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ENDANGERED LANGUAGES: A SYSTEMATIC QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS AND REVITALISATION

Abstract. This study investigates endangered language preservation through three research questions: risk factors for endangerment, socio-cultural effects of language loss, and complexities in preservation and revitalisation. A qualitative systematic review underscores the cultural, historical and intellectual importance of endangered languages. It identifies globalisation, urbanisation, and dominant languages as key accelerators of linguistic endangerment. The findings indicate significant sociocultural consequences of language loss, notably the decline of cultural identity and heritage. The study concludes that community involvement, technological advancements, and supportive government policies are crucial to successful preservation, ensuring that at-risk languages are maintained and revitalised for future generations.

Keywords: cultural identity; endangered languages; language policy; language preservation; linguistic discrimination.

Introduction

Human languages serve as dynamic representations of human experiences, encompassing history, culture, and perspective. They encapsulate the unique narratives of their speakers across generations. However, the prevalence of certain languages threatens the existence of other languages.

Language endangerment occurs due to various factors. Globalisation promotes assimilation of minority languages into dominant languages and jeopardises minority language communities. Migration for economic or political reasons further erodes linguistic heritage, as individuals often adopt dominant languages and neglect their native tongues. Moreover, linguistic discrimination marginalises minority language speakers, perpetuating stereotypes, and hastening language decline, particularly regarding socio-economic prospects.

A study indicates that 50 to 90% of more than 6,000 current languages may face extinction by 2100 (Maffi, 2005). The ascendancy of dominant

languages, such as English and Chinese, has contributed to the decline of numerous lesser-spoken languages (Kandler, 2009). Kornai (2013) noted that there are around 7,000 languages worldwide, with approximately 2,500 classified as endangered.

The number of languages fluctuates on the basis of the classification of dialects as distinct entities. Approximately one-fourth of languages and some dialects possess unique scripts, and undiscovered languages may still exist. The latest data from ethnologists lists 6,809 languages. Approximately 10 million individuals speak 300 languages, while nearly half of all languages are used by approximately 6,000 speakers, with 450 languages facing significant extinction risks. As can be seen, 60% of the world's languages are spoken by fewer than 10,000 individuals, with 10% by fewer than 100 (Rahman, 2024).

This study seeks to identify the catalysts of language endangerment, evaluate the sociocultural ramifications of language loss, and investigate barriers to preservation and revitalisation, ultimately formulating strategies to uphold linguistic diversity and enrich global cultural heritage.

Literature Review

The endangerment of languages is a major concern for scholars and organisations around the world. Approximately 43% of the existing languages are classified as endangered, as indicated by UNESCO (Dressler, 2017). Indigenous languages are especially at risk, and many are critically endangered (Ting, 2023). Languages are endangered by declining speakers, poor transmission, and dominant languages (Joven-Romero, 2020). Endangered tongues are frequently recognised to have speaker numbers less than 10,000 (Headland, 2018).

"Critically endangered" languages face severe declines in speakers and a shift away from their use (Lee & Way, 2016). Various methodologies, including the graded intergenerational disruption scale, have been established to assess language endangerment (Bodó et al., 2017). Language revitalisation aims to improve the status of endangered languages, from severe endangerment to widespread use (Ting, 2023).

Endangered languages exhibit various types according to their level of endangerment. UNESCO's Atlas reveals that 43% of contemporary languages are endangered, with various classifications including critically endangered, severely endangered, endangered, and vulnerable languages (Dressler, 2017). Language endangerment is disproportionately prevalent on islands where significant percentages of extinct and critically endangered languages reside (Tershy et al., 2015). Factors such as war and repression of linguistic minorities contribute to language endangerment (Kingston & Hanson, 2022). Endangered language movements emphasise the need to protect linguistic diversity globally (Roche & Suzuki, 2018).

Addressing language endangerment involves processes such as reclamation, revitalisation, and reinvigoration (Sivak, 2023; Zuckermann, 2021). Therefore, urgent efforts are necessary to safeguard the cultural and linguistic heritage of endangered languages. Recognising endangered languages as "language ecologies" underscores their interconnectedness and the significance of social and historical contexts in linguistic studies (Hermes, 2012). Classification systems, such as Zarma's five-level system, identify languages under social and economic pressure (Muhammad, 2014). The revitalisation context for indigenous and endangered languages highlights the importance of new speakers in language re-creation (Ting, 2023). Traditional multilingual settings are increasingly at risk, necessitating immediate action to preserve their linguistic diversity (Pakendorf et al., 2021).

The categorisation of endangered languages is based on varying levels of endangerment, emphasising the need to understand, reviving and addressing the underlying causes. Language revitalisation highlight the importance of new speakers and participations of indigenous communities, linguists, teachers, and language activists in preserving endangered languages (Wiltshire et al., 2022; Farfán & Olko, 2021). The multifaceted nature of endangered languages requires accurate assessment and evaluation of effective preservation strategies to combat the loss of linguistic diversity. Various vitality scales and metrics are essential to classify and understand the levels of language endangerment.

