NARRATIVE REVIEW

What we need to know about conducting language revitalisation work - A literature review from sociolinguistic perspectives

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Abstract

This article provides a critical review of literature relating to Indigenous language revitalisation, including an introduction that provides the sociolinguistic background on language endangerment, and makes a strong plea for language preservation work. In particular, this paper highlights the efforts required prior to conducting language revitalisation work by explaining language endangerment assessment criteria and the efforts entailed to carry out the work. In theorising language revitalisation, key concepts and vocabulary are explained, and thus, the content serves as an additional resource to PG students interested in research related to language and society.

Keywords: Indigenous language revitalisation, language endangerment, language shift, intergenerational transmission, language ideology

Introduction

It has been widely acknowledged that the world's linguistic diversity is diminishing quickly, and this is especially true for Indigenous languages**.** Crystal (2000) warned that, at the current speed of language corrosion, a conservative estimation indicates that "at least one language must die, on average, every two weeks or so" (p. 25). Even the most optimistic estimation indicates that half of today's oral (Indigenous) languages will have disappeared or at least will not be learned by children by the end of this century (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). This is the harsh reality facing Indigenous languages.

Throughout history, powerful countries, such as Britain and France, spread their languages by means such as exploration and colonisation, in a physical sense. Nowadays, the mobility of languages has exceeded physical and geographical boundaries. Dominant languages, such as English, colonise many socio-political, economic and public spheres without physically taking over. This phenomenon is made possible by the advancement of the internet, and the

smartphone and its applications. Sallabank (2010) thus regarded the decline in linguistic diversity as "by-products of globalisation and/or international capitalism" (p. 59). While the use of digital media also connects diasporic or geographically distant speakers of minority languages, the mounting pressure to 'keep up' with the world has resulted in many Indigenous communities choosing to use the dominant languages over their heritage languages. What is worse is that many of these minority languages are facing pressure both from domestic and international perspectives. This pressure is felt by minority languages all around the world (Hinton & Kale 2001; King, 2014; Wright, 2014). For example, the Taiwanese Indigenous languages are in competition not only with the socio-politically dominant Mandarin Chinese, but also with the English language as a global lingua franca. For the speakers, this means the struggle for physical resources (i.e., teaching materials and classroom hours) becomes a challenging task for language revitalisation.

However, language revitalisation is not just about physical resources – it is also about the recognition of a language's social status. Many Indigenous language speakers are fighting against the steady current of *language shift* (LS). Language shift means that the language speakers prefer one language to another, and therefore slowly shift to speaking the preferred language for reasons such as social prestige or economic benefit (Fishman, 1991). As a result, the minority language is replaced by the dominant language in almost all domains of life (Spolsky, 2004), although there have been examples of *diglossia* – a stable intergroup bilingualism (Fishman, 1991, p. 73) – such as Finnish and Swedish in Finland (Bell, 2014, p. 47). But, what we see currently is more minority language speakers shifting to speaking only the dominant languages.

Arguably, the word 'shift' suggests that the speakers have a choice about which language to speak; however, given the socio-historical context, often these choices are pre-determined (e.g., by immigration, colonisation, globalisation). Take Taiwan for example, colonisation by the dominant Mandarin Chinese speakers has resulted in a rapid decline of the Indigenous languages.[1] Once the minority language starts to lose its domains of usage (e.g., in public places, at home, or online), the language gradually disappears. This is also known as *language attrition*, which I explain later.

[1] It should be noted, while this literature review uses Taiwan as an example, the points made here are about the overall needs for language revitalisation worldwide.

Given the sociolinguistic complexity that impacts on language revitalisation efforts, this article provides a critical synthesis of existing literature relating to language endangerment and revitalisation, including assessments of endangerment and the resources that can be drawn out to support language revitalisation efforts. These evaluations are important in determining the causes and levels of endangerment of a language before the work begins, so the resources can be deployed to match the needs of the communities. Below, I start by making a compelling case for the revitalisation of endangered languages. I urge that, while it may seem cost-effective 'not to' save languages, we gain so much more by doing so. I then provide an explanation of key vocabulary and concepts involved in the assessment of endangered languages, followed by a brief explanation of ideological clarification. I also provide examples of language revitalisation efforts around the world. This paper ends with a recap and a conclusion.

