major cultural change, and the potential repercussions should be carefully considered. The teaching of literacy presupposes a literate group who can serve as teachers, as the creators of written materials, and furthermore, literacy itself presupposes domains where it will be used; the failure to create and sustain domains of usage has resulted in the failure of written languages. Such is the case with many of the Siberian indigenous languages, for example. Linguists created orthographies and standard forms at the beginning of the Soviet period, in the 1920s and 1930s, as part of a larger Bolshevik literacy campaign. But because Russian was already so firmly entrenched as the language of written communication, these nascent written forms failed to catch on and have persisted only as artificial, textbook varieties. The norms that were created then continue in many cases to create barriers to actively learning and promoting the language, as they are seen as representing a "correct" form of the language that, in fact, no speaker actually uses. But this raises the larger issue of standardization that accompanies the creation of a written language. Decisions need to be made about what variety will become the standard, and such questions can be very divisive if one form is seen as being promoted over another. (Some communities address these concerns by incorporating different features from different dialects into the standard, but the extent to which this is feasible can only be locally determined, in large part depending on how similar the different varieties are to one another.)

### Orthographic Systems

Orthography is an important part of the decision to develop literacy. Some endangered languages have orthographic systems that, for whatever reasons, are not used (but may be seen as part of the cultural wealth of the language). Some may be written in the same orthographic system as the national language or the

language of wider communication; others may have a different writing system. Still many others—in fact more than half of all known languages—do not have any written form at all. For languages with an existing writing system, some communities prefer to use the orthographic system of the language of wider communication to facilitate its acquisition in revitalization; others prefer to use a different system to distinguish the two quite clearly. These are very important decisions and can be very political, even for majority languages—such as Croatian (written in the Roman alphabet) and Serbian (written in Cyrillic), or Hindi (written in Devanagari) and Urdu (written in Arabic script).

Many issues enter into orthography design. Linguists tend to prefer a one sound–one symbol system, where there is one and only one symbol for each phoneme of the language. But this may not be the system that speakers prefer, and their attitudes are often influenced by the writing system of the majority language. Most frequently the phonemic inventories of the local language and the majority language do not match up perfectly, but the strong writing tradition of the majority language can influence choices about writing in the other. For example, speakers of indigenous languages in contact with Spanish sometimes opt to distinguish only five vowels in writing, under the influence of Spanish orthography. Others, such as the Quechua, deliberately distinguish only three (see Grenoble & Whaley 2006, chapter 6, for discussion). Even communities whose languages have long-standing written traditions grapple with these issues. For example, the Nunavut Language Commission is currently struggling with variation among the Inuit varieties spoken in Canada and how they are to be written. Are these dialects of one language or separate languages? Should there be a unified, codified variety or multiple varieties? Should they (or it) be written in the syllabary, as is accepted practice for Inuktitut, or in the Roman alphabet, as is common for other Inuit varieties, as well as for the majority languages of the country, English and French?

Creating an orthographic system that is acceptable to all community members can bring revitalization programs to a halt if there is significant controversy among different constituents. Orthography is linked to spelling, and both are part of the larger issue of standardization. These issues often require prolonged discussion to be resolved. For these many reasons, some communities opt not to pursue literacy as part of the initial steps in revitalization.

### **Building the Lexicon**

For some groups embarking on revitalization, there is no need to create new terminology as the language is still spoken by many speakers. But this is probably the exception rather than the rule. Often terminology is lacking for those domains where it is not used (e.g., government, technology, and education) and needs to be developed. The need for lexical development is even greater if the

language has been dormant or has been used in only very limited domains (such as religious or ceremonial uses) for an extended period of time.

New vocabulary can be coined from language-internal sources, such as building new words from existing lexemes and morphemes. This is particularly well suited to languages with rich derivational morphology and a well-known strategy for polysynthetic languages, for example. Alternatively, new words can be borrowed from other languages. Generally, there is resistance to borrowing from the dominant language because revitalization is attempting to combat the influx of words from it into the endangered language, but it is sometimes possible to borrow words (or roots) from related languages. This is a common practice in Inuit languages, even in West Greenlandic (Kalaallisut), which is not endangered but has experienced loss of certain names due to Danish influence. Names are often borrowed from closely related Inuktitut (spoken in Canada) where necessary.

