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SOCIAL MEDIA:
FACILITATING REVITALIZATION IN ENDANGERED MIDWESTERN NATIVE
AMERICAN LANGUAGES

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By

Brittany Williams

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The thesis of Brittany Williams is approved:

Anna Joaquin, Ph.D.

Date

Christina Scholten, Ph.D.

Date

Aaron Sonnenschein, Ph.D.

Date

Ana Sánchez-Muñoz, Ph.D., Chair

Date

California State University, Northridge

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL MEDIA:

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By

Brittany Williams

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Language attrition is the process by which languages begin to lose features and may ultimately become extinct. When a language dies, it is a huge loss in terms of culture, identity, history, art, and ways of understanding the world. We are moving into an ever-increasing digital age, and there is a fear of language globalization. To prevent language loss, minority communities are utilizing social media for the purpose of language revitalization. This thesis explores the question of what social media-related tools are being used for language revitalization, how these tools work and what the popularity of these tools is as a means for language maintenance.

This research involves ten endangered Native American languages of the Midwest. A Google search for these languages was conducted to discover what revitalization tools were readily available to the community. This general search was followed by an examination of the linguistic organizations and universities, which focus on Native American languages to assess the tools being used for revitalization purposes.

Finally, a survey was conducted within the communities to determine the level of awareness and utilization of these tools.

The results confirm that social media is widely being used for language maintenance; a Google search for one language in particular with 20 known speakers surprisingly produced 93,000 websites, videos, blogs, etc. The majority of community pages focus on gatherings and social events, with the minority language sparingly used. The world wide web presence in the language and/or about it indicates the interest by the community to maintain or revitalize the language. The linguistic organization, university, and government pages include audio files and other more explicitly language-based tools.

The overwhelming availability for language revitalization tools suggests that an attempt is being made by the community and others to maintain endangered languages using modern technology and social media, which refutes the idea that social media is extinguishing these languages. It is important to raise the awareness of these social media-based tools because the more we work towards language maintenance and revitalization, the more endangered languages will flourish.

*Languages give us life.
Because language is not easy to create,
this means we have a great wisdom
in these ancestral languages.*

—Filemón Beltrán

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Language loss is a phenomenon that negatively affects us all. Much is lost when a language dies, so it becomes the responsibility of everyone to be aware of language attrition and what we can do to prevent it. This thesis will outline the gravity of language loss and the significance of language revitalization. Through my research of language revitalization as it pertains to social media and new technology in endangered Midwestern Native American languages, I will see what tools are being used to maintain these languages and assess the popularity of these tools.

A language attrites when some of its features are lost and not replaced. De Bot and Schmidt (2005) have aptly defined language attrition as “a reversal of language acquisition” (p. 210). This is when one increases the development of a second language and the first language suffers, or attrites. There may be a loss of lexicon and a loss of structure. Words are lost from the language due to cultural changes and restriction of domains of use, as will be explained later. The loss of structure refers to the loss of sounds or sound rules. There is also a loss of morpho-syntactic categories, which leads to the simplification of the languages, which can ultimately lead to complete attrition of language acquisition (Silva-Corvalán, 1994, p. 9). Sánchez-Muñoz (2007), acknowledges that “minority languages have been reported to lose stylistic range as a result of various processes of language attrition, such as simplification and loss. In some extreme cases of language attrition, speakers may become monostylistic since their language is restricted

to very casual situations at home and with familiar interlocutors” (p.1). Due to this loss of widespread and multi-situational use of a language, it begins to lose its usefulness and the language ultimately attrites. *The Living Tongues Institute*, an organization devoted to language documentation and preservation, states that “minority languages are being increasingly replaced by various politically, economically, or socio-culturally dominant ones” (Living Tongues: Institute for Endangered Languages, 2007). What this means is that languages are either given up by the people in order to pursue economic success that is provided by the socially dominant language, or that the languages may be forcibly taken away, possibly by colonization, war, or other political factors. Death occurs when there are no more living speakers of the language. According to Anderson, every fourteen days a language dies and he predicts that “by 2100, more than half of the more than 7,000 languages spoken on earth--many of them not yet recorded--may disappear” (2007). Dr. Anderson underscores the gravity of the situation, however, this data is proven to be outdated. ELCat (Endangered Languages Catalogue) recently discovered that language loss now progresses at a rate of one language every three months (Wiecha, 2013). Although language death is slowing, this does not mean revitalization efforts should cease. In the next section I give an overview of the efforts to prevent language attrition and loss.

Language revitalization is an attempt by language activists in combination with the specific community in which the language is spoken to implement or create tools intended to sustain the language and prevent it from impending death. Although many studies refer to these efforts to maintain and promote the language as *language preservation*, the term *revitalization* is preferred here because *revitalize* means to “give

new life or vigor to” (Merriam-Webster, 2012), which is what linguists aim to do: revitalize them into working, widespread community languages. Many languages are under-documented or not even documented at all. Before a trained linguist can discover the language and obtain access in order to document it, often times the language has already perished. Because of the aforementioned reasons, in many cases, the only speakers left are elderly and once they die, their language goes with them. It is the general consensus that time is of the essence and that we must work together to document and promote all that we can in order to revitalize the languages that are left. When languages have more speakers, have a cohesive community, and have dense social networks, the language is more likely to survive. Language revitalization, thus, is important for many reasons, as detailed by several linguists including K. David Harrison and Gregory Anderson, as well as David Crystal.

Revitalization tools have always included dictionaries or grammars, but often in IPA rather than in the language’s orthography, sometimes because the language might not have a written system. Nowadays, linguists have access to an array of technology that allows for more precise documentation and revitalization than before. Technologies used today include: (1) orally recorded dictionaries, specifically designed for languages with no written form; (2) online and publicly accessible audio files containing sentences or anecdotes in the language; (3) special keyboards and computer systems created for a specific language; and (4) the use of cellphones and other mobile devices has the potential to help revitalization efforts as people use them more. Art is another avenue by which a language can be maintained, because it is intrinsically tied to the cultural identity

of many communities. Textiles, poetry, creative writing, song, etc. all help keep the language alive and promote generational language transmission.

An increasing number of language revitalization tools are being used in the public domain of the internet through social media. I define social media as internet and mobile based technologies which are used to create interactive dialogue between organizations, communities, and individuals for a variety of purposes. These technologies encapsulate the following language revitalization tools, among others: (1) networking websites such as Twitter and Facebook, which aim to connect the community that speaks the language and give the members a space where language can be used communicatively for a plethora of topics. These sites may also raise awareness of endangered languages to get the general public interested and involved in revitalization efforts as well. Other social media being used for language revitalization purposes are (2) personal blogs or websites created by native speakers, trained linguists, or language activists, designed to promote the language; (3) YouTube videos capturing the language, culture, and identity of a community; as well as any website that includes a comment feature where communities have the ability to interact with one another in the language via the internet. These tools are in place for various reasons, including language preservation and revitalization, so that an endangered language, dear to many, does not perish.

Several endangered communities are also in full force in their attempts to preserve their language, especially many Native American communities, for instance the Passamaquoddy tribe. This language is spoken along the St. Croix river. The Passamaquoddy community website explains that “the digital age has brought a new way of preserving, learning, and teaching the language” (Pleasant Point-Passamaquoddy

Tribal Government Web Site, 2003). In my original research from volunteer work with the Living Tongues Institute investigating various technological modes of revitalization proves that this is indeed true. For instance, I conducted a second inspection of different forms of media for twenty-five endangered languages in North America. I discovered that over the span of six months, many new blogs, Facebook pages, and audio files for these ancestral languages were found on the internet. This surge of tools intended for language revitalization led to the idea for this thesis. Increasingly, more communities are using social media for language revitalization. However, there exists no published work regarding a compilation of social media as it is used in a particular area specifically for the use and maintenance of a language, nor are there resources examining how social media is used for these purposes. This information is important, because if we can understand why and how social media is used to maintain languages, we can work towards multiplying and improving these sources for the communities of endangered languages. In the next paragraphs, I will outline the main research questions of my study and describe some of these tools.

1. A. Thesis Question

This thesis poses that social media facilitates language revitalization in an innovative method that is attractive to the new generations. Language revitalization through online social media such as Facebook is a very recent concept since the emergence of new technologies. But endangered languages are surviving, as will be further described in the following sections, due to the renewed interest in community, culture, and language. These smaller languages have the attention of linguists across the

globe and the awareness of those in the community who now have a technological medium with which to productively and communicatively use their language.

This thesis examines the use of social media as a tool for language revitalization. In order to address this main point, we will look at (1) what social media can do to aid in revitalization; (2) under what circumstances it does what it could do to revitalize; (3) what social media-related tools on the internet are being used in this revitalization process for endangered Native American languages of the Midwest; and (4) the popularity of these tools. As a framework for comparison to gage the potential success of technology in revitalization for these languages, I will discuss its use in revitalizing Irish Gaelic in Ireland.

1. B. Framework of Successful Revitalization

Irish was once a language that flourished in the country of Ireland. But, the people of the land had suffered invasions, economic hardships, divisions between communities, and mass emigration. All of this led to the eventual take over of the English language in the land. Now, with recent levels of Irish speakers being at an all-time low, the people of Ireland, politicians, and language activists are uniting to reestablish the Irish language within the Irish communities.

There are varying reports on the number of Irish speakers today, most likely due to the confusion about what it means to speak a language; does this mean one is fluent in the tongue? The individual can communicate on a basic level? Or, does speaking a language simply refer to the fact that one has had some schooling in the language and can recognize some words and phrases? According to the Ethnologue's recording of the 1983

census, there were 260,000 speakers of Irish. Ó Néill (2005) found that from the 2002 census there were 414,000 functional speakers (p. 279). Even more recently, the Irish Times recorded that on the 2011 census, 1.77 million claimed some ability to speak Irish. However, of this number, only 77, 185 spoke the language outside of the classroom. This is compared with a population of 5 million in the year 1800, 3.5 million of which were fluent Irish speakers (MacAulay, 1992, p. 20). Regardless, Alison Healy, reporter for the Irish Times stated the 1.77 million represents more Irish speakers than in past censuses, and “the findings were welcomed by Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Dinny McGinley. He said the increase in the number of people able to speak Irish was a positive development in terms of the 20-year strategy for the Irish language.” This 20-year strategy outlines the progress that Ireland would like to make in terms of bilingualism (of English and Irish) in this time span.

Language activists continue to promote the revitalization of Irish in Ireland. Ó Néill (2005) affirms that “by revival, the Irish truly did mean and do mean restoration, that is a return to daily usage by all sectors of the population in both family and community life” (p. 280). By no means does he believe that the Irish should no longer use English. But rather, English should be used in addition to Irish: “the goal of language restoration in the Celtic countries is to arrive at a point of bilingualism” (p. 21). English is economically, socially, and politically very integrated into society, so to eliminate English in Ireland would be detrimental to the daily lives of the Irish. Therefore, to promote Irish while maintaining English is the best solution.

The language is implemented in each domain in which language is used. These domains include work, education, family, friends, government, etc. It is acknowledged

that it is important to preserve Irish now, while the language continues to be transmitted fluently to the next generation. When a language has been lost and a full revitalization effort must be undertaken, as in the case of Hebrew, then what is being revitalized is a standardized dialect of the language, which may not match the lost vernaculars. Hebrew was solely a written language for many years until the mid-1800s when Eleizer Ben-Yehuda revitalized the written Hebrew into a widely spoken language in all domains once again. Hebrew was not what it once was because at this point, many new words were necessary to communicate modern concepts. Another example is that of Prussian. Declared a dead language, meaning that there were no living speakers left, Prussian has become revitalized and now there are over 70 speakers who use the language in day to day communication (Ethnologue, 2009). In this way, the current public awareness the preservation efforts surrounding the Irish language is important, so the Irish language can thrive and continue evolving.