Linguistic discrimination, or linguicism, entails biased treatment based on language or dialects (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018b). This form of prejudice

reinforces the disparities among linguistic groups that are similar to racism, ethnicism, or sexism. Historical instances of linguistic discrimination include severe actions, such as the mutilation of slaves' tongues, the prohibition of German during World War II, and the execution of Russian speakers' post-Alaskan purchase. Additionally, linguistic discrimination affects broader social structures, which causes significant obstacles for various ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups due to the established social and educational inequalities. Moreover, an example of this is linguistic profiling, in which voice-based race inference also contributes to discrimination in the housing market (Squires & Chadwick, 2006; Wright, 2023; Rice, 2006).

Linguicism refers to ideologies and systems that rationalise unequal power among linguistically distinct groups. Velez (1998) categorised linguicism as overt, such as explicit language bans, or covert, such as the omission of language in education. The spectrum of linguicism, highlighting a range that includes direct discrimination and intricate, unrecognised signs within the discrimination in education for minorities (see Gynther, 2003, 2007 as cited in Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018a). It is framed as a loss of power and influence linked to language, highlighting its relevance to power dynamics and social equity.

Language revitalisation involves initiatives aimed at sustaining and revitalising endangered and minority languages within communities. Such efforts are vital to maintaining linguistic diversity and cultural identity. Various approaches have been adopted to foster new speakers, including digital technology (Galla, 2016), specialised teaching methods for endangered languages (Hinton, 2011), and musical integration to foster new speakers (Ansah et al., 2022). Furthermore, language revitalisation encompasses both linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions. This requires a transformation in the perspectives of the community on language use, promoting greater engagement with endangered languages by both native speakers and learners (Hinton, 2018). Furthermore, effective revitalisation requires active community participation in linguistic documentation and revitalisation strategies (Hermes, 2012).

The objective of language revitalisation is to stop or reverse language extinction. This includes: (a) assessing individual languages, (b) understanding

the complex causes of language decline, (c) advocating publicly and politically, (d) documenting languages, and (e) collaborating with community members to support language preservation efforts (Wilhelm, 2013/2023). In addition, language revitalisation initiatives have garnered considerable attention and involve various stakeholders, from individuals to governmental bodies. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) emphasised coordinated actions, while Hinton (2013) highlighted family and community involvement, focussing on innovative strategies to engage the younger generations. A review of the literature presents a 10-year national plan of India that focusses on policy development and community involvement for the revitalisation of native language (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023).

Indigenous communities around the world face threats to their linguistic heritage from dominant colonial languages and cultures (Meighan, 2023). Studies suggest that active use and revitalisation of traditional indigenous languages can improve mental and physical well-being (Whalen et al., 2023). Consequently, the role of linguists has evolved to become more complex and politically charged, necessitating ethical partnerships rooted in mutual benefits and trust (Wilhelm, 2013/2023). Language revitalisation is a comprehensive process that integrates linguistic, cultural, and technological strategies to protect endangered languages.

Research Methodology

This study focusses on endangered languages, linguistic discrimination, and linguistic revitalisation from a sociolinguistic perspective. The research method used is a qualitative systematic review of the literature aiming to identify and critically review relevant research, as outlined by Rubio-Alcalà et al. (2019). The review process was rigorous and systematic, ensuring the collection of relevant articles by systematically searching several databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, Scopus, and many other relevant sources. This is due to the large number of studies available in the field of endangered languages.

Findings and Discussion

Statistical evidence indicates a significant language loss in various regions. Several countries, including Papua-Neuve Guinea and Brazil, exhibit diverse languages that are facing extinction. Within these nations, only a few languages maintain substantial speaker populations and official recognition (Brenzinger & Graaf, n.d.). In more linguistically uniform areas, language threats are less severe but still noteworthy. For instance, the Sorbian language has been gradually supplanted by German since the 13th century (Faska, 2012), and Saami languages faced significant pressure from dominant state languages from the mid-1800s to World War II (Jernsletten, 1993). Similarly, the Sora language in Bangladesh (Mahapatra, 1991) and the Breton language in France (Mendel, 2004) are endangered.

Scholars have linked the rapid extinction of languages to biodiversity loss and the erosion of unique worldviews (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Crystal (2000) highlights that the dominance of global languages exacerbates the marginalisation of minor languages. Mufwene (2002) discussed socioeconomic factors, asserting that language shift and death are influenced by the economic advantages of dominant languages.

Addressing language extinction requires urgent multifaceted interventions. Preservation strategies should encompass socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors that affect language survival. By tackling the root causes of language endangerment and applying effective preservation measures, linguistic homogenisation can be resisted, thus safeguarding global linguistic diversity.

