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What can revitalization work teach us about documentation?

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As language documentation gains recognition as an important methodology for linguistics, and as communities mount ever more impressive revitalization projects, the interests of academic and community scholars are converging. It is useful to look to those involved in revitalization for their views on what they treasure most in the existing records of their languages and what they wish were there. Decisions about documentation are tightly bound up with ideas about what constitutes the essence of a language. If a language is viewed as encompassing such things as discourse structure, styles of interaction, constructions that meld structure and substance, prefabricated collocations and idiomatic expressions, recurring lexical choices, and conventionalized prosodic structures, then all of these must be part of the record.

1. Introduction

Normal science pushes us to address the questions we are currently asking. It can move knowledge ahead, as new answers raise new questions. But the escalating endangerment of languages all over the world raises important issues for normal work in linguistics. On the one hand, the languages may not be there when new questions develop. On the other, the kinds of information that are most valuable to the communities whose languages they are, and that may become even more valuable to them in the future, may not be the focus of current science. Endangerment brings a special responsibility for scholars, inside and outside of local communities, to think beyond immediate interests. Thoughtful documentation is a more crucial aspect of the field than ever before.

Fortunately, recognition of the importance of good documentation is now widespread, and attention is being directed not only at the technical aspects of the work, but also content. The audiences for language documentation are varied, evolving, and merging. They include both general linguists and those working in more specialized areas. Ever more importantly, they include scholars from within

the communities, with many of the same kinds of interests as those outside, but also with a special stake in the language. There are now impressive revitalization projects underway around the globe, and many of the people involved in them have insight into the kinds of language documentation that will be most valuable to communities as circumstances evolve. They can offer important advice on what kinds of material they have found the most useful for their work, as well as what they wish were in the record but is not.

Michael Noonan (2005) wisely distinguished two main mechanisms leading to language endangerment: *language shift* and *linguistic convergence*. With the first, *shift*, people simply stop speaking the language. For understandable economic and social reasons, they want and need to be able to communicate in the encroaching language and ensure that their children can do the same, so they use that language in more and more situations. Often shift progresses below the level of consciousness of speakers: they themselves are bilingual, but they are sometimes surprised to discover that the next generation does not know the traditional language. In the second scenario, *convergence*, distinctive characteristics of one language are lost by gradual drift toward the grammatical and semantic categories of another. As Noonan remarks, convergence is in a sense more insidious than shift; the language survives, but it loses its distinctiveness. As he notes, convergence is not always obvious from grammatical descriptions, because grammarians are often selective, consciously or unconsciously, when they decide what should go into a grammar, describing only structures deemed “typical” of the language.

Revitalization work is raising our awareness of the kinds of information that should be considered for documentation in both situations: shift and convergence. And as the field of linguistics has evolved, it has become increasingly clear that often the very kinds of documentation valued by communities can contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the nature of language in general and the forces that shape it.

2. Shift

Language shift can be motivated by a variety of forces, often operating in concert. Bilingualism in an encroaching language makes sense as a way to survive economically and socially in an evolving world. As a consequence, the traditional language can become all but invisible. Children may rarely see it or hear it around them. Both contributing to this situation and as a result of it, the language may be undervalued by community members, by people outside of the community, or both.

2.1 Counteracting invisibility

To counteract loss through invisibility, an obvious strategy is to increase the presence of the traditional language. Certain kinds of documentation can contribute to this effort. Mohawk communities in Quebec, Ontario, and New York State are providing some wonderful examples of what can be done.

One tactic is to increase its visual presence. In Kahnawà:ke, Quebec, for example, intersections are marked with bilingual stop signs: the familiar red hexagonal signs say both *Stop* and *Tésta'n*. Over the door of the church is a sign *Ononhsatokénhti* ('it is house holy'). At the entrance to the bank is a sign whose top line reads *Tsi iehwistaientákhkwa* ('place one lays down money with'), above *Caisse populaire Kahnawake*. Along a road is a billboard *Sheia'tánerenk tóka' she-norónhkhwa* 'Buckle them up if you love them', with cute drawings of babies and children buckled into car seats. There are plaques around town commemorating the *Ratirista'kehró:non'* the heroic ironworkers. For those engaged in language documentation, it can be useful to think of the kinds of vocabulary that might serve as useful community resources for heightening the visibility of the language, whether or not such terms seem to be of current theoretical significance.

