

## Citation

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Cassidy, P. (2011). Language shift and revitalization. *Accents Asia* [Online], 4 (2), 38-59.  
Available: <http://www.accentsasia.org/4-2/cassidy.pdf>

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## Language Shift and Revitalization

Peter Cassidy, Mitsui Gardens International Preschool (American Embassy Housing Compound, Tokyo)

## Introduction

“There are now hundreds of endangered languages, and there are few regions of the world where one will not find at least nascent attempts at language revitalization” (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 1). Language contexts are rarely, if ever, exactly alike. Many different factors are at play when looking at the important topics surrounding language revitalization and the phenomenon of globalization is a large contributing factor to language endangerment. The spread of English and technology “has generated heated debates about its sociopolitical, economic, and cultural impact on non-English speaking countries, most of which belong to the developing world” (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 2). Political, economic, and cultural implications will vary and the following discussions will strive to explore how the differences between cultures or language communities may result in different language revitalization strategies through planning and policy, formal education, or community-based programs. Regardless of the supporting factors or the hindrances that may exist, language revitalization translates to strengthening language domain repertoires in the hopes of maintaining or strengthening cultural identity.

Language endangerment is a very real cultural issue in many parts of the world and this is characterized by language shift.

When a language dies gradually, as opposed to all its speakers being wiped out by a massacre or epidemic, the process is similar to that of language shift. The functions of the language are taken over in one domain after another by another language. As the domains in which the speakers use the language shrink, the speakers of the dying language gradually become less proficient in it. (Holmes, 2008, p. 58)



Fishman's (1991) "Graded Intergenerational Disruption scale" (Fishman's GIDS. Retrieved 05, 11, 10 from [http://web.scc.losrios.edu/raposat/stories/storyReader\\$58](http://web.scc.losrios.edu/raposat/stories/storyReader$58)) looks at the different levels of language vitality in eight stages with the last stage representing language death as being a very high probability. This scale takes into account the status of a language that in turn will lead to its domains of use. Landweer (1998) and Wurm (1991) have also compiled leveled indicators categorizing the level of endangerment for languages facing shift or even extinction.

Language revitalization efforts may be seen as a human rights' response to languages at risk, and this involves people, planning, policy, and action towards reversing the effects of language endangerment and bringing a language back to wider domains of use. Bernardo and Yamamoto (2007) and Crystal (2002) have put forth factors that may consequently affect revitalization efforts, and there are striking similarities to Grenoble and Whaley (2006) who reference the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, hereafter UNESCO, Ad Hoc Group's factors affecting language revitalization. Most of the similarities alluding to the real need for getting people involved with planning have relevance in that the establishment of supportive language policies is a crucial first step in the process of slowing language shift. Heightening awareness to promote action in formal educational settings or through community-based programs may also result in the maintenance of domains for language use. Still, a "critical empowerment approach and perspective is also required in order to address the wider issues, and power relations, that inevitably frame, and delimit, the development of first language models" (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005, p. 480). As the following section will outline, there are many factors working for and against language revitalization movements. Around the world, cultures in the face of language shift may try to promote the idea that "language is not a purely technical tool; it is a cultural artifact created within specific sociocultural and historical contexts, and thus carries the characteristics of these contexts" (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 2). Language revitalization works towards reversing language shift, and it can be better understood through an analysis of the internal and external forces providing support for success or conversely working against a language's vitality. The language itself, the speakers of the language, the domains and trends for language use, the medium for language acquisition, the resources available, the planning and policies involved, and the attitudes towards the language based on its place in the home, community, country, or world are important areas of discussion for understanding successful cases of language revitalization.



It will be shown that there is a relationship between language status and globalization and this can have an influence on language attitudes, language choice and minority language domains for use. A discussion lending itself to the importance and promotion of linguistic human rights is central to the call for language revitalization and the language strengthening strategies that may apply to a variety of language contexts. There are many common threads between the categorical organization put forth by the research on the topic of language status or language vitality, and the nine factors affecting language revitalization put forth by UNESCO's Ad Hoc Group will be applied to specific cases as detailed below. Attitudes towards a particular language might very well be the foundation for a language's vitality. The exploration of this begins with discussion of factors like language status in the face of globalization, domains for language use and how it affects intergenerational language transmission in certain language communities. Examples from the language communities of Canada and The United States will also be applied in an attempt to highlight the importance of population and the proportion of speakers of a language with regards to language status. A brief look at one aspect of the Isan language in Thailand, as well as the main reason for the successful revitalization of spoken Hebrew, will underpin the importance of the amount and quality of a language's documentation. Finally, a focus on the successful case of the revitalization of the Maori language in New Zealand will show the importance of the creation and implementation of supportive language policies and how this can be applied to language education and literacy resources.