## MODELS FOR LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

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Different approaches to language revitalization are being used throughout the world. Which is best suited to an individual community depends on a combination of factors, including the number of speakers, available resources and the goals of the community, but most revitalization programs face similar challenges. This section provides an overview of some of the models currently found in language revitalization programs, such as the Master-Apprentice Program, Language Nests, immersion programs, bilingual programs, and nomadic schools. Some of these models are in widespread use throughout the world; others are associated with specific regions, languages, or ways of life. There are a number of handbooks of language revitalization (e.g. Grenoble & Whaley 2006; Hinton & Hale 2001; Tsunoda 2005) that provide more information about these different models and general guidelines to establishing language revitalization programs.

### Te Kōhanga Reo, the Language Nest

The language nest model is a particular kind of immersion program associated with the original language nest, *Te Kōhanga Reo*, Māori revitalization in New Zealand, established in the early 1980s. The language nest model emerged under recognition of ongoing shift away from Māori to English. It is founded on a principle of total immersion. The program was created in a stepwise fashion, beginning in the preschool by bringing fluent elders into the preschools to work with the young children in a total immersion environment, and creating

the curriculum as the first class of children progressed through the school system. This plan was conceived based on the recognition of two facts: (1) at the time, the fluent speakers were primarily over 40; and (2) young children are the most proficient language learners. Thus the program was developed to take advantage of the existing resources and to target future learners as efficiently as possible. As a result of the success of the preschool program, the first immersion primary school (Kura Kaupapa Māori) was created in 1985. This stepwise creation of the program addresses the need for curricular development: it is impossible for programs to start from scratch and move to a fully fledged immersion curriculum overnight. The other issue is teacher training. Here, too, the program has stepwise training of teachers, building each new level on the successes of lower levels.

### Master-Apprentice Program

The Master-Apprentice program (Hinton et al. 2002) pairs a language learner (the apprentice) with a fluent or highly proficient speaker (the master) for intensive immersion language learning. This program was devised for those situations where there are few remaining speakers and where there are individuals who are interested in learning the language in a one-on-one pairing. Those individuals may go on to revitalize the language among a larger community of potential speakers, or they may be the sole learners. It is aimed specifically at adult learners and has the advantage of not requiring formal pedagogical materials or a classroom setting. Instead, it sets about to teach the language in the natural setting in which it is used by the master, in the home and in everyday life. The method relies on oral communication only and has become very popular with communities; it offers a practical way for speakers and learners to take control of language learning without requiring massive financial resources. Although the program was originally designed to pay both the master and the apprentice for their time, as an incentive to carry out the work, it has been implemented in many communities without any kind of salaries or pay.

### Nomadic Schools

Nomadic schools have been established in parts of Siberia among a few communities of reindeer herders, primarily in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) with support from UNESCO. In these communities, the local languages (such as Evenki, Chuckchi, and Dolgan) are spoken most robustly among the families who maintain a traditional lifestyle, which includes nomadic herding and hunting. Historically, children have been enrolled in boarding schools in the villages to receive their (Russian-based) education, facilitating shift. The nomadic schools were created in response to this situation to enable children to stay with

their families and still receive formal education. There are several different models, depending on the needs and desires of local communities; the models vary as to whether the children spend a few initial years in the boarding school and then return to the herds; whether a teacher travels with the herds; or whether in some cases the teacher meets only periodically with the herds, and parents are responsible for day-to-day education. In some versions, instruction depends upon Internet access and computers, so that the children and teachers can maintain contact electronically. This model is not readily portable to other parts of the world, as it is specifically designed to address the issues of a nomadic lifestyle, but it has much to offer for other nomadic communities.

### Language Reclamation Programs

Language reclamation refers to those instances where there are no remaining speakers of a language. In some cases there may be a few "rememberers," people who know only a few words (or phrases) of the language. In other cases, there may be no one left who has ever heard the language spoken; instead, perhaps all that has survived is some kind of documentation: a dictionary or even just a word list, perhaps a descriptive grammar, perhaps recordings. In such cases, the first task is to reconstruct the language as much as possible. Where the documentation is scant, such reconstruction often depends on knowledge from related languages.