Another strategy for heightening awareness of the language is to increase its aural presence. Many factors enter into the language choices bilinguals make in particular settings and with particular people. Speakers can decide to use the language as often as possible. It may not be easy, but it need not require special funds. There is nothing like being surrounded by a language to make a person want to know it. The language immediately becomes more relevant. Even those who are not first-language speakers can make a difference. In a community where residents have dogs and talk to them, for example, speakers and learners alike can canvass the community to collect traditional pet names. The Mohawk dog names *Shentáhsa* 'the tail one, Tail' (for male dogs) and *Skentáhsa* 'Tail' (for female dogs) even show some grammatical structure, with different gender prefixes. Other traditional dog names show similar structure: *Shahónhta* 'Ears', *Shanén:ia* 'Rocky', *Shanénhsta* 'Corny'. Dog owners can learn simple commands and fill the air with them, such as Mohawk *Sátien!* 'Sit!', *Sá:rat!* 'Lie down!', *Satkarhátho!* 'Roll over!', *Tatsé:na!* 'Catch!', and *Tesatkarhaté:ni!* 'Turn around!' They can praise their dogs if so inclined: *Senahskwi:io!* 'Good dog!' (literally 'You are a good animal'). Learning a repertoire of such phrases is not too hard, and dogs are much more tolerant of a learner's pronunciation than many people. Documentation of such language need not take long, but it can yield observable results.

Another useful project is to collect phrases that everyone can use in daily interaction, like Mohawk *Kwé:* 'Hi', *Iawékon* 'It's delicious', and *Niá:wen* 'Thank you'. Assembling lists of expressions used most often on a daily basis can provide

another fruitful research opportunity for community youth and others. What is said in the traditional language can be learned and used as is. Identifying what is said most often in the encroaching language is important as well, since it reflects the things people will probably want to say. Counterparts for those expressions can then be sought in the traditional language.

Other kinds of language that even non-speakers can learn readily, and that can serve as a marker of identity and respect for the language, are interjections. One common Mohawk expression is *Háo'ki* 'Come on'.

(1) Interjections

Háo'ki tetewatská:hon.
'Come on let's eat.'

Like most languages, Mohawk is rich in such small expressions: *Hátskwi*, *Hánio*, *Ótsta'*, *Wáts*, *Wá'tsik*, *Á:ke*, *Akí:*, *Atió:*, and many more. Anyone listening carefully to Mohawk conversation will notice them everywhere. Some are easily translated. *Atió:* is said when someone feels something cold: 'Brrrr'. *Akí:* signals pain: 'Ouch'. Others have meanings like 'Gee whiz' or 'Wait a minute'. Many children who have grown up in Mohawk-speaking communities without learning Mohawk as a first language still use such expressions appropriately.

But expressions like these often did not find their way into the field notes of earlier linguists. These gaps are usually the first thing mentioned by those working to revitalize languages. Three very active individuals spearheading revitalization projects in North America, Daryl Baldwin (Myammia (Illinois) project in Oklahoma), Megan Lukaniec (Wendat (Huron) project in Quebec), and Richard Zane Smith (Wyandot project in Oklahoma) have each cited everyday expressions as the most valuable information they could have, information that is represented only scantily, if at all, in the records of the language they have to work with.

2.2 Empowering more serious learners

Ambitious learners involved in revitalization programs often comment that they know a lot of words, but not how to talk. For those eager for more than short expressions, systematic documentation of basic patterns can serve as the foundation for learning to understand and say new things, to use the language creatively. Yes/no questions, for example, tend to be relatively regular cross-linguistically. In Mohawk, such questions are formed simply with the particle *ken*.

(2) Yes/no questions

<i>lawékon.</i>	'It's delicious.'
<i>lawékon ken?</i>	'Is it delicious?'
<i>Iokennó:ron.</i>	'It's raining.'
<i>Iokennó:ron ken?</i>	'Is it raining?'

Learners can get considerable mileage out of this one construction. But to continue the conversation, they will eventually want to know how to answer in the negative. There are clear patterns here as well.

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (3) Negation | | |
| | <i>Iawékon.</i> | ‘It’s delicious.’ |
| | <i>Iáh, iáh teiawékon.</i> | ‘No, it doesn’t taste good.’ |
| | <i>Iokennó:ron.</i> | ‘It’s raining.’ |
| | <i>Iah, iáh teiokennó:ron.</i> | ‘No, it’s <u>not</u> raining.’ |

The range of sentences learners can use will be increased greatly if they can talk about different persons.

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (4) Persons | | |
| | <i>Katonhkária’ks</i> | ‘I’m hungry’ |
| | <i>Satonhkária’ks</i> | ‘ <u>You</u> ’re hungry’ |
| | <i>Satonhkária’ks ken?</i> | ‘Are <u>you</u> hungry?’ |
| | <i>Kenòn:we’s</i> | ‘ <u>I</u> like it’ |
| | <i>Senòn:we’s</i> | ‘ <u>You</u> like it’ |
| | <i>Senòn:we’s ken?</i> | ‘Do <u>you</u> like it?’ |

In some linguistic traditions, it has been customary to provide no more examples than are necessary to demonstrate the point under discussion. Those documenting the language might assume that the examples of polarity questions in (2), negation in (3), and first and second persons in (4) would be sufficient. But teachers and learners alike need more in order to see the patterns for themselves and absorb them. And there may be limits to the patterns that are not obvious from a single example. The Mohawk negative, for example, is signaled by a different prefix if other prefixes are present. Also, as in many languages, the forms of individual morphemes, like the pronominal prefixes in (4), have different shapes in different contexts.

