

Ownership and Language Change in Mutsun Revival

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Language change in the context of the revitalization of Native American languages merits further study. Sources of change have been traced to attrition in the language production of the last speakers, to problematic documentation, and to relearning strategies. This paper explores change at the relearning stage of revitalization in a case study of a Mutsun tribal member learning his language. Mutsun is a Costanoan language of coastal central California belonging to the Yok-Utian family. Analyses of psychological and intellectual mechanisms driving language change during relearning remain scant in the literature. This paper posits the sense of *ownership* as a factor enabling language change through the learning process. The Mutsun learner's sense of ownership is the driving force behind language change in this case study of Mutsun language revival. Data supporting this assertion include decisions made by the learner about language form, function, and usage. I propose that these decisions are evidence of a sense of *linguistic ownership* and *political ownership* felt by the learner and that these license language change.

1. INTRODUCTION.¹ Languages undergoing revitalization often exhibit changes to their phonology, morphosyntax, and lexicon. The sources of these changes can be identified at many points along declining languages' trajectories, trajectories that often include attrition, documentation followed by analysis, and (re)learning. The trajectory of change prior to language revival efforts has inevitable consequences on the grammatical form of the revived language. At the time of revival, these changes will potentially become a part of the newly learned variety of the language. Most importantly, at the stage of revival work, learner agency will play a significant role in shaping the language's form. In this paper I present evidence to suggest that a sense of *language ownership* contributes to learner agency in shaping the ancestral language into a renewed form. I base this idea on two years of my experiences working with a single learner of Mutsun, a California language undergoing revitalization. I will present examples of the learner employing a variety of strategies to address limitations in the resources being used to learn Mutsun. Following clarification of terms used in this essay and a brief overview of Mutsun revitalization, I present a review of various writers' conceptions of ownership. This is followed by an overview of known changes in linguistic structures stemming from increasing disuse, imperfect documentary practices, and new learner usage variants. These, drawn from studies of Mutsun and other languages, inform my subsequent analysis of how the learner's statements, actions, and decisions can contribute to potentially effecting language change.

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2. DEFINITION OF TERMS. Terminology has been used inconsistently throughout the revitalization literature; I will give some basic guideline for the terms I use here, with further clarifications, when needed, in the remainder of the text. I follow Hinton (Hinton 2001a:5) in using *language revitalization* as a blanket term for all activities dedicated to increasing knowledge and speakership of languages that have lost ground to more dominant languages in the context of language shift.

Language shift refers to the process of transitioning from a community's use of their ancestral or heritage language to the language of a more dominant group. *Complete shift* occurs when few or no speakers of the ancestral language remain, while *shift in progress* implies that fewer children are learning it as their mother tongue, that the population of those who can speak it is therefore aging, and that the language is spoken in fewer and fewer domains. This slow decline is called language *attrition*. Fishman's eight point Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Fishman 1991) first codified this process with a score of 1 indicating a language showing early signs of shift and 8 a language with only a few isolated elderly speakers of the ancestral language remaining. Beyond 8, no speakers remain; this was the state of Mutsun prior to reclamation efforts.

The term *reclamation* generally refers to the revitalization of languages with no speakers. Leonard (2007:3) conceives of reclamation as comprising revitalization and *reconstitution*, i.e. "extrapolation from whatever information exists to guess what the language might have been like" (Hinton 2001b:414). Reclamation may involve *modernization* (Hinton 2001b:414), the creation or alteration of lexical items to accommodate the communicative needs and desires of tribal language learners. Reclamation is also a recovery project involving the repatriation of language resources, in physical or digital form, that may be scattered among various public and private collections, so that language revival can proceed. *Revival* is a more general term, quasi-synonymous with reclamation. It differs in that it lacks the implication of agency and ownership rights that reclamation implies, based as it is on the root word *claim*. The term revival is based on the metaphor of death/lifelessness and is applied to the revitalization of languages with no speakers, that we metaphorically bring back to life. L. Frank Manriquez uses a more positive, poetic, and indeed accurate, metaphor for languages that are documented but that currently have no speakers, calling them *sleeping languages* (Hinton 2001b:413). Following the metaphor, as Hinton does, they have the potential to awaken.

3. THE MUTSUN LANGUAGE AND ITS REVIVAL. I characterize Mutsun today as a language that is awakening. From a cultural standpoint, the language has long had an important place in the consciousness of Mutsun people; it is an important part of being Mutsun to know that they are the heirs to a language that defines them as a people in relation to other Native American communities, as well as to other, non-indigenous groups in contemporary society. In the past two decades, a number of tribal members have become familiar with aspects of their language through reclamation efforts. Thus, Mutsun has awakened from a time when, though vital as a cultural and social entity/referent, from a linguistic standpoint, as a "unique formal system" or "an instrument of thought" (Errington 2003:729), it existed solely in field notes and recordings.

The first efforts to revive Mutsun started in the late 1990s, led by a group of tribal members, including Quirina Luna,² linguist Natasha Warner of the University of Arizona, and other non-tribal participants. They produced a brief 15 lesson textbook, a phrase book

²Luna or Luna-Costillas is used, depending on the publication.

including newly created words for contemporary items (such as television), and an audio CD (see Warner et al. 2009, Warner et al. 2007, and Warner & Butler 2006 for accounts of their efforts). These were based on the relatively extensive documentation of Mutsun undertaken until around the time of the death of the last fluent speaker, Ascención Solórsano, in 1930. The language was first documented by Arroyo de la Cuesta in the 1820s as a list of 2874 phrases, called the *Vocabulario* (Arroyo de la Cuesta 1862), and analyzed in his *Gramática Mutsun* (Arroyo de la Cuesta 1861). The best documentation was done by J. P. Harrington in the 1920s and 1930 working with Solórsano (Harrington 1922, 1929–1930). The major undertaking in Harrington was the rehearing of the Arroyo de la Cuesta *Vocabulario*, some of which was unfamiliar to Solórsano (for a number of reasons, which I discuss later in this paper). This work yielded approximately 34,800 pages of fieldnotes. Major analytical work includes Okrand (1977), a grammar based primarily on Harrington's and Arroyo de la Cuesta's work, and the unpublished 253-page English-Mutsun, Mutsun-English dictionary³ prepared by Natasha Warner and Lynnika Butler of the University of Arizona, and Quirina Luna-Costillas of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band.

3.1 A NEW EFFORT. All of these materials were available to the learner in this study, whom I will call Bernat. His work, that I am helping advance, represents a new branch of Mutsun revival, in parallel with continuing earlier efforts, and relies on the existing analytical and pedagogical resources, especially the grammar and the dictionary. This branch of Mutsun revival started as Bernat's individual effort to learn the language and grew into a project offering online lessons and in-person classes to all interested members of the Mutsun community.