The Gaelic League was established in 1893 to encourage the resurgence of the Irish language into the community. Durkacz (1983) discovered that “by studying the Irish language and its heritage, the Gaelic League in Ireland found the cultural justification for its political aspirations. Language was recognised as the basis of nationhood and a potent vehicle of nationalism” (p. 203). At this point, Irish was seen as part of a positive cultural identity by the community, rather than an undesirable trait of these individuals, as invaders had once viewed and convinced the Irish of their language. Even more recently, in 1999 another Irish language preservation organization was founded, called *Foras na Gaeilge*. They are “the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the whole island of Ireland” (Foras na Gaeilge, 1999). This group has many

commitments to the Irish community and is dedicated to working with authorities to re-establish the language in the nation. Nowadays, Ó Néill (2005) recognizes that “Irish is in fact, after Welsh, the Celtic language which is now coming closest to re-establishing itself in community life” (p. 28).

There are several reasons why the loss which Ó Néill describes occurred in Ireland, including the famine in the 1800s which killed many of the Irish speakers, due to hunger or malnutrition. After the famine, many held a negative view of their homeland, so they sought to start over elsewhere, typically in the English-speaking countries of the United States and Canada. There was also the Anglo-Norman invasion which led to the influx of English in Ireland. After this invasion, English was seen as necessary for social and economic advancement, so people consciously dropped Irish and did not allow their children to learn it.

Although the English language continues to gain power, language activists now promote a nationalistic view of Irish, so new laws and preservation efforts have been in place since the 1800s. However, as early as the 1700s the first glossary and dictionary were created for Irish (MacAulay, 1992, p. 16). The late 1800s sparked an array of language preservation organizations including the Gaelic League and the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language. The early 20th century brought a wave of efforts, beginning with Irish gaining official status in 1922. Once official status was maintained, Irish became a mandatory subject studied in the schools; Irish was posted on signs, money, stamps; new publications and media were introduced in the Irish language, all leading to greater literacy in Irish. And finally, Irish-speaking communities, called the Gaeltacht, were established, along with churches and schools (Ó Néill, 2005, p.280-298).

More currently, Irish-speaking pub-nights, concerts, dances, festivals, and adult language classes have been introduced to incorporate the language into daily use (Durkacz, 1983, p. 206). This daily use of language is vital in order to establish a bilingual community, because if a language is to flourish, it must be utilized in all domains, not solely in the home. This background on Irish is important for this thesis, because as with Irish, Native American languages are on the verge of extinction for sometimes similar causes. So, by looking at what efforts have aided the Gaelic revitalization and specifically as far as technology and social media is concerned, we can see how it is applied and can be used for native american languages.

In order to continue this revitalization, those interested in promoting the Irish language have begun using technology to continue the efforts. For instance, the internet search engine *Google* has created a space in which language activists can preserve, explore, and learn a minority language. Kerry O'Shea, a staff writer for IrishCentral news source, informs that "through the Endangered Languages Project website, users are encouraged to upload audio, video, and documents that can help preserve and promote the struggling languages. Google is also reaching out to diaspora communities and encouraging them to get in touch with one another to share language learning." Google recognizes that a single individual cannot maintain a language. Many individuals participate in the collection of a variety of language-related data, which has sparked a dialogue. Now, on the Endangered Languages Project page, there is a section for 'activity,' which includes conversation between multinational users. This conversation ranges from translation aids, to reading lists containing books in Irish, and comments on news articles relating to the usage of the Irish language. Understanding that this project is

just in its inception, there is relatively a large amount of activity. Almost every day there is a new audio or video file being uploaded, which means the site is frequently being used for its intended purpose of language use and preservation. Communication and connections allow for the preservation of a tongue. Through social media and world-wide efforts, Irish speakers have a space to use their language with one another, across many domains. This opens up a new digital space that the Irish are successfully employing, that might be translated into Native American efforts, which is what this thesis is trying to address.

Google not only initiated the Endangered Languages Project, but has been a major supporter of a multilingual internet, despite the fact that over 75% of webpages originate in English (retrieved from Schäffner, 2000, p. 3). Google offers a translating service called *Google Translate* which allows for any webpage to be translated from English into Irish. Through this service, Irish speakers will visit the Google Translate website and insert the address of the page that they would like translated. Then, the website appears no longer in English, but in Irish. Even if an individual is more fluent in English, it is important to have the option to translate pages into Irish, in order to maintain a level of fluency in Irish. If one wishes to maintain his or her language, then he or she must use the language in all facets of life, including reading, writing, socializing, and scholarship: all of which are available via the internet. One cannot maintain a language without using it.

Another digital preservation tool for Irish is the social networking site *Facebook*. Because Facebook is utilized by so many individuals across the globe, it has the potential to quickly capture the attention of Irish language learners and users. First, Facebook allows its members to adjust the language setting so that they may enjoy the website in

Irish, rather than the default, English. This feature is meant for more fluent Irish-speaking Facebook members, while certain pages are designed for the less fluent, but still interested speakers. One page in particular is entitled “Irish.” On this page, affiliates may learn a new Irish word each day, complete with pronunciation guides, enhancing their vocabulary. Also available is Irish-related news from Ireland and everywhere that Irish is widely spoken. This allows people the ability to remain up-to-date on Irish current events, and remain (at least virtually) a part of an ever-growing Irish culture. Along with the news, members and the creators of the page can upload photos of Ireland, perhaps as a sign of nationality and Irish pride. This page also has a discussion board, where users can converse regarding all things Irish: sharing news, commenting on articles, comparing books, giving advice regarding courses and books for Irish language learning, and becoming a part of the interconnected Irish community. All of these unique features, from photographs to news stories and discussion boards make Facebook a go-to site for the twenty-first century Irish. Although typically members of the Facebook page “Irish” communicate in English, there are a few who utilize Irish. Often times one will find a posting in Irish, rather than English. Having a safe medium which encompasses both the English and the Irish languages provide a comfortable haven where individuals of all levels of the minority language can practice and learn, thus aiding in the preservation the Irish language. Given the popularity of Facebook amongst Irish users and learners and its potential to increase language vitality, is there anything similar for the Native American languages that this thesis examines? That is the question we now turn to.

1. C. Importance of Revitalization

Gaelic in Ireland has shown us the importance of language revitalization for their people and culture, and technology is definitely playing a crucial role in those efforts, as we have seen. The interactive nature of new media make it more appealing to the public, allowing them to have a space to use their language with one another. Media also allows for minority languages to be documented on file for others to see, promote, learn or teach language. The continued use of language ensures its survival and provides a space for this continued communication. As professor Margaret Noori, who works to increase the speaking pool of the Ojibwe states, “it is essential to produce proficiency in the next generation and archive the contributions of fluent elders” (Van Der Weyden, 2012). Van Der Weyden continues in her article capturing Professor Noori’s efforts, “as a result it is the responsibility of the younger generations to learn from older generations. This is why social media is being implemented.”

It is the hope that if new media is used for revitalization purposes, then more people will see these minority languages as useful and meaningful. If people have positive attitudes about their language there will be a drive to preserve it—make it public on the internet, teach it to their children, learn it themselves and become proficient, or maybe even share it with others. For a case in point, multicultural CSUN undergraduate, Sonia Matos expresses, “I am proud of knowing two languages and for belonging to a culture that is Mayan. I have truly learned to appreciate language as I would not have thought of it being so precious” (S. Matos, personal communication, May 10, 2012). There is a chance that shifts in attitude will result in less discriminatory practices and also in a renewal of interest from the speaking community. For example, Native Zapotec

speaker and language activist Filemon Beltran urges for the reversal of language attrition. He argues that “since no language is superior, all speakers on this planet have to respect one another. Language loss is the responsibility of everyone on the planet” (F. Beltran, public lecture, April 10, 2012). The first step to language co-existence and shifting attitudes is language revitalization, and this, as mentioned earlier, is sparked by social media. This is a fairly new topic, as social media is a burgeoning concept in academic contexts. There may be information on the effects of social media on other fields, but there is very little in the field of linguistics. My research will bridge the gap of social media and its effects on linguistics for language revitalization.

It is important to revitalize the world’s languages, because when a language perishes, so does an entire culture. Language and identity are very closely linked, as a language embodies ideas, histories, art, knowledge, etc. Harrison (2008), who co-produced the documentary, *The Linguists*, insists that “language disappearance is an erosion or extinction of ideas, of ways of knowing, and ways of talking about the world and human experience” (p. 7). An entire history of a people is lost when a language dies. Crystal (1999), mentions several reasons why language preservation is important. He outlines the intellectual and cultural diversity held within each language, noting that “we should care about dying languages for the same reason that we care when a species of animal or plant dies. It reduces the diversity of our planet” (p. 56). Crystal maintains that diverse ecosystems are the strongest, and if this is to be expanded to include the human ecosystem, then diversity in language should be cherished. For all these reasons and more, we should actively work together to prevent the loss of language. Beltran referred to language as a tree. “How we nurture the ‘tree’ depends on how big the tree is and how

green its leaves will be” (2012). If we “nurture” our language tree with care, and have a large support group nourishing it, the language will grow and will be strong.

As we can see, language revitalization is highly important. My research will add to this viewpoint by providing a compiled resource of these new forms of language revitalization for Native American languages of the Midwest. There are several tools for preservation being used currently in the field, but as mentioned before, social media also has great potential for aiding in language revival. I will list, describe, and explain exactly how and where these tools are being used. I will investigate the popularity of these tools, so we can have a sense of which are useful in the revitalization of endangered languages. The hope is that this research will help raise awareness of the variety of tools and their potential usefulness in the area of language revitalization and documentation.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I first provide an overview of the origins of the study of language loss as a subfield of linguistics, including details of the primary conference and call for papers on the subject which led to the growing field it is today. I look at research regarding language attrition and loss. I review studies on the process of attrition, including which aspects in particular attrite and how language loss finally occurs. Next, I examine recent literature on what language revitalization is, as a response to language attrition and loss. I detail the main reasons why language loss happens, both from the internal linguistic causation and the external sociolinguistic factors. I then discover what researchers have found to be the consequences of language loss. And briefly, I explore the methods in which linguists have attempted language revitalization. In conclusion, I describe the contribution of this thesis to the problem of language attrition and loss, as well as the practical implications for revitalization efforts.

2. A. Language Loss and Attrition

The study of language loss is relatively new to the growing inventory of linguistics sub-fields. The origins date back to 1980 at the conference entitled *The Loss of Language Skills*, organized by Richard Lambert and Barbara Freed. Lambert and Freed called for papers regarding an individual's loss of his or her second language (Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer, 2010, p. 1). However, *language loss* is a broad topic including not only the loss of one's first or second language, but can be extended to include the loss of an entire language altogether. Freed (1982) identifies language attrition as:

the loss of any language or any portion of a language by an individual or a speech community. It may refer to the declining use of mother tongue skills by those in bilingual situations or among ethnic minorities in (some) language contact situations...Likewise, language attrition may be used to describe the death of an entire language (p. 1).

From its inception, the field of language loss recognized researchers such as Richard Lambert, Barbara Freed, Nancy Dorian, and Stephen Wurm among many others who aim to describe language attrition and loss, and seek to find methods to reverse this language shift. The field soared once the journal *Language* began to publish articles on endangered languages in 1992 (Errington, 2003, p. 723). From this point on, the study of language loss has escalated and now there is much research regarding how and why language attrition, and ultimately, language loss, happens (Adelaar, Aitchison, Andersen, Campbell & Muntzel, Dorian, Durkacz, Harrison, Nettle & Romaine, Ó Néill, Silva-Corvalán, and Wurm). Languages are perishing at a faster rate than ever before (Harrison 2008; Wurm 1991). Therefore, it is important that attention is paid to why and how this loss occurs. This section will review key research on the loss of language and what this means.