### **Attitudes Towards Languages**

“Attitudes to language are strongly influenced by social and political factors” (Holmes, 2008, p. 406). This discussion will reveal how it is very possible that language domains shrink based on the perception of language value.

English affects the motivation of governments, schools, parents and students to promote the languages. The lower status of local languages derives from their functions, which are perceived as limited. In contrast, English is seen as offering gains in terms of entry into higher levels of education and employment, and subsequent upward social mobility. (Chen, 2006, pp. 334-335)

This stance affirms that many believe that English should be embraced as the most important language for advancement in many domains within many different societies. This is not



usually the case as “[people] generally do not hold opinions about languages in a vacuum. They develop attitudes towards languages which reflect their views about those who speak the languages” (Holmes, 2008, p. 406).

While certain people may view some local languages as less valuable than English based on their perceptions of use, others will perceive this limiting judgment as a negative language attitude.

Linguistic and cultural feudalism is the view consciously or unconsciously held that some languages between and even within nations, are of higher order than others; that they constitute an aristocracy while others, in a descending order of being, occupy lesser positions, different degrees of minions.

(Resistance to Linguistic Feudalism and Darwinism. Retrieved 05, 25, 10 from <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/59136>)

Linguistic Darwinists may see the oral tradition languages that lack a written form as destined to die in the context of globalization. Some languages are becoming less relevant and efforts to maintain such languages, it would seem, do not warrant the time and the money that it would require for positively shifting a language status. This, of course, is usually when the language has no economic domains when set against global economics.

While linguistic Darwinist attitudes may exist for some people or certain governments, others believe that cultural identity is at risk. “Language and cultural identity are mutually constitutive. The recognition and promotion of the importance of English by non-English-speaking countries, often over and above their own languages, has profound implications for their national cultural identities” (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 2). Second language acquisition courses teach that the vernacular (L1) can sometimes represent a tool for learning the other languages that may have become necessary for English-dominated contexts and certainly “[embodied] in a language are the history, the beliefs, the cultures, and the values of its speakers” (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 2). Of course, attitudes are often dictated by context and certain countries populated by many immigrant or indigenous communities, proficient in languages other than English, are still streamed within English-only domains.

### **Language Status**

#### *Effects of Globalization*

“Globalization is effected by two inseparable mediational [sic] tools, technology and English; proficiencies in these tools have been referred to *as global literacy skills*” (Tsui &



Tollefson, 2007, p. 1). As discussed above, attitudes about certain languages and their value can have significant repercussions affecting language vitality. Globalization has changed the status of many languages worldwide, and thus “labels such as ‘endangered’ or ‘highly endangered’ entail constellations of factors relating to language use, language attitudes, language proficiency, population, location, socioeconomic status, and level of education among others” (Lewis, 2008, p. 35). Much has been written on the subject of certain factors that can become a positive influence on endangered language vitality or conversely work against revitalization efforts (Bernardo & Yamamoto, 2007; Crystal, 2002; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Landweer, 1998). The globalization of English may work against language revitalization in the sense that language choice, based on domains for language use, may eliminate certain minority languages from said choice.

### *Language Choice*

There are other imperial languages such as French, Spanish, and Portuguese but English carries the most weight for these discussions. Language choice has cultural impact and the spread of the English language affects the language choices being made by families, schools, and governments. This influences minority languages that embody “the history, the beliefs, the cultures, and the values of [their] speakers” (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 2). The history of the spread of English has made the choice for use of other languages less relevant in certain economic domains. This phenomenon is based on the fact that the U.S has had strong economic and cultural influence on the world for many decades and English has become the language of business. One might argue that this does not mean that other languages need to suffer, but inevitably English replaces certain vernacular languages in a variety of domains. An example of what Chen (2006) refers to regarding diminishing status of local languages would be the choice of North American or British English in certain Hong Kong schools over lesser-valued local languages like Malay or even other world English types like Singapore English or Indian English. The spread of English worldwide, in a sense, has produced other forms of English but may also be limiting language choices in a wide spectrum of language domains.