Documentation of robust patterns like these is fundamental for revitalization. But word lists and basic grammar alone do not make full speakers. Much of knowing a language is knowing what to say in a given situation. Language comes in recurring, situated chunks. Piece-by-piece translations of sentences from the encroaching language may be technically grammatical but completely unidiomatic, simply not what speakers say. In each of the examples below, the first two lines provide idiomatic English and Mohawk counterparts. The third lines provide literal translations of the idiomatic Mohawk. The idiomatic Mohawk could never be derived from the idiomatic English.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| (5) English: | ‘So how’s everything?’ |
| Mohawk: | <i>Kwé:. Hátskwi oh ní:ioht?</i> |
| Literally | Hi. so then how so it is |

- (6) English: 'Watch out!'
 Mohawk: *Se'nikòn:rarak!*
 Literally 'Keep mind setting on it!'
- (7) English: 'I agree'
 Mohawk: *Né: ki' wáhi'.*
 Literally that.aforementioned in.fact TAG

People in all cultures learn social formulas. There are various ways in Mohawk to invite someone to take a seat next to you, for example. (All of these examples were drawn from spontaneous Mohawk conversation among skilled first-language speakers. Each line represents a separate intonation unit or prosodic phrase.)

- (8) 'Sit here!'
- a. *Kén: satien!*
 here you set yourself
- b. *Kén: sanitskó:ten!*
 here you bum stand

There are certain ways of extending invitations.

- (9) 'Come join us!'
Ká:ts, takwatia'tárhahs
 come put yourself bodily in for us'
- (10) 'What do you say we go play some golf?'
Ó:nen kati' ken
 now then Q
tentsitewahthennoókha'?
 there will back you all and I go to ball hit

There are ways of requesting permission.

- (11) 'May I have a cup of coffee?'
Enwá:ton' ken enkatathnekárhahse'?
 it will be possible Q I will myself liquid serve for

There may be formulas for introducing people to each other.

- (12) 'I'd like to introduce you.'
Wá:kehre' ki:
 I thought this
takwaterò:seron'...
 I would make you all friends

Documenting such routine ways of interacting can be one of the most important contributions one can make to a community. Amery, working with the Kurna, Yolngu, and Pintupi people of Australia, makes a similar point. He proposes what

he calls the Formulaic Method (2000: 209–212, 2001: 200–204, 2009) for learning a language that is no longer spoken:

Well-formed, high-frequency utterances are learned, starting with minimalist utterances, such as stand-alone question words and one-word responses to questions that can be dropped into English conversation, but still maintain the grammatical integrity of the language. (Amery 2009: 139)

This approach can raise issues for communities to consider. Styles of interaction can change over time. Should traditional patterns of behavior be preserved, or should the heritage language be adapted to the modern world? There are communities, for example, in which people did not traditionally greet each other every time they met. Does this mean that new generations of learners, who have perhaps grown up greeting most people they encounter, should refrain from greeting others, or should new expressions be constructed in the heritage language to serve these purposes? In some societies, people have not traditionally thanked each other for small courtesies. Should learners refrain from thanking others in the heritage language in situations in which they would do so now in the majority language? Issues of this kind are also discussed in Hinton & Ahlers 1999 and Mithun 2007. Whatever decisions are made by communities, the documentation can be a useful resource for informed choices.

3. Convergence

The second type of language endangerment identified by Noonan comes through convergence with an encroaching language. For an adult second-language speaker, learning a heritage language which is structurally similar to the encroaching language is certainly easier. A focus on the similarities can make the task seem simpler. But if all languages are viewed as essentially equivalent, the value of each becomes marginal. Recognizing what is special about a language can be a powerful tool for building respect and esteem, within the community and beyond. Recognizing the specialness is crucial for linguistics as well. Linguistic theory teaches researchers to spot patterns that have previously been identified and discussed. But it is just as important to discover the unexpected. Languages can be special in a variety of ways, some immediately obvious, some more profound.

3.1 Distributing information over words

A basic but often unrecognized way languages vary is in how speakers package information. What speakers of one language may package in a string of words, for example, speakers of another may package in just one. Compare the Mohawk word in (13) with its English translation.

- (13) Mohawk polysynthesis
Ahsani'tskwahra'tsherakarhátho.
 'You might tip over a chair.'

Not surprisingly, the Mohawk word has multiple meaningful parts.

- (14) Morphological analysis
Ahsani'tskwahra'tsherakarhátho.
 aa-hs-an-i'tskw-a-hra-'tsher-a-karhat-ho-'
 might-you-own-bum-LINKER-set-thing-LINKER-turn-cause-PFV
 'You might cause the thing one sets one's bum on to flip.'

