

The role of parents in the development of minority languages by children

Rodion Kosorukov
Eurasian Modern College; Moscow, Russia;
e-mail: ordinrod@gmail.com

Abstract

In the process of revitalizing the minority language, activists face many challenges. Most of the developments are aimed at increasing the ease of learning a language, creating entertaining content, developing methods of teaching a language from an early age and creating a language environment. Often experts come to the conclusion that for a successful revival of the language, new young speakers must appear. This task is the cornerstone of the whole issue of the revival of the minority language. Indeed, only in the communication of new native speakers will the language be able to revive and fully function. However, in all discussions, the important question of the role of parents in the acquisition of a minority language by children escapes. In this article, we will try to identify the role of parents in the development of minority language by children and outline the directions for further research.

Keywords: parents' role; minority languages; language revitalization

1. Challenges for revitalization processes.

Revitalization initiatives always face several similar problems. Most minority languages are low-resource. They lack grammar books, dictionaries, manuals, corpora, etc. Linguists who visit the language community with an expedition are often involved in the creation of such language resources. There are also funds for endangered languages, which organize the interaction of revitalization specialists, linguists, sociolinguists, and communities to develop a revitalization strategy (The Endangered Language Fund, etc.). Some organizations try to assist enthusiasts or communities and coordinate the development of resources for low-resource languages (SIL, DLDP). Most often these are developments in IT, less often in teaching, and very rarely - developments in the field of early language acquisition.

2. Frequent development to support minority languages

If everything is relatively simple with the creation of IT tools: there are ready-made engines and manuals, open-source software, etc., then it is very difficult for language activists to do something full-fledged in the education system, because there are much fewer developments in teaching methods of endangered languages and often teachers do not participate in this process, but only linguists.

A fairly popular language learning program is the so-called "Master-Apprentice" (Hinton 1997), however, being, in essence, a way of organizing language learning by a direct method in the absence of teaching staff and manuals, it has all the disadvantages of the direct method: it requires more hours compared to other methods, the exclusion of explanations in a known language complicates the process of perception of many lexical and grammatical phenomena, such training cannot be massive. (Ivanchenko 2016) In addition, this method is more suitable for the development of a minority language by adults as a second language, but what about

children? On this issue, there is the famous project Te Kohanga Reo - this is the so-called "language nest": a kindergarten with the full immersion of children in the language environment. This case successfully solved its problems: the Maori language has new speakers. (King 2001)

3. The fundamental task of revitalization: new carriers

New native speakers for minority languages are the main foundation. Any language lives in communication. Native speakers must use it in different situations in their personal and social life. The more situations and the more the language covers, the more actively it is used in communication, the stronger it becomes. And the more natural and familiar this communication will be, the stronger the foundation of the language. This is easier for children to achieve at an early age, learning the language naturally.

On the example of Te Kohanga Reo, it can be seen that when providing a communication environment, children develop a habit of using language, and with the correct continuation of the language chain (kindergarten-school-university), a language community appears that uses the language regularly as an everyday language. (King 2001)

4. Problems of the emergence of new native speakers.

However, despite all the successes, many graduates of the language nests of New Zealand continue their studies in educational institutions where teaching is only in the majority language or is bilingual. Let's make a reservation that bilingual education should not be considered a panacea for language shift, as a rule, this measure only delays the process of language shift, but does not stop the process of the disappearance of language from communication. In addition to education itself, there is another problem: the use of the language in the family. There are no studied examples when children began to constantly use language as everyday language, which was not used in the family and the children's collective, but only as a subject of study in the education system.

This was encountered in the Te Kohanga Reo project. The activists had to do a lot of work with the parents of Maori children to make them realize that the Maori language will not prevent their children from gaining education and decent jobs in the future. (King 2001)

5. The most important factor is parents

Quite often, in minority communities, parents deliberately switch to the majority language in-home communication. One of the main reasons is parents' own traumatic experiences when they were abused in school for using a minority language. Having failed to recover from this trauma, parents try to prevent their children from falling into the same situation and deliberately deprive their children of the language at home. (King 2001) Also in education, many parents believe that the choice of the language of education will have a positive impact on the future career of a child. This is another reason when the minority language is inferior to the majoritarian one and, over time, may completely disappear from the education system. (Jovanovic 2014)

Fortunately, in New Zealand, the community, enthusiasts, and elders have successfully worked with parents and changed their attitude towards the language, making the project successful and having positive results. However, these problems are rarely discussed: conferences on

endangered languages discuss the tasks of education, culture, traditions, but not work with the parents of potential native speakers. But it is the parents who determine the fate of the child and decide what language he will speak.

6. Conclusions

From all of the above, we see that many researchers who developed methods for revitalizing minority languages undeservedly ignored the problem of parental involvement in this process, because of this, the solution methods are so poorly described. In the future, it is necessary to study in detail the situations of successful inclusion of parents in the revitalization process and understand what kind of work was carried out with them. It is also necessary to conduct surveys of parents in communities where revitalization is not successful to find out where mistakes were made and to develop measures to correct them.

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