### *Minority Languages and Language Domains*

Globalization has led to the spread of English around the world. North America is a perfect example of a continent with a few dominant languages being forced upon a plethora of minority languages and has eliminated choice in some cases. Official school curriculum



from elementary to secondary education, in Canada, will be either English or French and a Cree student will not be able to receive instruction in the Cree language. This is not surprising since “Canadian education has always been characterized by racism directed against First Nations (also termed aboriginal) and non-English immigrant groups” (Cummins, 1997, p.411). The education domain for language is just one of many and Romaine (1994) discusses the arbitrary make-up of language communities and the variety of language domains that may exist. There are governmental and education language domains, community language domains, and family language domains, and each differs in its own unique way.

All nation-states, whatever their political ideology, have persecuted minorities in the past and many continue to do so today. While not all states are actively seeking the eradication of minorities within their borders, they pursue policies designed to assimilate indigenous people into the mainstream or dominant culture. (Romaine, 1994, p. 34)

Therefore, one must also consider how immigrants are also being assimilated in the U.S and Canada. The easiest way to do this is by using the majority language to minimize the minority language; something that is an obvious cultural identifier. The term minority language has many criteria and by no means should one equate minority language with endangered language. Simply put, a minority language is “one with a relatively small number of speakers living within a domain of a more widely spoken language, whose language is usually necessary for full participation in society” (Romaine, 1994, p.35). The number of speakers worldwide and the proportion of speakers within a language context will factor into the discussion regarding domains of use.

Language domains serve both social and economic purposes. The fact that many minority languages have become endangered based on dominance of another culture or the globalization of the English language means that community or family language domains are changing as well.

Therefore, all individuals from minority backgrounds find themselves somewhere in this continuum of different literacies [sic]. They have to decide for themselves on the balance of various languages in their linguistic repertoire, and make the best possible use of their linguistic capital. (Kosonen, 2008, p.185)



Governments may have economic motivation for adopting English only policies that may minimize the other languages of a country; schools may have the same motivation including institutional prestige issues, and local communities and families, too, have their own specific motivation for placing English above their vernacular. “Through the selection of one language over another or one variety of the same language over another speakers display what might be called ‘acts of identity,’ choosing the groups with whom they wish to identify” (Romaine, 1994, p.35). Often, English is seen as a means to change one’s identity and it may have the capacity to improve one’s position in society. Be it economic or social status, English is now a very real tool for international, national, and even local community advancement.

As described above, how English is used for advancement has no formula for the variety of individuals who choose to adopt it into their language repertoires. “Whereas the State seems willing and able to accommodate linguistic dynamics resulting from globalization and regionalism, it seems less able to deal with nationalism and localisation” (Kosonen, 2008, p.173). This becomes an issue for minority languages that may have become less valued even at local levels and, although government funding is usually a possible resource, dealing with language shift, or the change in a language’s status, positive change often becomes the endeavor of local communities. That being said, there is also the real need for outside influences to help organize language endangered communities worldwide.

## **Factors Affecting Language Revitalization**

### *Linguistic Human Rights (LHR)*

The U.S, and its mainstream education system, “gives little attention to the teaching and learning of immigrant children’s mother tongues” (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009, p. 90). Cummins (1998) describes the case in Canada with regards to immigrants as well as First Nation languages. The smaller numbers of minority speakers within a majority language context may be the justification of utilitarian governments to create education policies that support English or French only education, but this is the attitude that overlooks the quality of language and considers more the number of speakers in a specific context. The decision to focus on majority language(s) in mainstream education and government operations brings into question the rights of a people to pursue their mother tongue in domains outside of the family or local community. The dual official language policy in Canada is a step in the right direction, but more should be done for the First Nations people of Canada and other minority



languages. Language shift is a reality for many indigenous languages and allowing languages to become de-valued does not foster the idea of human equality.

It has been touched on that globalization may have an effect on the status and the health of a minority language and its domains for use. “There is a widely held and popular-but nonetheless misconceived belief that any reduction in the number of languages is a benefit to mankind, and not a tragedy at all” (Crystal, 2002, p. 27). Those who believe that language is a cultural artifact would disagree with the position above. Globalization, and its aforementioned effects on language minorities, has created the need for organizations like UNESCO to work to help ensure that minority language communities have some protection.

