Documentation, Revitalization, and Benefits for Young Learners and their Communities

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ICLDC 5, March 2017
Supported by NSF Award # 1500720
Background

Endangered language documentation can provide critical resources in support of language reclamation and revitalization (LR).

However, there are many questions about how documentation benefits LR, and especially how these practices may impact children 0-5 and their communities.
Key Questions: #1

◦ How, why, and to what extent does documentation benefit LR efforts?

◦ What are the methods for identifying and evaluating these benefits?

◦ How can we achieve better cohesion between documentation practices and LR goals?
Key Questions: #2

◦ (How) does **child language acquisition** differ in endangerment and revitalization situations?

◦ How can understanding these differences
  ◦ Help us **optimize** these unique language learning environments?
  ◦ Shed light on **language change** in endangerment contexts?
Key Questions: #3

◦ What are the benefits of LR?
  ◦ **Linguistic benefits**: language competence and use
  ◦ **Extra-linguistic benefits**: academic success and well-being
    ◦ Increased fluency and number of speakers
    ◦ Improved mental and physical health
    ◦ Improved academic performance
    ◦ Sense of cultural identity
    ◦ Leadership skills
    ◦ Stronger community and family connections
A cross-disciplinary perspective is critical to improving practices within the field of documentary linguistics, and to ensuring the maximum benefit of language documentation research to the field of linguistics and the broader society.
Agenda-Setting Workshop: October 13-14, 2016 in Washington, DC

Four core topics explored:
- Young learners in LR
- Documentation methods and products in support of LR
- Linguistic outcomes and benefits of LR
- Extralinguistic outcomes and benefits of LR
Who We Are

Network of researchers and practitioners representing descriptive and applied linguistics, public health, language pedagogy, psychology, psychiatry, indigenous studies, education, and child development.

Organizers

Ruth Rouvier, UC Berkeley/ Education Development Center, Inc.
Joanne Knapp-Philo, Education Development Center, Inc.
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Student Research Apprentices

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Working group members

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Richard Oster, University of Alberta
Chris Sims, University of New Mexico
Joshua Sparrow, Brazelton Touchpoints Center/Harvard University
Jennifer Weston, Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project
Workshop Results

Shared findings and preliminary recommendations with 20 DC-area researchers, funders, and federal agency representatives.

Transformed into permanent body which will hold regular workshops and/or conferences to pursue and share collaborative research.

Preliminary Findings: General Issues

- Deficit model predominates
- Little research on LR for ages 0-5
- Existing research is scattered, not widely disseminated, and often difficult to find
- Investigating these questions requires a broad range of skills and expertise, intensive and sustained collaboration between researchers and practitioners in academic and endangered language communities
Preliminary Findings: Institutional Challenges

- There is little academic (and funding) **attention on and support** for research on these issues
- No clear **disciplinary or institutional ‘home’** for research
- Many **barriers** between key groups:
  - academic disciplines, scholarly/professional, academic/governmental
- Few researchers whose **training and focus** is primarily on these issues
- Production of **revitalization-focused materials is not widely valued** within linguistics community
- LR work carries risks for **funding, tenure and promotion** in academia
Recommendations

- Improve coordination, communication and collaboration
- Prioritize research on child development and language acquisition in LR
- Expand scope of language documentation
- Paradigm shift
Improve Coordination, Communication and Collaboration

- Create **professional networks** and institutional infrastructure to improve sharing of knowledge and connecting research with practice.
- Improve **integration of research and practice**
  - Inform research (agendas) with practice and practice-based evidence
  - Promote and support translation/practical applications of research
- Prioritize **community-initiated projects**, and fully involve communities in all stages of project planning and implementation.
Prioritize Research on Child Development and Language Acquisition in LR

Research Priorities

- **Nature of input** being received
- How linguistic, cognitive and social **development** is occurring
- How to enhance and support the **learning process**
- How **cognitive benefits**, such as increased executive function, inhibition and focus, are utilized differently (e.g. ceremony and cultural practices vs. work or school) in different communities
- Contextualize children 0-5 within their families and communities
Expand Scope of Language Documentation

Research Priorities

◦ Acquisition (L1/L2)
◦ Child language use
◦ Child-adult language use
◦ Language shift
◦ Documentation of, and through, revitalization
◦ Sociolinguistic research on documentation and revitalization
Paradigm Shifts

- Create new research paradigm and **protocols for documentation**
- Understand ‘**health**’ as it is defined by communities
- Recognize language and cultural health as **determinants of ‘health’**
- Incorporate community-generated **definitions of language outcomes** and social determinants of outcomes
- Elevate **status of revitalization** within linguistics and academia (including funding priorities)
Dissemination and Next Steps

**LSA poster (January 2017)**

**White Paper (March 2017)**
- Produce a white paper summarizing our findings, recommendations and plans, which we will share with academic, agency, funder and community partners. Sign up [here](#) to receive a copy.

**ICLDC Workshop (March 2017)**
- “*Documentation, Revitalization, and Benefits for Young Learners and their Communities*”: Share our preliminary findings and recommendations, and discuss implementation and solicit feedback from our ICLDC workshop participants.

**Literature Review (Ongoing)**
- Continue to collect, review and summarize research papers and additional popular press articles which directly relate to these issues, in order to create a [library](#) of existing research.

**New Research Projects (Ongoing)**
- Develop collaborative and interdisciplinary research projects among working group participants and outside colleagues to investigate key questions, and explore new methodologies identified by the group.