In Lithuania, the Karaim language, part of the Turkic family, is critically endangered, the northwest Karaim dialect being the only remnant in Lithuania and Poland (Németh, 2023). The Lithuanian dialects exhibit regional variations and complexity. While dialects such as Samogitian (Žemaitian) possess a strong regional identity, others, such as certain Aukštaitian sub-dialects, face potential decline (Mikašytė, 2017). Lithuania's linguistic environment is intricate and shaped by historical influence and diverse languages. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania has historically promoted multilingualism for effective communication (Lūžys, 2012). This language co-existence has led to

interference, bilingualism, and multilingualism, illustrating the region's rich linguistic heritage (Koniusz, 2015). Even with official monolingual policies, real language use often reveals a hybrid variety, challenging strict monolingualism (Pinkevičienė, 2022). This linguistic richness is further evidenced by the interactions between Lithuanian and Latvian-speaking communities in border regions, and the historical impact of Germanic languages in Lithuania (Rudzāte, 2022).

In the context of globalisation, bilingual and multilingual communities face increased risks of language variety and a reduction in linguistic diversity (Mirhosseini & Abazari, 2016). Initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting minority languages are essential to safeguard linguistic heritage and cultural identity despite these challenges.

Endangered Languages: Socio-cultural Importance and Risk Factors

The preservation of endangered languages is crucial for the protection of traditional knowledge, cultural identity, and human heritage for the forthcoming generations (Bensemann et al., 2023; Cámara-Leret & Bascompte, 2021). Furthermore, endangered languages improve global cultural and cognitive diversity, as each language encapsulates a distinctive worldview that has evolved over centuries, reflecting the cumulative knowledge of its speakers (Evans, 2010). These languages are frequently regarded the quintessence of cultural heritage, serving as a repository of human history and representing intricate social and cognitive systems (UNESCO, 2003). Every language, indigenous or dominant, encapsulates a distinctive understanding of local ecosystems and environmental interactions (Gorenflo et al., 2012). Furthermore, the extinction of any language can lead to the forfeiture of invaluable knowledge on biodiversity, sustainable practices, and ecological equilibrium (Maffi, 2005). Furthermore, language plays a crucial role in the cognitive mechanisms that encompass memory, perception, and problem solving capabilities. Consequently, language extinction increases the likelihood of losing these unique cognitive frameworks (Boroditsky, 2011). Both dominant and endangered languages promote cognitive diversity, offering varied

methodologies for understanding and interpreting the world (Lupyan & Dale, 2010). Therefore, the conservation of endangered languages signifies the preservation of the intricate tapestry of human cognitive and cultural experiences (Nettle & Romaine, 2000).

In addition, the symbolic significance of endangered languages is evident within the linguistic landscape, which augments language awareness and emphasizes the critical importance of these languages (Kļava & Ernštreits, 2022). Discourse surrounding endangered languages frequently underscores their intrinsic value, employing metaphors such as "priceless treasures" to accentuate their relevance (Schwartz, 2018; Muehlmann, 2012). Government-led initiatives aim to create a multitude of potential advantages. These benefits may extend beyond the linguistic sphere and positively impact the autonomy, legal framework, and general welfare of communities associated with these languages (Watson, 2020).

In addition, several significant risk factors contribute to the change and decline in endangered languages. Primarily, economic necessity serves as one of the predominant forces propelling language shifts toward dominant languages, as individuals often pursue "linguistic capital" (Bourdieu, 2003) pertinent to their specific contexts, operating under the assumption that adopting or transitioning to a dominant language can secure enhanced employment prospects and facilitate greater mobility. Consequently, numerous individuals forsake their native languages in favour of languages that are perceived as economically advantageous (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Bangladesh is in a similar situation. Individuals show less interest in acquiring proficiency in Bengali, instead opting to allocate their resources and time to mastering English, as it is believed to guarantee employment and promote social mobility (Roshid, 2018). Furthermore, linguistic discrimination is frequently interwoven with the dynamics of political power. Dominant groups with social and political influence may marginalise minority languages inadvertently or deliberately. This often culminates in the relegation of minority languages to informal contexts, devoid of official recognition, and experiencing a contraction of functional domains (May, 2012). Thus, the marginalisation of minority languages diminishes their status and practical significance, thereby exacerbating their decline toward extinction.

Another salient risk manifests itself within educational systems that predominantly endorse hegemonic languages while systematically marginalising minority or indigenous languages. This phenomenon obstructs the intergenerational transmission of minority or endangered languages and perpetuates the notion that these linguistic forms lack intrinsic value or practical utility (Cummins, 2000). Illustratively, nations such as Australia and Canada have a historical precedent for suppressing indigenous languages through educational paradigms that favour English [or French in Quebec] at the expense of native tongues (Khawaja, 2021). Such suppression has precipitated a marked decline in the demographics of Indigenous language speakers. Furthermore, the peril of language endangerment may also arise from the repercussions of warfare, genocide, and explicit repression directed toward linguistic minorities (Kingston & Hanson, 2022).