Observing LHR implies at a collective level the right of minority groups to exist (i.e. the right to be different) and the right to enjoy and develop their languages. It implies the right of minority groups to establish and maintain schools and other training and educational institutions, with control of curricula and teaching in their own language. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994, p. 625)

Crystal (2002) lists many other world organizations dedicated to helping endangered languages in all parts of the world (p. 167). As discussed with the Canadian minority language contexts, dedication to promoting minority languages is not always the case. In the cases where English is being spread to non-English speaking countries, minority languages are also seeing less support and have suffered as a result.

Minority languages should be able to find support within the domains of the majority languages, but the reality is that many are being forced to retreat to more limited domains of use. “In a civilized state, there should be no need to debate the right to maintain and develop the mother tongue” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994, p. 625). “The UNESCO Ad Hoc Group is very clear that nine factors need to be considered in conjunction with one another” (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 16). They describe factors involving population in terms of intergenerational language transmission, absolute numbers of speakers, and the proportion of these language speakers among the total population. Domains and the use of media for promoting and strengthening the language lead to the discussion of language status in the educational domains. Materials and resources are closely linked with an important influence of government and institutional support through planning and language policies in relation to official status and use. It is crucial to look at the importance of the amount and quality of documentation. As seen when looking at UNESCO’s seventh factor and how there is need for



governmental and institutional policies for language vitality to be increased, this might translate into the support of bilingual education and bi-literacy programs at the state-level, or it may take root in community-based programs through local government support.

The nine factors affecting language revitalization put forth by the UNESCO Ad Hoc group will be explored through examples of specific language contexts that highlight individual factors. Certainly we can acknowledge that some factors are more relevant than others with regards to individual language situations, but it is my hope to clarify each one of these factors and how they affect actual language revitalization movements today.

### *Intergenerational Language Transmission*

A real part of cultural identity is how the language exists and how it is passed on from generation to generation. Some languages have no written system, while others have a very strong written language. In the case of the former, the oral tradition and the actual speaking of the language becomes crucial for transmission, and, in the case of the Maori communities in New Zealand “the amount of Maori used in ceremonies is entirely dependent on the availability of respected elders who still retain some knowledge of the appropriate discourse” (Holmes, 2008, p. 59). This could be an issue if the domain for language use has been diminished to use in ceremonies, story telling, or praying only. How the language is exchanged between fluent speakers and those who are less fluent may be affected by who is speaking and to what audience. Young people are not always willing to spend a lot of time speaking to their elders, and this could be an issue as described in a good rubric for predicting the levels of how the language will be transmitted from a generational standpoint. This is described in “Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale” (Fishman’s GIDS. Retrieved 05 11, 10 from [http://web.scc.losrios.edu/raposat/stories/storyReader\\$58](http://web.scc.losrios.edu/raposat/stories/storyReader$58)) which “provides a framework that describes the level that language shift produces” (Kosonen, 2008, p. 172).

Some predictors described in the different stages of language vitality take into account the speakers and the domains of language use. As an example, stage eight of Fishman’s (1991) GIDs describes the weakest language case in which there are so few fluent speakers that there is a need for outside expert support in order to reestablish community language norms. This could be compared to Wurm’s (1991) fourth level of moribund languages description of a language community with “only a handful of good speakers left, mostly very old” (Crystal, 2002, p. 21). This is the stage before extinction in which the last speaker of a language has died and, if said language has no written form and has not been



documented, generational transmission has ceased to exist. Fishman's stage seven describes a situation that has many older generation users of the language but it is thought that they may be the last generation of language users. Wurm's (1991) stage three of seriously endangered languages describes a situation with the youngest speakers of the language being aged fifty or older. The second stage of endangered languages has few children learning the language and the youngest speakers are young adults. It is described in the first stage of potentially endangered languages that the language community is starting to lose child speakers. Stage six of Fishman's (1991) GIDs points towards the importance of the attainment of intergenerational informal oralcy [sic] with demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement. It is evident that age is a real factor within language revitalization and the generational issues of transmission, as is the actual number of speakers involved in language exchange between the generations of the language community.