Language attrition encompasses many concepts, each related to the loss of linguistic features. A definition from de Bot and Schmidt (2005) was provided in the introduction, as “a reversal of language acquisition” (p. 210). This means that there is a loss of certain linguistic aspects within a language that often results in complete language loss, either on the micro, or individual level, or on the macro, or community scale. Yet another definition is given by Mufwene (2004) stating that attrition is “the loss of

proficiency of a language” (p. 203). Each implies a variety of linguistic situations, including the factors associated with the decline of one’s L2; the reversal of one’s L1; and the process towards obsolescence of a language as a whole. I will be solely discussing the latter, as the attrition of language in its entirety is the overriding issue to which language revitalization responds, whereas the former two relate to language loss on a micro rather than a macro level.

2. B. Why Language Loss Happens

Rarely, there is a sole and clear reason why any language perishes, but rather, there may be a few factors in play, often including external social factors influencing the language loss. One reason for the extinction of a language is due to the death of all the speakers of the language. Nettle and Romaine (2000) explain that in certain instances throughout history, a more powerful militia invaded communities, murdered all the members of the community, thus, forcibly ending the spoken language of the land (p. 6). This was specifically the case for many Native American languages during the colonization by European settlers. One instance of this genocide in particular is that of the language Yahi, in which the last speakers were exiled and murdered by colonists (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 51).

Fatal disease and natural disasters also lead to near-total language loss (Nettle & Romaine 2000; Wurm 1991). Each has the capability of killing off the majority of the people in a region, many of which belong to small, close-knit communities with a language of their own. When disease strikes, it is often contagious and affects the entire

community, such as the case of the Irish potato famine, as explained earlier; the same happens in the case of natural disasters.

Cases of force also disallow the use of a minority language. For instance, when it becomes illegal to speak a language in a community, individuals are punished for speaking it (Ó Néill, 2005). Along the same line is that of the Celtic language, Breton, spoken in France. More prominently prior to the 1980s when minority language preservation laws began to pass, Breton was seen as a language which hindered the people as it was a language of the lower class and to succeed, it was believed that the nation needed to speak French only. Therefore, teachers would ridicule and humiliate students who were overheard speaking the minority language, so parents ceased to teach Breton to their children. Often times the death of minority languages is attributed to the lack of transmission to the next generation because it is viewed by parents as advantageous for the younger generations not to learn the minority language in exchange for another language in the area.

Most cases of language loss occurs gradually. Situations of language contact of a community language and a superstrate, or the more prestigious and economically or politically dominant language. Here, the overtly prestigious superstrate language becomes increasingly dominant and the minority or community language eventually fades out. The more widely spoken and socially prestigious language becomes politically or economically prominent in the region. This language comes into the region either by force, as in instances of colonialism, or conquest (Adelaar 2007; Nettle & Romaine 2000). Colonialism is how English came to North America and how Spanish came to Latin America, for example. When this more dominant language comes into the region, it

is socially advantageous for the speakers of the community language to learn the more economically powerful language. For this reason Nettle and Romaine note, “many people stop speaking their languages out of self-defense as a survival strategy” (2005, p. 6). Many choose to abandon their language to become fully fluent in the new one. Also, parents may not allow their children to acquire the community language, in order to disassociate with the minority community to become economically successful (Durkacz, 1983).

When a language attrites due to a language contact situation, the fundamental structure is bound to shift. Andersen (1982) notes that language attrition refers to all of the following: loss of language comprehension and production; and loss of phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon and domains of use (p. 84), and these may affect the oral and written language. Each of these linguistic aspects undergoes transformation while in decline and all may be shifting concurrently. Dorian (1989) identified the phases of speakers in an endangered language situation. First, there are native speakers of the language. Then, as the language is in decline, there are semi-speakers. These are people who are more or less bilingual in the community language as well as in the superstrate language. Semi-speakers do not qualify as completely fluent in the community language, as often, they will have restricted domains of use in it. Next, there are terminal speakers; those who know basic grammar but cannot create unique, complex sentence structures in the language. And finally, there are the “rememberers.” This category includes individuals who have knowledge of a few words or phrases in the language that were commonly used with close friends or family. Andersen (1982) notes that “the language dies out as younger speakers of the language shift their language use over to a language

of wider use” (p. 90). Between one and four generations the language is lost and throughout this time, internal linguistic shift occurs as well.

Due to the external social factors which cause language loss, the structure of the endangered language is shifting towards decline. What shifts are all the features that uniquely make up a language. One aspect that shifts is the phonology, or sound system of the language. In decline, a language will likely have more allomorphs and fewer separate phonemes in its state of decline (Andersen 1982; Campbell & Muntzel 1989). The sounds are becoming indistinguishable from one another and can be used in similar linguistic environments, as opposed to the sounds being used in separate environments to create new words and different meanings. There is a tendency for the endangered language to become simplified through phonological reduction (Andersen, 1982, p. 95). This simplification includes moving back towards a basic CV (consonant vowel) structure, rather than maintaining complex consonant clusters. An example of this phonological simplification is the Manchu language of China. Manchu is an agglutinative language with various consonant clusters of no more than two consonants allowed. However, as the language entered decline, certain clusters which are found in older forms, such as in *abka* ‘heaven,’ became reduced to *aga*, a simplified form which lacks the word-medial cluster (Li, 2000, p. 17). The language will, when entering simplification however, maintain sounds that are present in both the community language and the lingua franca of the region or the powerful language, and the same goes for syntactic shift. If the same word order is present in both languages, the word order remains, but if there is a discrepancy, then the word order more frequently shifts to that of the overtly prestigious language of the dominant group.

Many times, the language becomes more similar to the language of power of the lingua franca of the region. In language contact, this is a phenomenon called convergence (Silva-Corvalán, 1994), which is not, but can eventually lead to what Aitchison (2000) and Nettle and Romaine (2000) called this *language suicide*. When the lesser spoken language becomes more similar to the lingua franca, it begins to borrow all linguistic constructs of the more prestigious language. The minority language eventually dies out but has all along slowly become more like the lingua franca to the point where speakers are in fact speaking the majority language. This often times occurs with creoles, because these languages are frequently spoken in the region where the lexifier language is still prevalent, so borrowing sounds, words, and structures is common. Decreolization is a process in which creoles gradually shift language features to that of the prestigious language in the area and this is what happened in the English-based creole called Guyanan Creole. In stages, the language began to regain English. Take for instance, the Creole word 'fu' which translates to the English word 'to.' First, Creole began to use 'tu' after ordinary verbs such as *ron* 'run.' Then, after verbs expressing desire and finally, after verbs meaning 'start,' and the shift continues (Aitchison, 2001, p.236). Eventually, the language takes on 'tu,' or the English 'to' in all the same places where it would in English and so on with other words and structures of English.

While the minority language is undergoing simplification and younger speakers are more frequently using the superstrate language, the morphology of the substrate or minority language is being reduced. The minority language loses grammatical distinctions that are not found in both languages (Andersen, 1982, p. 97). Andersen recognizes that the marked morphological features of a minority language are the ones

that are reduced the quickest and most easily. These are features which are unique to the community language and are not found in the superstrate. On this note, if the feature in question is already used infrequently in the minority language, then with language contact, the feature will likely be abandoned. Also, morphological features of a language that an individual acquired last, typically the most difficult morphological aspect of a minority language, will be the first feature to attrite in a language contact situation.

When morphology is reduced, so is the syntax. Reduced syntax leads to a restriction in the domains of use of the language, and typically results in the sole communicative use of the language, as opposed to the language having a wide range of functions. For instance, complex syntactic structures are found to be reduced in Cupeño, an Uto-Aztecan language in California. Compared with a recording from the 1920s, the language uses many fewer relative clauses and instead, adjectives are being used. As these relative clauses are fading from the language, the ceremonial contexts in which they had historically been used have disappeared and speakers no longer have situations to use these complex sentence structures in the language (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 55). As the syntax is reduced in the language, young speakers have less access to the various domains in which language is used, and therefore, the language attrites much more quickly. Andersen (1982) states that when a language is in decline, the minority language speaker tends to collapse different possible constructions into one and the more marked form of a sentence is lost. Thus, “the number and variety of syntactic transformations would decline gradually in favor of a small number of more widely productive ones” (p. 99). With fewer, more useful sentence structures, the language is extremely convenient, but slowly becomes insufficient for varied communication.

As the language simplifies, Andersen (1982) reports that a bilingual speaker will use circumlocution, paraphrasing in order to compensate for linguistic gaps in his or her native language, due to the loss of lexicon in the minority language (p. 106). In cases of language contact situations, there is a high level of lexical borrowings, especially intergenerationally. Because there is a lack of use of the community language as the majority language becomes more prestigious and economically advantageous, many words, especially those already used infrequently, are simply forgotten (Dorian, 1973, 414). The loss of lexicon is exemplified in the Australian language, Dyirbal. Nettle and Romaine (2000) explain that the language has many words for 'big' which are chosen depending on the noun with which the adjective is associated. To choose the correct lexical item each time is challenging, so to simplify, younger generations have borrowed the English word 'big.' Now 'big' is used rather than native Dyirbal words. Thus, the lexicon is losing lexical distinctions and being simplified. Other infrequently used lexical items are often dropped for a more simplified, synonymous word. Andersen (1982) states that "What lexicon...[is] retained will be of common, highly frequent, unmarked lexical items" (p. 94). Therefore, in order to discuss more complex ideas or ones involving modern concepts, the language must borrow from the socially prestigious superstrate which is more likely to have the lexicon to refer to these concepts.

As discussed above, language shift involves a reduction of morpho-syntactic categories, phonology, and lexical items in a minority language. Nettle and Romaine (2000) sum up language loss:

Language shift and death occur as a response to pressures of various types--social, cultural, economic, and even military--on a community. Every time a language

stops performing a particular function, it will lose some ground to another that takes its place. Death occurs when one language replaces another over its entire functional range, and parents no longer transmit the language to their children (p. 7).

2. C. Consequences of Language Loss

When the minority language undergoes attrition, there is a devastating catalyst of overall loss. Crystal (2000) has outlined four major losses with the death of a language: diversity, human knowledge, identity, and history. He reminds us that diversity is necessary for a healthy and stable ecosystem, noting that “if diversity is a prerequisite for successful humanity, then the preservation of linguistic diversity is essential, for language lies at the heart of what it means to be human” (pp. 33-34).

Not only is human diversity an essential aspect of maintaining a language, but linguistic diversity as well. Nettle and Romaine note that, “languages give individual names to concepts of cultural importance just as they mark certain distinctions in their grammars” (2000, p. 60). Languages have different ways of expressing what is important to the culture in which it is spoken and if this language is to perish, then these terms, and in some cases, entire concepts will be lost. This can be devastating, scientifically speaking, as well. For instance, prior to colonization, native Hawaiians had significant amounts of knowledge of types of marine life and their behaviors, all of which was passed down orally through generations. Once English was brought to Hawai’i, much of this knowledge faded from the language and now what is left are remnants of facts interspersed throughout the language via idiomatic speech. Nettle and Romaine note that

before these words began to disappear from Hawaiian in the late 1700s, the islanders maintained a greater awareness of marine biology than scientists today (2000, p. 56).

As Crystal (2000, p. 46) acknowledges, an overall worldview is the sum of all stories within the world, which consists of all languages. We are only seeing a portion of the world and only have a grasp on a small amount of understanding of the world if we speak just one language. Each community has its own way of understanding the human experience and language allows us to express our thoughts. In fact, each language may be viewed “as a way of coming to grips with the external world and developing a symbolism to represent it so that it can be talked and thought about” (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 69). Languages have their own words and phrases that cannot be translated, because there simply is not a word for that concept in another language. Harrison explains that Siberian language, Tuvan, has a word ‘iy’ which refers to the short side of the hill (2010, p. 47). While this concept may not be important in our own culture, and perhaps we have not even noticed that this concept, in fact, exists, it is acknowledged and is essential to those who speak Tuvan. The culture is primarily nomadic and knowing which side of the terrain causes one to exert less energy is salient.

