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M.A. in Bilingualism & Multilingualism

7 May 2024

Societal Bilingualism: Minority Language Vitality and Preservation

The complex landscapes of bilingual and multilingual societies offer valuable insight into many interrelated domains that must be considered in any analysis of minority language vitality. Only a contextualized and multifaceted approach will work, examining factors such as the relationship between high and low status in different domains, historical, economic, and demographic factors, intergenerational transmission, language education and planning and national/international recognition. In this paper, I recommend that language vitality should be considered contextually within a sociolinguistic ecosystem of people, languages, dialects, societies, and their unique circumstances. Limiting the scope of language analysis to specified criteria and frameworks may be beneficial at times, but it could also miss some of the nuanced interactions and relationships between elements not considered in a framework. In this paper I will examine the interplay of several of these factors using specific examples from around the world, as well as discussing several frameworks for understanding language contact and vitality, before concluding with final reflections and recommended approaches to understanding language vitality and promoting linguistic diversity in multilingual societies.

Political Dominance and Institutionalization

One of the key factors of language vitality is political, as the dominant group exerts enormous linguistic influence over other domains like education, government, media, economic opportunities, representation in public spaces, home language choice, and more. The language of the dominant group becomes the *lingua franca*. As the default language used in most public settings in bilingual or multilingual societies, the dominant language is expected of people to learn to high levels of proficiency. Educational opportunities in any other language may not even exist. If economic and educational success are strictly tied to the dominant language, or if a language or dialect gains official status, minority languages can quickly lose cultural favor, fall into rapid disuse, or become a political target. Governments even declare what is ‘language’ rather than a ‘dialect’. They have even prohibited the use of a language in all aspects of society, pushing languages and dialects into a corner, which logically affects everyone’s perception of the language in society at large as well as in the home. Proper implementation of language planning, protection, and institutionalized support in the relevant domains can greatly benefit minority languages, by potentially reversing language shift, encouraging positive attitudes towards minority languages, and promoting stable language maintenance for all languages in bilingual and multilingual contexts.

Case #1: Catalan in Spain

Consider the case in Spain, an emerging upper class in eighteenth century Catalonia "sacrificed its own language" (Marfany, 2004), to create a Spanish nation, declaring Catalan unofficial and implementing other assimilation policies, both discrete and public, aimed at diminishing Catalan in favor of Spanish. Until the early nineteenth century, the language was still

widely spoken and used in commercial and private writing, despite having lost official status in 1716 with the Nueva Planta decrees. One of the final details in the early political history was the Royal Certificate in 1799, which made it forbidden to "represent, sing and dance pieces that were not in Spanish." (de la Cierva, 1981). Suppression of the language intensified during Franco's dictatorship, which banned Catalan from public spaces and institutions, including schools. Basque and Galician were similarly oppressed. The initial prescribed change to Castilian Spanish as the official written language paradoxically coincided with the *Renaixença*, a literary and national revival for the Catalan language and traditional culture. Marfany argues that this was more a symbolic gesture or token for the deliberate suppression of Catalan in other areas of society. After Spain's transition to democracy, Catalan was reinstitutionalized as an official language, and reinstated in education and mass media, increasing the language's prestige (Wheeler, 2003). However, official status alone is not enough to protect a language.

Political forces continue to influence the region. In 2021, Spain's highest court ruled that at least 25% of all classes in the region must be taught in Spanish. This was to combat the poor test scores in the region, especially among native Spanish speakers. The blame fell on the Catalan education system, which uses Catalan as the primary language for instruction. This has been the policy for over forty years, in order to promote bilingualism and strengthen the minority language. Spanish has a more dominant presence in "pop culture, cinema, television channels, court rulings... [and] other day-to-day activities" (Catalan News, 2022). The separatist regional government in Catalonia has since passed their own law permitting schools to raise or lower the level of Spanish-language instruction according to need (The Economist, 2024). When two languages have co-official status and both possess strong public support, linguistic conflicts of this nature are to be expected.

