Current perspectives on awakening languages:
An introduction

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper serves as an introduction to the special issue of the journal *Living Languages • Lenguas Vivas • Línguas Vivas* that focuses on efforts to revitalize languages after a period during which they were entirely or almost entirely out of use. This period is what Leonard (2011) refers to as a period of *dormancy*. It is therefore fitting to use the same sleep metaphor to describe efforts to revitalize formerly *dormant languages* as *language awakening*. Language revitalization is a challenging enterprise in any circumstances: The conditions that lead languages to become endangered and in need of revitalization are typically social and political in nature and reflect systemic pressures on Indigenous and minority communities to assimilate to dominant regional and national languages in contemporary nation-states. However, the challenges associated with language revitalization are magnified when a language is dormant given that such efforts must begin without the main pillar of language socialization: a community of language users.

There is now a robust and growing body of literature on language maintenance and revitalization (Hinton & Hale, 2001; Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016; Pérez Báez, Rogers & Rosés Labrada, 2016; Hinton, Huss, & Roche, 2018; Pérez Báez, Vogel, & Patolo, 2019; Olko & Sallabank, 2021; Hill & Ameka, 2022; inter alia). Leonard (2011) is foundational reading that has shifted the assumptions around language dormancy and awakening by acknowledging the growth in use of the Myaamia language and, by extension, the future prospects of language awakening efforts broadly. Other readings on language awakening include Begay, Spence, and Tuttle (2021) on Wailaki reclamation efforts in Northern California, Grinevald & Pivot (2013) on the Rama language, Zuckermann (2020) on Hebrew and Aboriginal languages in Australia, Lukaniec (2022) on methods for using archival data in language reclamation, and case studies in Hinton, Huss, & Roche (2018), inter alia. However, there remains inadequate attention in the literature given to the specific perspectives of members of communities who are engaged in language awakening efforts. This special issue (also referred to

henceforth as *this volume*), contributes towards filling that gap by offering a forum for discussing the nuances of language awakening efforts from the perspectives of community-based scholar-practitioners along with those of academic collaborators who support their work.

While we adopt the term *awakening*, readers should be aware that other terms are also in circulation, both in contributions to this volume and in the broader published literature. For instance, the term *language revival* is sometimes found in the literature in relation to the efforts to revitalize Hebrew (Zuckermann, 2020; Belew & Simpson, 2018). Both Leonard (2011) and Baldwin (2003) use the term *language reclamation* in relation to Myaamia revitalization efforts, with Leonard explicitly distinguishing revitalization per se (with specific goals such as increasing the number of speakers of a language) from reclamation, which he frames as "a much larger social process" whereby "members of a community assert their right to claim, learn, and speak their language" (2011, 141). However, some people working on awakening languages choose to simply refer to their efforts as language revitalization (e.g., Viles, this volume), a perspective that emphasizes the many points of overlap between language awakening and other revitalization scenarios. Sands, Harvey, and Griscom (this volume) prefer the phrase *connecting through language* as a way to highlight the social significance of awakening efforts. They also embrace an expansive understanding of the term "awakening" that includes the revitalization of dormant linguistic practices (such as the use of writing systems) even for languages that are not otherwise considered dormant. These choices of terminology reflect important differences regarding how particular contributors to this collection position their work vis-à-vis the social, historical, and political contexts in which language awakening occurs.

Whatever the terminology, this volume is intended as a resource for those engaged in language awakening whether from a community-centered and directed, ideological, applied, and/or academic perspective. The possibility of language awakening has prompted a critical re-evaluation of some core concepts in the field of linguistics: for example, what it means to be a *speaker* of a language and attendant notions such as *semi-speaker* (cf. Grinevald & Bert, 2011); the relationship between linguistic knowledge as it existed in the minds of members of language communities in the past versus how that knowledge is represented in the documentary record (cf. Begay et al., 2021); how information encoded in closed corpora can be made accessible and relevant to contemporary communities (cf. Link et al., 2021); and the social and political impacts of language choices people make today as a way of addressing past and present social injustices.