As we have seen, languages are closely related to our culture and it is not surprising that with the death of a language comes the death of a culture. This idea is confirmed by Nettle and Romaine, who note, “language death is symptomatic of cultural death: a way of life disappears with the death of a language” (2000, p. 7). Such as languages maintain words and structures restricted to particular domains of use, when the language associated with one domain is lost, so may that domain altogether. This is particularly true of spiritual or religious contexts. If the language used within that context

is lost, the spiritual beliefs of that culture may be lost as well, for instance, in shamanistic practices. Encompassed in one's culture is one's identity. A language links individuals together to form solidarity, because the members of a particular group have a particular language, just as within a single community of practice, certain groups will have their own jargon, excluding members of other groups and forming a closer bond with members of the same group. Identity is also part of human history and history is also lost when a language perishes.

To access historical events of a community and relive anecdotes, language must be present because "a language encapsulates its speakers' history" (Crystal, 2000, p. 41). When a language is lost, so is the history of those people. Van Hoorde accurately explains that "When you lose your language,...you exclude yourself from your past" (1998, p. 8). I personally know this to be true. My ancestors are Polish, but I do not speak the language. Now, uncovering the genealogy of my family proves a nearly impossible task because the history is so tied to the language that I do not understand. The records of my family are all in Polish. Therefore, I am excluded from my personal history because my language has been lost. In terms of ancestral languages, however, the situation is much more grave. Where I can understand the idea of the records through a translation, other histories are lost forever because there are no translations. Oral histories especially will never be heard again. While we cannot entirely revive the languages that are gone, we can attempt to revitalize the languages that are still spoken, so the loss associated with language death will not be known.

2. D. Revitalization Efforts

As we have seen, much is lost when a language dies and thus, language revitalization is of imminent importance. There are many ways in which language is revitalized and everyone in the community must be involved. Joshua Fishman noted that governmental language planning was vital to the upkeep of a language. He said, “language planning is a type of planning that is concerned with one or more of the languages utilized within a larger or smaller community” (1991, p. 337). Fishman created an eight-point scale which was designed to engage the leaders and the members of the community in language revitalization. In his plan, Fishman outlines the necessity of the use of the language in the community. He continues to explain that the language must be used in the schools, government, media, home, etc. A language is a tool to be used for communication, so if it is to survive, it must be spoken. Language revitalization is not only an individual effort, by means of a family speaking it with one another, or bottom-up, but must occur top-down also, through support via laws from the government and promotion in the education system. Maintenance is a community effort and different tools can aid this process.

Patrick Eisenlohr (2004) discusses the importance of technology as a tool for language revitalization in today’s digital age. Because our world, and especially America, is becoming more dependent on technology, it is important to look at the ways in which we can use this technology to aid in the predicament of the minority communities in terms of language loss. Since these indigenous languages must be made available for use in the modern age, Eisenlohr states that, “to reverse language shift, the new avenues for publishing and circulating discourse also must be linked to an ideological transformation

among speakers, inducing them to reestablish routine use of a language especially when interacting with children and adolescents” (2004, p. 35). Languages must always be adapting and evolving to the age in which they are spoken. Therefore, there is currently a movement towards utilizing technology and electronic sources for language revitalization purposes.

2. E. Technology in Revitalization Efforts

Technology and its application to language revitalization efforts has only recently become the focus of linguists and language activists working with endangered languages. Many believe that digital media encourages the globalization of English and thus, the decline of minority languages; especially as over 75% of webpages originate in English (retrieved from Schäffner, 2000, p. 3). However, linguists such as Eisenlohr document the expanding use and importance of electronic mediation in minority language revitalization.

Digital technology has captured the attention of language activists for an assortment of reasons, including that “it provides comparatively inexpensive and effective ways of recording linguistic practice...especially in situations where language shift is almost complete” (Eisenlohr, 2004, p. 22). The internet also provides an affordable and easily accessible method of minority language teaching. These languages can be learned via the internet because linguistic data is easily found in all forms, such as written, spoken, and some programs even allow for a language learner to speak into a microphone, and with modern technology, the learners’ speech can be analyzed and corrected, so they may learn to produce proper speech sounds. With a wide range of

linguistic possibilities, new technologies provide ample opportunities for language preservation.

The reestablishment of endangered languages within their communities is on its way to being successful as revitalization efforts become more popular, with the aid of modern tools, such as social media including Google, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and community webpages, many of which are an integral part of being alive in the digital twenty-first century. Digital media is effective because social networks and new technologies can reach a large number of people, and are interactive, keeping the language relevant. Eisenlohr acknowledges the importance of technology in language revitalization especially in maintaining the use of the language in modern society:

a central concern of the use of lesser-used languages in electronic mediation is not only encouraging language maintenance and revitalization by providing speakers with opportunities to hear and maintain skills in the language, but also is achieving a transformation of ideological valuations of the language so that the lesser-used language is viewed as part of the contemporary world and as relevant for the future of a particular group (2004, p. 21).

When the language is relevant to people's lives, the language holds value, and is used. As any community language becomes increasingly present on the internet, it will continue to grow in value, because the language will be used daily, and will thus be used outside of a technological medium as well. Having the ability to maintain easy access to "around the clock" communication in the minority language, rather than English, will ensure that it does not quickly perish, despite the globalization of English.

2. F. Contribution to Field

It is in this particular area of technology and language revitalization that my thesis will specifically have an application. As we are moving into a digital age, languages must remain relevant in order to be used. We must use what technology we have in order to revitalize, or give new life to these endangered languages. Nettle and Romaine acknowledge that “the pulse of a language clearly lies in the youngest generation” (2000, p. 35). We are dependent on the younger generations to keep these languages alive. Therefore, we can use the technology that these individuals are already using for revitalization purposes. My research will make explicit which language communities are using social media and new technology for revitalization, what types of social media, and how popular is the use. By bringing awareness to the technologies available for language revitalization and understanding their use, we can continue to improve upon them and researchers will be more likely to use them in communities.

Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY

In this section, I explain the methodology developed for the study of the relation between social media and language revitalization, including (1) the sampling methods of the languages surveyed and (2) the data collection procedure.

3. A. Sampling Methods

This thesis includes research into the use of social media in relation to some Native American languages of the Midwest. According to the National Geographic website, the Midwestern area of the United States consists of twelve states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Of the Native American languages spoken in this region, I examine only the ones defined by Crystal as *endangered*. He states that endangered languages “have few or no children learning the language, and the youngest good speakers are young adults” (2000, p. 21). To be in this classification, the languages “are spoken by enough people to make survival a possibility, but only in favourable circumstances and with a growth in community support” (Crystal, 2000, p. 20). The Ethnologue web page lists ten endangered languages in this region: Arikara, Hidatsa, Mandan, Michif, Omaha-Ponca, Meskwaki, Ho-chunk, Menominee, Oneida, and Potawatomi. Figure (1) shows which languages are spoken in which states, with the total number of speakers of each language in parentheses.

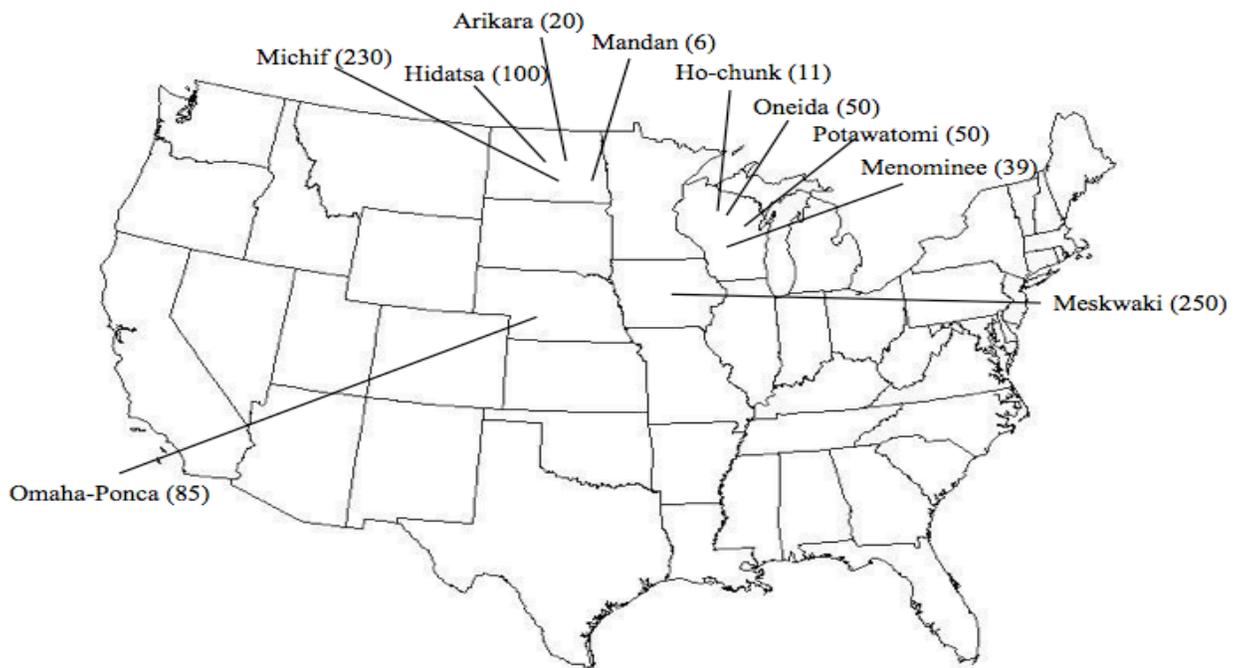


Figure (1)

Endangered Languages in the Midwestern region of the United States

I will review the use of social media for language revitalization purposes for the ten languages listed in figure (1) in the results. In the next section I outline my procedure for data collection.

3. B. Data Collection Procedure

For the purpose of finding the use of social media in these languages, a general Google search was conducted to discover what sources were readily available for the community or anyone searching specifically for the language in question. Next, I examined the research of major linguistic organizations on these languages to see how social media was employed in the revitalization process. And finally, I contacted the

community directly to administer a survey of which social media is frequently used among its members to utilize and revitalize the language.

From the Google search, I determined which websites fell under the broad category of ‘social media’ defined in the introduction of this thesis as internet and mobile based technologies, which are used to create interactive dialogue between organizations, communities, and individuals for a variety of purposes. The websites that were determined to be social media-based were then categorized into two types (1) those which come from the community or are created by the community, and (2) websites created by linguistic associations with revitalization in mind. The first type (1) includes sites that are in the language, about the language, or for the language. The second type (2) may include professional sites such as specific linguistic or governmental organizations with revitalization in mind.

The quantity of sources for each of the ten languages was calculated, and where possible, the popularity assessed. This assessment was determined based on counters located on the web page which tally the visitors to the site, as well as the time the page has been in existence. Through this quantitative data of internet traffic, we can make inferences of the potential impact of the social media.

Surprisingly in the Google search, each language generated thousands of hits, meaning that there were thousands of webpages devoted to the language. However, sifting through the websites, less than half could be classified as social media-related language revitalization. An issue I encountered with the categorization of the websites is that some only mentioned the languages or were used to promote awareness, but the websites did not contain information about where to use or learn the language, or were

not actually written in the language. I still included this data in my research because it could be argued that discussion about the language is considered language revitalization because it promotes awareness about the community and their unique tongue, and creates a bond between the members that could in turn elicit collaborative efforts towards language revitalization. In these cases I created a separate category to acknowledge websites that promoted a dialogue between members and only generally mentioned language, rather than being used to specifically revitalize the language.

Another issue that needs to be discussed is in regards to determining popularity. In reality, very few websites actually have counters, and even with websites such as Facebook or YouTube where counters are blatantly obvious through the number of members on a given Facebook page or through the number of times the video has been watched on YouTube, we have no way of knowing the intentions of those counted. These individuals could be counted because they are interested in the content, have friends who were interested, or because they arrived at the webpage accidentally. Either way, the fact that these sites have hits or are being encountered is enough to determine that there is awareness of the source and this is the first step to any source being utilized for its intended purpose of language promotion and revitalization.