Dorian states that minority languages with no official status “amount to a sharp power differential” (2003), yet this also remains true for many minority languages with governmental recognition and official status. As we saw in the case of Catalan, a power differential remains and continues to threaten minority languages despite their official status. Many indigenous North American languages such as Wôpanâak, Ojibwe, Cree, or Navajo in the United States and Canada also have regional and federal recognition, yet remain severely endangered or vulnerable at best. For these languages, the historical context of extreme population loss, forced assimilation, and loss of culture are more significant factors than national or regional recognition today. The importance of official status remains, as this is often a means of funding language revitalization programs. This can also legitimize non-English educational systems and promote the use of the language through public and private schools, and visibility in public spaces. Community-led efforts often provide the grassroots ‘bottom-up’ solutions to the problems created by ‘top-down’ institutional efforts or unenforced policy mandates, regardless of how well-intentioned they may be.

Case #2: Indigenous languages in Canada and the United States

In Northern Quebec, sustained institutional support for the Cree language has seen its successful introduction in the local education system, with a carefully planned bilingual model (McAlpine, 1994). The program is described as a collective effort, as it incorporates community leaders, elders, and parents in addition to the children, school staff, and school board members

involved. The Cree language education system continues today, serving 5000+ students in nine Eeyou Istchee communities. Specialized programs offer a cultural education, emphasizing Cree heritage and traditional nature-centered practices. Cultural activities in the program are designed to "transfer knowledge between elders and younger people" according to Elaine Drouin on the Cree School Board staff (Postmedia Content Works, 2023).

Engman and Hermes (2020) also discuss ecological approaches to language learning for Ojibwe. The land itself is considered as a language learning resource. Immersion programs focus on the cultural relationship between Ojibwe people and the land. Centering indigenous views and cultural perspectives is key to successful and meaningful language revitalization efforts. The Ojibwe relationship to nature is of primary significance, as in many other indigenous cultures around the world. In the forests of the Upper Midwest region in the United States, even traditional Western frameworks for language education can be subverted by cultural forces. The hierarchy of instructor-student is transformed into "peer-Elder-nature relations" (Engman & Hermes, 2020), which recognizes the value of Ojibwe cultural standards and internal frameworks. The erasure or blurring of the boundaries between the colonial-imposed nature/culture boundary stands out as a particularly useful idea, which can be applied across many other indigenous cultures around the world. The authors also mention how under-resourcing and colonial language-framing in old or low-quality teaching materials can undermine the effectiveness of revitalization programs.

Any minority language reclamation project may only succeed with support or at least tolerance from the dominant group. Political rights to language use, protection, and preservation or documentation are prerequisites for the success of a program, or the vitality of a language

itself. The goal of many indigenous language reclamation programs is to restore a lost identity and cultural continuity in place. In these types of programs, indigenous ways of knowing are being restored to a higher prestige level than Western cultural trends or colonial and post-colonial systems. Language and Land are similarly dynamic in that they both shape and are shaped by their surroundings, and so the metaphor of a linguistic ecosystem may be apt, and less linear frameworks could offer new insights in the field. Governments and communities that are serious about language revitalization cannot ignore these cultural factors. The usefulness of centering indigenous rights and perspectives is apparent. There is a wealth of cultural resources language planners can draw from, including indigenous place-based ecological knowledge, traditional practices, social frameworks, belief systems, and worldviews.

Some indigenous languages on tribal reservations and other places in Canada and the United States have some type of official recognition as well, and there are many examples of indigenous language representation on signage and in

tribal or regional governments. This sometimes includes the promotion of indigenous writing systems such as Tsalagi (GʷY/Cherokee) and Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics, a system used in Cree, Inuktitut, and some other Algonquian languages.



in public spaces such as this.

Fig. 1: Syllabics, on the left, is a co-official script in the Nunavut Territory in Canada, used by the local government

The Tummivut Building (Fig. 1) showcases this implementation of indigenous languages and scripts in a multilingual context. This is another example of institutional recognition of indigenous sovereign rights to ancestral lands, including language rights and the importance of language visibility in the inherently political linguistic landscape.