Why save languages

The notion of language revitalisation divides opinion. On the one hand, language revitalisation plays a pivotal role for humanity (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991; Hinton & Hale, 2001). On the other hand, the revitalisation of Indigenous languages is sometimes seen as costly and impractical (see Crystal, 2000). It can be argued that the cost of 'not doing it' is greater. The question then arises, 'why should we revitalise Indigenous languages?' To begin to answer this question, it is useful to consider the two categories put forward by (Grin, 2003): *moral conditions* and *welfare considerations.*

The moral condition

The moral arguments for Indigenous language revitalisation count on people's moral judgment, which has several aspects. The first moral condition judges language revitalisation as of equal importance to the act of preserving animal or plant species. As biodiversity is the prerequisite for human existence, linguistic diversity can be viewed in the same way (Crystal, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas 2013). For this reason, it is argued that preserving and revitalising endangered languages that are at the brink of extinction is the 'right thing' to do (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Harrison, 2007; Hinton & Hale, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). However, opponents of such arguments assert that linguistic diversity and biodiversity are not comparable. Regardless of the opposition, the moral condition has a stronger argument – the notion of *linguistic human rights* (LHR) (Grin, 2003).

The LHR argument is based on the notion that rights are considered one of the most basic needs of an individual in a democratic society (Grin, 2003). In order for language revitalisation to be seen as the 'norm' and, thus, accepted, the association of human rights with language is an irrefutable normative premise. Since no language can function without its language user, the extension of an individual's rights to use his/her language in a certain domain with certain people is his/her LHR; these are collective rights as well as individual rights (Grin, 2003). Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) reiterated the concept of linguistic rights as a human rights issue and indicated that to deprive people of their LHR is the equivalent of genocide due to the harm caused to the speakers of a language psychologically and through social displacement. While the idea of 'linguistic genocide' is contentious, it is evident that language loss can be an exceedingly difficult emotional process for the speakers, who see not just their language but their identities and culture gradually eroding away. Hinton and Hale (2001), in particular, related LHR to Indigenous human rights and stressed that "language retention is a human rights issue. The loss of language is part of the oppression and disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples" (p. 5). In this light, the loss of language is closely linked to the disorientation of people's ethnolinguistic identity. Ethnolinguistic identity is not only an identity marker for the individuals, but it also contains regulatory properties that are culturally specific and create hierarchical structures which guide an individual's behaviour in society. Denying a person's right to exercise his/her ethnolinguistic identity is seen as breaking up the fabric of a certain society, and therefore is morally unsound.

Despite the above moral debates in favour of the preservation of minority languages, there are arguments which support having a lingua franca as an effective way of stimulating the global economy. These kinds of arguments suggest that people who speak a minority language often also speak a dominant language (i.e., te reo Māori and English). Therefore, Indigenous language revitalisation could be seen as unnecessary. Although Crystal (2000, p. 40) argued against this view with the "human capital theory", the economic benefit accruing from regarding a lingua franca as a way to minimise the perceived linguistic cost seems to be widely accepted (Crystal, 2000). As a result, the moral debates sought an alliance with an economic approach – the welfare perspective.

The welfare perspective

The second defence for language revitalisation is based on a welfare perspective (Grin, 2003). The welfare approach examines how revitalising a language benefits society as a whole. This approach explores whether society is better off devoting resources to act on language revitalisation. To answer this question, the morality involved in saving endangered

languages is secondary because decisions made to revitalise a language based on the welfare perspective are morally neutral, with the aim being to increase the collective welfare of society, resulting in an economic approach to the language issue. This approach recognises a language as a public good. While it can be argued that language revitalisation requires vast amounts of expert time and funds, the cost of language revitalisation may impact on other aspects of society, as language issues are often an index of other social agendas, such as economy, education, crime, poverty and so on (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley 2006; Hinton & Hale, 2001). Therefore, the budgets for language revitalisation need to be weighed against other social revenues, compared to the cost of 'not having it'. In this light, valuing the minority language helps reduce social costs associated with the displacement of the minority language speakers (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013).