Does this difference matter? Indeed it does. Many of the distinctions Mohawk speakers slip inside of a word can also be expressed in a separate word. Alongside of the prefix *aa-* 'might, could, should' there are full words like *enwá:ton* 'it will be possible'. In addition to pronominal prefixes like *-hs-* 'you' there are separate pronouns like *í:se* 'you'. In addition to causative suffixes like *-ho-* there are whole verbs that can specify causation. Speakers often have choices about whether to package a cluster of ideas together within a single word, or to spread them out across a string of separate words.

The alternatives are not equivalent. What may be appropriate in one context may not be appropriate in another. One way might highlight one aspect of the message, and another leave it in the background. One way may be idiomatic and another simply not the way things are said. Mohawk speakers cannot generally identify parts of words consciously (unless they are also linguists), but they often manipulate them with dazzling skill. And they often have some sense of what is inside of their words. As one speaker remarked, 'The language paints pictures'. Referring to a certain lady, for example, one speaker used the expression in (15).

- (15) *Teiakotia'ta'neká:ron*
 te-iako-at-ia't-a-'nekar-on
 apart-she-self-body-LINKER-explode-STATIVE
 'She has bodily exploded.' = 'She was a large woman.'

As is well known, language is a rich repository of culture. The Mohawk verb *wa'khehárahse*, for example, means 'I bought her a gift'. It begins with the factual prefix *wa'* for past tense and the pronominal prefix *khe-* 'I/her'. It ends with the benefactive applicative suffix *-hahs* 'for', and the perfective suffix *-e*, which indicates that the event is viewed as a complete whole. The surprise is the root: *-har-* 'hang'. The whole word means literally 'I hung it for her'. Speaker Kaia'tit'ahkhe' Jacobs explained the history of the term. Traditionally when a couple married, a rope was strung in the house for guests to hang blankets on as gifts. The verb 'hang for' was extended to refer to gift giving in general.

3.2 Distributing information over categories

Much of the existing documentation of minority languages consists of translations from a contact language. The words themselves may be from the traditional language, but their arrangement often reflects lexical categories of the model. This phenomenon can be seen in the Bible passage in (16), translated from English by excellent, first-language Mohawk speakers.

- (16) Nouns and verbs in Jonah 2:10.
E'thó' nene Roiá:ner wahrónnien ne kéntson
 then the Lord he made the fish
 'Then the Lord ordered the fish
ne taontahóstike' ne Jonah ne thiió'ke.
 the he would spit him out the Jonah the beach place
 to spit Jonah up onto the beach.'

The words are all indeed Mohawk (with the borrowed name *Jonah*). But it is immediately clear that this passage did not originate in Mohawk. Mohawk speakers would not have presented things in this way. The constituent order is a word-by-word replication of the English Subject-Verb-Object, not technically ungrammatical, but unlikely in this context. More telling is the density of referring expressions. Mohawk has just three kinds of words: nouns, verbs, and particles. Spontaneous speech in English shows a Noun/Verb ratio of approximately 1/1 (Wallace Chafe p.c). Similar counts in Mohawk show a Noun/Verb ratio of 1/17. The sentence in (16) contains four referring expressions: 'Lord', 'fish', 'Jonah', and 'beach'. Compare (17), from spontaneous conversation.

- (17) Spontaneous Mohawk conversation
- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------------|------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| | VERB | | PARTICLE | | PARTICLE |
| A. | <i>Tesewatenna'tsherénhawe'</i> | | <i>ken</i> | | <i>ní:se'?</i> |
| | you lunch have brought | | Q | | yourself |
| | 'Did you bring your lunch?' | | | | |
| | PARTICLE | | PARTICLE | | |
| B. | <i>Hen.</i> | | <i>Kenh.</i> | | |
| | 'Yes. | | Here.' | | |
| | PARTICLE | | VERB | | |
| A. | <i>Háo'ki</i> | | <i>tetewatská:hon.</i> | | |
| | come on | | you all and I dine | | |
| | 'Come on, let's eat.' | | | | |
| | PARTICLE | PARTICLE | PARTICLE | | VERB |
| | <i>Ó:nen</i> | <i>ki:</i> | <i>ni'</i> | | <i>wa'katonhkária'ke'.</i> |
| | now | this | myself | | I got hungry |
| | Now I'm hungry.' | | | | |

VERB	PARTICLE	PARTICLE	VERB
<i>Wakerhà:re'</i>	<i>ki:</i>	<i>ni'</i>	<i>a:katshó:ri'</i>
I am waiting	this	myself	I would slurp
'I'm waiting to have some soup.'			

There is not a single noun in the entire interaction. The pattern is typical. A number of factors contribute to it. In some cases verbs contain nouns inside of them, like *-atenna'tsher-* 'lunch' in 'you have lunch brought'. In others, a verb alone captures the situation: the verb *-atshori* 'slurp' is used only for eating soup or something soupy. For eating something else, a different verb is used.