Ultimately, individuals can experience coercive pressure to conceal or relinquish their linguistic heritage to facilitate assimilation when subjected to discrimination based on language or accent. Lippi-Green (1997) posits that this tendency may undermine cultural identity and foster a shift towards dominant languages. A pertinent illustration of this phenomenon is observed in the decline of Welsh as a linguistic entity within the United Kingdom, attributed to cultural pressures. During the mid-19th century, British authorities characterised Welsh as the vernacular of the uncivilised and uneducated, thus establishing English as the predominant language across most public domains (Bowen, 2020). Consequently, contemporary initiatives aimed at revitalising and promoting the Welsh language strive to counteract its decline and reclaim the cultural heritage intrinsically linked to it.

The framework of language revitalisation for indigenous and endangered languages encompasses the discursive construction of language ownership and accountability, highlighting the pivotal role of new speakers in the revival of these languages (Ting, 2023). In addition, traditional multilingual environments are increasingly at risk, underscoring the critical necessity of safeguarding linguistic diversity (Pakendorf et al., 2021).

Role of Policy in Preserving Endangered Languages

The preservation of endangered languages is vital to linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Protection strategies include documentation and revitalisation programmes to ensure linguistic diversity among future generations. Preservation efforts include documentation, revitalisation, and conservation initiatives. Furthermore, the preservation of endangered languages serves as resistance to linguistic oppression and cultural erasure (Battiste, 2000). By disputing the perceived superiority of dominant languages, preserving marginalised languages empowers communities to affirm their identities and resist linguistic assimilation pressure (Fishman, 1996). Initiatives like "Kohanga Reo" in New Zealand have significantly aided the revival of the Mori language (Mahrooqi & Asante, 2012), challenging English dominance and affirming indigenous cultural value. Furthermore, language preservation acts against globalisation, which often prioritises some dominant languages over endangered ones. Communities can resist monolingualism by promoting minority languages in education and the media (Hale, 1992). In particular, post-1994 education reforms in Bolivia advanced Quechua, Aymara, and other indigenous languages alongside Spanish (Hornberger, 1998) through bilingual education and recognition policies to counter Spanish dominance. Furthermore, language preservation is linked to broader resistance efforts, including land rights and environmental activism. Indigenous communities worldwide integrate language preservation into their struggles against colonisation, land loss, and environmental degradation (Maffi, 2005).

Education is crucial to revitalising endangered languages. Various strategies have been developed to meet the specific requirements of language revitalisation (Hinton, 2011). Furthermore, social networks and digital resources greatly influence multilingual practices and education, especially within indigenous and minority contexts (Imtiaz & Murshed, 2020). Specifically, training community members in linguistic methodologies and transcription has been effective in documenting endangered languages (Hermes, 2012). Additionally, the incorporation of endangered languages into formal education, supported by heritage languages as instructional media, facilitates intergenerational transmission (Barrett-Walker et al., 2020). These initiatives

engage scholars, enhance public awareness of language endangerment, attract funding, and aid communities in preserving their linguistic heritage (Hill, 2002). Furthermore, language revitalisation encompasses various forms, including music lyrics, that improve usage (Arifin, 2019). Consequently, immersion education is vital to revitalising indigenous languages, emphasising grassroots efforts and community consciousness (Hermes & Kawai'ae'a, 2014). Social networks and emerging technologies provide innovative avenues for language education and exposure (Deschene, 2019). Numerous countries have demonstrated various policy frameworks to safeguard linguistic diversity, reflecting their distinct linguistic and cultural contexts. For instance, South Africa's Constitution [1996] endorses 11 official languages, promoting multilingualism and linguistic equity across government, education, and media (Du Plessis, 2000). As more examples, the National Indigenous Languages Report (Australian Government, 2019) and organisations, such as First Languages Australia (www.firstlanguages.org.au), established in 2013, exemplify Australia's dedication to conserve and foster indigenous linguistic heritage. These programs aim to identify, manage, and distribute linguistic resources housed in archival institutions. Concurrently, they emphasise the crucial role of local community participation and cultural significance in maintaining the vitality of Australia's Indigenous Languages. This national effort underscores a country's commitment to preserving its rich indigenous linguistic diversity.