My own roles in this new branch of Mutsun revival have been multiple: I provide technical expertise, engage as a learning partner, teach Mutsun language classes, and participate in community events. When I met Bernat, I was doing graduate-level work in linguistics but had no prior knowledge of Mutsun. I was one more European-American male cultivating an interest in the revitalization of Native American languages, but already focusing on the languages of California. This background equipped me with an appreciation of some of the issues surrounding language revitalization with which I approached our partnership, particularly an appreciation of language ownership. As Bernat progressed with his learning and started to produce language lessons for other learners, then to organize language classes, it became apparent that a sense of ownership provided the underpinnings for his actions and decision-making process. A clarification of this notion of language ownership follows.

4. OWNERSHIP OF LANGUAGES. In language revitalization, the question of ownership and when, how, and why it is expressed comes to the fore. It reveals itself as an important theme when one considers that the people who are concerned with preserving or reclaiming their language have had their property appropriated by outsiders in many cases (See Hill 2002:121–122 for a fuller discussion of these issues). This manifests in the form of appropriation of land and cultural objects taken, which are now held in private and public collections rather than residing within the communities whence they came. One of these cultural objects is language. On the one hand, a language's grammatical form and semantic content are recorded by linguists in documents stored outside of communities, in academic and other public or private collections; on the other hand, languages are taken away from communities without

³The version of the dictionary used during this study; it was later updated and is being prepared for publication at time of writing.

being documented, destroyed through cultural genocide. In the latter case, the language is unrecoverable. With documentation, recovery of at least some of the language's structure and lexicon is possible through reclamation. Repatriation of the language's documentation is the first step to reclaiming ownership of their ancestral language. A claim to ownership underlies all revitalization activities. This paper focuses on the feeling or *sense of ownership* of a learner, and how this sense affects decisions in the context of language revitalization. This is a constrained focus that, to be appreciated, requires some understanding of ownership claims within communities. A sense of ownership is informed by an understanding of social, political, historical, and legal realities.

There is no way to establish ownership of a language through US laws. Licensing cannot be used because it applies to individual property and a language is a communal property (see Tatsch 2004). Copyright can be used to a certain extent, e.g., for protecting newly produced materials: the Miami Tribe copyrights all the language materials that they produce through the Myaamia Project because "...proprietary ownership over cultural information and materials is important to the tribal community" (Baldwin 2003:21). Despite this legal roadblock, the rights of indigenous peoples to intellectual property are nevertheless recognized by the United Nations:

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions [...]. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their *intellectual property* [emphasis added], over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 31)

Language is cultural heritage, carrier of traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expression of a community all at once, so this passage may be interpreted as a protection of the rights to claim communal ownership of language. The concept of language as a historical possession of a community is concisely expressed by Errington (2003:727) as he considers a way of thinking about language endangerment that:

...presupposes languages to be *possessions* [emphasis added] of speakers, rather than natural phenomena. Under this profile, endangered languages' values are linked to speakers' shared social biographies and collective identities: They are not natural conditions to be maintained but, rather, rights to be recognized by sources of political authority.

Communities themselves express or perform ownership in a number of ways. A claim of language ownership represents an assertion of sovereignty in the face of tacit counterclaims of "universal ownership" (Hill 2002:122). Ownership may be expressed as the right to keep outsiders from accessing the language of one's community, thereby controlling the community's intellectual property. One elderly Native woman justified keeping the existence of speakers secret from the nearby university: "We don't want people coming around bothering us" (Macri 2010:37). As Macri observes, tribal ownership confers even the right to decide to allow a language to disappear. By this logic, an individual's or a community's decision to teach a language is made from a position of ownership where another choice would have been not to teach the language, thereby retaining exclusive ownership of it, but with the risk of losing the language in subsequent generations. This would be an example of what Errington calls "the shaping effects of those claims [of ownership] on languages

that are their objects” (2003:727). Such shaping effects would also include changes made to a language’s linguistic form during reconstitution and modernization in the context of a language reclamation project.

The question arises then of who among the potentially many stakeholders working on language reclamation has the ownership necessary to make decisions about language form. Evans (2001) contrasts language ownership with language competence, asserting, as does Macri (2010), that ownership generally requires an ancestral relationship to the language, while outsiders, such as linguists, for example, may have competence without ownership. Their expertise permits them to explain and suggest solutions but does not license them to make decisions unilaterally about an ‘object’ that does not belong to them.

Within a community, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) explain language ownership as being variable among speakers. Some members of the community may have ownership of the language while others do not. A number of factors, such as an individual’s societal status and verbal skills, affect who may claim ownership, yet the boundaries of ownership are not clear cut, suggesting that variation in ownership within communities could be based on other factors as well. Individuals who have put a lot of effort into reclamation work of their language, for example, may be perceived as having a stronger claims to ownership than others.

Ultimately, ownership of language confers ownership of “language choices” (Grenoble & Whaley 2006:170) made during revitalization. Neely and Palmer (2009) consider the sense of ownership over such decisions about the language as crucial to the success of any revitalization project. They observe that without ownership of the decisions regarding the future of their ancestral language, communities will not make the total commitment necessary for its revival (p. 290).

While ownership has been expressed, claimed, and/or attributed in a number of contexts, questions remain about the implications of an inherent sense of ownership on a learner’s approach to language reclamation. The literature on ownership presents different facets of the importance of considering languages as cultural property. The particular context explored in this paper is not addressed, however. Hill (2002) does not mention language revival. Macri (2010) discusses ownership as it relates to the ethics of documentation. Neely and Palmer (2009) tie a sense of ownership to success in revitalization, but focus on ownership of decision-making processes. Similarly, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) discuss language ownership and the ownership of language choices, but do not explore how these manifest themselves during language learning.

Such a discussion is necessary to understand situations in which students of the language participate in updating or reconstituting the language, as in the case of Mutsun reclamation. Warner et al. (2007) discuss the role of Mutsun community learners in reconstituting the language, therefore changing it, yet the connection between change and ownership is not explicitly or exhaustively investigated. I believe such an investigation is necessary to uncover the extent to which the two are connected. Without such an investigation, it is difficult to identify the source and origin of some of the less obvious changes or if any have indeed taken place. Also left underexplored is to what extent changes are made consciously, respecting what is known of the language’s grammar, versus the extent to which they are less disciplined and potentially a result of historical factors. Such an exploration is not possible without first taking into account that a language undergoing reclamation has had a particular history of decline and revival that has affected the evolution of its form. I discuss this history of language change in the following section.

5. LANGUAGE CHANGE. Language change can mean many things. It can be understood broadly, as in Errington (2003:729) where language changes due to rapid social change are listed as death, endangerment, and loss of rights. Language revitalization inherently aims to reverse these changes. Reclamation seeks to reverse apparent death by reawakening sleeping languages. It will be evident in my findings that, in certain aspects of language work, the learner is also advancing the reclamation of language rights. I will discuss this as a corollary to a more constrained and linguistically grounded area of change, my main area of concern: changes to grammatical form and the lexicon.