The implementation of mother-tongue instruction can strengthen students' self-identity and academic success. Baloy (2011) discusses the importance of language ideology in indigenous language revitalization efforts in Vancouver, British Columbia. Language ideology is defined as "the social connections people make with their own or others' languages" (Baloy, 2011). The author highlights that in order to create spaces for the Squamish language in urban areas, advocates must recognize and promote the connections between land, language, and identity. Bilingual road signs were made in the Squamish and Lillooet languages, as well as roadside kiosks depicting indigenous art through a project called the Sea-to-Sky Cultural Journey. This reclamation of physical spaces can be an important step in promoting positive attitudes towards a language.

A recent example from Massachusetts exemplifies this shift in political and public attitudes towards minority languages and indigenous languages. In the city of Cambridge, an area with few or no indigenous Wampanoag people today, more than 70 street signs are being changed to add Wôpanâak translations. The proposal was approved by the city government in 2021, merging with a related cultural reclamation project, now called the *African American & Indigenous Peoples Historical Reckoning Project* (City of Cambridge, 2021). The purpose of adding indigenous translations to street-signs is to promote an awareness of local indigenous history and offer representation as a form of reparation. This is different from previously

mentioned examples, which are in areas that often have significant indigenous populations. Projects such as this one in Cambridge can be seen as part of a wider cultural trend towards cultural pluralism, decolonization, and indigenous/cultural reclamation for previously oppressed groups. Institutional efforts in these regards signify a commitment to redress historical wrongs and cultivate a more inclusive and diverse society.

Case #3: Gaelic in Ireland

A similar example of institutional support for linguistic alteration of placenames is found in Ireland. Gaelic benefited from gaining official status, which has seen many policy efforts to promote its use. The Official Languages Act allows for the official designation of the Irish language for placenames and even the replacement of English placenames within the Gaeltacht regions (Ní Dhonnabháin & Ó Ceallaigh, 2015). Official status can also counter the political dominance of the majority language in educational systems, which plays a crucial role in language vitality and language revitalization. However, many challenges remain for these educational efforts to be successful. Some common barriers in Ireland mentioned by Ní Dhonnabháin and Ó Ceallaigh are the lack of convincing pedagogies, lack of strong language proficiency among teachers, low motivation levels of language learners, and exemptions from studying Irish in post-primary schooling.

Case #4: Indigenous languages in Latin America

In Bolivia, Spanish and more than 30 indigenous languages are all co-official according to the 2009 Constitution. The Education Law requires education in the country to be multilingual, intercultural, and intracultural, yet many indigenous languages remain at risk

(UNICEF, 2021). Lack of full implementation of the law and a lack of language transmission are cited as reasons why the designation of official status has not been successful in maintaining indigenous languages. The UNICEF strategy to target this area is a revitalization program called Bilingual Nests. The strategy includes intergenerational community meetings where indigenous languages are prioritized, providing a safe space for parents, grandparents, and community leaders to share knowledge and values. The program targets children up to 4 years of age, providing places for them to hear and speak their indigenous language. Students show increased confidence and self-esteem (Taylor, 2003). The entire community benefits from programs and policies that reaffirm cultural identity and promote community participation in education planning.

In Venezuela, revitalization efforts of the nearly extinct Mapoyo language have been unsuccessful (Granadillo, 2022), and the language today is critically endangered or already extinct. Growing interest in Mapoyo led to classes being taught in schools and teachers/students both trying to learn the language. The author argues that 'standard language ideology' threatened the revitalization efforts in a significant way. As in all languages, there is orthographic and phonetic variation among speakers of Mapoyo. The author is correct that any revitalization project must address ideological factors as well as pragmatic ones. However, many other factors mentioned by Granadillo need to be addressed as well. Considering the entire ecosystem, the analysis and potential solutions could go beyond this dichotomy of pragmatic/ideological concerns discussed by the author. In 1996, Granadillo and Medina counted five fluent speakers, and another who became fluent. In 2013, only three self-identified as speakers of the language, and by 2021 only one of those three is alive. The program's outcome was shaped by many pragmatic factors such as demographics; an aging and very small pool of speakers, lack of

documentation, and a geographic location in a single widespread village with no water nor public electricity. The revitalization efforts also did not begin until 1999, which may have been too late for the fate of Mapoyo. From the interaction of all of these and other factors, it is clear that Mapoyo had greater problems than 'standard language ideology', but the author's point remains valid. A prescriptivist's approach to use a single standardized form may risk the vitality of a language more than support it. Attachment to a 'correct' form of writing or speaking ignores the dynamic nature of languages and their speakers. If only a handful of speakers remain, combined with the other previously mentioned factors, it may already be a near-impossible task for language revitalization.