Another salient aspect of the exchange in (17) is the density of particles, especially in contrast with the sentence that originated in English in (16). Particles are pervasive in Mohawk, especially among highly skilled speakers. They convey all sorts of information, some grammatical, some pragmatic. Most particles are below the consciousness of speakers and difficult to translate. Interestingly, they tend to disappear when speakers write. (Even first-language Mohawk speakers learn to write first in English.) The result is that particles are typically sparse in language lessons, and, accordingly, not learned by second language speakers.

An example of the subtlety of particle use can be seen in the excerpt from a conversation below. Two people were discussing an accident in which a lacrosse player had been killed by a goalpost. One noted that the goalpost was constantly undergoing repairs. The next comment contained a barely perceptible particle *se'*.

- (18) *Wa'ka'rhé:nien'ne' se' wáhi'.*
 it toppled over TAG
 'It fell, didn't it.'

The particle *se'* indicates that this statement contrasts slightly with the preceding. It is not as strong as English 'but' or 'however', which are rendered by other means in Mohawk. It can appear in conversation to indicate a slight difference in assumptions from those of the previous speaker. The comment in (18) also includes another particle *wáhi'*, a tag something like the English *Didn't it*. The Mohawk tag has a wide range of uses, some parallel to those of English tags, some not (Mithun 2012a). Like its English counterpart, it can solicit confirmation from the listener in cases of doubt. It can be used to draw a listener into the conversation. It can mark recognition of the knowledge of the listener. It can also be used to highlight an important point, as here, focusing on a particular idea and requesting acknowledgment from the listener. The listener's response is in (19).

- (19) *Né: kí' wáhi'.*
 that in fact TAG
 'It did indeed, didn't it,
ranontsi:ne.
 on his head.'

The particle *ki'* is also very frequent in speech, though often barely audible. It signals that the remark is pertinent to something that has just been said. The response to this is in (20).

- (20) *Thó takà:ra'ne'*.
 there it came there to set on
 'That's where it fell.'

The word *takà:ra'ne'* would have been a complete grammatical sentence on its own, with the direction of motion indicated by the prefix *ta-* 'to there'. The particle *thó* 'there' links this statement to the preceding, referring specifically to the location mentioned by the previous speaker, the boy's head.

Particles like these are pervasive in the speech of skilled first-language speakers, particularly in conversation. Their contribution can be subtle, but they play powerful roles in shaping the flow of ideas and conversation, creating coherence, linking contributions from the various participants, and facilitating interaction. They rarely if ever appear in translations from English, or sentences constructed in isolation, even by good speakers. They are often conspicuously absent from language curricula and the speech of second-language speakers.

Documentation of everyday conversation in natural contexts is crucial if the special properties of the language are to be appreciated, both by descendants interested in their own heritage, and by linguists seeking to understand the workings of a wide range of languages.

3.3 Idiomaticity

The point that there are many possible ways to say things, and that knowing a language well involves knowing which of them to use, has been made eloquently by Andrew Pawley (Pawley & Syder 1983; Pawley 1986, and elsewhere). Pawley notes, for example, that English speakers could in principle use any of the alternatives in the sets of sentences below, but they know that the first is the appropriate one.

- (21) Pawley alternatives
- a. *I'm so glad you could bring Harry.*
 - b. *That Harry could be brought by you gladdens me so.*
 - c. *Your bringing of Harry causes me to be so glad.*
 - d. *I am in a high state of gladness because you could bring Harry.*
- (22) Pawley alternatives
- a. *The time is twenty to twelve.*
 - b. *The time is eleven o'clock and two thirds.*
 - c. *The time is a third to twelve.*
 - d. *The time exceeds eleven by fifty minutes less ten.*

Documentation of spontaneous speech is crucial if such knowledge is to be preserved.

Mohawk morphology is tightly structured. It is templatic: the morphemes which can appear in each position within the word are rigidly defined. It might be thought that since the possible combinations of prefixes, roots, and suffixes are so strictly specified, simply following the rules would be sufficient. But first language speakers bring much more knowledge to speaking than those rules. One speaker made the remark in (23).

- (23) *Iah énskak tsi, teió:ien' ne,*
 not one only as not does it have the
 'There's more than one way
a:kì:ron' ne iaesate'nikonhrón:ti'.
 would I say the you would throw your mind
 to express yourself.'

Speakers know which of the alternatives are appropriate for the context and their goals. They also know which combinations are idiomatic, traditional ways of expressing ideas. For the concept 'expressing oneself' he used the term 'throw one's mind'. The language is full of idioms built on the noun root -'nikonhr-' 'mind'; they are generally terms that people know as part of the language, rather than create on the spot.

The loss of idiomaticity is characteristic of what Noonan described as convergence. When a group was discussing whether a friend had had her baby yet, a second-language speaker made the comment in (24).

- (24) *Thé:nen' wakathónte'.*
 nothing I have heard
 'I haven't heard anything'

A first-language speaker later noted that a more usual way to express this fact would be (25).