In reclamation, a language comes to us primarily from written records. These represent what I will call a *pathway of transmission*. For sleeping languages, this *written pathway* is usually all that remains; earlier *oral pathways* of transmission have ended. Though language sometimes continues to be transmitted through song, often these songs are understood in their function and intent, but not in their word-for-word meaning.⁴ A few spoken words or phrases, often serving ceremonial or formulaic communicative functions, may also survive. The sum of the written record contains representations of an end state⁵ of the language.⁶ Given that these records will be the basis for revival, it is important to assess what they have preserved of a language that was once vital and ‘complete.’ I will present examples of what can happen to language in the speech of last speakers and during the process of creating written records of this speech. This will establish the context for why Bernat and I had to make decisions about language structures and clarify how these fit into a continuing evolution of the form of the Mutsun language.

This succinct statement on the nature of language change is a good starting point from which to discuss some of the history of Mutsun as it has been transmitted to successive generations:

“...healthy languages continuously change and adapt to changing historical and social circumstances” (Kroskrity 2009:75).

Based on the fact that the last native speaker of Mutsun lived until 1930, we can assume that the ‘natural’ path of transmission, intergenerational transmission from parent to child, finally ended sometime in the mid- to late-19th century. The path of transmission then took the form of written documentation. These documents are a static record, a frozen and unchanging collection of words and phrases. In reading Kroskrity’s statement, we see that it applies to languages that are still spoken, “healthy languages.” So it applies to spoken Mutsun until 1930, but not to the written documentation of Mutsun. Of course, the practice of producing documentation is imperfect and changes can be introduced as imperfections through this mode of language transmission as well. Kroskrity’s statement applies again to languages being revived, as they are in new “historical and social circumstances” after a period of dormancy within written documents. I sketch below ways in which three periods of the language’s history — attrition, dormancy, and revival — can be loci of changes to a language’s linguistic structure.

5.1 A TRAJECTORY OF CHANGE. By Harrington’s account, Ascención Solórsano was a remarkable resource both culturally and linguistically. How then do we account for the fact

⁴This is the case in Mutsun. Several wax cylinders of songs exist, but their quality is too poor for the words to be clearly intelligible.

⁵Not *the* end state.

⁶I use ‘the language’ here as shorthand for ‘the dialects and personal linguistic idiosyncrasies of the speech of particular language consultants,’ which are actually what is documented.

that some of the Arroyo de la Cuesta materials were unfamiliar to Solórsano? Is ‘healthy’ language change since Arroyo de la Cuesta’s time a sufficient explanation? In §5.1.1 and §5.1.2, I will focus on two other possible explanations: attrition in the speaker and errors in the documentation, using evidence from prior scholarship on Mutsun and other languages to suggest answers to these questions. Then in §5.1.3, I will discuss some known and potential language change observed in other revitalization projects.

5.1.1 ATTRITION. Attrition is a decline in the use of, and proficiency in, the language of a community as it is replaced by a new, and increasingly dominant, language. On the community level, opportunities to use the original language decrease as the new language is learned as a first language by more and more children (Elmendorf 1981). This may lead to incomplete acquisition of the original language by successive generations (Sorace 2004:2), and to some forgetting of linguistic forms in individuals who had fully learned the original language. This is individual attrition resulting from community attrition. In any case, whether from forgetting or incomplete learning, last speakers may not be as proficient as earlier generations of speakers. Thus, attrition is characterized by alterations to the speaking population and to the language (Swadesh 1948 in Elmendorf 1981, Babel 2009, Cook 1989, Thiering 2009). In Native American communities, population numbers may remain constant or even increase, but speakership dwindles (Elmendorf 1981) due to changes in language ecology resulting from persecution and cultural repression (Wurm 1991).

Attrition has been documented in a number of individual cases and in a number of different areas of language competence: “Older, forgotten native expressions” replaced by English calques⁷ in the speech of the last speakers of Yuki (Elmendorf 1981:41); loss of spatial semantics in Dene Suliné (Thiering 2009); changes in phonology and phonetics in Northern Paiute (Babel 2009), and Chipewyan and Sarcee (Cook 1989). Certain registers may be lost before others; ‘high language’ which has “more elaborated rhetorical or narrational styles” is lost before colloquial speech in Wappo (Elmendorf 1981:39).

Attrition may then be the first locus of change in the revival of languages that were documented from the speech of the last speakers. The grammatical forms of many languages will have been altered in the process of attrition by the time they are recorded. Why did Ascención Solórsano not understand or know all of the words and phrases in the Arroyo de la Cuesta *Vocabulario* and *Gramática*? As the above research indicates, individual attrition is one possible cause. Another is that there were errors in Arroyo de la Cuesta’s documents.

5.1.2 DOCUMENTATION. Indeed, the act of documenting a language creates several potential loci for language change. These include limitations in orthography, poor penmanship, and even typesetting errors⁸ if handwritten manuscripts are later printed. Prior to the availability of good quality audio and video recording equipment,⁹ reliance on written documentation resulted, to varying degrees, in a necessarily inadequate record of the language. The contents of field notes as well as the actual form of the transcription are potential sources for language change.

Documentation results from collaboration with a speaker, whom I will refer to as a *consultant*, the term preferred over the more traditional *informant* that presents the speaker as a passive mouthpiece for the language rather than as an active participant in presenting and

⁷Word-for-word translations of phrases or compound words into another language

⁸Mentioned by Warner in her introduction to the forthcoming Mutsun dictionary (Warner et al. n.p.).

⁹Fairly high quality reel-to-reel recorders were commercially available in the 1950s; consumer video cameras became available in the 1980s.

explaining aspects of the language in a personal thoughtful way. Grinevald (2003) makes the point that there are many types of consultants with diverse abilities: grammatical intuition, encyclopedic knowledge, or command of several registers, for example. This distinction of active versus passive is important in that seen in this light, what gets documented is as much, if not more, a function of the speaker's decisions on what and how language is being shared and explained as it is of the fieldworker's questions. A choice not to share ceremonial registers, for example, would result in these not getting documented (note that these are decisions made from a position of ownership). Choice of consultants matters also for the language they are speaking; a field worker may unknowingly be collecting data from a related dialect, or a pidgin. This is certainly possible with Arroyo de la Cuesta who was working with a mixed mission population speaking a number of dialects and languages from the regions surrounding Mission San Juan Bautista.

In light of this, either party may be responsible for limitations in documentation. The balance depends on the consultant's willingness and ability to volunteer and explain linguistic information and the fieldworker's depth and care taken in questioning, as well as a dedication to obtaining a rich explanation of the language being offered by the consultant (Grinevald 2003). This would primarily have an effect on what gets left out and what gets misunderstood or misinterpreted in the interview process during documentation. Insufficiently nuanced translations may result. Okrand comments on Harrington's missed opportunity to obtain more specifics from his consultants: "Harrington does little comparison of similar forms to bring out the difference in meanings between them" (1977:9).