A well-documented reclamation project is that of Kaurna, a Nunga language of South Australia that was reconstructed based on documentation dating to the middle of the nineteenth century (Amery 2000). The reclamation efforts have led to the reclamation of place names, traditional greetings, and welcoming speeches, and even to Kaurna language classes in the local schools. Another example is provided by Chochenyo, a Costanoan language of the Muwekma Ohlone people of California, which had not been spoken since the 1930s. Early reclamation efforts involved reconstructing as much of the language as possible from existing documentation, which included the field notes and recordings of the linguist J. P. Harrington, although many of the recordings were songs, with few words, and by comparing the existing materials to those of the Mikowk and Yokut languages, which were known to be phonetically and structurally similar. The community, working with linguist Juliette Blevins, was then in a position to create an orthographic system for Chochenyo and to build a word list, again, from existing materials, but also creating new words for missing ones, words for new items not used when Chochenyo was last spoken, and words to fill in some blanks in the historical records.

One of the more dramatic illustrations of language reclamation is the Myaamia Project, supported by the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and Miami University. Like Chochenyo and Kaurna, Myaamia had not been spoken for many generations. The project has two goals: "to conduct in-depth research

to assist tribal educational initiatives aimed at the preservation of language and culture” and “to expose undergraduate and graduate students at Miami University to tribal efforts in language and cultural revitalization,” as defined by the program website ([www.myaamiaproject.com](http://www.myaamiaproject.com)). The project is directed by linguist and Miami tribal member Daryl Baldwin, who has worked closely with an external linguist, David Costa, to analyze the historical documentation and make Myaamia a viable modern language. Despite initial impressions to the contrary, there are significant written records and documentation of Myaamia. These records, along with comparison to living related Algonquian languages, have allowed Baldwin and Costa to revitalize the language and fill in lexical gaps. The program has been very successful in creating new speakers and stimulating interest in younger people to speak their language. It is seen as a key part of strengthening both language and culture.

## LANGUAGE DOMAINS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

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(Re)learning the language, its lexicon and grammar, is only part of the process of revitalization. To move from endangerment to vital, the language needs to be used. Lack of use is what brings about language shift in the first place. Thus it is important for revitalization programs to take language usage into account; ideally they should strive to create opportunities to speak, read, and write the language (where literacy is part of revitalization). Creating domains of usage is challenging. It is very difficult to oust the language of wider communication in a given domain and replace it with the revitalized language. Moreover, the dominant language tends to spread to new domains of use: this feature is typical of vital languages and can be taken as one measure of vitality. One challenge for the Hawaiian revitalization program, for example, has been to create places for Hawaiian to be spoken outside the school. Without such places, it runs the danger of being a “school” language, much like foreign languages taught in high schools in the United States. In order to prevent this, or at least mitigate it, some programs have parents sign a contract that commits them to learning the language and speaking it at home with their children.

It is clear that more than domains are involved. Research on social networks shows that they play a critical role in language revitalization and maintenance (Milroy 2002; Sallabank 2011). Social networks, or “the aggregate of relationships contracted with others” (Milroy 2002: 549), can provide a theoretical framework for understanding how speakers interact and how those interactions can influence language and linguistic behavior. Work in language variation and change has used social networks to explain the kinds of social mechanism that support linguistic varieties or foster their change within given

social groups. For example, social networks have been used to explain language change that results from urbanization. Networks made of strong ties can support the (continuing) use of localized norms. In networks with weak ties, or where previously strong ties have weakened, the result is often modifications in the social structure that are conducive to language change and shift.

Just as weakened ties can foster shift, so too can stronger ties offset change. For revitalization efforts it is thus important to build and strengthen ties. Social network theory makes explicit the perhaps obvious but often forgotten fact that language use and vitality is dependent upon speech communities. Community-based and community-driven revitalization programs are well placed to create social networks for language use because they directly involve the speakers themselves.

## THE ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL LINGUIST

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One issue of much debate is the role of the external linguist in language revitalization. At some level the goals of linguists and communities are at odds: linguists are interested in documentation, description, and theoretical advances that can be achieved by access to unusual linguistic data. Linguists are often charged with being interested in languages, not language and its speakers. Communities are interested in revitalization, and often show only a secondary interest in the products of documentation and description insofar as they can further the development of pedagogical materials. These goals would appear to be at odds with one another, and yet the two groups have more in common than might at first be apparent. Revitalization requires documentation and description. Linguistic description is critical for the creation of textbooks and reference materials such as dictionaries and reference grammars. Documentation is equally critical: it not only provides content for lessons and reference materials, but in many cases, what we know about languages today is due to earlier documentation. This is particularly true for languages that have not been spoken for years; reclamation of Kaurna or Wampanoag would have been impossible without documentation. By the same token, linguists cannot accomplish any of this work without speakers; they are completely dependent upon them. Current ethical guidelines for linguists call for collaboration at all stages of a project, and this often means that linguists need to spend part of their time jointly developing revitalization materials. Since many are not trained for such work, there is increasing tendency to include applied linguists in field projects, and to receive additional instruction in language pedagogy and materials development. (For further discussion and examples, see the papers in part 4 of Grenoble & Furbee 2010.)