While French endures as the singular official language of France, the government admits the existence of numerous regional languages, incorporating Alsatian, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Franc Provençal, Occitan, and the languages d'oil, which embody different northern dialects. Significant milestones in the development of French language policy within the educational sector include the establishment of compulsory public education with instruction in French in 1882, the implementation of the Toubon Law in 1994, which mandates the utilisation of French in educational establishments, the recognition of regional languages within the curriculum in 2001, and the initiation of bilingual programmes in regional languages in 2013. These achievements illustrate an enhanced appreciation of the cultural and historical importance of regional languages, which has led to increased

availability of language education in academic institutions (Nikolovski, 2018; Hawkey & Kasstan, 2015). Additionally, the acknowledgment of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) as an official language by New Zealand in 2006 highlights the imperative for inclusivity as well as the fundamental rights pertaining to communication. It was officially recognized as a language of New Zealand in April 2006 pursuant to the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 (New Zealand Government, 2023).

Concurrently, it is essential to recognize that the Constitution of Kenya (2010) acknowledges the significance of cultural diversity and the safeguarding of indigenous languages. This concept is evident in the Basic Education Act (2013) (Government of Kenya, 2013) which mandates the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in lower primary education grades 1 to 3 in regions where the language is prevalent. Furthermore, it is imperative to reiterate that Singapore's initiative for bilingualism, established in the 1960s, obligates students to excel in both English and their cultural languages (i.e., Mandarin for the Chinese faction, Malay for the Malays and Tamil for the Indians) (Le, 2023; Ng, 2011). This policy has two objectives. First, it addresses the necessity of effective global communication, as English operates as a universal language, facilitating interaction in a connected world and providing access to international commerce, technology and education. Furthermore, it promotes social integration within Singapore's multifaceted population, by establishing a common linguistic framework across diverse ethnic groups. Additionally, advocacy for native languages preserves and honours cultural heritage, ensuring continuity with ancestral customs, beliefs, and values. This bilingual approach is recognised for enhancing Singapore's economic prosperity by fostering a workforce proficient in English that is grounded in its cultural heritage. In addition, it cultivates national unity and multiculturalism, reflecting Singapore's identity as a cohesive and diverse society. India's endeavour to safeguard endangered languages, spearheaded by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), aims to advance and conserve Indian languages through research, promote linguistic cohesion, and document minority and tribal languages. CIIL also fosters emotional unity and interdisciplinary studies of these languages (Benedikter, 2013). These instances underscore the vital importance of well-formulated policies, legal

acknowledgements, and community involvement in promoting linguistic diversity and preserving endangered languages. Consequently, revitalising endangered languages requires innovative educational strategies and robust policies to protect minority language rights, uphold linguistic traditions, celebrate cultural diversity, and enrich human communication.

Exploring Case Studies: Demonstrating the Role of Language Preservation in Resisting Linguistic Discrimination

Analysing real-world cases reveals valuable insights into how language preservation functions as a resistance mechanism. The following cases demonstrate the dynamic relationship between endangered languages and proactive attempts to combat linguistic discrimination.

Rejuvenation efforts and promotion of Bilingualism in Wales

The Welsh language in the UK has significantly declined due to English dominance, particularly after the Laws in the Wales Acts of 1535 and 1542, which undermined Welsh in key areas. Nevertheless, since the late 20th century, revival efforts have emerged through grassroots activism and policy initiatives. The Welsh Language Act of 1993 and the Government of Wales Act of 1998 formally acknowledged Welsh and incorporated educational reforms for bilingual instruction up to the age of sixteen. These actions have resulted in a steady increase in Welsh speakers, with a governmental goal of one million speakers by Welsh Government (2017). Revitalisation efforts have also fostered renewed national identity and cultural pride, as the Welsh language has been reintegrated into the media, education, and daily use in conjunction with the promotion of bilingual education. In addition, schools have incorporated Welsh into their curricula, facilitating instruction in both languages. Government offices and public services have begun to provide Welsh language services to promote bilingualism. Additionally, media outlets have played a role in broadcasting Welsh programmes, news and entertainment. Consequently, local cultural events, museums, and festivals

have embraced language, enhancing national identity and pride. Consequently, the collaborative interplay among these initiatives has significantly mitigated discrimination towards Welsh speakers, culminating in the development of a dynamic bilingual community (cf. Özerk & Williams, 2023; Royles & Lewis, 2019).

The Maori Renaissance in New Zealand

The decline in the Maori language, an indigenous linguistic representation of New Zealand, can be traced back to colonisation and the overarching influence of the English language, resulting in the marginalisation of both the Maori language and its cultural significance. Recently, preservation initiatives have experienced a significant increase. Programmes such as Kohanga Reo (language nests), which were established in the 1980s, concentrate on immersing young children in the Maori language from an early age, further supported by government-endorsed television and radio broadcasts. These meticulously coordinated endeavours have played a pivotal role in what is widely recognised as the Maori Renaissance. This cultural revival is characterised by an increased use of language, an enhanced sense of cultural pride and connection to indigenous heritage, and a broader social acknowledgement of New Zealand's dual cultural identity (Hunter & Hunter, 2020; Te Huia, 2020).