Linguistic diversity can be acknowledged as a public good for humanity in several ways. Firstly, while some may argue the loss of languages is symbolic, in reality, it results in the erosion of cultural and environmental knowledge (Crystal, 2000; Freeland & Gomez, 2014; Grenoble & Whitecloud, 2014; Harrison, 2007). An Indigenous language not only contains cultural beliefs, it often contains rich knowledge and practices of local agriculture, fisheries, horticulture, and forestry. For instance, the Tofa people have some very dynamic words to describe reindeer and the terrain on which they traverse as Siberian reindeer herders (Harrison, 2007, p. 57). These language speakers have used the language for centuries to navigate the wilderness in the absence of a scientific method. They use the language to track time, identify months and seasons, pinpoint locations and more (Harrison, 2007). In this regard, Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) has attributed to these languages a higher degree of accuracy and sophistication than Western scientific taxonomy.

Secondly, our understanding of history is embedded in the language we speak, such as idioms and metaphors. Many of the idiomatic uses of language represent the social condition, history and social structure of the time. In a way, a language 'sees' and 'lives' history. Moreover, the oral traditions of many Indigenous languages use the storytelling of legend and myth as a way of documenting historic events, which in turn provides insight for researchers in other fields, such as botany, anthropology, geology, and so on. In this sense, much of what is known about the world rests with the language speakers (Harrison, 2007) and when these languages die, so too does the cultural knowledge and history attached to them.

Thirdly, languages contribute to studies of human cognition (Harrison, 2007, p. 18). Harrison (2007) pointed out that a primary goal of linguistics is to uncover the universal properties of all human languages. To lose one language is to lose a variable in which a particular linguistic structure may be discovered. As Harrison (2007) explained, if we only have the major languages to study (i.e., English, Chinese, French, etc), then our understanding of human linguistic cognitive capacity will be "severely handicapped" (p. 19). Also, our cognition of the metaphysical world will be reduced without language. Many languages, in this respect, offer philosophical knowledge and enhance the human experience. In this regard, there is much to gain if the diversity of languages is maintained.

It is clear that languages serve as collective repository of ways of knowing and ways of seeing the world. Crystal (2000) quoted Russian writer Vjaceslav Ivanov, who said that "each language constitutes a certain model of the universe, a semiotic system of understanding of the world, and if we have 4,000 different ways to describe the world, this makes us rich" (p. 47). Therefore, it is daunting to imagine that the disappearance of a language is also the extinction of a significant pool of knowledge, hence the need for urgent language revitalisation work.

Before the language revitalisation work starts

How a threatened language could be saved depends on three factors: its history of attrition, its level of endangerment, and the community's attitude towards the language. Therefore, before the language revitalisation work can start, it is important to find out why a language is disappearing and what the contributing factors are. There are many criteria used in current literature to describe the levels of language endangerment, here I explain a few that are commonly known. These criteria provide us with different tools to assess how endangered a language is and what might be required in the language revitalisation efforts.

Assessing language endangerment

Earlier, I mentioned the process of language attrition, and here I explain the causes of it. *Language attrition* is the process of losing a native, or first, language (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Grenoble and Whaley (2006, p. 17) adopted Campbell and Muntzel's taxonomy of language endangerment situations and listed four causes of language attrition.

1. **Sudden attrition** occurs when a language loss is sudden and abrupt. It is directly linked to the loss of speakers. The reason for such sudden loss may result from political conflict, colonisation or diseases.

2. **Radical attrition** is similar to sudden attrition, but it is mainly a choice made by language speakers to avoid political persecution and thus distance themselves from the language and their ethnic identity,

3. **Gradual attrition** means a slow loss of language due to language shift. Whether a local language is shifting to a dominant local language or a national language, the shift may be slow and unnoticeable until it has passed the point where revitalisation efforts become difficult.

4. **Bottom-up attrition** is also called the 'Latinate pattern'. It means a language is not used in the family setting and/or most other domains, but is, specifically, used in ceremonial practice. Because of such prestigious use of language (high status) and the wide use by a large population in such a limited domain, the demography and the status of the language may be 'perceived' or self-reported as high. This makes it difficult to assess the vitality of the language.