## SUCCESSFUL REVITALIZATION: THE CASE OF HEBREW

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Hebrew is often held up as the most successful example of language revitalization. In the late nineteenth century, Hebrew revitalization slowly began in several agricultural settlements and colonies and was declared the only sanctioned public language in Tel Aviv. From this foundation it slowly spread, so that by the 1920s, Hebrew had become the first language for some. With the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1919 and the establishment of British rule, Hebrew usage spread in the educational systems established by the Jewish communities, who were allowed a fair amount of latitude. Classical Hebrew needed to be changed from a liturgical language to a modern, secular one; in this the Language Committee (later renamed the Hebrew Language Academy) played a critical role (Blau 1981). Since the state of Israel was created in 1948, the use of Hebrew as an official language and a language of the home has continually grown. (Arabic, English and Hebrew were all official languages prior to 1948 as part of British Mandatory law; English was dropped from this list with the establishment of Israel.) The growth of Hebrew is in large part due to two factors: an influx of Jewish immigrants with diverse first languages who opted to use a single lingua franca, and a political climate that was very favorable to establishing Hebrew as a unifying official language of Israel.

That said, it should be remembered that Hebrew presents a very particular case in time and was in an arguably unique position for revitalization. Its success comes in large part from the fact that revitalization was politically motivated and was seen as an integral part of the larger goal of creating a new Jewish state. (See Nahir 1998; Spolsky & Shohamy 1999 for more details.) Moreover, Hebrew is remarkable in that, although it had ceased to be used as a language for daily interaction, it continued (and continues) to be robustly used for religious purposes, so that even when it was no longer the primary or first language for most of the Jewish population, it continued to be transferred from one generation to another in one domain, religion. It was never completely dormant, although this specialized religious language could not meet the demands of daily interaction. Thus, when the decision was made to revitalize Hebrew and make it the first language of the emerging nation state of Israel, there were ample speakers with knowledge of the language, even though the language itself needed to be reinvigorated to handle the vast number of domains in which any national language is used, ranging from menial aspects of daily communication to government, law, and higher education.

The revival of Hebrew is thus unique in many respects, both sociocultural and sociolinguistic. The creation of the state of Israel, and subsequent massive Jewish immigration, resulted in a unique set of circumstances for fostering the revived use of Hebrew. Moreover, it was revived in "an acute communicative vacuum" (Nahir 1998: 340) where it was not competing with another language



but became the primary language of communication. This distinguishes Hebrew from almost all other endangered languages today, in that it became the language of a nation-state. Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic) is possibly comparable in having national, official status, and it has been successfully revitalized since the implementation of Home Rule in 1979, which granted it official status in both education and in the government. The overwhelming majority of the world's local languages are not in this position, and for them it can be problematic to have the case of Hebrew as a role model.

## ASSESSING LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS

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Despite decades of revitalization efforts, to date there has been little true assessment of the efficacy of these programs. At present we lack good survey data on exactly what kinds of programs are underway and where; numbers of participants (both students and teachers); and the duration of such programs. We also lack data about how successful (or not) they are, although there are indications that they may not be creating new communities of speakers. Reporting the results of a 2000 survey conducted by *Indian Country Today*, Berardo and Yamamoto (2007: 107) show that although 71 percent of respondents said that the language programs were offered by their tribes, only a very small percentage claim actual knowledge of the tribal language.

The reasons for lack of assessment are both political and practical. It takes a tremendous effort for a community to begin and maintain a revitalization program. A negative assessment could have a very detrimental impact on the morale of language supporters and on the status and credibility of the leaders of such efforts. From a practical standpoint, the goals and resources of individual programs are themselves in constant flux. Any assessment would necessarily need to determine what would constitute "successful" revitalization in a given community. Does it mean that the entire population or some percentage is fully fluent and functional in the revitalized language, or that some subset of the population has some knowledge of the language and can use it in ceremonial domains? There is a wide range of results that can be considered "successful." In many cases, simply maintaining the program on a daily (or yearly) basis is a victory. Any program assessment needs to take into account the status of the language when the program began and the group's goals; both are difficult to measure in any objective way. We often lack reliable data about language vitality at the onset of revitalization, so it is challenging to know how much progress has actually been made.