Transcription itself can be inadequate, a serious epistemological issue. C. Hart Merriam's transcription system based on English orthography predictably left out or obfuscated any phonetic information that was not already encoded in English orthographic conventions (Berman & Merriam 2002:428). Berman's investigation of Merriam's work on Palewyami, a California language, systematically identifies instances of phonetic simplification in Merriam's work. Similarly, Arroyo de la Cuesta's work is found to be "...suffering from transcriptional deficiencies..." Okrand (1977:3). Arroyo de la Cuesta wrote in Spanish, yet used Catalan equivalencies for his transcriptions of Mutsun (Arroyo de la Cuesta 1862). Nevertheless, the phonology of Mutsun could not be accurately captured in the orthographic system of either language. Prior to the development of phonetic alphabets such as the Americanist Phonetic Alphabet (APA) specifically to transcribe Native American languages, researchers were left to their own devices, with varying results (see Mithun 1999:20–22 for a sketch of the APA's development). Harrington, working in the first half of the twentieth century, had an excellent ear and used a highly detailed and nuanced transcription system. Some of his notations were integrated into the APA, but many were not and some are still not fully understood. In his case, the problem is not inadequacy in the transcription, but rather a partial opacity of his system to subsequent researchers using his notes (Anderton 1991, Okrand 1977).

Aside from the important problem of having absent or insufficient documentation of a language, the documentation may be compromised in a number of other ways. This has an effect on the form of the language that will emerge in the revival process. When existing documentation, in combination with the knowledge base of remaining speakers, serves as the basis for language revival, both of these sources may have already encoded changes which will be integrated into the language as it is relearned. Limitations will have to be addressed in reconstitution, as attempts to use the language lead to the discovery of missing, ambiguous, or incomprehensible records of the language.

5.1.3 RENEWAL. Thus far the activities discussed have centered on the preservation of language. The next phase, which I call renewal,¹⁰ includes the activities that lead to language learning in the context of revival. Renewal activities include the actual acquisition techniques but, more importantly, preliminary steps such as grammatical analysis, dictionary writing, and the development of orthographies and learning aids (Paulston, Chen & Connerty 1993, Warner & Butler 2006, Neely & Palmer 2009). These are interrelated; the creation of pedagogical materials, for example, is usually based on reference materials produced through processing and analysis of field notes. Also included would be the reconstitution and modernization processes, often necessary in language revival as gaps in the documentation are discovered during the act of trying to learn a moribund or sleeping language. This learning process is the final step in producing new speakers. I will focus on changes to language form emerging during reconstitution and relearning.

5.1.3.1 RECONSTITUTION. A teachable language may be developed through a variety of processes, including standardization and combination. Standardization, the selection of one variety of a language to become the ‘official’ version, facilitates teaching literacy and simplifies the creation of pedagogical materials, but privileges one variety of the language over all others. This is not a possible outcome for Mutsun or other languages with no speakers or a few partial speakers. Revival of such languages relies on the combination of data from all available resources. The reconstitution of a language may be the product of, for instance, the speech of the remaining speakers (of potentially different varieties of the language) blended with documentation produced by other speakers and the historical field notes of several linguists. Reconstitution through combination of these resources will result in an amalgamated form different from any one that was originally spoken, but will yield the most complete version of the language possible.

Another attested strategy that results in a new variant is using a related language to fill in the gaps. Wampanoag in Massachusetts is documented in a Bible translated into Wampanoag in 1663 and in a large number of legal documents and personal letters (Baird 2010). However, since the language had not been spoken in several generations, pronunciation was unknown. A still-spoken neighboring Algonquian language, Passamaquoddy, was used as a model for reconstituting Wampanoag phonology (Baird, pers. comm., 2010). The potential for change here is evident when borrowing a phonological system to recreate an oral ‘representation’ of the language in the total absence of speakers. When necessary, the lexicon was reconstituted using proto-Algonquian as the source, and diachronic transformation, to arrive at some of the unrecorded Wampanoag words. No Costanoan languages closely related to Mutsun are spoken today to help model phonology, but their documentation could potentially be used to reconstitute Mutsun lexical items. This strategy that has not yet been attempted.

To clarify, reconstitution is not an attempt to bring a language back to a mythic ‘original’ or ‘pure’ state. This would be a misunderstanding based on the fallacy that language change equals language degeneration. What the ancestors had were more complete versions of the language, ones that could serve all the communicative needs of their speakers. Reconstitution is a pragmatic undertaking aimed at restoring completeness. What learners want today is a language that can serve their needs, whatever they may be; reconstitution, in conjunction with modernization, can be useful for meeting these needs.

¹⁰This usage overlaps largely with Leonard’s (2007:2–3), though here it refers more strictly to the pedagogical aspects of reconstitution and revitalization.

5.1.3.2 RELEARNING. The relearning stage of revitalization presents several loci for changes to a language's form. Learners themselves may innovate to produce novel variants of the language. This is the stage at which the present study is situated. In the acquisition process, both teachers and learners may alter phonetic and phonological features of unfamiliar sounds; speakers of English sometimes choose to ignore glottalization, for example (Goodfellow & Alfred 2002). This may emerge as a strategy privileging learnability over total command of the language's more challenging aspects. Alternatively, the cause may be insecurity: perhaps making unusual sounds crosses a boundary that puts the learner in a frighteningly unfamiliar place. Inability to produce certain sounds may also leave learners feeling inadequate or inauthentic. In the absence of a strong model, such as a living community of speakers to emulate, some sounds may be perceived as 'too foreign' just as the idea of going back to living a traditional lifestyle may seem undesirable to people living in the twenty-first century. Thus the cause of such sound changes could be called linguistic conservatism with English as the standard.

Learner-driven change is not restricted to phonology. Kwak'wala on the western coast of Canada is being learned in schools as an L2. Loss of glottalization and calques from English have emerged in the language produced by younger speakers influenced by Canadian mainstream culture (Goodfellow & Alfred 2002). They transfer the structure of English into Kwak'wala (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 1982). In Australia, due to the rise of English over a period of four generations; "...younger speakers' Tiwi shows changes in phonology, lexicon, noun classification, syntax, and, above all, in verbal constructions" (Dorian 1994:481–482).

Disapproval of new forms by older speakers of a more traditional variety can hamper efforts to preserve a language. The classic form of Tiwi, for example, is not understood by younger speakers, yet attempts to teach a comprehensible intermediate version are rejected by elders. Across languages, such changes and the reactions they elicit may be problematic on a number of levels, but Goodfellow (2003) argues in favor of accepting new versions of these languages. See also Bentahila & Davies (1993) who consider transformation as a valid form of language maintenance in the case of European minority languages. This is my position as well.