These four stages are linearly linked. Once language attrition picks up momentum, it results in either the disappearance of the language or the situation in which the language is reduced to being used only on ceremonial occasions and rarely at home, which eventually leads to the language ceasing to be a living language.

Language revitalisation efforts need an understanding of the causes of language attrition in order to select the measures that are the most appropriate for the language to be revitalised given the social or political context. For example, in Taiwan, colonisation was identified as the main contributor to the sudden attrition of its Indigenous languages. Speakers of these languages were physically punished for using their heritage languages under the Mandarin-Only policy. As a result, they began to distance themselves from the language and their ethnolinguistic identity, thus resulting in radical attrition. Likewise, te reo Māori was also oppressed by the colonial power of New Zealand with similar effects. While identifying the cause of language endangerment is a relatively easy task, the more challenging task is to persuade the Indigenous communities, the government, and the general public that the Indigenous languages are worth saving.

I have explained the concept of language attrition, now I discuss how to evaluate the endangerment levels. In other words, before any revitalisation work can begin, we must find out how threatened a language is. To evaluate how endangered a language is, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) proposed a simple six-way scheme, as shown in Table1, that categorises language endangerment as safe, at risk, disappearing, moribund, nearly extinct, and extinct.

Table 1 *Language endangerment scale*

Categories	**Description**
Safe	The language is used by at least three generations and in all domains.
At risk	The language starts to lose domains for speaking, e.g., at school.
Disappearing	People start to shift to speak another language within the communities (i.e., within the home environment).
Moribund	The language is no longer passed on to children.
Nearly extinct	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.
Extinct	No remaining speakers.

When a language is *safe*, it is used by at least three generations in all domains. When a language is *at risk*, it starts to be used in limited domains. When a language is *disappearing*, it starts to be replaced by another language within its own community. The final three categories (moribund, nearly extinct and extinct) are characterised by their lack of *intergenerational transmission*, which is an emphasis of Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) that I discuss below.

Fishman (1991) hypothesised an eight-stage language assessment tool – the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), which is widely used by linguists and anthropologists to assess *reversing language shifts* (RLS). According to this scale, the higher the GIDS level, the more endangered the language in question is. In order for an endangered language to regain its intergenerational transmission, it is important for that language to move from 8 to 1 on the scale, with level 1 indicating the language is used widely in all social domains, which is the ultimate goal of a language policy dedicated to language revitalisation. Table 2 below is a simplified version of Fishman's (1991) GIDS. Each stage is listed with a corresponding 'must do'. Note, the 'must do' is not the only measure needed for each stage, as language revitalisation is multi-layered, but it gives a good indication of the level of language use.

Table 2 *Simplified version of GIDS*

Stages	**Must do**
8. The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.	To reassemble/document the language and work with those who still know the language.
7. The generation that is not at a child-bearing age knows the language well enough to interact with one another and are still	To gain a younger cohort and learn the language as Second Language.

socially active. There is no transmission to younger people.	
6. The language is used informally and orally by all 3 generations.	The language must also be an inter-family communication tool that is used within concentrated demography.
5. The language is orally used, with some written form used within the community.	Modicum of literacy (guided literacy) is used to broaden functional periphery, but under intra-communal control.
4. Literacy in the language is transmitted through education.	A language revival programme needs to make sure the children are associated with their cultural reward system.
3. The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders.	The goal of this stage is ethnolinguistic boundary maintenance.
2. The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services.	Be aware of the dominant language influence, and closely monitor the intergenerational transmission.
1. The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level.	Stage one represents 'cultural autonomy'. Still have to be watchful and actively maintain the language.

As Table 2 demonstrates, the gradual loss of language use is also reflected in the limited domains in which it is used. With a diminishing speaker population, before the new speaker population can be established it is crucial to capture the remaining speakers' knowledge about the language in stages 5 to 8, which Fishman (1991) referred to as the "inner defence" (p. 104).

At stage 5, while some literature has rejected the Eurocentric language revitalisation view, where literacy is viewed as essential to civilisation (Whiteley, 2003), Fishman (1991) stressed that literacy is important for broadening the functional periphery of language, e.g., for communication purposes. Regardless of the debate surrounding literacy, in order to move from stage 8 to stage 1, literacy is essential if a minority language community wishes to extend the language's domain, increase its mobility, and to communicate with other communities.