In addition, targets or goals can and do change as a revitalization program progresses. One prime example is Wampanoag (or Wôpanâak), an Algonquian language of eastern North America; the last known speaker, Chief Wild Horse, was recorded in 1961 by Gordon Day. There have been no fluent speakers for over 150 years and the language was considered "dormant" or extinct. At present, however, there is a very active language reclamation project, which is a collaborative effort of members of the Aquinnah (Gay Head), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribes and Assonet Band. The project made significant progress under the leadership of Jessie Little Doe Baird, who studied linguistics at MIT and has spearheaded a major reclamation project to recreate Wampanoag. Baird has worked extensively with legacy materials to reproduce Wampanoag in a form for today's purposes. Having taught herself the language, she is now raising her daughter to be the first fluent speaker of Wampanoag in many, many generations. Does such a program constitute success? Given the odds against any kind of Wampanoag reclamation, it should be considered a resounding success. Has Wampanoag replaced or even supplemented English among community members? Hardly. Thus, what by one measure is a tremendous victory may appear dubious by other measures; this underscores the need for an assessment metric that is sensitive to the particulars of very individualistic settings.

To address these problems, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma advocates Culturally Responsible Evaluation, which is sensitive to the local culture and respectful of the dignity and integrity of local stakeholders (Peter 2003). It challenges traditional evaluation measures, which are seen as overly dependent on quantitative data. Instead, it relies on ongoing evaluation, working closely with stakeholders to understand their perspectives and to develop and enlarge them. Negotiation and sharing of results are integral to Culturally Responsive Evaluation. The Cherokee Nation language revitalization is framed as an act of linguistic self-empowerment, and this different form of evaluation emerges from this sense of self-empowerment. It is one possible model for assessment of revitalization that might result in more effective, more successful programs.

## FUTURE RESEARCH IN REVITALIZATION

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The existence of so many revitalization programs provides the opportunity and need for new and different kinds of research. These include scientific investigations into the linguistics processes and effects of both attrition and (re)acquisition, or revitalization. The situation with revitalization language is the reverse of that for many heritage languages. With heritage languages, the

children learn a language at home with the (usually immigrant) parents and cease speaking it when they enter the school system. This results in what is termed *interrupted acquisition*: the children do not acquire full adult fluency and the language is replaced by another. In some cases, the acquisition pattern of indigenous languages is similar: children are raised in monolingual environments where only the indigenous language is spoken. They then shift to another language when they enter the school system or have extensive contact with speakers of the majority language. But often there are different patterns, more instances of forgetting than of interrupted acquisition. In such cases adult speakers of the language cease using it because they speak another language at work or when they move to an urban area, or because they make a conscious decision not to speak it to their children. (This is frequent in situations where speakers have been punished for using their language.) Thus the children are raised monolingually in the dominant language; the parent generation may be bilingual, but opts not to use the indigenous language. Over time, such speakers may forget their language, in particular if pressure to speak the dominant language is so great that the endangered language falls out of use. One result is real loss across a single generation, where what was formerly the parent generation has now become the elderly grandparent generation, and their children (now parents) have little to no knowledge of their ancestral language. This new parent generation is ill-equipped to teach the language to their children.

This raises several scientific questions with regard to the linguistic processes of attrition. At the same time, we should ask several questions about the linguistic processes of revitalization. At a very basic level, two (potentially) different forms of the language can be identified. First is the linguistic structure of the language when fluently spoken, i.e., from a time of pre-contact, or when children are raised by fluent speakers and themselves reach fluency. Second is the linguistic structure of the revitalized language, which may have been influenced by the contact language(s) and may also have been influenced by attrition. In many cases of revitalization, the instructors of the language (parents or formal teachers) are themselves not fluent in the language; they either learn it as adults as a second language or have partial acquisition as children. (In these instances it may be useful to distinguish between revitalized languages and reinvigorated languages, whose use is encouraged where there are still fluent speakers across generations. Until we have further research into these questions, we can theoretically assume that the input that children receive differs in the two cases.) In cases of reclamation, there are no speakers of a language and the linguistic structure is reinvented from extant documentation. Although linguists recognize that the structure of a reclaimed or revitalized language differs from earlier versions of the language, it is not yet clear if it differs in predictable ways, what is the contribution of the contact language(s) to the new structure and what, if any, impact does attrition have.

## NOTES

1. See the UNESCO website at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00136>. Accessed November 20, 2010.

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