More fundamentally, language awakening efforts have allowed everyone engaged in language documentation and revitalization work to re-imagine the realm of what is possible. As Baldwin and Olds (this volume) put it, when the Myaamia awakening effort was getting underway in the 1990s, even among people who were invested in language revitalization work, the dominant assumption

countered in Leonard (2011) was that "if you lose your speakers, your language is extinct, dead—you're done." Fast forward 30 years, and the fact that this volume is even possible is a testament to the impact the painstaking work of language awakening has had in shifting that once-dominant narrative. The papers in this volume show how inappropriate it is to use death metaphors to refer to languages during a period of dormancy and how relevant language revitalization is to the well-being of a community. Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds, in fact, provide research-based evidence of the social impact of language revitalization in various areas of community well-being.

Language awakening efforts constitute a growing movement as more and more communities come to realize that despite the many decades or even centuries of linguistic and cultural suppression they may have endured, their collective future can include a renewed use of their ancestral languages. In the Global Survey of Language Revitalization Efforts (GSLRE; Pérez Báez, Vogel & Patolo, 2019), out of 245 responses, about 1 in 5 reported on awakening efforts for 33 distinct languages. A majority of languages in the United States and Canada that were once dormant are now undergoing awakening, making this region the locus of about half the awakening languages in the world (Belew and Simpson, 2018). Australia is also a well-known locus of language awakening efforts and the context from which *Paper and Talk* emerged – a methodology in the use of archival materials for revitalization (Thieberger, 1995/2005). Belew & Simpson (2018) report that a third of the awakening languages of the world are in Australia. Some of the longest standing language awakening efforts in the world are for European languages, notably Manx (Wilson, Johnson, & Sallabank, 2015, inter alia) and Cornish (Lowe, 2018, inter alia). In contrast, little can be found in the literature about awakening language efforts in other parts of the world (but see for instance Morey, 2018), yet we are learning more and more about them. Among the languages with active awakening efforts documented by the GSLRE are Coahuilteco, whose community is divided by the Mexico-US border, Kalinago and Boruca in Central America and the Caribbean, and Cumanagoto, Muisca, Nonuya, Pataxó Hãhãhãe, and Tembé in South America. Beyond these preliminary reports, however, there remain large gaps in our understanding of language awakening in these regions, and the GSLRE received no reports on language awakening efforts in Africa, Asia, the Caucasus, or the Near East.

The lack of language awakening scenarios reported in the literature can be erroneously interpreted as an absence of these efforts in other parts of the world. This, in turn, hampers the exchange of experiences across a broader spectrum of efforts and for the benefit of language communities around the world. In this volume, Sands, Harvey, and Griscom provide an extensive examination of numerous community efforts to reconnect through language in African contexts. Aaley and Bodt recount the story of language shift within the Kusunda community of Nepal after societal and resource-related pressures led to the dispersal of the community and provide details about ongoing efforts to revitalize the Kusunda language. Pérez Ríos contributes to the incipient understanding of language awakening in

Mexican contexts, specifically Coateco Zapotec in Oaxaca, while Sánchez Avendaño and Porras Cabrera provide a detailed account of the philological and societal foundations of the efforts to revitalize the Brorán language in Costa Rica. These contributions provide a diversity of perspectives on language awakening. Each contribution and the volume as a whole have been written with the goal of sharing experiences from which revitalization practitioners across a diversity of contexts can draw meaningful ideas, strategies, and encouragement. We recognize that there are many more language awakening efforts that deserve attention and hope this special issue will spur interest in sharing more about such efforts from around the world. For now, the scope of this special issue sheds light on commonalities across efforts as well as the uniqueness of each social, cultural, and geographic context.

A key goal of this volume has been to increase knowledge about language awakening to foster support for these efforts. This follows from GSLRE data which show that support is considered essential for good outcomes in revitalization. Twenty-nine percent of the 400 responses to the question: *What are the top assets that have helped the revitalization work?* stated that support has been a key asset in ensuring positive outcomes of the revitalization efforts. The relevance of support from community-internal authorities and other members is made evident in the present collection in contributions from Baldwin and Olds, Sánchez Avendaño and Porras Cabrera, and Pérez Ríos. In their accounts, the commitment from authorities, teachers, knowledge-bearers, and leaders has had an unequivocal positive impact in providing the efforts with momentum and growth. Aaley and Bodt's paper also describes moments when institutions such as local schools and the Nepal Language Commission made key contributions to the grassroots Kusunda language awakening effort and includes recommendations for how that support could be increased.