### *Absolute Number of Speakers*

As previously shown, English may often appear to be the best choice for language learners based on its domains of use and, as a result, there may be fewer and fewer good speakers of certain vernaculars. Wurm's (1991) extinct language stage sees languages having no chance of being revived if the language is spoken only. The language dies with the last speaker and even if the language has the written medium, if the number of speakers is bleak then revival may not be possible. Even the lesser stages of endangerment point toward the importance of absolute number of speakers as language exchange should increase in respect to the actual numbers of speakers. As mentioned earlier, a language like Spanish will survive based on the absolute number of speakers worldwide, as will French, but First Nation or Native American languages may not be based on their less significant global presence. Numbers can be deceiving sometimes, and assessment of certain languages may reveal large numbers of speakers that do not reveal good proportions or ratios against the dominant language(s).

### *Proportion of Speakers*

For the First Nations or Native American populations, language vitality and language revitalization is about more than just the language; it is about the cultural identity. Norris (1998) in her article about Canadian Aboriginal language focuses on the importance of maintaining First Nation language(s) as she believes that languages are the most tangible cultural artifacts. She also dedicates one section describing how geography influences the size and the diversity of languages. This is shown to be the case in Canada as the population



is spread over a wide geographical territory. With regards to Fishman (1991) and Wurm's (1991) criterion, the First Nation population in Canada is significant. Yet, when compared to the 33,759,742 (July, 2010) Canadian people (CIA Factbook Canada 2006 census. Retrieved 06, 06, 10 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ca.html>), their population makes up only about 3.5% of the entire population. Also, there are many different vernaculars in this demographic. This proportion dictates that the domains for any variety of First Nation languages will be very limited and will not reach the higher domains of education or government which is very important for minority language survival as shown in Fishman's (1991) GIDs starting at stage six and progressing to stage one that has the most influence on language status. Regardless of the proportion of the numbers of speakers, the official language status of French in Canada allows for the attainment of stage one.

French speakers in Canada (21.6%) also boast a robust population in Canada but proportionally it is much smaller than English speakers (58.8%). From personal experience, it has been observed that this proportion difference translates to many more Francophone speakers becoming French and English bilingual speakers when compared to the number of Anglophones who learn French. Still, because of its official language status, French speakers have access to educational and governmental domains for their mother tongue; the First Nations people generally do not. Absolute numbers of a language population worldwide is important, but as seen with both French and Spanish in Canada and the United States, these smaller proportions of language speakers usually adopt the language of the dominant culture of English speakers.

#### *Response to New Domains and Media*

Much of this paper has focused on language shift and some of the reasons for it. It has also been attempted to show the importance of domains for language use when considering language revitalization, and although we have looked at one end of the spectrum of English only policies, "a dramatic increase in instances of multilingual language policy around the world, even while (and perhaps because) the English language continues its seemingly inexorable trajectory toward becoming the most global language the world has ever known" (Hornberger, 2008, p. 96). At the core of language revitalization is the idea that saving a language will in fact save a culture and that cultural identity can change when domains for language use shrink dramatically. Still, globalization has seen many cultures embrace English over the vernacular languages. "First Voices," a First Nations group dedicated to protecting the many endangered languages around the globe, realize the importance of cultural identity



and how saving a language can save a culture. This organization has embraced the very thing that has perhaps endangered many indigenous languages around the world. They are using technology to archive languages that face extinction. For many First Nation languages, this is key to their language survival.

As was discussed, languages could die and never be revived if they operate in the oral tradition only and have no written form. This is a very good step towards preserving the language for future generations, and perhaps like Hebrew, a language that has a strong written tradition and as a result was able to re-emerge in spoken domains after centuries of disuse, the Native American language of Karuk could stand a chance for survival as well. Knowing that the language has been archived could breed motivation to attempt its acquisition, but it will require focused efforts by the community, as the video (Karuk Language Revitalization) indicates, before Karuk will be seen as healthy in a world of English and technology. Language learning programs, specifically geared to children, speak to the beliefs about age and language learning in SLA and are tools for addressing motivation to learn a heritage language even within an English dominant domain.