The major linguistic organizations I studied were UNESCO¹, SIL International², EMELD³, and HRELP⁴, along with language center at the University of California at Berkeley, and other universities within the local area where the particular languages are

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

² Formerly referred to as Summer Institute of Linguistics

³ Electronic Metastructure for Endangered Languages Data

⁴ Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project

spoken. I chose these organizations because they are well known, which means they are likely to have more funding than other lesser known organizations and thus, have more, as well as higher quality technologies, and are able to promote their revitalization media and awareness of the languages. These organizations were researched over others because while there were other great organizations, many did not have information on Midwestern languages, or they had information on endangered languages but did not contain any digital media sources with which to revitalize language. On the webpages of the organizations listed above, I was interested in what types of technologies were being used and how they worked to revitalize the language.

After I discovered technologies in use by the experts, I contacted each of the ten language communities via Facebook to find out which other social media is utilized within the community. I communicated via Facebook because for each of the ten Midwestern languages I researched, this digital medium was actively in use by the community members, so I had access to many individuals who either spoke the language or were associated with the tribe whose language I was researching. The goal of this research study was to evaluate the role of technology in helping tribal members maintain their heritage language and culture. I asked questions regarding the community's use of the native language through a digital social medium via a distributed survey (Appendix). In the next section I provide the results of this study.

Chapter 4. RESULTS

In this section I present my data collection from the Google search of language revitalization tools created from within the minority community as well as from linguistic organizations.

4.A. Languages of North Dakota

The endangered languages (languages with fewer than 1,000 speakers) of North Dakota include (1) Arikara, (2) Hidatsa, (3) Mandan, and (4) Michif. Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan are known as the Three Affiliated Tribes. They are three distinct tribes that live together and identify under one nation, or one central government, the *MHA* nation.

4.A.i. Arikara

The Google search for “Arikara language” produced approximately 108,000 hits, meaning that Google generated 108,000 pages, with each page containing eleven websites. I searched through almost 100 Google pages, and discovered that some of the same sites were often repeated, and many were actually just advertisements which related to other languages but did not include Arikara. Also, many sites introduced the language but did not involve language learning or dialogue in the language; or, the sites explained where the language was taught but did not include anything digital to communicate in or learn the language. Some of these sites also led me to other Native American webpages, having nothing to do with Arikara. I came across many news articles pertaining to the language and its people, but again, did not include language learning or maintenance. Many sites were inactive or were spam-ridden with lots of advertisements on the page

and popups, so many that it was impossible to get to the actual content of the page. Arikara is very close to two other nations, Hidatsa and Mandan, so when searching ‘Arikara,’ sites about the other two tribes appeared. Not much came up from a Google search, but research outside the search engine on Facebook provided more sources: a very popular Arikara site. Even research into specific linguistic organizations resulted in descriptions of the language, rather than social media for the language.

Eight sites from the over-1,100 that I viewed pertained to social media-based language revitalization, and of the specific linguistic organizations that I searched, none contained information on the Arikara language. From the data that I did collect, five sites were created by the community, one was a Native American organization, one was an informational site possibly related to a linguistic organization, and another was from Indiana University. I divided these websites into the two categories: (1) from the community and (2) from other professional organizations.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arikara_language
(2) Blogspot	http://hoeftok1b.blogspot.com/2010/03/save-arikara-language.html
(3) YouTube Video	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ri8zc8uECos
(4) YouTube Comments	http://www.youtube.com/all_comments?v=EHlvBqDgEAA
(5) Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/groups/102765529764166/?fref=ts

Table (1) Websites from the Arikara Community

For all the of the five websites listed above, any individual with interest in the language can contribute to the information provided. (2) is a blog from a member of the

community explaining the importance of learning and maintaining Arikara; the website also included a comment feature, but no comments were present at the time of my research (November 2012). (3) is a YouTube video of community members expressing greetings in Arikara, and (4) are comments from a video on Arikara war dances.

A closely related language to Arikara is Hidatsa, also located in the North Dakota region.

4.A.ii. Hidatsa

A Google search for the “Hidatsa language” produced approximately 101,000 results. Again, the majority of the websites either related to the Hidatsa culture or were advertisements and not social media based language revitalization tools.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hidatsa_language
(2) Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hidatsa-Language-Immersion/13474960924526
(3) Tumblr	http://lastrealindians.tumblr.com/post/37612155007/blair-baker-revitalizing-the-hidatsa-language-and

Table (2) Websites from the Hidatsa Community

Results (1) and (2) appeared on the first page of the initial Google search, and (3) was found after an alternate search for “Hidatsa Language Revitalization”. The Wikipedia site (1) includes history, culture, and language features, and allows for public revisions of the information provided. The Facebook site (2) has a total of 129 members. The page provides a word of the day, and while similar to the Arikara Facebook page in

that the community mainly uses it to initiate get-togethers, many more members use the site to communicate in the Hidatsa language. Tumblr (3) is a blog created by a Hidatsa tribal member to commemorate the culture and to bring awareness of the gravity of the language situation, as well as to introduce features of the language, as well as various useful phrases.

While very few community pages were found, no professional sites including social media to promote or allow for dialogue are available. Many great audio files, books, and other sources are available to learn and use the Hidatsa language, however, this is out of the scope of this thesis, as I am solely focused on dialogue-producing social media-related language revitalization.

The third and final language of the Three Affiliated Tribes, also known as MHA, is Mandan, also located in North Dakota.

4.A.iii. Mandan

A Google search for “Mandan language” yielded about 955,000 results, a surprising amount considering there is only one remaining speaker.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandan_language
(2) Buffalo’s Fire	http://buffalofire.com/category/language/nueta-language/
(3) YouTube Video	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmdJ2y2h8pc http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= bRGYyCT0EU

Table (3) Websites from the Mandan Community

Wikipedia (number (1)) described features of the language, including the phonetics and language family tree. In addition, this page had a section called “talk” which allowed for discussion regarding the Wikipedia article itself. The second community page I found was Buffalo’s Fire. This is a website dedicated to “inviting a conversation on tribal community, culture and communication,” and contained many word- and phrase-learning videos, as well as a forum for comments and dialogue from the community members. And finally, the last community pages I found for the Mandan language were YouTube videos portraying the last speaker, Edwin Benson, teaching phrases of the language, and had a section for comments about the video.

Like Hidatsa, many great websites, including dictionaries and audio files, are available to learn the Mandan language, but again, this is out of the range of my thesis paper, as I am concerned only with social media as a forum for dialogue in (or perhaps, about) the language. Therefore, the only websites I have included are ones that provide this forum. Above I have provided links to the community pages, or websites from within the language community. However, no pages from professional organizations or universities for the community were found or are publicly available.

The next language I researched was also located in North Dakota, called Michif, but is not a member of the Three Affiliated Tribes (Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan).

4.A.iv. Michif

Michif spans across the United States and Canada, and many of the websites I found came from Canadian sources, as the language is a Métis French (Aboriginal Canadian) and Cree mix; the people of this community call themselves the Métis. Most

of the census-recorded 230 Michif speakers, however, live in North Dakota. Of the endangered North Dakotan languages presented in this thesis, Michif has the most living speakers, and therefore, while the Google search only yielded about 110,000 results, which is fewer than that of some of the other North Dakotan languages, the “Michif language” search produced more community-created social media-based revitalization sites.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michif_language
(2) Métis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre	http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/cgi-bin/Blah/Blah.pl?
(3) Scribd	http://www.scribd.com/collections/3041307/Michif-Language
(4) Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/MichifLanguage
(5) YouTube Video	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qT5j7HWS3qI
(6) WordPress	http://michiflanguage.wordpress.com/ http://michif.wordpress.com/

Table (4) Websites from the Michif Community

The (1) Wikipedia web page is incredibly detailed, much more so than the other North Dakotan languages. This article in particular, “Michif Language” contains phrases and translations as well. Additionally, there are other sources listed as reference to the interested reader, and a “talk” section provided for discussion on the article and the language. (2) Métis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre site is a compilation of audio files and forums designated for various resources in the Michif language. For example, there is a “History Open Forum,” where users can discuss the Métis history. There is also

a culture section containing forums for recipes, dance, music, home remedies, and Michif language. The language portion allows for users to start their own forums dedicated to a particular topic and to respond to others on the same forum. (3) Scribd is similar to (6) WordPress, in that both are public blogs that members of the Michif community has chosen to utilize for the purpose of promoting and communicating in the language. Scribd contains several different pages related to the Michif community and language, including “Learn Michif,” “The Origins of the Michif Language,” “Emerging Michif Publications,” “La lang di Michif TA-PASHIPIIKAN” (Translation: “Michif Language”) and “Speaking Michif,” as well as pages dedicated to various Michif language experts. One notable page in particular is “Learn Michif,” which is a forty-eight-page document that teaches the reader words and phrases in the language. “Learn Michif,” like the other pages of this Scribd blog, has a comment section where people can use what they have learned from this blog. Another place where community members are utilizing the language is (4) Facebook. Although the “Michif Language” Facebook page is comprised of only thirty-five members (as opposed to 456 for Arikara and 129 for Hidatsa), the page thrives. On the page are photos of Métis art, planned gatherings and special events, and some members even use this forum to communicate in the language: to share greetings, and help each other with translations. The (5) YouTube video has been very popular. This video in particular is the only one that came up on the Google search, but has links to other similar videos. “A Conversation in Michif” is a six-minute video portraying a husband and wife having an everyday discussion in the Michif language. The comment section below the video allows viewers to talk in the language or about the video, with many of the comments collaboratively translating the taped conversation. Finally, (6)

WordPress is a blog site. I found a couple WordPress blogs referring back to Michif. The first one listed is an animation project undertaken by community members to teach numbers in the Michif language using creative Métis art which potentially displays the Métis way of life. For example, the animation for the Michif number “six” shows a man in front of his teepee playing his fiddle by an outdoor fire, quite a distance from the mountains or hills. This blog, like the second blog listed, allows for comments in and about the language.

The next Midwestern state we will turn to look at the social media being used for revitalization is Nebraska.

4.B. Languages of Nebraska

The only endangered language that the Ethnologue has identified from the Nebraska region is Omaha-Ponca, which has eighty-five reported speakers. It is a Siouan language consisting of speakers from the Omaha (Nebraska) area and the Ponca (Nebraska and Oklahoma).

4.B.i. Omaha-Ponca

While the Ethnologue reported eighty-five speakers, Wikipedia suggests that this is an old census dating back to 1986, and currently maintains just seventy speakers as of 2004, despite having an ethnic population of 528 between the Nebraska and Oklahoma areas. This language group has the fewest social media sources of any language presented thus far.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omaha-Ponca_language
(2) YouTube	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P295sE322X4

Table (5) Websites from the Omaha-Ponca Community

I found only two social media networks relating to the Omaha-Ponca language. In addition to (1) Wikipedia and (2) YouTube, there was a Facebook page dedicated to the language, but unlike the Facebook pages for the other languages I highlighted, this one provided a history of Omaha-Ponca people and language, and did not contain a forum for written commentary or dialogue, so it does not fit my definition of “social media” and thus cannot be added to this list of Omaha-Ponca social media-based language revitalization tools. The Wikipedia page for the Omaha-Ponca language contained a “talk” section like the other Wikipedia pages for other languages. The YouTube video that appeared in the Google search for “Omaha-Ponca language” is called “Words of Life Omaha-Ponca: Ponca People/ Language Movie Trailer.” This video is an Omaha-Ponca translation presumably of the biblical story of Noah’s Ark, due to the illustration associated with the digital recording of the translation, which is the building of the Ark. While other videos did not appear on the Google search, the right sidebar lists many more translation and dialogic videos in the Omaha-Ponca language.