Beyond what research has shown, it is, of course, common sense that humans draw strength and inspiration from their peers. The struggles and self-doubt throughout any language awakening process are evident across the special issue, suggesting the pervasive nature of these concerns (see also Taylor-Adams, 2022). Baldwin and Olds share a beautiful and easily understood gardening metaphor whereby the challenges of language awakening are described in terms of the efforts to clear a garden of weeds and tend to it once again in order to nourish a community. Viles walks us through his journey in learning Nuu-wee-ya' and provides an account of efforts and challenges to incorporate the language in his home and daily life even if he is miles from the language community. Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds provide a vision of a viable future in which language revitalization efforts, however challenging they may be, will translate into measurable benefits to the language community. Thus, contributors to this special issue are sharing their intimate thoughts to normalize them for others and provide evidence that awakening efforts can evolve and grow despite insecurities, pressures, and inevitable setbacks (cf. Section 3.2 below). The contributors offer a diverse range of strategies they have implemented to give other practitioners ideas for how they might address challenges of their own.

It is in the spirit of fostering the exchange of experiences and know-how among language awakening practitioners that we have conceived this volume, which emerged from longstanding collaborations and conversations with and among revitalizationists from the Pacific Northwest in the United States. In Section 2 of this introduction, we expand on the community-centered intent and design of the special issue. Section 3 elaborates on some of the themes addressed in contributions to the volume: motivation; dealing with inevitable challenges; sharing information and strategies across different communities while still adapting to local circumstances; and moving beyond traditional metrics of language vitality such as the number of speakers and language proficiency as a way to evaluate the benefits of language awakening. Section 4 discusses the broader importance of awakening efforts, ranging from its benefits to the well-being of individuals and communities, to positive shifts in academic practices as they are informed by the efforts of revitalizationists, as well as the scholarly contributions that all authors in this volume make to advance the practice and theory of language awakening. Section 5 summarizes and concludes.

2. A SPECIAL ISSUE FOR AND BY REVITALIZATIONISTS

While this volume is published within an academic context, its primary audience is that of revitalizationists, especially those working in language awakening contexts. Thus, we have followed several principles to ensure that the contents will be of value to revitalization practitioners far and wide. First, we prioritize the voices of revitalizationists whether they are affiliated with academia or not. Most authors in this special issue are directly involved in the awakening of dormant languages and many are members of the communities whose languages they are working to revitalize. Such is the case of Edgar Pérez Ríos of the Coatec Zapotec community in Mexico, Leonardo Porras Cabrera of the Bröran community in Costa Rica, and Clint Bracknell of the Noongar people of Western Australia; authors who are members of Native American Tribes in the United States include Shayleen Macy of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Jaeci Hall of the Confederated Tribes of the Lower Rogue River, Carson Viles of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Connor Yiamkis of the Pit River Tribe, and Daryl Baldwin, Jarrid Baldwin, Julie Olds, and Haley Shea from the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. Zalmai and Jeff Zahir were raised with the Lushootseed language and have led efforts to teach it. Uday Raj Aaley of Nepal, although not ethnically Kusunda, has worked closely with the Kusunda people for many years and has attained something akin to community insider status (cf. discussion in Aaley and Bodt, this volume). Many among these revitalization practitioners are also academics trained in anthropology, linguistics, pedagogy, second language acquisition, or sociology who have directed their scholarly work to the benefit of their own and other language communities. All the remaining authors of papers in this special issue have practiced, researched, and/or supported language revitalization, working from within academia in partnership with numerous communities.