This overview illustrates ways that change can occur along the trajectory of language attrition, documentation, and revival. Much of the literature focuses on the effects of attrition and, to a lesser extent, on shortcomings of documentation. Studies of language change during the relearning process tend to focus on descriptions of learner language variants and the often negative attitudes towards such variation. Analyses of mechanisms driving language change during relearning remain scant in the literature. Through an analysis of a case study of an individual learning Mutsun, I will suggest that ownership is such a mechanism licensing language change during the learning process.

6. METHOD

6.1 GOAL. This research aims to pinpoint how a language that is no longer spoken undergoes change in the context of revival. Without full documentation, an impossibility in any case, the revival of a sleeping language will necessitate changes because of the need to recreate missing elements of its linguistic structure and inventory, reconstitution, and to coin new terms for lexical items that never existed or did not get documented, modernization. The role of the learner in these changes is particularly important since it is only the tribal-member learner, rather than a non-tribal-member linguist, who can claim ownership of the language. I stand

with Warner, Luna, and Butler (Warner et al. 2007) in asserting that the linguist can explain and suggest ways in which remedies can be applied, but cannot make decisions about making changes to the language; only tribal members can do so. Given these constraints, language change is only possible within the context of tribal ownership. Instances of expression of ownership need to be identified and analyzed as loci of language change. What those changes may be will follow from the specific individual instances of expression of ownership in the context of gaps in the language documentation. Thus, it is crucial to investigate the effect of ownership on decision-making about language form during the learning process. The particular case I present here is significant in that it represents an early stage in revival when the issues of inadequate documentation and its remedies are actively being engaged.¹¹

6.2 CONTEXT. This paper answers research questions using source material collected as part of a larger long-term study of one learner's efforts to learn Mutsun in the context of the wider Mutsun language revitalization project. My involvement in the project has increased as I have continued working with Bernat and expanded my activities to teaching language classes and participating in tribal events and programs. This model, in which the researcher engages with a community beyond the time frame and the specific focus of a study, has been labeled *empowering research* (Cameron et al. 1992 in Rice 2010) and *action research* (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). Within this model, the present paper addresses a more constrained area of focus as a case study (Smith 1978) of Bernat's efforts to learn Mutsun.

This is a long-term qualitative study, to which Bernat has made a four-year commitment. I am a participant-observer working directly with Bernat as a linguistic adviser, tutor, and co-learner. I also provide guidance about learning methodology. I use this approach because I am not interested simply in documenting and quantifying *progress* in language acquisition. I am interested in examining the *process* or the approach to language learning that Bernat takes. I do not have expectations in terms of what Bernat will accomplish, but rather I am interested in what phenomena might emerge from the attempt to learn a language under these particular circumstances. I support the learner on a path to language acquisition that keeps him engaged and therefore increases his chances of success.

Meetings take place at the Native American Language Center at my University of California campus. This is a modest office with two desks, shelves of books, and a microfilm reader station. Our meetings are essentially tutoring and advising sessions during which Bernat and I sit at a desk with various documents laid out, computers open, and discuss aspects of the language, learning strategies, and his activities in tribal affairs. This last area of discussion is important in the assessment of what I call *political ownership*, as defined in §6.3.2.

We planned to meet on a weekly basis, but in practice meet less often, usually due to scheduling conflicts and the emergence of other commitments. Each meeting usually lasts about one hour, but ranges between half an hour to almost two hours. A few meetings happened over the phone. By the end of the first year, we had met a total of 26 times.

At the beginning of the second year, we enrolled in a ten week course offered by the Native American Studies department. Called 'Teaching and Learning Indian Languages,' or NAS 107, the course introduced methods useful for working on languages that are rarely or never taught in an academic setting. Students learned a Native American language of their choice by adapting a series of tasks and exercises to their target language while also learning to use these tasks as effective teaching methods. Bernat and I applied this to Mutsun. During

¹¹For a fuller overview of these issues in Mutsun see Warner et al. (2007).

this period, classes took the place of our regular meetings. When they resumed, after the class ended, Bernat's focus shifted from purely personal learning to include outreach to the rest of the Mutsun community. Encouraged by his experiences in NAS 107, he began to produce lessons for the tribal membership that he distributed through e-mail and on a private Mutsun social media site. He also started organizing daylong Mutsun language classes that were hosted on the campus of UC Santa Cruz every two months. By the end of the two-year study period he had produced 54 on-line lessons and organized three daylong language classes.

To summarize: We met 26 times in the first year. This was followed by 10 weeks of NAS 107 classes, called meetings 27–31. Bernat started writing and sending out the first language lessons by meeting 32. After NAS 107 we met 23 times in the second year. The first Mutsun class at UCSC took place after the 40th meeting, the second after the 45th, and the third after the 50th. We had a total of 54 meetings in two years.

6.3 DATA COLLECTION

6.3.1 SOURCE MATERIAL. Data were drawn from the written and audio-recorded documentation of our work during this two-year period. 44 of the 54 meetings were audio recorded. The first five were not audio-recorded, but summarized in detail within a few hours. I did not audio record the NAS 107 classes; I produced written summaries based on in-class jottings I made about Bernat's activities and our classroom conversations. I labeled these documents "meetings" 27–31, for sorting purposes. I produced summaries of many of the recorded sessions as well. These are typically less detailed; some are simply a few lines to note the main activities of the session and any significant event pertaining to Bernat's learning activities.

6.3.2 ELABORATING CODES. To extract useful information from the source material, I first sought to clarify the notion of ownership. The following is elaborated from my notes written at this stage.

We must distinguish between *political* ownership, which is assumed because the language is the ancestral language of the group, and *linguistic* ownership. The latter is defined by the ability and willingness to make decisions about language form, function, and usage, as well as actual engagement in this process. These decisions bear on the linguistic aspects of the language, not the political aspects of its existence as a cultural property. Political decisions require no knowledge or understanding of the language. Such decisions are made about the language as a "commodity" (Macri 2010:40). On the other hand, linguistic ownership can only be achieved by knowing the language to some extent. To make decisions about its form, function, and usage, one must be knowledgeable about the gaps in understanding in each of these areas. These gaps result from imperfect and incomplete documentation, and from conceptual and material advances in the world that have occurred since the language was last spoken and recorded. There is a need to make decisions in the areas of grammar and lexicon to reconstitute and modernize the language. Such decisions, made by a tribal member learning the language, are evidence of a sense of linguistic ownership. In summary:

Linguistic Ownership—A type of ownership that becomes a factor when the learner has some mastery of the language. Specifically, the learner is able to understand the basic structure of the language, has the ability to read it, is able to use the documentation to work on the language, and, crucially, understands the limitations of the available sources and

documentation. Essentially, the learner is able to make decisions about the language based on personal knowledge of the language.