Plato once said: “Do not then train youths to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each” (Campbell, 1997, p. 14). This insight seems in line with a lot of classroom theory leaning towards learner-centered curriculum with less teacher-centered attitudes. The youth of today tend to be much more computer literate than the generations before, and this could very well be a result of the globalization of technology. Ensuring that the medium of instruction is a platform that interests learners might, in theory, heighten motivation to continue in the endeavor being undertaken. Taking advantage of the resources available is a must in language planning, and the Internet is the most widely used computer tool on the planet right now. “But the evidence is that the majority of teachers, even younger, more recent graduates, are in real need of guidance in understanding the opportunities deriving from the impact on information and communication technologies (ICTs)” (Unsworth, 2008, p. 63). Some might be surprised at the idea of indigenous cultures embracing modern technology, but the “First Voices” endeavor is an example of embracing technology to benefit the promotion of endangered languages.

The “First Voices” Internet platform has many learning sites; some of these are geared for children featuring low text for supporting young learners. “Electronic media are not simply changing the way we tell stories: they are changing the very nature of story, of what we understand (or do not understand) to be narratives” (Hunt, 2000, p. 111). Getting



children interested in learning might be the first step, but the medium for learning is also a good strategy in the face of globalization. “It is the visual / verbal interface that is at the heart of literacy learning and development for both computer-users and those without access to computers” (Andrews, 2004, p. 63). Resources are not always readily available nor are there always sufficient numbers of teachers, but First Voices has done this at the community level showing that it is possible to have an impact thinking globally or thinking locally.

#### *Amount and Quality of Documentation*

Languages with no written medium, as described above, are examples of languages with the weakest quality of documentation and the internet platform is creating the documentation. Hebrew is an example of a language that has been revitalized in the spoken medium and this would probably not have been possible without its extremely strong written medium. Spolsky (2010) discusses the revitalization of spoken Hebrew in comparison to the Maori revitalization movement, and touches on the importance of policy as well as the benefits of Hebrew’s strong written medium. Maori is an example of a language without a written medium but there was still a spoken medium in certain domains when revitalization action was deemed necessary for its survival in the dominant English language domain in the New Zealand context. Many oral tradition languages have survived to this point in history, but they might be deemed potentially endangered or even extremely endangered based on globalization, attitudes about the language, economics and proportion of speakers within the dominant culture, to name a few. One could argue that the lack of a written language, or a language with very little and low quality documentation, is the biggest factor pointing towards language status and its relative health in terms of surviving the effects of globalization. Crystal (2002) lists the ability to write the language down as very important to language revitalization.

An article by Draper (2004) focuses on the Isan language and looks at the health of this language with regards to its presence in Thailand. The article illustrates that the Isan language is very healthy in the sense that it has many domains of use, including the media, and it also has many speakers. But the written form has been all but eliminated from use. “Without a written language, the likelihood is that Isan will never attain ‘safe’ status as an official regional language in Thailand, and consequently will be one of the 6,000 ‘local vernacular languages that will die out’” (Kraus, 1992, cited in Draper, 2004, p. 2). Having a written context is an element of great importance with regards to a language being able to



resist shift in the face of globalization and the spread of English or in the midst of other majority languages.

What can be done in these cases where there is inadequate or no written language? Bernardo and Yamamoto (2007) touch on development of written literature and they also mention the need for modernizing the language by creating new vocabulary to fit the modern world. There are many stages to this development:

First the language must be documented and described so the language team knows about what teachers must include in order for learners to have as much knowledge of the language as possible. The resulting grammar may be called a Language Revitalization Reference Grammar or LRRG.(Bernardo & Yamamoto, 2007, p. 110)

The next stage is curricular design and the creation of materials. The stages that follow involve training of fluent speakers to become teachers in order to implement practices in the classroom as well as in the community. Isan has a written language that has regressed and is not known by a majority of its speakers so the process above may be a lot easier than with certain First Nation or Native American languages. Still, as is described, there are paths to take for the development of the written medium for language revitalization. Optimism and hope are definitely positive components to this complex issue affecting so many minority languages.