- (25) *Iáh tewakerihwarón:ken.*
 not has it matter bumped into me

This does not mean that this second-language speaker's achievements in expressing herself are any less than admirable. Her fluency is impressive. But extensive documentation of language in use can provide models for the next level of expertise, idiomaticity.

The traditional way of describing someone with white or grey hair is in (26a). Now one often hears (26b).

- (26) Grey hair
- a. Traditional
Iakohrà:then.
 iako-hrà'th-en
 F.SG.PATIENT-be.white.haired-STATIVE
 'She has white or grey hair.'
- b. Innovative
Kará:ken niiakononhkwisèrò:ten.
 ka-rak-en ni-iako-nonhkwisèr-o't-en
 N-be.white-STATIVE PARTITIVE-F.SG.PATIENT-head-be.a.kind.of-STATIVE
 white so is she headed
 'She has white hair.'

(26b) is a more literal translation of the English, the same general construction one would use to say 'the dress is white'. One speaker noted that even first-language Mohawk speakers now sometimes use this expression: "People are modeling their Mohawk on English, to try to make it easier for learners." Similar new usages can be heard for descriptions of people with blond hair or blue eyes.

Another innovative use can be heard in talk about speaking a language.

- (27) Speaking a language
- a. Traditional
Sahrónkha' ken?
 'Do you speak?'
- b. Innovative
Satá:tis ken?
 'Do you talk?'

Both verb roots, *-ahronk* and *-atati*, are native. The first, *-ahronk*, is the usual way to describe the ability to understand and speak a language. The second, *-atati*, simply means 'talk'. The use of *-atati* to ask whether someone can speak Mohawk is a calque on the English *speak*. A first-language speaker remarked, "They should know better. They're trying to help the non-fluent speaker understand what they're saying, then it becomes a habit."

Innovations like these pose choices for communities. Convergence, like that seen in the two examples above, is natural with bilingualism. As noted earlier, bilingualism is empowering, allowing speakers to participate in two cultures and to talk with a wider range of people. Bilinguals have more options at their disposal for expressing their ideas. At the same time, bilingualism can affect both languages in the ways speakers package ideas. It is up to communities to decide whether or not to try to influence such effects. Documentation of spontaneous speech can

help them become aware of the kinds of processes that occur and make informed decisions as they work toward revitalization. And it can shed light on the ways contact can shape the development of languages in general.

4. Structure and substance

Linguists are naturally attracted to recurring structures and patterns. General principles help bring order out of apparent chaos, and provide learners with powerful tools for mastering the language. But the strong connections among structure, substance, and use are becoming ever clearer. Languages are rich, dynamic systems, constantly evolving as speakers routinize recurring expressions and extend existing patterns creatively. Good documentation of spontaneous speech, where speakers are the ones to choose both the grammatical structures and the vocabulary attached to them, and where the contexts can be seen, can be important for language learners hoping to speak idiomatically. It is also important for our understanding of the processes that shape language.

4.1 Routinization

An example of routinization can be seen in the development of the Mohawk negative construction seen earlier. Basic negative constructions are formed with the particle *iah* ‘no, not’ plus a negative prefix such as *te-* on the following verb: *Iokennó:ron* ‘It is raining,’ *Iáh te-iokennó:ron* ‘It is not raining.’ To negate just a part of a statement rather than the whole fact, a special construction is used based on the verb root *-i* ‘be’.

- (28) Negation
Iáh è:rhar tè:ken
 iah ehrhar te³-ka-i
 not dog NEGATIVE-NEUTER-be
 not dog it is not
 ‘It is not a dog.’

This construction can be seen in (29) ‘It is not Indian,’ where the term *onkwehonnehá*, literally ‘real person style,’ used here for referring to the Mohawk language, is a nominal.

- (29) Negation in speech
Iáh tetkaié:ri,
 not is it right
 ‘It’s not correct.’

iáh onkwehonwehnéha' t̃:ken.
 not real person style not is it
 It's not Indian.

Iáh nonwén:ton tewakathont̃:òn
 not ever have I heard
 I'd never heard

tsi iáh onkwehonwehnéha' t̃:ken ...
 that not real person style not is it
 that it wasn't Indian...

Very often, however, the final syllable of this frequent construction is omitted:
t̃:ken > *t̃:*.

(30) Shortened negation

Iáh né: t̃:
 iah nè:'è t̃:ken
 not it is not is it
 'That wasn't it.'

Here the verbal structure is gone; both the pronominal prefix *ka-* and the root *-i* 'be' (*ka-i* > *ken*) have simply been dropped. What we now have is an unanalyzable particle *t̃:*. Since both the full form *t̃:ken* and the short form *t̃:* still occur, we can see the development of the language in action.

Particles themselves may become further reduced with frequent use. The particle *shes* 'customarily, habitually, formerly' is often shortened simply to *s* in certain combinations in rapid speech. Both forms can be seen in (31).