Political Ownership—A type of ownership for which it is most useful to conceptualize language as an object or a “commodity” (Macri 2010:40). Knowledge of the language is not necessary to claim political ownership. Rather it is a type of ownership that involves making decisions about what can be done with the language. Just like an object, it can be shared, it can be shown to a new audience, and access to it can be restricted. These are essentially political decisions. As a high-ranking tribal member, Bernat had opportunities to make such decisions, so this type of ownership was expressed in the data.

6.3.3 CODING. Coding involved several steps. I initially coded the written meeting summaries for *political ownership* and *linguistic ownership*. Based on this initial coding, I located and transcribed sections of the audio recordings that contained relevant passages to use as data. For the meetings that were not audio recorded, I used excerpts of my written summaries themselves as data. Because a number of audio recordings had no written summaries, or very brief ones, the data extracted from the 54 meetings are not exhaustive. It is likely that more instances could be found in the remaining audio recordings. However, I believe that there is sufficient data in the material that was transcribed for valid conclusions to be drawn, given that my analysis is not reliant on massive replication of a phenomenon.

7. FINDINGS

7.1 LINGUISTIC OWNERSHIP AND LANGUAGE CHANGE. I divide language change that is effected due to linguistic ownership into two types. *Implicit* change refers to changes that are assumed to be taking place because of decisions made during the language learning process. That is to say, the changes are not fully understood because it is unclear if the language being produced by the speaker accurately reflects how the language was spoken when it was still vital. In a sense, these changes are assumed to occur because there is no native speaker who can correct the learner’s language production. The limitations inherent in documentation are the primary cause of these outcomes. Exact pronunciation of speech sounds, for example, is impossible to fully convey in written descriptions. Lexical items and their functions are never exhaustively described, leading implicitly to potential changes in their meanings when documents are the only source of information on the language.

Overt language change refers to changes that are the result of deliberate choices made to replace missing elements of the language. The most well-known instance of this in language revitalization is the creation of new words for objects and concepts that were not known at the time a language was documented or that were simply not documented. Kimura and Counciller (2009:137–138) provide a list of strategies for doing this in Hawaiian, for example. These include extension of the meaning of a particular word to add to it an aspect of meaning that it did not originally have, and *compounding*, or the combination of two known words to produce new meaning. These types of language changes are easier to identify than implicit changes.

The data show that decisions can also be overt or implicit. There are few instances of decisions that are articulated as such. Rather, the data consist mostly of the learner demonstrating ownership in his thinking process. The result is a potential change in the language. Not all instances result in overt language change, but the importance of these findings is that they uncover some of the mechanisms that operate in the learning process of

a language that is simultaneously being revived. It is these mechanisms that are potential loci of language change.

7.1.1 EXPRESSIONS OF LINGUISTICS OWNERSHIP LEADING TO OVERT LANGUAGE CHANGE.

A number of instances of overt language change were found in the data. The clearest example was in the 53rd meeting, when Bernat and I had been working for nearly two years. The dictionary has several words for daughter, but all are very specific to who is speaking and the age of the daughter. A general term for daughter is not specified.

Here Bernat decides that the meaning of one of these words will be expanded.
(B= Bernat, L= myself in all examples)

- (1) L: so we're gonna say that *onespun* is the general word for *daughter*?
B: mhm.

Bernat elaborates:

- (2) B: Well if you talk about your daughter you use *tawre*, if you talk about someone else's daughter you use *onespun*, that's kind of what I was thinking

The change effected here is extension of a specific meaning to a general meaning.

The next example is also a type of expansion of the meaning of a lexical item. It occurs in the 21st meeting, late in the first year of work. Bernat is translating a short speech he has written in English that he wants to speak in Mutsun to greet an audience he will be addressing. Here the word for chairperson is needed for the opening of the speech. This word does not appear in the dictionary, so Bernat uses *leader* as a substitute.

- (3) B: [...] I looked for *chairperson*, there is a word for *leader*, so I just put that. "I am the leader of the Amah Mutsun."

The use of *leader* for *chairperson* is interesting because the words share some semantic equivalency. In English, the role of chairperson in various different organizations may be defined differently. In most cases it seems to be simply a designation that confers some organizational responsibilities to one member of a group. In this sense the chairperson leads in making certain types of decisions. A leader also does this, though the meaning can include unquestioned authority. However, the amount of authority and the scope of this authority is defined by the group that the leader belongs to.

These are two examples of semantic extension of a lexical item. There is evidence that extension could become a common type of language change in the revival of Mutsun. This evidence comes from my written summary of one of our early meetings as we are discussing tools and methods for moving forward despite the limited inventory of lexical items available in the documentation:

- (4) 5th meeting summary
He mentioned possibly using a thesaurus to find different ways of saying the same thing which may be more easily translatable.

This idea is subsequently implemented. By the 21st meeting, 7 months later, Bernat's use of a thesaurus is standard practice. Here Bernat reports on his efforts to find specific words in the Warner dictionary. I include the entire exchange here to give context to the last line where

the learner establishes his regular use of the thesaurus. The passage also shows evidence of the learner affirming his linguistic ownership by deciding that the word *approval* would be appropriate. We can see the enthusiasm of the learner which makes very credible the easy affirmation in the last line.

- (5) 21st meeting
 0:19:45
 B: *assistance* and *guidance*, I did not find no *assistance* and no *guidance*, and I did not find *help*.
 L: you didn't find *help*?
 B: no *assistance*, *guidance*, *help*. "we ask for..." approval, how about *approval*? *Approval* would work.
 L: ok let's...
 B: this is what I like, I do like this, trying to find out alternate words.
 L: You should uh, you should pick up your thesaurus in English and see all the things that would be similar.
 B: yeah, I do that at home.

In this same meeting, during which we worked primarily on translation, many more instances of linguistic ownership were evident in attempts to find near-synonyms and extend their meaning. Again, we are searching through the English-Mutsun dictionary.

- (6) 0:38:40
 L: do you need *repair* for anything?
 B: Well, we can use that for *healing*, you know?
- (7) 0:41:08
 B: another word that I don't know, that's *known*. You know "the earth and in particular the land known as popolotcho." *Known*, *identified*, *known* is not there. There is *know*, but not *known*. [...] or just named. {identifying a substitute word}

It is interesting to note that in the last example the learner does not pursue the path of transforming *know* into *known* but rather thinks of a near-synonym, *named*, for *known as*. This clearly shows that there may be several options for resolving a specific deficit in the documentation. Linguist and learner may have different impulses; mine would have been to investigate the possibility of a grammatical transformation of *know* to *known as*, for example, while Bernat's was to use a quasi-synonym. The choice made by the learner, given his Mutsun ancestry, is the privileged one in the context of language ownership.