### *Language Policies*

Language policies are influenced by a variety of factors and although the French language in Canada might fit the mould of a minority language, all French speakers, by law, are afforded full participation in society by the simple fact that it has official language status. This example of language policy affording a smaller proportion of the Canadian population equal rights under Canadian law is a good model, and yet it may not be feasible in other language contexts. The Canadian context and its First Nations people is an example. These minority language speakers have a significant population in Canada and yet the many varieties of these languages are considered endangered. They do not have domains for use outside of their very limited language communities. “Interestingly, public discourse on minority languages and their use in education is increasing. Language policy issues have been debated much in recent years in the media as well as various seminars and workshops” (Kosonen, 2008, p. 176). The Maori of New Zealand are a very good example of a people



whose language is endangered and by using language planning leading to policy in order to empower its speakers, Maori has been revitalized. The process of language planning with regards to endangered languages can ensure that there is bilingual or multilingual education planning since one language, perhaps English or French as examples, is still considered mainstream while other languages like the First Nation vernaculars are important only within specific domains. It may involve literacy programs within the schools or perhaps within the language community. Regardless of the program, the motivation for maintaining or revitalizing an endangered language is usually community or family heritage based. As well, the disappearance of a language translates to the death of cultural identity, and this may act as a motivator for State government or smaller interest groups outside of the language community.

Goals of language revitalization may differ from one language to the next, but when looking at the processes it will include “planning, implementation, and evaluation” (Chen, 2006, p. 324). Planning has three categories that will usually define language problems in order to be able to create ways to solve them. “It involves three types of planning: (1) status planning includes the allocation of functions to any particular language” (Chen, 2006, p. 324). In simpler terms, it looks at which domains the language functions in and how the language may be improved its overall status. “(2) Corpus planning involves planning about the language itself in order for it to perform its functions” (Kloss, 1969, cited in Chen, 2006, p. 324). Finally, “(3) acquisition planning means organized efforts to promote the learning of the language” (Chen, 2006, p. 324).

Policy grows from planning and “three language policy types can be identified: endoglossic (community oriented), exoglossic (externally oriented), and mixed policies” (Ruiz, 1995, p. 71). Exoglossic policy might entail the policy that English is taught as the medium of instruction in Taiwan. Endoglossic policy might entail Maori being taught within an English curriculum in a New Zealand school or the Karuk community organizing language nests. Spoken Hebrew revival efforts “include rules and regulations, the establishment of a central council for Hebrew imposition, control of public space, monitoring of language proficiency, at home, and monitoring of language learning and other activities” (Shohamy, 2006, pp. 209-210). State support usually involves funding to special interest or community groups and this type of State support was key to the revival of Hebrew in certain spoken domains in Israel. Still, this level of support needs the involvement of people closer to the situation. “Local involvement is crucial to the successful implementation and enforcement of language policies” (Silentman, 1995, p.179). That said, there are usually many different



levels of government or society influencing policy. “Because what happens in ethnic collectivities can have implications, directly or indirectly, for the society at large, the State is likely to influence their leadership, its policy orientations, and its activities” (Jedwab, 2001, p. 1). This leads us to some of the key areas of focus that involve supportive resources and as seen with the Maori,

a different cluster of factors seems to have been operative involving a strong ethnic community involvement since the 1970s, a long established (over 150 years) literacy presence among the Maori, a government educational policy which has brought the Maori courses into schools and other centers, such as *Kohanga reo* (‘language nests’), and a steadily growing sympathy for the English speaking majority. (Crystal, 2002, p. 128)

The more support a community receives in its attempts to plan and create policy to help revive a language the higher the chances for its survival.

On the opposite end of the support spectrum are the problems that slow the process. “Such non-governmental entities, such as churches, political parties, labour unions, business, and the media, may also have an interest in influencing the affairs of ethnic communities” (Jedwab, 2001, p. 1). Does this help or hinder the situation that is to be remedied? An article by Meek and Messing discusses materials and development for language revitalization and they admit, “little research has attended to the visual presentation of language used in educational texts aimed at reversing shift” (Meek & Messing, 2007, p. 99). Resources require funding, and sometimes even when the funding is available the resources do not exist. This is one area of planning and policy that should be addressed, but it is a difficult task to say the least. What their study showed was that “minority languages continue to be framed by the matrix languages such that the practices meant to interrupt matrix-language dominance continue to reinforce current hierarchies” (Meek & Messing, 2007, p. 99). This issue is accompanied by limited numbers of people to teach the endangered languages, and these are just two among a long list of problems that require policy and planning for solutions. Still, it could be argued that people’s “attitudes toward languages often have a stronger impact on the future of those languages than official language policies” (Linn, Naranjo, & Nicholas, 2007, p. 105).