Reviving the Hawaiian Language

In Hawaii, the Hawaiian language had previously faced extinction. However, collaborative efforts have led to a successful revitalisation. Schools have emerged as crucial centres for Hawaiian language education through immersion programmes. These programmes allow children to learn the language naturally and incorporate it into everyday conversations. Furthermore, local media began to produce content in Hawaii, helping its normalisation. Community workshops engage adults in language learning and practice. Universities have also played a role in researching and documenting language and preserving cultural heritage for future generations. These joint

initiatives have enhanced cultural pride and reduced linguistic discrimination against native speakers (Wilson, 2020; Saft, 2023; Silva, 2022; Ramirez, 2024; Heinrich, 2020).

Rejuvenation of the Basque Language

The Basque language, a venerable European language, arose from the overwhelming presence of Spanish and French. However, its revival has been bolstered by governmental support, local media participation, and educational initiatives within the Basque Country. In addition, authorities have provided financial resources for *Ikastolas*, where instruction is conducted in Basque. Public awareness campaigns have highlighted language distinctiveness, promoting its presence in public and domestic spheres. In addition, the media has been instrumental in revitalising the country by producing Basque content, enhancing its status as a spoken language. Similarly, literary and cultural endeavours have significantly contributed to elevating the visibility and acceptance of Basque, thus mitigating the marginalisation of its speakers (Nandi et al., 2023; Breda & Krämer, 2021; Nandi et al., 2022; Roman Etxebarrieta et al., 2024; Gardner et al., 2020; Apodaka et al., 2022).

Indigenous Languages in Latin America

The effort to protect indigenous languages in Latin America exemplifies resistance to cultural homogenisation. Several nations have implemented strategies to protect these languages, recognising their vital role in cultural preservation. In Mexico, the official acknowledgement of 68 national languages, including 63 indigenous languages, is in accordance with the general law on the linguistic rights of indigenous people (cf. Bugada Bernal, 2019; de León, 2019)). Bilingual education is promoted in regions with notable indigenous demographics and indigenous language characteristics in various media to enhance cultural representation (Hurtado, 2019). Despite this, there are still issues, including a scarcity of resources, an absence of competent bilingual teachers, and social bias. Furthermore, Bolivia's Constitution (2009)

recognises 37 languages, reflecting a strong commitment to linguistic diversity (Hammond, 2011; Gussen, 2017). The establishment of an intercultural bilingual education system and cultural events underscores Bolivia's progressive position, although issues such as resource allocation and educational disparities continue. Furthermore, Peru's Indigenous Languages Act (Ley No. 29735) (2011) facilitates the recognition of 47 indigenous languages in the relevant regions (Howard et al., 2018). This official status enables individuals to utilise their native languages in public services with provisions for interpreter assistance. Consequently, legislation fosters the use of indigenous languages in both public and educational contexts. Indigenous languages are increasingly represented in media and government communications (Mendoza-Mori & Becerra Sanchez, 2023), with grassroots initiatives and community centres essential for language preservation through collaboration with indigenous leaders. Community involvement significantly improves Peru's grassroots strategy by complementing its national policies. Although Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru have made commendable strides in protecting indigenous languages, the efficacy of these initiatives differs. Bolivia stands out for its comprehensive constitutional recognition and educational advancements, establishing it as a leader in linguistic inclusivity. Mexico and Peru have also shown substantial progress, particularly in the incorporation of indigenous languages into the media and public services. Paraguay's acknowledgement of Guaraní as an official language with Spanish signifies the effective incorporation of indigenous languages into societal frameworks, thereby enhancing national bilingualism (Ullon, 2023). However, these three nations face shared challenges such as limited resources, societal prejudices, and inconsistencies in their implementation. In general, these policies emphasise the necessity of an integrated strategy that merges legal structures, educational incorporation, media engagement, and community participation to guarantee effective preservation of indigenous languages and linguistic human rights in Latin America.

Preservation of the Kurdish Language in the Middle East

In Kurdish populations, the preservation of the Kurdish language is essential for cultural conservation and resistance with Kurdish identity and

historical narrative (Soleimani, 2024). Despite political challenges and deprived of linguistics human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Bucak, 1994), grassroots movements are advocates for the Kurdish education. Informal educational institutions bolstered by community and international support improve the accessibility of Kurdish learning. The diaspora uses online platforms to promote language and heritage. Community-driven initiatives and cultural events foster the expression and celebration of the Kurdish identity. Contributions from local authors and artists help to produce Kurdish literature. These efforts not only renew Kurdish usage but also symbolise identity, cultural resilience, and resistance to linguistic discrimination (Bocheńska, 2022; Kelbaugh & Conley, 2021).