From stage 4 to stage 1, while it seems language revitalisation is on the right track, Fishman (1991) further warned about the danger of being in constant contact with dominant languages as the minority language is integrated into the education system and workplaces where the dominant language is used. A minority language speaker might be tempted to work or study in a bilingual or monolingual situation for better pay or other reasons which puts the revitalisation process at risk. Thus, Fishman (1991) stressed that "any education system

inevitably undercuts RLS rather than contributes to it" (p. 102). In the end, keeping a perpetually watchful eye open is what needs to happen throughout the entire course of RLS, and this requires conscious efforts at local and governmental levels. However, the local and government-sponsored efforts are often short-term, which frustrates the language revivalists (Tang, 2018)

Whilst Fishman (1991, 2001) focused on intergenerational transmission within private domains as a measurement of language endangerment, the *ethnolinguistic vitality* (EV) theory (Harwood et al., 1994; Ytsma et al., 1994) took into account wider prospects to measure the vitality of a language – the more vitality a group has, the more it is likely to survive in an intergroup setting. The ethnolinguistic vitality theory includes three factors: *status*, *institutional support*, and *demography* (Harwood et al., 1994) as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 *Factors of ethnolinguistic vitality*

	Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV)	
Factors	1. Status	• Social • Economical • Political
	2. Demography	• Numbers • Distribution
	3. Institutional Support	• Formal (e.g., government) • Informal (e.g., religion)

While institutional support and demographic factors may be easier to measure, the status factor can be ambivalent; for instance, sometimes a language may still have a large number of speakers but is considered to have less status, and therefore, people may be unwilling to pass the language on to the next generation. This is linked to the community's attitude and beliefs towards this language – the last factor that determines whether a language could be saved. How a community views its language impacts on how much language revitalisation is needed; subsequently, the goal-setting process needs to be adjusted accordingly. However, what counts as successful language revitalisation is often ideologically determined. I further articulate this by explaining the concept of 'ideological clarification' in the following section.

The revitalisation methods for different communities will be vastly different in nature. For example, for languages that have suffered from sudden attrition or have extremely small numbers of speakers left, it may be impossible to establish revitalisation programmes with an aim of increasing the use of the language in the short or medium term. In such cases, language documentation may be the best option. Although language documentation may not

necessarily be carried out with the aim of revitalising an endangered language, it is a necessary step towards language revitalisation when the speaker numbers are in fast decline. As Hinton and Hale (2001) proposed, "the most important thing to do when a language is down to a few speakers is to document the knowledge of those speakers as thoroughly as possible" (p. 413).

In the end, it is important to understand that these scales and measurements must be examined on a long-term basis. Without establishing some sort of chronology in terms of how a language has shifted over time and how its demography and status have changed, the results of any such evaluations are likely to be unfruitful. As Hinton and Hale (2001) stressed, a language revitalisation process does not stop, it is on-going and will be for generations. Even when the language is not on the brink of extinction, the language still needs maintaining (i.e., education needs to continue) and the revitalisation goals need to be constantly re-evaluated, and so does the language policy associated with them.

Ideological clarification

Ideological clarification is the process taken to check the community's attitude and beliefs towards their language (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). While it may sound straightforward, what people think they should do and what they actually do often differ. An example could be the confliction between the speakers' *public belief* and *private belief*, which is normally influenced by social, economic and political factors, such as colonisation, immigration, and shift in political power. Put simply, a speaker could have high regard for the heritage language but refuse to use it in public domains due to socio-political factors. One pertinent description of this problem is labelled the "ethnic revitalisation paradox" (Dobrin, 2014, p. 215), which captures the way people talk about their language and the way they use it can be quite different. Dorian (1998) referred to this underlying issue the 'ideology of contempt', where "a language is despised by association with a stigmatised subordinate population" (Hill, 2002, p. 123). These assumptions are based entirely on "ignorance about the complexity and expressivity of Indigenous languages" (Dorian, 1998, p. 12). Such a view is often shared amongst Indigenous speakers (Hill, 2002) because of the colonising process (McCarty, 2018).