If the speakers of a minority language all speak a different variety, some may see this as confounding revitalization efforts greatly, but only if the program and learning materials are not coordinated and accepting of existing and future variations in the language. Therefore, language revitalization should be flexible, like language itself, rather than rigid. If an ethnic community decides to revive their extinct or dying language, as in the case of Mapoyo or Wôpanâak, their will alone is not necessarily enough. There must also be openness towards language variations, limited fluency among small populations, and the realities of language change as a constant and unstoppable phenomenon.

Larger institutions like L'Académie Française (The French Academy) often disagree vehemently with this position, attempting to preserve a 'pure' form of a living language; an impossible task. Meanwhile, non-standard varieties of very powerful world languages have been quite successful, despite their low political status or recognition. For example, consider the many English-based pidgins, Creoles, and other global varieties of English, or the many varieties of

French in Africa, including Nouchi, which developed from an Abidjan French slang variety into a Creole language with its own grammar (Sande, 2015). It seems these continue to see steady language maintenance, accepting internal and external influences. They are sustained through cultural transmission, adaptation to technology and other shifting domains, and regional community networks, rather than political status or institutional support.

Transcending Frameworks of Political and Cultural Dominance

Cultural factors are evidently crucial for a complete understanding of language vitality. Language identities and associated ideologies and social systems and structures form a core part of the human experience. Cultural domains such as literature, poetry, music, art, ceremony, and religion are enveloped in their respective languages, physical environments, and ancestral continuity in place. Incorporating traditional worldviews can lead to skillful language planning and policies that benefit indigenous and minority language revitalization programs and their communities and individuals. The ecological and cultural connections that many languages possess can be drawn upon as a primary resource in support of a language, and their significance and potential value for language revitalization programs should not be understated. Research suggests that the interplay of cultural and other elements cannot be easily compartmentalized into a neat framework.

In many indigenous cultures, man is not seen as separate from his environment. Gafner-Rojas (2020) points to the example of the !Xoon people of Namibia, who exemplify a common indigenous worldview cross-culturally, where humans, other beings, and nature are interconnected. This view of humans and other living beings as sharing origins in “Mother Nature” or a universal force is a common theme. This absence of hierarchy separating humanity

from nature is not entirely universal. Some have alleged that it is less prominent in many of the dominant European cultures that have spread their influence across the globe. One example cited is how the term for cloud in !Xoon translates to "house of rain." As children learn this terminology, they inherently understand the relationship between clouds and rain, unlike children learning 'Western' languages, such as Spanish, English, German, or French, where the words for cloud lack this ecological and cultural information (Gafner-Rojas, 2020). However, these words may have once conveyed cultural views as well, which have since lost their original meanings, while gaining new associations as languages continue to adapt and change over time. The etymology of English *cloud* in Proto-Germanic is the reconstructed word *klūtaz, meaning "lump, mass, conglomeration", as in the English word *clot* (Wiktionary, n.d.). This appears to also have come from a cultural description of the appearance of clouds. Occitan *niu*, Spanish and Italian *nube*, French *nuage*, and others originate from the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European word *(s)newdʰ, meaning "to cover" (Wiktionary, n.d.). This too conveys some practical environmental information, and association cultural reference to clouds as 'covering' or 'obscuring'. The modern descendant words in these languages may or may not retain any ecological or cultural significance for speakers, except in poetic or lyrical contexts. The significance of this, if any, is to consider that words are not mere combinations of sounds, but symbolic units carrying multiple layers of meaning and socio-historical context.