While this language had very few community pages, it had by far the most support from universities, including University of Nebraska and the University of Colorado. However, neither resource contained social media (forums to induce dialogue).

I had identified only one language categorized as “endangered” in the Nebraska region, and similarly with Iowa. But, while the Omaha-Ponca language of Nebraska had just 70-85 speakers, the Meskwaki language of Iowa claims to have 250 speakers.

4.C. Languages of Iowa

The Meskwaki language, while still endangered, has more speakers than any other language in my research (250). The Ethnologue has identified the language as “Meskwaki” but an initial Google search produced a variety of language names, including “Fox,” “Meskwaki,” “Mesquakie-Sauk,” “Meshkwahkihaki,” “Mesquakie-Sauk-Kickapoo,” and “Sac and Fox.” While I only search for “Meskawaki language,” I will record my findings on any of these languages that surface due to the keywords.

4.C.i. Meskwaki

A Google search for “Meskwaki language” yielded 109,000 hits for pages relating to the multitude of aforementioned language names.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fox_language http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Fox_language
(2) Indian Country Today	http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/mobile/article/meskwaki-tribe-receives-grant-for-sewing-and-language-project-19645
(3) YouTube	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKUbXJKJtqw http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHj6UiB4sI0
(4) Myspace	http://www.myspace.com/meskwakination

Community Pages	Web Address
(5) WordPress	http://paparoa.wordpress.com/2012/10/24/the-red-earth-people-of-tama/

Table (6) Websites from the Meskwaki Community

Searching the “Meskwaki language” generated several information pages regarding the Meskwaki’s unique history, especially its involvement in World War II, as several members of the Meskwaki tribe participated in code talking, using their native American tongue. Therefore, many websites were not directly related to using and promoting the language, but rather describing the history and events surrounding the language, as well as various programs that are in place to protect the language, or providing information on the Meskwaki casino. A few of the pages contained social media related to Meskwaki language revitalization, and these are highlighted in Table (6), and explained below.

(1) Wikipedia “talk” section, unlike ones for the other languages does appear to encourage and allow for discussion in the language and about the article itself (the first website listed under (1) Wikipedia), which also pertains to the language. The next website is (2) Indian Country Today. This is a news article that highlights the efforts of the Meskwaki women to learn the art and the language of their tribe, an effort funded by a modest grant. A paragraph within the article provides some translations in the language, and a comment section at the end of the article allows for readers to discuss other art-related words or phrases in the Meskwaki language. Two YouTube videos (entry (3) in Table (6) above) emerged from the Google search. The first is a Meskwaki woman

speaking briefly in her language, although there is no translation provided. The next video is a three-minute song displaying singing in the Meskwaki language, while showing images of the Meskwaki region in Iowa. Another page related to music in Meskwaki is (4) Myspace. This page provides several songs in Meskwaki and photos of the singers and other tribal members, and a comment section is available as well, for translations or discussion of the songs. And finally, (5) WordPress is a blog about the Meskwaki written by the author “Paparoa”. The blog describes prominent people within the community and their efforts towards the revitalization of the Meskwaki language.

The next group of endangered languages is from my home state, Wisconsin.

4.D. Languages of Wisconsin

The Ethnologue has identified four endangered languages within the Wisconsin region, including Ho-chunk, Menominee, Oneida, and Potawatomi. Of these, Ho-chunk has the least number of reported speakers (11). Menominee has 39 speakers, and Oneida and Potawatomi both have 50.

4.D.i. Ho-chunk

Google had produced 286,000 pages for “Ho-chunk language”. A search for the “Ho-chunk” also yielded many different language names, including “Hocąk”, what the Ho-chunk community calls itself, as well as “Winnebago”. While the Ethnologue has recorded eleven Ho-chunk speakers, other sources claim 300 speakers. The difference in these numbers could be native or fluent speakers versus language learners. Despite the

relatively few Ho-chunk speakers, a surprising number of community-produced social media pages were found.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnebago_language http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Ho-Chunk
(2) YouTube	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEFGxfaOOkI http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9-kN08Qmds http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbXdE5iODog http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok7Lcb-wikk
(3) Sioux City Journal	http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/video-hochunk-language-camp/vmix_5e430c52-3c68-51e5-bc1e-35800191b781.html

Table (7) Websites from the Ho-chunk Community

A search for “Ho-chunk languages” did not produce any blogs or even dialogue-inducing Facebook pages, but a few different Wikipedia pages and YouTube videos are available in and for the language. The first Wikipedia page for the “Winnebago language” is similar to that of other languages in that it describes the features of the language, its lineage, introduces key phrases within the “Winnebago” language, and of course, provides a space for commentary or dialogue as well as allows users to edit the article. The second Wikipedia page is the “talk” section of the Ho-chunk Wikipedia page (not listed in Table (7) due to the lack of specific reference to the language in the article). The “talk” section in particular discusses the language, and more specifically, the translations of certain words are provided by Wikipedia users. The Ho-chunk also

maintain a wide collection of videos in and about the language. The first video listed in Table (7) is a public service recording, created by the surrounding community (not necessarily the Ho-chunk themselves) about the language, with tribal members speaking the language within the video which aims to highlight the importance and gravity of language loss. The next YouTube video listed also stresses the situation of attrition within the community by discussing the plight of the Ho-chunk language as well as the revitalization efforts within the community, all in the Ho-chunk language itself. The third YouTube video presents greetings in the language. And finally, the last video is about language revival yet again, with portions in Ho-chunk and others in English, all while Ho-chunk music in the language serenades in the background. The comments display viewers communicating in Ho-chunk and sharing translations of their writing. The final item in Table (7), Sioux City Journal is also a video within a news source discussing a Ho-chunk language camp that was established for the Ho-chunk youth. This video is presented in the Ho-chunk language and a translation is provided, as well as a space for commentary.

4.D.ii. Menominee

The Menominee nation has a reported 39 speakers, according to the Ethnologue; however, a Google search for “Menominee language” provided an abundance of pages: more than any other language researched in this thesis yet, at 624,000 results, and unsurprisingly, these results produced more social media as well.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menominee_language
(2) Blogspot	http://menomineelanguage.blogspot.com/ http://mr-verb.blogspot.com/2012/01/menominee-language-outrage.html
(3) Lost Words Documentary	http://www.lostwordsdocumentary.com/2012/12/karen-washinawatok-director-of.html
(4) Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/groups/203084773176/?fref=ts
(5) YouTube	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUR4KPbjrY
(6) Quizlet	http://quizlet.com/6629790/menominee-language-flash-cards/
(7) Twitter	https://twitter.com/thewaysorg/status/273068742295027713
(8) Tumblr	http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/menominee

Table (8) Websites from the Menominee Community

Of these eight different results of social media for the Menominee language, two are considered blogs: number (2) Blogspot, and (8) Tumblr. Despite their common ground, the two blogs are quite different from one another. Blogspot is designated for discussion of the language attrition and prevention of this. (8) Tumblr takes a somewhat unique approach to blogging. While the Blogspot blog is written by an individual or a designated group, Tumblr incorporates entries from all members of the community, through postings of photos, videos, phrases, etc., and writing comments on others' entries. The blogs allow users to write in the language, and (1) Wikipedia has an excellent and detailed description of the features of the language. There is not yet a discussion in Menominee on the Wikipedia page, but there is dialogue about the

language, in particular, a debate regarding the language classification. (3) Lost Words Documentary seemed to be somewhere between a blog and a video. The main feature of this page is the documentary detailing the Native American struggle to save their endangered languages, however, below the video certain prominent language activists in the Menominee community were featured and the language revitalization efforts were highlighted, just above a section for comments in and about Menominee. This documentary is free and open for the public to view, and for anyone to discuss, unlike the next webpage on the “community pages” list: (4) Facebook. This particular page is considered a closed group, designated for the Menominee peoples only. The public can view the group members, all of which appear to be of Menominee origin, as well as the page description. Next is (5) YouTube. This particular video listed in “community pages” in table (8) is called “Words of Life Menominee,” created by World Language Movies who record theological, presumably Christian, myths like this in Menominee and many other languages as well. (6) Quizlet is a study tool. Users can make flashcards or games in any subject (in this case, the Menominee language) and share with others. Alongside the study set, which includes words and phrases and their English translations, is a discussion board so language learners can practice communication. And finally, the Menominee community also utilizes (7) Twitter. This social media allows a minimal character-count; each user can write 150 letters, characters, or spaces. Due to the lack of space, this particular tweet includes a link to an outside source: a video featuring the Menominee language revitalization. While the video itself does not allow for comments or any sort of dialogue, Twitter maintains this feature, so users can view the source and

discuss via tweet. Each of the social media-based technologies allows for communication in the Menominee language, and are created and utilized by the community itself.

4.D.iii. Oneida

The next Wisconsin language, Oneida, has 50 speakers, according to the Ethnologue; however, over 2 million Google pages were produced. Within these 2 million, there were several websites dedicated to the Oneida language revitalization, but only a few introducing social media.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oneida_language http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Oneida_language
(2) YouTube	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7enggKzjcc http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtcBmuXJQ9I http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8LcYvhLiqo&feature=g-crec
(3) Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/pages/Oneida-Language-and-Cultural-Education-Centre/253477251369858

Table (9) Websites from the Oneida Community

I've included two links to Wikipedia pages, the first of which is the "Oneida Language" article, including the sound system and other features of the language; the second is the "talk" page in which a discussion of the language has begun. Here, members have shared their personal knowledge of the language as well as articles and outside sources to supplement the data within the original Wikipedia article. Personal

knowledge of language was also shared on (2) YouTube videos. The first listed is one of a series of Oneida language videos that teaches Oneida words and their English translations. Each video is dedicated to a particular category of words; for example, the first video contains audio for the kinship terms. The next video is particularly exciting. An elder in the Oneida community has joined the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay revitalization efforts to create “talking,” or oral dictionaries in Oneida. This video describes the project and allows viewers to experience the language. On the same vein, the following video depicts an Oneida language class of first year language students from the Oneida tribe. Another way to be socially present across a distance is through Facebook, the final social media source listed in table (9). Although ‘The Oneida Language and Cultural Education Centre’ Facebook page has just 28 members, the information within the site is rich. Not only do the members use the language on the page, but also links to websites and videos are uploaded by various people to share sources in the language. Additionally, in-person language classes are made publicly aware via the Facebook forum.

4.D.iv. Potawatomi

The final endangered Native American language of the Midwest I researched was the Potawatomi language of Wisconsin. Potawatomi, like Oneida, has 50 living speakers, although the number of those who ethnically identify as Potawatomi is much higher. A Google search for “Potawatomi Language” yielded 1,550,000 results.

Community Pages	Web Address
(1) Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potawatomi_language http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Potawatomi_language
(2) WordPress	http://neaseno.org/blog/
(3) The Topeka Capital-Journal	http://cjonline.com/life/2010-06-26/potawatomi_language_lives_on
(4) YouTube	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4n53J9F-7A

Table (10) Websites from the Potawatomi Community

Four community pages were found including social media, the first of which is Wikipedia, separated into two pages: the article and the “talk” section. The article is incredibly detailed with phonemic charts and other language features, while this particular “talk” section is used as a forum to discuss changes made on the site, as well as personal knowledge of the language in regards to the accuracy of the information within the article. As an additional forum to discuss the language, the Potawatomi also use the medium of blog through WordPress. This blog is part of a bigger website that teaches the language through interactive games and readable lessons. Comments and discussion using the words that are taught through the website and the blog itself are found on this page ((2) WordPress). The next community page listed in table (10) is a news article from the Topeka Capital-Journal, highlighting language revitalization efforts from elders in the community, specifically in creating dictionaries: both oral and video, as well as grammar books in the Potawatomi language. On this page, readers have left comments teaching others words and phrases in the language, to support the efforts detailed in the article.