In examining these instances, interventions in the legal and political spheres to revitalise minority languages such as Welsh, Maori, Hawaiian, Basque, indigenous languages in Latin America, and Kurdish employ diverse strategies tailored to specific contexts. Legislative and administrative support plays a crucial role in this process. In particular, Wales and New Zealand achieved substantial advances through legal recognition and immersive educational strategies. Furthermore, community-driven educational programmes in Hawaii and media integration in the Basque have demonstrated their effectiveness. Latin America has shown a strong commitment to safeguarding indigenous languages through legal and educational initiatives, although with certain challenges. Additionally, the preservation of the Kurdish language benefits from grassroots movements and digital platforms. These examples highlight the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates legal, educational, media and community efforts for effective revitalisation and the lasting presence of minority languages.

Challenges in Language Preservation and Linguistic Revitalisation of Endangered Languages

Language preservation and the struggle against linguistic discrimination, although noble and critical, often face multifaceted challenges with which various stakeholders struggle.

Societal and Economic Dynamics

Dominant languages frequently engender a unique environment conducive to social advantages and economic proficiency across various domains, rendering them particularly appealing while simultaneously overshadowing languages that are at risk of extinction. For numerous individuals, embracing an endangered language may compromise their economic potential and social status, thereby instigating apprehension, even in instances where they acknowledge the intrinsic cultural significance of their indigenous languages (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). For example, in the Philippines, the prevalence of English and Filipino in formal and educational contexts has resulted in the decreased utilisation of numerous indigenous languages. Furthermore, the elevated status of English in the realms of global commerce and international employment often seems to eclipse the relevance of local languages. In Singapore, the government's prioritisation of English for global commerce has markedly reduced the prevalence of ethnic languages such as Malay, Mandarin and Tamil among youth.

Gaps Across Generations

There frequently exists a significant linguistic disparity between the senior and junior cohorts. The older generation may exhibit proficiency and possess comprehensive insights into the intricate heritage of the language, while the younger generation may only demonstrate a superficial grasp predominantly shaped by the influences of global culture and evolving societal norms. Nevertheless, reconciling this division requires tailored educational frameworks and community-driven initiatives that effectively engage younger populations (Dorian, 1981). For instance, an initiative in the United States entitled The Master's Apprentice Language Learning Programme (1992) pairs younger participants with older, proficient speakers to promote the transmission of language through interactive conversational engagement. This approach is gaining traction in North America (McIvor et al., 2024) and globally (Pine & Turin, 2017). Furthermore, in Japan, initiatives such as the Ainu language revitalisation project at Hokkaido University (2005) sought

to mitigate the generational divide through educational and community-orientated programmes (Alaimo, 2017).

Financial Bottlenecks

The financial battle on the road to language revitalisation is often uphill. Funding is often scarce, particularly when language keepers are members of marginalised communities. Funding is essential for selecting programmes, creating materials, and promoting research (Hinton, 2013). This is evident in several Latin American nations, where efforts to preserve indigenous languages are frequently hampered by financial limitations. It is possible that indigenous groups lack funding or resources to create educational materials or programmes, despite the rich linguistic diversity between them. Similarly, there has been little financial support for Santali, a language spoken in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India. This has had an impact on the development of educational resources and language-learning initiatives.

Controversies Surrounding Linguistic Authenticity

Efforts to revitalise endangered languages often spark spirited debates on linguistic authenticity. The central dilemma revolves around determining which dialect or variant truly captures the core essence of a given language. The quest for standardisation and linguistic purity can become focal points of contention, sometimes fragmenting communities and weakening unified preservation activities (Hale, 2007). This can be seen in the United Kingdom, where the revitalisation of Cornish faced such controversies, with different revivalists advocating various orthographies and dialects. Similarly, the Lanna language in northern Thailand has multiple dialects and lacks a standardised orthography, leading to debates on how to unify and revitalise it while respecting its diverse expressions (Unthanon, 2022; Chumbia & Wongpolganon, 2012; Phattharathanit, 2012).