In a different type of cultural analysis, Edwards (1994) discusses the example of the Gaelic music tradition in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia being used as a cultural base to provide a platform for activities encouraging language use. This symbolic support that a language has, or could have, promotes positive attitudes towards dying or revived languages. Many minority languages possess a higher symbolic status than the dominant language in cultural matters,

including: Ojibwe, Navajo, Quechua and other indigenous American languages, Welsh and other Celtic languages, Basque, Yiddish, Sami, Hawaiian, Hokkien, Bassari and several thousand more. Language revival and revitalization efforts can be greatly bolstered by cultural festivals, media initiatives, and a will to reclaim ancestral linguistic and geographic heritage, social status, sovereignty, and traditional knowledge bases.

Many languages are associated with religions or spiritual traditions, which can be an even stronger form of protection and preservation of language. Consider Hebrew, Ge'ez, Arabic, Sanskrit, Latin, Church Slavonic, and others. While some of these have become extinct, they all remain in some use in ceremonial and literary religious domains, and they are often well documented and highly revered. Hebrew is the most successful case of revival of an extinct language as a widely spoken modern language. Sanskrit revitalization efforts have been ongoing as well due to the strong spiritual association the language has for Hindu culture. Sanskrit, although extinct as a naturally spoken language, is far from being a dead language. The government of India has spent considerable efforts and economic support for Sanskrit, creating supervisory agencies, founding new Sanskrit learning centers, reopening old ones, and continuing historical literary traditions in the Sanskrit language. The government has also funded cultural events, radio and television broadcasts, and publications promoting the Sanskrit language (Ramaswamy, 1999). That is how powerful even an extinct language can be with cultural and institutional support. The language itself is seen as connected to 'the universal medium of communication', a primordial language transcending human speech.

Case #5 Wôpanâak in Massachusetts

The Wôpanâak language in the U.S. state of Massachusetts is another unique case with a strong symbolic association that even precipitated its revival. It was an extinct language for six generations before being revived by Jessie “Little Doe” Baird in 1993 when she launched the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP). The reconstructed and revived form of the language currently has a few hundred speakers at limited levels of proficiency, who are members of four Wampanoag tribes in southeastern Massachusetts. There are also 15 children being raised bilingually in the language, and at least one adult native speaker, Baird’s daughter Mae, who was raised bilingually in the language (New England.com, 2012). WLRP has since created a non-English early childhood curriculum, and many free youth language immersion programs for tribal members. There are also several adult language education courses available, and teacher training in the Montessori pedagogy of hands-on learning and collaborative play, with a land-based cultural education component as well (WLRP.org, 2024).

The revival of Wôpanâak and the existence of the WLRP started from a series of recurring dreams that Baird had, in which her ancestors spoke to her in Wôpanâak, which she initially could not identify or understand. Later she realized they were telling her to “ask Wampanoag people if they would like to bring their language home”. Dreaming holds a large significance in many indigenous cultures throughout the world. For Baird, that personal symbolic connection led her to study linguistics and receive a master's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There, she collaborated with linguist Dr. Kenneth L. Hale to create a language database and dictionary for Wôpanâak (Mifflin, 2008). The symbolic associations between language and personal or group identity are rooted in a desire for maintaining, revitalizing, or reclaiming traditional beliefs and practices. Community-based language planning

with a focus on culture centralizes the social and cultural needs of the minority language community.

Existing Frameworks in Language Revitalization

Although existing frameworks offer valuable insights, they often fall short due to their limited scope and oversimplification of complex processes. One seemingly linear factor prevalent in many frameworks is intergenerational language transmission. When parents don't transmit the language to their children, the language loses its natural transmission chain. This can quickly undermine language vitality by leading to a decline in language use, fluency, social status, and language perceptions. Joshua Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) was a groundbreaking attempt to categorize the vitality of endangered languages based on intergenerational language transmission (Fishman, 1991). Fishman himself notes that the eight stages should be considered as “overlapping and interacting”, rather than the stages leading directly from one to another (p.55). However, this framework still limits observed criteria to a set of boundaries in a seemingly linear way.