Also utilizing the language in a creative way was the fourth and final community page, a YouTube video. This video depicts student language learners practicing the Potawatomi language through their creation of a fun video, possibly as an assignment from the Potawatomi course.

4.E. Results of Survey

In addition to studying these social media sites, I surveyed the communities in regards to their feelings about the social media available for their language (the survey is available in Appendix A). The survey was in the form of a SurveyMonkey questionnaire that was sent out to community members via the languages' Facebook pages. The questions aimed to gain information about their proficiency and various uses of the language, particularly related to new technologies. In a scale from 0, no knowledge of the language, to 6, fluent, the first question asked them to rate their own proficiency in the language. Questions 2, 3, and 4 specifically addressed heritage language use through internet-based technologies. And finally, the last question aimed to gauge their interest in using their indigenous language if the technology would become available.

I received five responses⁵ to my survey and the results are provided in table (11).

⁵ I received only five responses for the survey due to difficulty in finding willing participants to share information on their language use.

Survey Questions	Average Result
Language Familiarity (0-6)	1.6
Use of Technology in Language (yes/no)	3 yes/ 2 no
Types of Social Media Used	3 Facebook/ 1 YouTube
Use of Social Media if Available	5 Yes

Table (11) Results of Community Survey

What we see from this survey is that the level of knowledge of the language is fairly low: limited to just a few select words and phrases in the language. However, with the limited knowledge, some community members are making use of social media, primarily in the form of Facebook and YouTube, as is verified by the results of my study. Although not all the respondents use social media in their language, remarkably, all would use it if it were available.

In the next section I discuss and interpret the significance of the results.

Chapter 5. DISCUSSION

From the results we can see that each language has fewer than 300 speakers, yet all have social media dedicated to them. To summarize the previous section, I present the figure below.

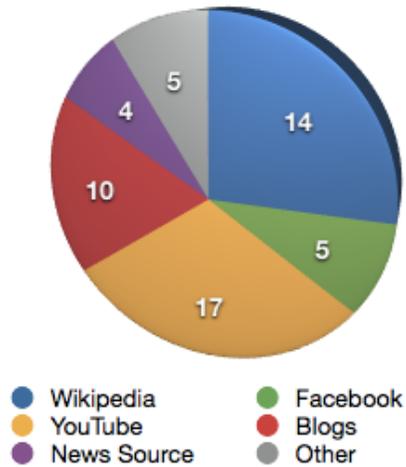


Figure (2) Types and Number of Social Media used within the Communities

The most prevalent type of social media found amongst these endangered languages of the Midwest is YouTube videos, with Wikipedia articles closely behind, followed by community blogs; other sources include community organization webpages, both Twitter and Myspace social media sites, and Quizlet language learning resource. There is no connection between the number of social media webpages and the number of speakers; for example, Arikara has 20 known speakers and has 5 community pages, whereas Hidatsa has 100 speakers, but only 3 social media-based webpages. There is, however, a connection between the number of speakers and the number of online webpages written in the language. As an illustration, Michif is one of the languages with more speakers and more social media sites, and many of the online sources examined

were actually written in the language. On the other hand, Mandan has only 6 speakers and no pages completely in the language. As we can see, it is clear that there are other factors which go into the successful revitalization of a language, other than simply having social media as a tool.

5.A. Community Pages

In this section, I further explain the significance of the most widely used social media within the communities, including YouTube videos, YouTube comments, YouTube for online language lessons, blogs, Facebook, and Wikipedia. Additionally, I will discuss what social media can do to aid in language revitalization and under what circumstances it could be effective, using the case of Irish, detailed in the introduction, as an example of a successful revitalization effort.

What I have shown thus far in the thesis is what social media is currently being employed in minority communities of endangered languages and how social media can be used in language revitalization efforts. According to Crystal, *endangered* refers to languages which “have few or no children learning the language, and the youngest good speakers are young adults” and “are spoken by enough people to make survival a possibility, but only in favourable circumstances and with a growth in community support” (2000, pp. 20-21). These circumstances Crystal refers to could lead to successful revitalization of a language in a minority community.

In order to maintain a language, the entire community must be involved in the efforts. Joshua Fishman (1991) created a scale called GIDS, or the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, to measure the vitality of a language. The idea is that

as a language attrites, it goes through a series of stages. These stages show the decline of a language. Understanding this process can help reverse language shift. From the scale presented below, we can assess where these endangered Native American languages are placed, somewhere between Stages Six and Eight.

- Stage 1: Some use of the language in higher level education, occupational, governmental, and media efforts (but without the additional safety provided by political independence)

- Stage 2: Language in lower governmental services and mass media, but not in the higher spheres of either

- Stage 3: Use of language in the lower work sphere (outside of the language neighborhood/community) involving interaction between those speaking the minority language and those speaking the majority language of the region

- Stage 4: Language in lower education that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws

- Stage 5: Language literacy in home, school, and community, but without taking on extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy

- Stage 6: The attainment of intergenerational informal orality in its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement
- Stage 7: Most users of the language are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but are beyond child-bearing age
- Stage 8: Most vestigial users of the language are socially isolated elderly people and language needs to be re-assembled from their tongue and memories are taught to demographically unconcentrated adults

Table (12) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

At the time of the nineteenth-century Irish revival, Irish was already at Stage Eight. Now, it is closer to Stage One. Comparatively, this shows how revitalization can bring a language from near-death to a working language that is integrated into the community. From this scale, it can be inferred that for social media to be successful as a tool for language revitalization, a variety of factors must also be in place. First, the language must still be somewhat in use, at least among some members of the community from whence it comes. For example, Mandan, with just two remaining speakers, is likely past Stage Eight. At this point, social media acts as a preservation tool, so the community can discuss aspects of the language, but not speak or write the language communicatively. Additionally, there must be a range of speakers. The language must be

used by the older generations and taught to the younger ones, who will subsequently enforce the language throughout the various domains of use. And finally, according to the scale above, there must be support from the educational system, institutions of employment, governmental structures, as well as the members of the community who will teach and communicate in the language with their children.

With Irish as a model, we see how many ways of revitalization go hand in hand; all are needed for success and social media can play a huge part in today's world of technology-aided communication. The ones that are most often utilized in endangered Native American languages of the Midwest are YouTube videos, blogs, Facebook, and Wikipedia. The use of these social media as tools for revitalization will be further analyzed in the following sub-sections.

5.A.i. YouTube Videos

As I explained in the results, YouTube is a social media site where users upload any videos of varying lengths and viewers can comment on the videos. This type of media is efficient for the revitalization of a language because it allows for community members to hear and practice the language despite distance from the community or lack of other interlocutors with whom to use the language. In addition to creating and viewing these videos for linguistic purposes, members upload clips of community events, native traditions, or other culturally based affairs. Culture and language are intricately linked and oftentimes, there cannot be one without the other. Language allows a community to engage in its culture. Many of the social media found in the results inform the public about events occurring in and for the community and allow the public to converse in the

language and to experience cultural events as a whole. Facilitating a forum for an ethnic group to come together around its culture and language is central for that transmission.

5.A.ii. YouTube Comments

The comments on the YouTube videos are particularly interesting. For the Arikara, the YouTube comments expressed desire to learn the language and regret about language loss. This is a common trend found throughout the comments of YouTube videos among other languages as well. The Ho-chunk, for example, use this comment space as a forum for debating the meanings of Ho-chunk words and phrases and lament the lack of reliable and readily available information regarding the language, community, and history. The comments from the community also express desire for more revitalization efforts, sadness toward the rate of loss, and excitement over learning new words and being able to use the phrases presented in the video. For instance, one of the users wrote:

This language revival that was shown, is helping to keep this Native American language alive. Everything must be done to preserve the 300 different Native American languages spoken throughout the United States, because if they are lost than we are losing an American heritage. We cannot keep them alive just through the names of states, cities, rivers, and mountains. They need to be spoken, and we must reverse the trend of the boarding schools a century ago.

This definitely shows the tragedy of losing the language, as another user laments, “I wish I could speak it. My grandpa left it with him and passed on.” In this way, the YouTube videos serve as a learning aid for the language and bring the community together to share

thoughts and to practice the language with one another. In fact, each video listed in the tables in the results has documented a significant number of views considering the number of people who claim to speak the language. Thus, we can claim that this is a particularly useful tool as a method for language revitalization.

5.A.iii. YouTube for Online Language Lessons

Sometimes just a video can unite a whole community in revitalization efforts. For instance, there was one unfortunate event occurred in the Menominee community: a young girl was admonished for teaching classmates phrases in her native tongue. This incident was captured in a number of videos, which resulted in a renewed sense of community and language pride. Members of the Menominee tribe started to unite efforts towards creating language classes at the local schools so children can learn and practice the language.

Some communities are already creating language classes via YouTube. The Oneida tribe is one such community. The description for the language class video states, “the Oneida Indian Nation’s goal is to encourage and grow as many speakers as possible in an effort to save their native tongue” (The Oneida, 2012). Taping class sessions and posting the video to the public domain of YouTube on the internet allows for many potential speakers to view the lessons, despite the possible inability to be physically present in the Oneida language class. Even though Oneida has only 50 native speakers, the interest in these YouTube language lessons points clearly to the community’s commitment for language maintenance. Once again, this online forum has an important potential as a language revitalization tool.

5.A.iv. Blogs

Another online medium which allows users to learn and practice language is the blog. Several language communities are utilizing this mode as it is free, simple to use, and can reach a large audience, as well as connect with others and create a dialogue. The Meskwaki community in particular is very supportive of this online tool. Their blog highlights various community members who are strong language activists. In describing these individuals, Meskwaki phrases and their translations are provided and readers can also write in the comment section, thus allowing practice of Meskwaki within the blog itself. Clearly, the members of the Meskwaki community have taken matters into their own hands to utilize and protect the language from impending death. These members note that “there is nothing embarrassing about speaking Meskwaki. It is more embarrassing to be Meskwaki and not be able to speak your own language” (Meskwaki Language, n.d.).

Members of the Michif community have also utilized the blog as a forum for revitalization. As discussed earlier, Michif has more than 200 speakers and many social media sites dedicated to it. Since the language has more speakers, it is likely that there is also a more fertile ground for practicing and passing on the language. One of the blogs was constructed by, Kai, a young Métis university student. In her blog, she writes that she had wished to be closer to her culture, so she took it upon herself to learn the language. The blog is the online manifestation of her language-learning journey. She has uploaded videos of herself telling stories in the language and has blog entries dedicated to different aspects of the language: either to Michif phonetics or to its morphology. The Michif language is one that is endangered due to the few number of speakers in relation to the

entire Métis population over the American and Canadian region; but young speakers, such as Kai, are emerging, utilizing social media for language revitalization. Through this blog she can share resources as she learns the language and can practice it through the blog entries and the comments, even as she is away from the community, across the digital divide.

The Menominee have a blog created by the Mawaw Ceseniyah Language and Culture Center. In this blog, we read testimonies, such as the following: “this is what gives [us] hope that our language will continue to be a vital part of our culture.” We can see that the blog is an important tool for this community, as “it encompasses everything that we...are working towards. Without our children growing up learning Menominee, our language will die.” Through the blogs, the younger generations have the ability not only to learn Menominee but have a forum to utilize the language as well.

5.A.v. Facebook

Another social media forum that the majority of languages use to communicate is Facebook. Facebook is the most popular social media site on the world wide web. But, its uses can go beyond social networking. Some Facebook communities were closed to the public and open for membership only to those with tribal affiliations. Harrison acknowledges that this restriction is typical in some Native American tribes as an effort to protect their own language. He notes, “this practice protects the language as a type of intellectual property that is proprietary, owned, and not to be shared or taught to anyone who is not entitled to learn it” (2010, p. 266). Within the community itself, language revitalization may thrive, but outsiders are not permitted within the Facebook group or

into the language-learning platform. For instance, the Arikara has a Facebook page which brings together members of the community to special events. In this page, members can introduce new Arikara words and pronunciations. In order for a language to be revitalized, it must remain current and relevant, and one way to make this happen is through Facebook. When users can learn and then immediately practice words and phrases, the language is able to be used, at least within its online community. Revitalization must begin somewhere. Community members may begin to use the language on Facebook and attend one of the events posted on the page. Most importantly, they can then utilize the language learned from Facebook face-to-face with other members while at these events.