Policy Pitfalls

Endangered languages face various policy challenges that facilitate their decline. The reasons that influence the risk of language loss are elaborate and cover political, ecological, financial, and sociolinguistic variables. Oppressive ideologies and assimilation tactics have endangered the languages of indigenous populations, as exemplified by the Sámi languages (Fylling & Melboe, 2019; Özerk & Williams, 2023; Sarivaara & Keskitalo, 2016). Consequently, communities frequently abandon their minority languages as dominant languages that provide greater economic, political, and social advantages, worsening the situation. Language policies significantly influence either the exacerbation of conflicts and language loss or the promotion of revitalisation and inclusion, thereby affecting societal stability. Historical legacies of colonisation and marginalisation policies have markedly contributed to language attrition, underscoring the necessity for effective revitalisation initiatives. Furthermore, competent administrations in regions with endangered languages are critical for the formulation and execution of linguistic policies. Additionally, revitalisation efforts require the creation of innovative pedagogical strategies that address the distinct needs and objectives of language recovery. Various countries have implemented strategies for revitalising endangered languages, yielding differing levels of success, and underscoring the critical nature of proactive preservation actions. The decline in endangered languages has necessitated the quantification of endangerment indicators to develop effective early intervention preservation programmes. In China, the majority of minority groups possess their own mother tongues (Zuo, 2007). However, the nationwide promotion of Mandarin Chinese as a national language, initiated in 1956 (Rohsenow, 2004; Zhou, 1999), along with the globalization-driven popularity of Mandarin due to China's trade relations with the world, has placed 120 minority languages in unfavourable positions (Zhou & Ross, 2004; Wang & Phillion, 2009; Sun, 2004; Sun et al., 2007). The promotion of Mandarin often undermines minority languages, such as Tibetan, Sui, and Qiang (Zhou, 2004; Nima, 2001; Stanford & Evans, 2012). Although some educational resources and media exist in these minority languages, national policies do not consistently support their widespread use (cf. Wang & Phillion, 2009).

So, endangered language policies should require a comprehensive approach considering historical, sociopolitical, and cultural contexts. Effective revitalization strategies and policies are essential to preserving linguistic diversity and ensuring sustainability.

Technological Obstacles

In the digital age, languages must evolve to be technology compatible to remain relevant. However, many endangered languages find themselves on the fringes of the digital revolution, lacking foundational technological infrastructure such as specialised keyboards, localised software, or a significant online presence (Warschauer et al., 1997). In particular, languages such as Quechua and Aymara in South America have limited digital presence, with efforts to develop digital resources hindered by a lack of technological infrastructure. Similarly, in Vietnam, minority languages such as Hmong and Khmer Krom struggle to find their place in the digital world, lacking online content, resources, and technology developed for their specific linguistic needs.

Limitations

The methodological framework of this study had certain limitations. For example, it exclusively examined particular databases, concentrated predominantly on publications in the English language, depended on specific lexical terms, and incorporated comprehensive studies. Qualitative methodology may have engendered an element of subjectivity. Furthermore, the sociolinguistic lens used in this investigation may have restricted the interdisciplinary perspectives. It is imperative to acknowledge these limitations to contextualise the findings and inform subsequent research.

Conclusion

Maintaining linguistic rights for minority groups is critically important because the marginalisation of minority languages can profoundly endanger

their status and vitality. State entities wield substantial authority over language policy by promoting specific languages while marginalising others, thus instigating profound societal changes even with slight modifications. The debate about language extinction is notably contentious; certain scholars argue that the disappearance of a language does not negatively impact human society, while others assert that each language embodies a unique perspective, cognitive framework, mode of expression, and worldview, thus making its extinction detrimental to cultural diversity. Educational approaches often prioritise dominant languages over indigenous ones, a phenomenon that has elicited criticism from linguists. Revitalising at-risk languages requires comprehensive strategies that encompass the instruction of the native language within educational systems, its incorporation into cultural frameworks, and the establishment of linguistic resources, such as lexicons and encyclopaedias. Active parental involvement is essential to instruct children in their native languages to promote intergenerational transmission. Language-related conflicts tend to escalate in multilingual states, leading to legal controversies. The survival of minority languages depends on effective government policies, affirmative educational practices, and community-driven initiatives. The extinction of any language eradicates its distinctive cultural identity and perspective, transcending its role solely as a medium of communication.

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**NYKSTANČIOS KALBOS: SISTEMINIS KOKYBINIS
SOCIOKULTŪRINIO POVEIKIO IR KALBŲ ATGAIVINIMO
TYRIMAS**

Anotacija. Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas nykstančių kalbų išsaugojimas ir siekiama aptarti tris klausimus: grėsmės rizikos veiksniai, sociokultūrinis kalbos praradimo poveikis ir sudėtingi kalbų išsaugojimo ir atgaivinimo aspektai. Kokybinė sisteminė apžvalga pabrėžia nykstančių kalbų kultūrinę, istorinę ir intelektualinę svarbą; joje nurodoma, kad globalizacija, urbanizacija ir dominuojančios kalbos įtaka yra pagrindiniai kalbų nykimą skatinantys veiksniai. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, jog kalbos nykimas turi reikšmingų socialinių ir kultūrinių pasekmių, ypač dėl to silpsta kultūrinis tapatumas ir paveldas. Daroma išvada, kad bendruomenės dalyvavimas, technologinė pažanga ir palanki vyriausybės politika yra labai svarbūs veiksniai, kad kalbos, kurioms gresia pavojus išnykti, būtų išsaugotos ir atgaivintos ateities kartoms.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: kultūrinis tapatumas; nykstančios kalbos; kalbų politika; kalbų išsaugojimas; kalbinė diskriminacija.