Rhydwen states that language loss is not an intellectual problem, but rather the result of behavior changes and the lack of intergenerational transmission (1998: 101). Behavior change in individuals, communities, and entire societies cannot be reduced to any set of criteria, without surely missing other factors or their interactions. This highlights the need to examine each language contextually with a focus on community and individual attitudes towards the language, language use in the home, differences in language perceptions between generations, and the language's prevalence in local social networks and other domains. This complex tapestry of

interdependent domains, many of them culturally and socially transmitted and sustained, is a more accurate depiction of language vitality than existing frameworks.

The UNESCO framework for assessing language vitality endangerment considers a variety of factors together using a combination of real numbers and scale scores from 1-5 (2003). These factors include intergenerational language transmission, language use in different domains, and the availability of educational materials. The authors also give a caveat to their framework, stating that "No single factor alone can be used to assess a language's vitality," and acknowledging that any final 'score' or totaling of the numbers and scale scores from their system of assessment should simply not be done. These and other frameworks serve as starting points for assessing language vitality, but a comprehensive understanding of language shift and revitalization requires consideration of the broader context in which languages exist, or perhaps a more contextualized framework that is broader in scope and variable in its functions and applications depending on the language in question.

Lewis (2020) has also examined Maslow's "hierarchy of human needs" as a relevant framework, analyzing language shift as a linear scale of whether the language satisfies human needs, from the physiological necessities of food, water, shelter, and safety to the "unnecessary" higher levels of psychological and self-actualization needs. In a pragmatic sense this is absolutely true, as a language will be severely threatened if it is not used or needed for any basic needs in a community. Politically as well, if a language has no safety via governmental recognition or regional support, it will face greater challenges. The pyramid should also be considered upside-down, with ideals of self-fulfillment, creative activities, and cultural or psychological domains, which can be viewed as the impetus and foundation for language

revitalization efforts, leading to wider usage in social and familial domains, and eventually widespread adoption into sociopolitical domains such as government, economy, and education.

The dichotomy of this pyramid going strictly in one direction or the other is itself a theoretical construct from Western cultural experiences. A more culturally relative framework suitable for many of the world's culture-language systems may frame the cultural and pragmatic concerns as circular, leading to and from one another. The goal for each minority language community and program may be different, but often it is a shared vision of vibrant communities using the language for everyday interaction, creating a supportive environment for language use, sustaining language transmission across generations, finding economic and educational opportunities in the language, and sharing in cultural endeavors through the language. It could be beneficial to develop more extensive and non-linear frameworks.

Cultural and Linguistic Pluralism in Society

According to Ruiz (1984), languages should be considered as resources, and multilingualism is advantageous to societies. Cultural and linguistic pluralism, when supported by effective language planning policies, enables societies to promote multilingualism, allowing minority languages to thrive alongside dominant languages. Edwards (1994) describes language decline or loss as being more aptly described as language change, the result of social-group

contact between *politically* and *economically* unequal populations. Edwards states that historical and social evolution is not easily reversed, and that economic and pragmatic considerations are therefore of central importance in most cases. This may be true to an extent, but this focus ignores significant cultural domains that we have already mentioned, and the interactions across domains. For language revitalization of small or endangered groups, the chance of any economic competition with the dominant group is simply impossible. In these cases the central focus should be on cultural and non-economic community domains.

For a language to succeed with limited or nonexistent economic influence, language planning policies could be established that support bilingual or multilingual visibility in the workplace, and provide higher compensation or additional roles/opportunities for bilingual individuals. This targeted support could improve the social and political standing of a language, eventually encouraging natural growth and maintenance of the minority language in a way that can coexist economically and socially with the dominant language. Instead of being marginalized and viewed as a relic of the past, or at least unnecessary in modern society, the minority language can be sustained and expanded upon in its own domains, as well as carving out spaces for itself in society that go beyond tolerance from the dominant group, fostering mutual appreciation, respect, and a shared understanding of language rights and language equality.