Other languages, for example, the Menominee, take a different stand, and rather, keep the page open to anyone who may be interested. The “Menominee Language” Facebook page is open to those who “wish to learn more about their native language, as well as for those who wish to learn more about a new language.” This is yet another revitalization tactic outlined by Harrison, who states, “*Make it public, visible, and freely shared*. As intellectual property in the public domain or creative commons, teach it to anyone who is interested” (2010, p. 267). He notes that this is a technique particularly employed by communities whose languages have been hidden or repressed.

5.A.vi. Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a public forum intended for sharing knowledge. One way Wikipedia functions as a revitalization tool is by keeping the community updated and involved in important public affairs. Since Wikipedia is available for public collaboration on its

articles, the information is most often up-to-date. An instance of this is seen in the Mandan community. According to the Ethnologue, in 1992, the Mandan language had six known native speakers. Today, there may be only one left, based on accounts from Wikipedia and local news reports. This speaker is called Edwin Benson and he is the only fluent communicator. The “Mandan” Wikipedia page highlights his role as the last speaker and as a language activist, promoting the tongue and inspiring the young children to learn Mandan.

Wikipedia articles have two sections: first, the main article, which describes the language and shares words or phrases, and second, the “talk” section, which allows users to discuss discrepancies within the article, and make a plan for the relevant updates. The “Omaha-Ponca” Wikipedia page does still elicit public collaboration and consists partly of phrases and words in the language meant to maintain it. Through this public collaboration, users can provide other references to materials in regards to the language and can check the quality and accuracy of the data presented by others.

The Wikipedia foundation itself is involved in endangered language research and preservation. The *WikiProject Endangered Languages* aims to highlight articles related to and in support of ameliorating the situation of endangered languages. Also, the *WikiProject Indigenous Peoples of North America* is an effort to promote writings about Native Americans. These two projects bring awareness to the gravity of the language situation to anyone who visits particular articles, including for example, one dedicated to the Meskwaki. The “talk” section rated the Fox language (Meskwaki) as being of high importance, meaning that special attention must be paid to this particular article because of its impending death. The combination of community and organizational efforts

towards revitalization is absolutely necessary. An organization like Wikipedia has the resources for funding and outreaching globally, which can connect the community to others to spread the language.

5.B. Professional Organization Pages

So far we have discussed publicly accessible and free websites that the Midwestern Native American languages have utilized for revitalization. The challenge of revitalizing is exacerbated by the scarcity of funds and lack of resources that many communities experience. In personal communication with Hidatsa tribal member and language instructor, Delvin Driver, Jr., I learned that in order to receive funding for language classes or teaching tools, the community members must petition with major organizations within the area, which often times means the casinos or the oil companies (D. Driver Jr., personal communication, December 15, 2012). This requires much time and energy to prepare statements and present documents explaining a need for funds; the entire process can take years. All this time, members and potential speakers are aging and generations are not learning the language. Also, since many speakers of Native American languages are elderly, last speakers are dying and with them goes the language. As a last speaker once said to David Harrison, “you’ve come too late to learn our language. Nowadays we are a people whose days are numbered” (2010, p. 246). It is vital that not only the communities, but also local professional organizations with resources document and work towards the revitalization of these endangered languages. While native speakers are in existence, revitalization of a language is the aim. Universities and linguistic organizations must be involved and must be connected to the community. A great way of

doing that is through social media, because “this work has to be speaker-centered, not scientist-centered, and putting languages into archives should be much more than just “building a graveyard” (Harrison, 2010, p. 262).

The University of California-Berkeley has put forth efforts to ensure that the indigenous languages of California are more than items in Harrison’s proverbial “graveyard.” Chumash is one such language that has embraced what the Berkeley connection has to offer. This example of university support can show how other universities could utilize or create resources for the languages of the Midwest. For the Chumash language, Berkeley has dedicated an entire website, containing background information on the language, such as the number of speakers and precisely where the language is spoken. Archival information is also located on this website, including papers on and in Chumash. Additionally, further reading is provided for those interested in learning about or researching the language. This digital archive also includes an online catalogue of original paper records from the community and links to other revitalization efforts for Chumash and other indigenous languages of California. Berkeley also hosts the *Breath of Life* workshop, which works toward endangered language survival by supporting the community of languages with no fluent speakers. *Breath of Life* helps these community members understand and do research on their language by teaching documentation methods and aiding the community in the utilization of resources provided by Berkeley. On this website, the university also provides a rotating exhibit of languages, like a museum, to inform the public about these languages and their communities. So, we see that the support from the University of Berkeley has been

beneficial for the case of Chumash, specifically when it comes to technology and the use of digital tools.

In the case of Midwestern Native American languages I studied, there were no social media-based websites hosted by universities or other linguistic organizations. That is not to say that there are no websites. Several of the local universities have excellent programs and webpages dedicated to some of the languages in that region. These universities include the University of Iowa, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, as well as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Missouri, and University of Colorado-Boulder. For example, the University of Iowa provides resources and documentation for the Meskwaki language, University of Wisconsin-Madison has taken great strides to protect and promote the Ho-chunk language, and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay offers language classes in Menominee.

The university support for the Omaha-Ponca is substantial. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln webpage provides a comprehensive digital dictionary in the language, although approval from the university is required prior to access. Additionally, a collection of nineteenth century texts is electronically available via the institution website. The University of Missouri also supports the Omaha-Ponca language. Available on the university website is a detailed description of the language as well as a brief history of the language, to help raise local awareness of the Omaha-Ponca language. And finally, the University of Colorado-Boulder has an entire webpage dedicated to the background, including history and linguistic features of the language, texts in the language, further references for information on Omaha-Ponca, and the contact

information of the website creator, a professor at the university. It is possible that Omaha-Ponca has such an array of university support because the language covers a broader region than the other languages, over Nebraska and Oklahoma. Therefore, more universities are likely to be involved, whereas in Wisconsin, there are four languages vying for time and resources from the universities, so the local universities must decide which languages receive the dedication of funding and efforts.

Despite the involvement of several local universities for these languages, there are no social media pages created or maintained by these universities. I argue that online social media is a tool useful for the purpose of revitalization that linguistic organizations and universities can also use to promote language maintenance. For example, some languages like the Potawatomi are not backed by any revitalization effort from any linguistic organization or university, this might be related to the tribe's location further away than other tribes of Wisconsin. Location is vital, because although there are many universities in Wisconsin, students may not have vehicular transportation and professors may not have the time or funding to travel across distances. It is precisely in situations such as the Potawatomi language that online social media can be of particular use to better accomplish preservation goals.

Universities and other major linguistic organizations have support in a variety of ways. First, those involved in projects have specific training and knowledge about how to best undergo a documentation and revitalization endeavor. These universities and organizations are aiding the cause, but much more needs to be done. As Harrison stated, these languages cannot be kept in files on the computer, but rather, there needs to be a social aspect through communication. The community needs a space to utilize the

language and make it relevant and able to be used. The endangered language community members seeking a space to practice the language, as we discovered from the survey presented in table (11).

5.C. Other Websites

Some pages, although not containing social media, are nevertheless noteworthy in terms of revitalization. One website for the Oneida tribe was created by the community's Language and Cultural Centre, complete with interactive games and videos, and contains audio clips and sound charts. This webpage bordered the definition of "social media" in its interactiveness, but due to the lack of interpersonal dialogue within the site, I could not include it within the results as a social media-based language revitalization tool.

Websites such as these play a potentially important role for endangered languages.

More than any other language, Potawatomi has several websites intended for language revitalization. These sites teach, promote, and through games, allow visitors to practice the language. However, without the aspect of dialogue, these websites cannot be included within the rubric of social media-based sources, as they lack that "social" component. The interactive social aspect is vital because without communication, the language remains stagnant. Unique words will not be created in context and thus the website fails to facilitate language for its intended purpose of communication among speakers.

Overall, I found much fewer webpages than I had expected considering the vast amount of Google pages for the endangered languages examined, but this in itself is significant because while there is a great desire to learn the language, very few resources

are readily available as proven by the results presented in this thesis. While some community-initiated social media is available in each of the endangered Native American languages of the Midwestern region, there are little to no linguistic organizations involved in the social media-based language revitalization effort. As communication in the tongue is vital for a healthy living language, the ability for the speakers to utilize the language in a digital medium becomes a key component to modern day revitalization efforts.

While the lack of social media-based websites is an issue, many of the pages I visited were fairly recent. This suggests that new sites are emerging and the presence of social media used for language revitalization is growing. Harrison reminds us:

Though many small languages will cease to be spoken and the knowledge they contain erased, the situation is not all dire. I see hope in a vibrant global movement to reclaim and enliven small tongues. A determined push-back against the steamroller of globalization is happening right now. I hear it in Mohawk-language kindergartens, Navajo pop music, and Ojibwe Facebook postings. These familiar media present new and powerful platforms for many of the world's smallest languages. Their speakers, also wired global citizens, cleverly apply new media to sustain ancient words. Rather than viewing technology and globalization as threats, they dive into the information sea, using it to buoy their languages to new heights (2010, p. 17).

Chapter 6. CONCLUSION

Language loss is a serious issue, not only for the community in question, but also for everyone. Encompassed within any given language is a wealth of knowledge and if we do not take strides to revitalize the language while we still can, that information may be lost forever. One very recent and emerging form of revitalization is through the digital forum of social media. This thesis examined the use of social media primarily for revitalization purposes for 10 endangered Midwestern Native American languages. We discovered that while social media exists dedicated to each of these languages, there are not enough websites available, nor is there enough academic support.

No social media sites are provided by linguistic organizations or local universities. This is an issue because these academic or professional associations have valuable resources needed by the endangered language speakers. However, the communities employ other social media, including YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs, and Facebook in their native languages. Due to quantifiable measurements such as number of comments or views on a page, we can see that these tools are frequently used and have the potential of significantly assisting in maintenance efforts. A survey distributed to the community showed that while about half the respondents use social media in their language, all would use it, if it were available. This shows a need for more social media-based webpages in endangered native languages and more academic involvement in social media initiatives.

One caveat for the lack of available social media could be that many of the fluent speakers for each language are elderly and may not use the internet, let alone for maintenance purposes. However, while revitalization must begin with these fluent

speakers, it continues and is carried out by the younger generations. Because the young pave the way for the future, social media is an important outlet for language transmission. In fact, the research presented here supports the idea that online social media is potentially key for future revitalization efforts. In time, we hope that online tools are employed to their full potential before it is too late. It is our responsibility as linguists to assist communities in their efforts to maintain their ancestral languages so that they can successfully pass on not only a linguistic system, but “an entire lifestyle.” As eloquently put by the Hidatsa tribe, “without our language my relatives, everything will change. Our sovereignty will exist on borrowed time. We will no longer have this unique distinction of being the Hidatsa tribe. Our words will blend indistinguishable with the rest of society’s words and we will have no way of defining ourselves” (Hidatsa Language Immersion, 2011).

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Appendix: Survey for the Community

1. How familiar are you with your tribe's language?

No knowledge	Understand few words/phrases	Understand with major difficulty	Speak with some difficulty	Can speak; difficulties with reading/writing	Nearly fluent (grammatical issues)	Fluent
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. Do you use technology to communicate in the language?

Yes No

3. What types of social media do you use to communicate in the language?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Blog
- Other

4. If you chose "other," what types of social media do you use to communicate in the language?

5. If social media were available in your language, would you use it?

Yes No