Compounding was also attempted as a solution to limitations in the documentation of lexical items. This was at the beginning of our second year, during the academic quarter spent in language class NAS 107 working on a unit covering techniques for learning languages as self-learners. For this assignment we were asked to compile a list of color terms in our language from available resources. The dictionary gives one word meaning *blue* or *green*: *cutsu*.¹² There is also no word for *brown*. Bernat tried to find ways to distinguish the colors. He looked up words for natural items that could be used to form compounds to disambiguate *cutsu* and to create a compound color word for *brown*. These are from my written notes of our classroom activities:

¹²This may be the Mutsun equivalent of *grue*, but later versions of the dictionary give *cutsu* as green and no word for blue. It would be premature to make the claim that *cutsu* is *grue*.

(8) 27th meeting 1

He then looked for words for objects that were of a certain color. Since Mutsun has no distinct terms for *green* and *blue*, he looked up *sky* and *leaf*, *ground* and *earth* for brown.

7.1.2 EXPRESSIONS OF LINGUISTIC OWNERSHIP LEADING TO IMPLICIT LANGUAGE CHANGE.

Lexical changes can also be implicit. A word may have been documented, but with only basic or partial information about its meaning and usage. One instantiation of this is the case of different Mutsun words for which identical definitions are given. Specifics about their appropriate context of use have been lost.

In the next example, six entries were found in the dictionary for *gather*. Two of these seemed appropriate to talk about a meeting or gathering of people. These are from the dictionary (Warner et al. 2005:53).

- (9) *gather v*. keye. Other mng: collect, come together.*
gather v. moyce. Other mng: collect, come together.*

No other information is given about the meanings. In his translation of a short speech, Bernat decides to use both words.

(10) 0:09:24

B: [...] Okay by using it twice, so I'll use one in one place and one in another place maybe, just to keep, just to try and learn different words that way.

Notice that the reason is given that it will be good to learn both words. They are seen as perfectly synonymous. What is unclear is what the difference in meaning was originally, if any. In this case, the change in meaning of the lexical items may be a narrowing or possibly an extension. It is impossible to know. Though there is no way to know with certainty, it is likely that some aspect of the meanings of at least one these words is implicitly changed when they are used synonymously.

Implicit phonological change is also evident. Okrand (1977) describes aspects of the prosody of Mutsun, but Warner has found data that may call for a reexamination of his conclusions. In an e-mail, Warner responded to our questions about word stress:

- (11) I can get back to you in a couple days about stress. We spent a good while trying to figure out what to do about it. In this particular case, there are good reasons to not do what Okrand's grammar describes.

In light of this, I did not seek to impose stress patterns I'd adopted from Okrand (1977) during the following exchange from our 45th meeting. Here Bernat asserts linguistic ownership in response to my stress pattern.

(12) 45th meeting

0:52:20

L: so when I say kanraakat, or kanraakat {corrects vowel quality}, that's "my name". You know that, from Angie's class {referring to NAS 107}?

B: yeah

L: kan is mine

B: yeah, yeah

L: so it's kanraakat {I place stress on second syllable}

- B: I say kanrakat {places strong stress on final syllable}{laughs}
 L: whatever you say, kanrakat {I adopt B's stress pattern}
 B: Whenever, that day, it's the first thing you said...and it just threw me off {laughs}
 L: kanraakat {B's stress pattern}, I'll say it like that

Remaining in the realm of phonology, some implicit language change derives from decisions made about pronunciation, decisions which are expressions of linguistic ownership. In the following example, the learner and I are listening to a recording made by the revival group from the 1990s. We are writing a pronunciation key and attempting to describe one of the more challenging phonemes in Mutsun, a type of retroflex /t/¹³ which is written as <T> in the current orthography. This sound is discussed at length in Okrand (1977:20–24) where he attempts to make sense of Harrington's transcriptions and descriptions. Here Bernat and I are making decisions that will affect how the language is pronounced by other learners who use our pronunciation key.

(13) 4th summary

The symbol *T* in the phrasebook was found to correspond to the symbol *tR* in the textbook. These symbols represent the Mutsun sound which sounds like English *tr* with *tch* color. We agreed from listening to the recordings that this was a fair characterization of the sound and made the entry into the pronunciation key.

Note that our written description is based on another written transcription and description of a sound that is unrecoverable today since it was not audio recorded. Our current pronunciation is an interpretation of a written description, and as such it is likely to be somewhat different from the original sound. This is not problematic, since pronunciation of languages is constantly in flux. I have simply isolated a potential cause of flux for one speech sound in Mutsun.

7.2 POLITICAL OWNERSHIP AND LANGUAGE CHANGE. In its simplest form, *political ownership* means owning the rights to the language. Change here, therefore, implicates not only linguistic change, but also Errington's conception of language change as loss of language rights (2003:729). Owning the rights to the language can be reified to also mean actually owning, or at least owning copies of, the texts documenting the language. Hinton identifies acquiring such documentation as the first step to reclamation of a sleeping language (2001b:413). The importance of this is that without access to the materials, potential learners of a language such as Mutsun, whose grammatical structure is only accessible through field notes and other documents, cannot even begin. To work on a language, one must have access to the language. Granting access is another expression of political ownership.

7.2.1 MATERIALS. Evidence of this basic ownership was expressed several times in the data. Here I discover that Bernat has, and therefore the tribe has, copies of all of the Harrington notes. This is material ownership of the physical object that contains the language.

(14) 28th meeting

I also found out today that he [Bernat] has copies of all the Harrington material on CDs. I offered to give him hard copies of the files I am copying now, that's when he told me he had gotten them from Q? or N? when she went to copy them at the Smithsonian a few years ago.

¹³This is a /t/ pronounced with the tongue tip touching further back along the roof of the mouth.

The Mutsun also own copies of all the recordings of songs made in the 1930s. Note that this is not exclusive ownership, since the Smithsonian owns the original wax cylinders.

(15) 8th meeting
0:43:05

L: yeah, that's great that you have that song, those songs

B: we got 37 of these songs here. We got wax cylinders and the copies made...

During our work, a new Mutsun song comes to light from a newly discovered document.

(16) 53rd meeting
0:19:44

B: so we got a new song, but this right here [unclear], we didn't have this in our repertoire

L: it's clearly Mutsun

The next example indicates a sense that the Mutsun should be in possession of their language in whatever form it currently exists. These forms are objects to be owned.

(17) 35th meeting
0:09:43

L: [...] so that would be an area of research that would be associated with getting the language taught is to make sure it's being taught correctly by consulting the source material.

B: well then that's another thing we should put in the grant is developing a comprehensive or complete, as complete as possible, library of all matters and materials related to Mutsun, you know, our language, we should have just a comprehensive library...

A political decision is also made to try to secure funding to analyze and research the language further. This is a recognition of the need to understand the structure of the language. The state of knowledge about the language will advance as a result of a political act. Note that this decision does not require any linguistic knowledge.

(18) 0:11:49

L: {summarizing notes of conversation about planning language program and relevant grant application} So I put down: comprehensive resources database, continued analysis and databasing of Harrington and other materials, correction and addition to dictionary and grammar. And under the heading of: additional research on the language.