(31) Shortened particle

Thoş wáhe' thoió'te'.
 thó shes wáhe' thoió'te'
 there customarily TAG there he worked
 'He used to work there didn't he.

Tanon' shes ki: ratiksaòkòn:'à tsi nihonwáhsons.
 and customarily this children so they hate him
 And the children really used to hate him.'

Of course not all verbs evolve into grammatical or discourse particles, and not all particles are reduced at a constant rate. Structure does not evolve independently of substance, and substance affects frequency of use. Documenting spontaneous speech in context can allow us glimpses of the relative frequencies of forms and the evolving uses to which they are put, helping us to understand how language structure develops over time.

4.2 Extending patterns

Grammatical constructions may be lexically-specific to varying degrees, that is, they may be more or less general, more or less tied to particular vocabulary. In his masterful survey of complementation, Michael Noonan (2007) noted that cross-linguistically, complementizers often cooccur with specific sets of matrix verbs. In English, for example, we have *I know that she'll read the book*, but *Joe wants Pete to retire*, and *Bert made Jimmy blush*. Mohawk shows similar differences.

- (32) Mohawk zero complementizer

Wà:kehre' ki' takwaterò:seron' ...
 I thought in fact I would make you all friends
 'I thought I would introduce you.'

- (33) Mohawk *ne* complementizer

Tóka'ni' seweién:ton ne ohsnónhsa' ahsewennahnó:ten'.
 maybe you know how COMP hand you could word stand
 'Maybe you know how to read sign language.'

- (34) Mohawk *tsi* complementizer

Waháttoke' ki' tsi rotihnekatá:rión.
 he noticed in fact COMP they each had liquid inside
 'He noticed that they had been drinking.'

Just one or two samples of Mohawk complement constructions would not provide sufficient information for a full understanding of the cooccurrence patterns. Learners need more than a few examples to equip them to create their own complex sentences with other verbs, and linguists need more in order to see the steps by which such constructions develop. Complement constructions often begin with a small set of lexical matrix verbs, and then are generalized gradually, item by item. There are clear patterns to the distribution of the three complementizer options in (32)–(34), but they are in a state of flux, varying across individual speakers and generations. The complementizer *tsi* appears to be slowly gaining ground in Mohawk, as speakers extend the contexts in which it is used. Rich documentation can often show us the routes by which such processes progress (Mithun 2012b).

4.3 Creativity: Language use

A significant part of the linguistic heritage of a community is what speakers do with their language. Mohawk speakers are known for their skill and delight in language, their propensity to play with it and use it creatively. One speaker mentioned that her grandmother used to refer to her best hat as *tsi kaná:taién' ieiakehtáh-khwa'*. It is immediately obvious that such a term must have more meaning than simply 'hat'. In fact it does.

- (35) *tsi kaná:taien' ieiakehtáhhwa'*
 to it town lies away one goes with it
 'I go to Cornwall with it'

The phrase *tsi kaná:taien'* literally 'where the town lies', is the term for the large town closest to that community, called *Cornwall* in English. The grandmother originally referred to her best hat jokingly as in (34), but thereafter, others around her picked up the term and used it for any fancy hat, tongue in cheek. Such expressions might not be the first thing that comes to mind when one is thinking about writing a grammar, but they are a part of the legacy of the language. They rarely surface under elicitation, but they can tell us much about how speakers exploit the structures available to them to create new expressions.

Mohawk speakers have a long tradition of valuing and cultivating language play. Speaker A below, was saying good-bye to B, whose Mohawk name is *Tekaronhió:ken*, literally 'Split in the Sky'. As a name, its primary meaning is to designate this man, and its literal meaning does not immediately come to mind when it is used. But another man, speaker C, jumped in, playing with the name.

- (36) Linguistic virtuosity
- A. *Ó:nen Tekaronhió:ken*
 'Good-bye, Frank.
Kátkek tentsitsatátken.
 Someday we'll meet again.'
- B. *Hánio'*
 'OK.'
- C. [*Hé: Tekaronhiakháhsion.*
 'Hey, Dividing the Sky.'
- B. *Kwah nekne akoniahská:nekse'.*
 'I'll make you wish for it (seeing me again).'
- C. *Oh naiá:wen'ne*
 how could it happen
 'How could
ne tekaronhió:ken ahsatóhetste'
 the it is sky split you could pass through
 you pass through a split sky
tóka' iáh tha'tekaronhiakháhsion?
 if not is it sky divided
 if the sky isn't divided?'

Documentation of language in use provides a record of speaker creativity that is an integral element of the linguistic heritage of the community. It also allows us insight into the ways speakers can manipulate the structures available to them.

5. Pride in complexity

Most of the structural complexity of a language is normally below the level of consciousness of first language speakers, particularly if the language is not written. It is in fact what makes them able to communicate so efficiently. As a result, however, the language can be undervalued by the very speakers who manipulate it so skillfully. One Mohawk group was commenting on the fact that they had been largely unaware of the richness and intricacy of their language until they began to write it.