*Language Education and Literacy Resources*

Empowerment of a culture is often the key to its language revitalization and the Maori have been struggling for legitimacy in the New Zealand context for many years.

One of the damaging and long-lasting consequences of colonization over several generations within New Zealand society has been that many indigenous Maori parents, who are competent speakers, readers, and writers of English, no longer have sufficient knowledge of their own heritage language and culture to pass these on to their own children. (Glynn, Berryman, Loader & Cavanagh, 2005, p. 433)

As a result, steps were taken in the mid-1970s “to appease and quieten [sic] Maori demands for schools to provide such instruction” (Jenkins, 1994, cited in Rau, 2004, p. 405). These early beginnings were unsuccessful based on the delivery through the English medium of instruction and of course the westernized cultural approach to teaching the language. The 1980s saw a more bicultural approach but these programs “were often ill-resourced and ill-prepared to cope with the demands of dual language instruction” (Rau, 2004, p. 405). This would lead to a more autonomous educational situation in which total control and “targeting the exclusive use of Maori language” (Rau, 2004, p. 405). This was not to be an easy task as the teachers were predominately second language learners of the language. Evolving from this came the Maori-medium education and the establishment of bilingual and Maori immersion programs. “By 2001, approximately 25,000 primary school-aged students, including a small percentage of non-Maori, were participating in 430 schools” (Ministry of Education, 2003, cited in Rau, 2004, p. 406). This number is significant and inspiring since the Maori now have state funding for these schools, and the funding comes at no expense to their community control over how the programs are to be run.

The Maori of New Zealand, and its example of bilingual and immersion programs in the greater domains of English, epitomize successful institutional and community-based language revitalization.

The struggle by New Zealand’s Pasifika communities for official support and policy recognition for Pasifika languages, along with the resourcing of bilingual / immersion education, has consequently been carried mostly by the Pasifika themselves, and by related organisations such as Ulimasao. (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005, p. 487)



Globalization has created “a David and Goliath confrontation between Pasifika language minority communities, recently empowered by bilingual / immersion education knowledge and successes, and a language majority education and political system, equally determined, it seems, to resist them” (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005, p. 487). This is not surprising, but it is a struggle that highlights the issues facing so many languages worldwide.

The determination to create viable programs to allow for Maori children to maintain their English as well as develop their mother tongue has seen good results as was this reported in a study by Rau:

The study is a celebration of Maori achievement and has positive implications for Maori-medium education because it adds robust literacy achievement data for students in Maori-medium to the limited pool of information that currently exists (Rau, 2004, p. 428). This provides a more positive outlook than the earlier attempts at language revitalization, but one must pay tribute to the perseverance and autonomous strength exhibited by the policy planners at the local level. I believe that the Maori language will survive and “so long as Maori people seek to control their own destiny and assert the unique value of their culture, the urge will remain strong to know and be nourished by the rich and complex inheritance that is Maoritanga.” (Melbourne, 1991, cited in Rau, 2004, p. 429)

The planning that has lead to policies was not without struggle. The Maori will remain a minority in the New Zealand context but with community empowerment has come language status enhancement within the local context. The dedication of the community to ensure the Maori language gained new language status has been supported by adapting corpus planning that didn't always support the language as it is supported today. Acquisition planning was the driving force behind change in order to better ensure that both Maori and English were supported in literacy programs, bilingual programs, and immersion programs. It seems that with government support within a system that is community controlled, Maori is going to thrive and survive.

## **Conclusion**

It has been put forth in the above discussion that language minorities should have the right to promote their language in order to ensure their culture survives, but this is not always a reality in a globalized world. It has been shown that in strategizing language revitalization,



in the cases where the death of a language seems highly probable, there are many considerations regarding numbers of speakers, proportion of the speakers in a specific language context, and of course the need to empower the speakers and widen their language domains. It should be apparent that successful language planning may promote supportive language policies, but at the core of language revitalization success may remain at the community level in which the language has its uses.

It has been argued that language represents the culture, the values, and the beliefs of its speakers and, based on this assertion, all languages have a certain value even in a context that promotes globalization and the spread of English and technology. The main assertion made in the discussion was the fact that adapting to globalization influences may be necessary for economic survival; this can be done while keeping in mind that all languages have value, therefore allowing for minority language participants to become more empowered in the use of their vernacular as well as becoming proficient in the dominant languages surrounding their culture.



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