B: yeah, see that's all gonna be time, time that a consultant will get paid for.

Political ownership can also be expressed by controlling authority to use the language, choosing to hire linguists or language teachers, creating contexts for language use, and disseminating the language.

7.2.2 AUTHORITY TO USE THE LANGUAGE. In this area, the right to use the language limits who has access to the language and therefore who can make changes to the language. There are several instances of controlling access in the data. In the first case, Bernat is talking about another tribal member, his contact, who participated in earlier efforts to revive Mutsun.

(19) 4th meeting

It was one of his [Bernat's] tasks to ask his contact about a few more sounds we weren't sure about last time. He said he got some new information but had had a falling out with his contact and therefore had not been able to get all the information.

Bernat's contact has ownership of some linguistic aspects of the language, i.e., "the information." Bernat wants this information, which is a commodity, but the contact is withholding it, thereby controlling access. This is an act of political ownership.

The next passage reveals another instance of political ownership expressed through control of access to existing teaching materials. Note the use of the term "authorization" which signals that someone has exclusive ownership of the materials, and can decide who may access them.

(20) 27th meeting 2

[...] he is currently on bad terms with one of the authors of the textbook. He also said that for teaching purposes it would be good to use the textbook, but that getting authorization to do so may be difficult given the circumstances. There was talk of the possible need to create new materials if these were not allowed to be used.

This time the problem revolves around access to existing pedagogical materials. Interestingly, the claim is closer to what mainstream American culture would recognize as copyright ownership or intellectual property as discussed by Macri (2010) and Tatsch (2004).

Language planning implies controlling the authority to use the language. As tribal chair, Bernat has very definite plans for the future of the language.

(21) 32nd meeting

At the end of our meeting he asserted that in 25 years he would like to make Mutsun the official language of the tribal council and hold meetings in Mutsun exclusively.

Given the state of Mutsun today, it is clear that this directive would engender many changes to the language so it could serve as an effective means of conducting official business. Thus a political decision to work towards this stated goal would drive the direction of language change, namely developing the ability to use language appropriate to council meetings.

8. DISCUSSION. The evolution of the form of the Mutsun language in the past 200 years reflects its history of decline, sleep, and reawakening. Through oral and later written pathways of transmission, the language has survived. The written record that serves as the basis for revitalization reflects alteration to the language's form introduced into these pathways. This is not a unique situation; changes encoded into Mutsun are not novel and have been documented in other languages with similar histories. During reawakening, i.e., in revitalization, language rights and ownership are salient to success, but also to the form of the language that emerges from revival efforts. As a concept, language ownership is generally understood as a right that indigenous people have over a language that is their cultural property. This ownership manifests in identifiable ways during relearning, in particular when tribal learners work with linguists on needed reconstitution and modernization. Expressions of political ownership and linguistic ownership are evident in these and other aspects of language reclamation work.

Political and linguistic ownership thus both have a bearing on language change. The importance of political ownership cannot be overstated, since it gives tribal groups access to

and control of their languages. In this sense it is a crucial component of language revival efforts. It provides the context within which languages can be learned by new generations. It is this type of ownership that Hill (2002) discusses as an issue of sovereignty for indigenous people. It is also the type that I believe Neely and Palmer (2009) are referring to in their claim that ownership is necessary for successful revitalization. As learning progresses, linguistic ownership develops and informs decisions about changes to language. By identifying the effects of linguistic ownership during learning it is possible to draw coherent conclusions about how ownership licenses language change.

Reclamation represents an assertion of language rights expressed through an act of ownership, tacitly advancing language change in the broader sense, as recovery of lost language rights (Errington 2003:729). The sense that one is empowered to make decisions about the future of one's language informs the choice to move forward with language revival. It is with this sense of political ownership that a community faced with incomplete documentation might simply decide that their ancestral language is lost and not revivable, or, conversely, decide that what is left should be learned, can be expanded, and should serve as the basis for language revival. This is where linguistic training becomes crucial in the process; while political ownership may be conferred through ancestry, linguistic ownership must be acquired through learning. Whether access to linguistic training comes in the form of an external linguist working with tribal communities or in the form of a community member trained in linguistics, the result is the same. As the language is learned, reconstitution and modernization can take place with a focus on what learners want to say.

Political ownership also sets the stage for community access to the language. We see this in the planning of language lessons, the decision to use newfound language materials in songs, the acquisition of language materials from the Smithsonian archives, and the decision to seek funding for further analytical work on the language. However, political ownership can also be contentious within the community. Disagreements may arise when more than one person or group decides that they want to work on the language but are at odds. This sort of dynamic is not unique to this group. In groups where a few speakers remain, each may claim to speak correctly while claiming others are speaking the language incorrectly.

The act of learning the language can be conceptualized as an attempt to acquire fuller ownership by adding linguistic ownership to the already claimed political ownership. The usual sense in which we think of learning a second language is that we are learning a language that is not our own. From the perspective of a monolingual English-speaking Californian, French, for example, is the language of the French people. It is *their* language, not ours. *Our* language is English. It is our means of communication. That a language can belong to a group that does not speak it is a circumstance common to indigenous groups who have lost their language as a result of coerced assimilation into the culture of a colonizing power. The group can no longer lay claim to the language on the grounds that it is their means of communication. They can lay claim to it because it was spoken by their ancestors, and their ancestors are a culturally defined group that was associated with that language and that language alone. This is pure political ownership. Revival is the group's attempt to get to a point to where they can lay claim to a language on the grounds that it is (one of) their means of communication. They are attempting to broaden ownership to include linguistic along with political.

To get to the point where the language is spoken again is more than a question of simply learning it. This is because the language is not simply there to be learned. The linguistic structure and lexical inventory of the language is only derivable from a set of documents and maybe from the utterances of a few speakers. A rebuilding is required on the road to

learning. Only those licensed by political ownership and made competent through linguistic ownership can do the rebuilding as they are learning the language. This rebuilding is evident in the instances of linguistic ownership that I have presented here. The fact that rebuilding is involved leads to de facto language change.

The findings in this paper show some decision-making processes of one tribal member, and though he is a high-ranking member, his decisions are not sure to be adopted by the tribe as a whole and integrated into the current form of the language. So what I have described should be considered *possible* sources of language changes rather than *actual* changes that are now a part of Mutsun. Furthermore, the findings in this paper are the result of a case study of a single individual. As such it is impossible to know if they are widely applicable. However, there are specific situations where it would be difficult to imagine other ways of proceeding with language learning in the absence of complete documentation. Further research would provide a more complete account of other ways in which learners are able to negotiate the path to language acquisition under these circumstances. In particular, studies of alternate approaches to language revival would be especially useful in evaluating the premise that linguistic and political ownership are essential if learning is to be successful.

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