Gafner-Rojas (2020), notes the countries with the largest number of languages, many of them indigenous: Papua New Guinea with 839 identified languages/dialects, Indonesia with 701, Nigeria with 507, India with 519, Australia with 215, Mexico with 282, Cameroon with 270, Brazil with 201, and Democratic Republic of the Congo with 207. One similarity across all of these countries is their rural character. All of these countries, as well as others that I will mention

in the following sections, have large areas of undeveloped land and high levels of biodiversity. It is recommended that policymakers and language planners recognize linguistic and cultural diversity and their intrinsic link with biodiversity and traditional ecological knowledge. Many of these languages are rapidly losing speakers and domains of use. Although many of them remain endangered or at risk, the extreme linguistic diversity has historically been supported by their rural environments, highlighting the need for nuanced environmental approaches in language revitalization to better develop and maintain the incredible linguistic and cultural diversity in multilingual societies.

Case #6: Indigenous Language Dominance in Paraguay and Greenland

Paraguay is a unique case to consider, as it is the only country in South America with an indigenous language as a dominant majority language, with over 90% of the population fluent in Guaraní. The historical background of Jesuit missionaries using Guaraní as a lingua franca to convert the indigenous population led to its prevalence in early colonial society. Despite a later language shift towards Spanish in urban areas among upper and middle classes in the mid-twentieth century, Guaraní remained strong in rural areas and among the working class (Rubin, 1985). It has been the official language of Paraguay since the 1992 Constitution, which grants it equal status with Spanish in all areas of national life. Paraguayan society has always had a strong bilingual tradition, spoken by both indigenous and non-indigenous citizens. There has been a bilingual curriculum for primary schools since 2010, ensuring students learn both Guaraní and Spanish to high levels of proficiency (Gynan, 2018).

The only country in North America with an indigenous language majority is Greenland, where 85-90% of the population speak Greenlandic, or Kalaallisut. As in Paraguay, the rural

nature of Greenland's population supported indigenous language maintenance throughout the colonial period. Greenlandic was reintroduced as the primary language in the educational system in 1979. The goal of the Greenland's Home Rule act in 1979 was to create a proficient bilingual society by mandating Greenlandic as the country's primary language of instruction, and Danish may be taught from the second grade, and must be introduced by fourth grade (Aqigssiaq, 2010). The 2009 Self Rule Act made Greenlandic the sole official language. (Valijärvi, R.-L., & Kahn, L., 2020). The former colonial language, Danish, continues to be widely used in governmental and administrative domains, while the language of daily life remains Greenlandic for the majority, and some successful efforts have been made to use Greenlandic in administration as well. Kahn (2020), analyzes the trilingual nature of Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, with much of the population fluent in Greenlandic, Danish, and the 'global language' English, which is also introduced at the earliest grades.

Case #7: Multilingualism in Senegal

Throughout West Africa, speaking three or four languages is routine. In Senegal, there are at least 30 languages spoken by at least 19 ethnic/cultural groups (Benson, 2020). It is not uncommon for children to learn four languages: their ethnic language at home, another dominant regional language such as Mandinka, Serer, or Pulaar, the national lingua franca - Wolof, and French, the former colonial language. According to Sarr (2020), certain local languages have begun to challenge the dominance of the French language. Thiam (1994) notes that while French

is the only official language, Wolof is more widely used "in all environments" including institutional areas where French is officially supposed to be used, such as in state institutions, public areas, official speeches, and universities. Leopold Senghor, the first President of Senegal, revived a 1937 idea and introduced national languages into public education in 1968.

Wolof is the primary language of radio broadcasts, media, news, and elsewhere, sometimes alongside French and other regionally dominant languages. In the country's early history after independence, the situation was quite different. Sarr (2020), mentions that President Leopold Senghor received enthusiastic applause when he switched from French to Wolof or Sereer for even a few words in his speech. So, we can see that while immense support existed for indigenous languages in the early postcolonial period, French was still viewed as the status quo. Today, it is the expectation that politics and all other areas of public and private life should be conducted in one's own language. This shift towards linguistic pluralism in society stems from language identity as intrinsic to ethnicity, trends towards decolonization and Pan-Africanism also played a role in diminishing French; despite its official status and continued role in some institutional domains. The dominance of Wolof has also led to challenges for minority language speakers in urban areas like Dakar to maintain or transmit fluency in their own languages (Sarr, 2020). So, although the linguistic and cultural pluralism found here may greatly benefit indigenous and minority languages, other factors of societal linguistic dominance still threaten smaller languages, or languages with less similar cultures to the dominant group.