Whilst many public statements of language ideology and beliefs about the heritage languages are positive, often it is the unstated beliefs and ideologies that prevent fruitful effective language policy making and language revitalisation. The untangling of the ideological web about a language is a taxing task because language ideology has myriad layers and is a series of socially, culturally and politically loaded positions of and about a language (Woolard, 1998).

For this reason, it is important to conduct (*prior) ideological clarification* (Austin, 2014; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Grenoble & Whitecloud, 2014) to find out who uses their heritage languages and when, how, and with whom they use their heritage languages (Austin & Sallabank, 2014).

What the future looks like for language revitalisation.

Despite Grenoble and Whaley's (2006) argument that "an honest evaluation of most language revitalisation efforts to date will show that they have failed" (p. ix), many countries have made dedicated efforts to revitalise and preserve Indigenous languages. Although a number of studies have criticised the linguistic assimilatory effect of globalisation, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) argued that globalisation also has a positive effect on minority language revitalisation. In societies that are increasingly homogenous, both culturally and linguistically, many minority communities have reacted to globalisation by asserting their unique cultural and linguistic identity, resulting in the emergence of many language revitalisation programmes (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). In this section, I give examples from different countries around the world where there has been some small success with Indigenous language revitalisation.

At a national level, the preservation of Irish (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006) has been considered, by Li and Mathúna (2012) to be a success for its institutional support that raised awareness for the Irish people, regardless of its limited success in language outcome. For example, in Taiwan, language policies dedicated to Indigenous language preservation have been released in the effort to raise the status of the languages to 'national language' and increase the support for language revitalisation efforts (Dupre, 2017). Additionally, there are localised bottom-up, community-based efforts. These efforts rely on determined individuals (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006), as has been shown to be the case with the revitalisation of Hebrew (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Spolsky, 2004, 2018), the Māori language nest model (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Hinton & Hale, 2001), the Master-Apprentice Programme (Hinton & Hale, 2001) and Hawaiian revitalisation (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). It is worth mentioning that the Hawaiian case is particularly interesting; it differs from the other examples listed above because it was the non-native speakers of the language who were responsible for establishing the language revitalisation programmes (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). This example also underscores the pressures of language revitalisation endeavours "to confront legal and political obstacles" (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 70), as the state had regulated Hawaiian as 'foreign language' for its operations. Thus, the success of the Hawaiian language programme highlights that legal-political reform is needed from the government "when revitalization is linked to state or federal educational structures" (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 98).

In many cases, the localised efforts still require some level of government support and language revitalisation needs both 'top-down' (government) and 'bottom-up' (community) efforts. No matter how big or small these endeavours are, they work towards the same goal, that is, language revitalisation of the mother tongue(s). There has been enough success to warrant optimism. However, simply being optimistic is not enough. There needs to be concrete and consistent support, including language policies that are designated to the preservation of these languages. This also means language policy needs to stop viewing Indigenous/minority languages as *a problem* and more as *a right* or *a resource* (Ruíz, 1984).

Conclusion

I have explained concepts relating to language endangerment and the terminology associated with it. I also have shown why the revitalisation of Indigenous languages is a necessary effort. Historically, there have been successes, but this does not mean that the problem has been solved because there are only a few language revitalisation cases that could be described as successful, and they have to be taken on a case-by-case basis. It is a daunting process to lose one's language; it is, at the same time, an incredibly challenging task to revive a disappearing language. This is not to say that the future of Indigenous languages is one of doom. For a language revitalisation programme to be successful, many factors are required to work together to ensure that, once a programme is up and running, it will have the maximum impact to sustain the use of the language. These factors include the language ideology of the people (speakers or not), the language practice of the community, and the related language policy. While these factors can be unpredictable and multi-layered, it is fair to say that they will not succeed if the goals of language revitalisation are not clear and visible with a long-term plan. At the end of the day, different communities will take different steps to reach their language revitalisation goals. Sometimes, it takes just a handful of committed individuals to drive the success of a language revitalisation programme, and sometimes it needs strong government support to get there. To be able to imagine the future success of language revitalisation, getting a clear picture of the 'now' is pivotal, and this includes the evaluation of the socio-political context. By so doing, the right programme can be established and the real hard work can begin.

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