(37) Complexity

- A. *Iah ki' tetewattó:kas, nó:nen íáh teiokwahiatonhátie'.*
 'We're actually not conscious of it when we're not writing.
Kwáh ionkwahiatonhátie' thó: ne: ó:nen.
 'Just when we're writing, that's when.'
- B. *Tewattó:kahs ki' tsi nikanontsísti:io's, wáhi'.*
 'We realize how smart we are, don't we.'
- A. *Tóka' ni íáh tekanontsísti:io's.*
 'Or how not smart we are.'

Much of linguistic structure is easier to see in written form, where one can take time to examine patterns and contexts. Full documentation of active, spontaneous speech can substantially increase appreciation of and, accordingly, the potential longevity of the language.

At the same time, revitalization programs and grammarians alike struggle with reconciling full complexity and user-friendliness in the materials they produce. A group discussing the optimal level of complexity for a reference grammar for the community joked about a 'Mohawk for Dummies' version.

- (38) *Wa'ì:ron'*, "Mohawk for Dummies".
 'She said, "Mohawk for Dummies".
Hánio!
 Come on!
Wa'ì:ron' né: nè:'è,
 She said, that one,
 "*Iáh tè:kehre*", *wa'ì:ron'*,
 "I don't think so", she said.
That's an oxymoron!

The complexity, while sometimes daunting, can be an enormous source of pride. In the early 1970's, a group of dedicated and energetic Mohawk speakers began classes and workshops in Mohawk linguistics in preparation for teaching the language. As they and generations of teachers after them became conscious of the

enormous richness of the structure of their language, they constantly expressed wonder at the kinds of minds that shaped it.

- (39) *Sewatié:ren's ò:ni' tiotenonhianíhton*
 sometimes too it is frightful
 'Sometimes it's frightful
tsi niió:re' tsi é:so' tekawennahsonterónnion'.
 so it is far so many words are connected here and there
 how many connections there are (morphemes within words).
Né: kí' aorí:wa' tho niió:re'
 that is in fact its reason there so it is far
 That's why,
tsi kanontsistii:io's ne Kanien'tkehá:ka.
 so it is good heads individually the flint place people
 Mohawks are so smart.'

Recently some of those in the first pioneering group commented that they felt that discovery of Mohawk morphology had been a major turning point in self-esteem for their community. A true appreciation of the systematicity and intricacy of the structure can come only with documentation of extended speech in context.

6. Conclusion

Fortunately, language documentation is now recognized as an important scholarly methodology in the field of linguistics. Among the points in the Resolution Recognizing the Scholarly Merit of Language Documentation passed by the Linguistic Society of America in 2010 is the following.

Whereas the products of language documentation and work supporting linguistic vitality are of significant importance to the preservation of linguistic diversity, are fundamental and permanent contributions to the foundation of linguistics, and are intellectual achievements which require sophisticated analytical skills, deep theoretical knowledge, and broad linguistic expertise;

Therefore the Linguistic Society of America supports the recognition of these materials as scholarly contributions to be given weight in the awarding of advanced degrees and in decisions on hiring, tenure, and promotion of faculty.

But the value of documentation is not limited to academia. What is recorded now may be all that is available to future generations. Rice (2011) makes the point that academic scholarship and community-based research need not be distinct endeavors, but that community-based research can yield traditional scholarly products as

well as new research topics. Yamada (2011), describing documentation and revitalization of the Kari'ña language in Suriname, shows how documentation and the creation of teaching materials support and strengthen each other.

Those engaged in revitalization projects can provide important advice on kinds of materials to include for posterity. Most express genuine gratitude for any and all documentation that exists of their heritage languages. But they are also discovering what materials have proven the most useful and what needs they have felt the most keenly.

A top priority is expressions for use in everyday interactions, words and phrases that learners can use early on and often. Next are model constructions that can allow learners to do more than name objects. Systematic grammatical patterns can help them to understand and create novel expressions from basic ones. Rich exemplification is useful: teachers need enough examples to create lessons, and students need enough to see generalizations for themselves.

But a language is more than a dictionary and abstract structure. Structure is intimately connected with substance and context, and these connections are part of the knowledge of first language speakers. Many perfectly grammatical structures are unidiomatic when combined with particular words and morphemes, simply not what is said. Chunks of language are also closely linked to context: speakers know what to say in particular situations. Much of the essence of a language has scope beyond the single sentence uttered by a single speaker. Particles that link ideas and give texture to interaction, for example, rarely occur in teaching materials or, for that matter, in the speech of learners.

All of these aspects of language are important both to scholars interested in the shapes that language can take and forces that mould them and to the people whose heritage the language represents. They are often most richly represented in documentation of extensive bodies of unscripted speech, in a variety of genres and contexts, with a strong interactive component. Documenting what speakers do when left to their own devices, in the varied contexts of their daily lives, can provide a foundation for appreciation of how each language is special and what makes it the way it is.

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