Benson (2020), discusses an NGO-supported bilingual program that uses *L'approche simultanée*, or simultaneous approach. The ARED model, described as "bilingualism in real time", emphasizes the simultaneous teaching of literacy and other subjects in both a national language (sometimes the learner's home language, sometimes not), and French, which is new to

most learners in the program. This teaching style is also transmitting "simultaneous biliteracy," by imparting literacy skills in both languages from the first day. Benson and her team conducted a large-scale mixed-methods study based on her fieldwork from November 2018 to January 2019, including comparisons of cohorts in the traditional French education system with cohorts in the ARED bilingual program. The results showed that the bilingual model consistently led to higher performance and success in external evaluations, among other positive outcomes (Benson, 2020). From other studies, it is clear that many other schools have already been implementing bilingual education models in some form or another into public and private education since at least 1968 with a in which the national language policy is characterized by both maintaining French as the official language of international communication and promoting national languages into the languages of culture and languages of instruction. (Thiam, 1994). The ARED model appears to present a more focused bilingual effort with an intentionally bilingual pedagogy that can benefit learners. Community perceptions of the program were also overwhelmingly positive, with parents and other community members comments mentioning that they hope for its expansion into secondary school, that children are teaching their family members how to read and write in Wolof, and that they hear "rich and high level Wolof" from the students in the program (2018.11.27 Parent leader, Kaolack commune, W).

Adaptability plays a role here as well. Standardized orthographies exist for several of the dominant national languages, including Wolof, but they are often ignored in favor of alternative orthographies that each one may use "in his own way" (Sarr, 2009). Even if it is not the primary mode of communication for the society, French remains highly prevalent in the lives of all urban residents and many rural ones as well. Especially in urban areas, this has seen significant examples of code-switching, which has developed into a new variety of Urban Wolof; sometimes

called "frolol" or "francolol" (Thiam, 1994). A distinction is made between these urban varieties of Wolof with more French admixture and the “pure” or “deep” Wolof from rural areas (Ngom 2004). This circles back to the connections between ancestral land, language, and language ideologies. While French remains a prestigious language for institutional purposes such as education and government, other languages continue to dominate culturally. Wolof, Arabic, Pulaar, and various other languages regionally have more cultural prestige and widespread use than French in most aspects of life. Other factors in the enduring multilingualism found in Senegal stem from shared cultural perceptions of cultural practices, religion, nationality, and continental identity. The prevailing multilingual realities of Senegalese society, like many in the region, can serve as a role-model and offer some optimism for enduring bilingualism and multilingualism in a society, though even in this case, language revitalization efforts are crucial for protecting and promoting minority languages.

Conclusion

By drawing upon examples from diverse bilingual and multilingual societies, I have demonstrated that minority language vitality in multilingual contexts depends on numerous factors within a complex linguistic landscape. Minority language vitality is an issue with no single solution or linear framework that can be applied across all cases. Each language’s contextualized ecosystem and historical circumstances should be considered, as well as the goals and voices of the concerned language communities. To support these languages, tailored approaches are needed that account for the unique historical, sociopolitical, and environmental contexts of each language community. Language research, policies, and programs should always take the dynamic linguistic ecosystem into consideration. To ensure a comprehensive approach,

the linguistic ecosystem should be examined holistically, transcending the limitations of linear frameworks, which are inherently bound by their own criteria and cultural preconceptions.

In order to analyze the vitality of a minority language, we must approach the subject from a thorough examination of its linguistic ecosystem. The need to overcome Western-centric perspectives is also apparent from the examples discussed. It is crucial that language policies and programs fully involve communities and their language rights. Community engagement, self-determination, and positive language identities are key components for language programs, encouraging language resilience in the face of homogenizing currents of language shift. Embracing traditional knowledge systems and land-language connections can further guide policies and programs aimed at safeguarding minority languages, which in turn may safeguard ancestral lands and place-based knowledge, adding to humanity's cumulative wealth of cultural and linguistic knowledge.

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