Second, while this volume uses the written format of academic communication and some of its articles implement academic strategies such as the use of bibliographic citations, it is not confined to an academic style of writing. In fact, the reason this volume is published through *Living Languages • Lenguas Vivas • Línguas Vivas* is to give authors the flexibility to implement the chronicles format, or elements of it, to present their ideas. The chronicles format is intended to "share narratives, testimonials and experiences in language revitalization scenarios" and does not need to follow any stylistic conventions. Instead, authors are encouraged to "create a narrative that reflects the work from the perspective" of the language community. Several papers in this volume are written in the chronicles style, or even combine the academic and the chronicles styles in a way that reflects a community-academia collaboration, as is the case of the paper by Sánchez Avendaño and Porras Cabrera. All contributions have been peer reviewed, with community-based practitioners included among the reviewers for chronicles.

We also recognize that a fundamental problem for revitalization practitioners to communicate with broader audiences, especially in written communication, is that it comes at a cost: Time spent writing and revising papers for publication is time not spent engaged in direct support of ongoing programs and initiatives in one's own community. Thus, this special issue is experimenting with a new format of edited interviews. The article by Baldwin and Olds is the result of three oral interviews the editors of this volume carried out with the authors. The transcription of the interviews was partially automated with widely available speech-to-text technology; a corrected transcription subsequently prepared by the editors was the basis for further refinements by the authors. To be sure, the paper in its final form, as a heavily edited amalgamation and interleaving of three separate interview sessions, is no longer a direct reflection of the original content of any one of them. Although the method could use some refinement, it was an efficient way to develop a manuscript for the authors to share their invaluable experiences with readers of this journal without requiring an undue time commitment. It also preserves some of the oral narrative flow of the original interviews, which is a more accessible format for some readers in contexts beyond academia. We consider this edited interview format an innovation that brings a wider range of voices into the published literature on language revitalization.

Third, we have not limited this volume to papers written in English. The contributions by Sánchez Avendaño and Porras Cabrera on the Brorán language of Costa Rica and by Pérez Ríos on Coatec Zapotec in Mexico are written in Spanish. This aligns with the goals of *Living Languages • Lenguas Vivas • Línguas Vivas* to provide opportunities for authors who prefer to publish in a language other than English and promote accessible scholarship to readers in regions where English is not widely known. While we recognize that two publications in Spanish barely begins to address the dominance of English in academic writing, we do hope to contribute to the slow but steady call to broaden academic writing to a more diverse range of authors and audiences (cf. Ahmed et al., 2023).

3. THEMES IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

Across the diversity of linguistic, geographic, and historical contexts of the papers in this special issue, common themes can be found, a few of which are highlighted in this section: motivation, adversity, knowledge sharing, local awareness, and the importance of building connections.

3.1 MOTIVATION

One key issue addressed by several papers is people's motivations for learning a dormant language, which can be variable and change over time: Why undertake the study of a language that either does not currently have living speakers to communicate with or (under the extended understanding of "awakening" adopted by some authors) where the number of speakers is so small and too widely dispersed to constitute a speech community? Some previous research has shown that people commit to language awakening for a variety of reasons often related to the relevance of a language to family cohesion, individual and community identity and well-being, and sovereignty. For example, as one GSLRE (Pérez Báez et al., 2019) respondent reporting on the efforts for the Fernandeno/Tataviam language explained, "[t]he reason to revitalize the language was, we wanted to be more in touch with our culture and our heritage and learning the language is the first step in an in-depth understanding in who we are." The data in the GSLRE also show that among awakening language efforts, the second most frequent type of objectives are those intended to bring the language back into use as a means to strengthen a community, and vice versa.

In the present volume, the question of motivation is addressed most centrally by Taylor-Adams and Hall from two complementary perspectives: Hall's highly personal, autoethnographic account of her own efforts to awaken Nuu-wee-ya', a Dene language of southwestern Oregon in the United States, and Taylor-Adams' qualitative analysis of survey data from the GSLRE and interviews she conducted with individuals engaged in awakening dormant languages in the United States. Important motivations they identify include strengthening relationships within a community through experiences as co-learners; furthering social justice goals by offering contemporary people a choice of language which, in most circumstances, was denied to previous generations through various forms of political violence and coercion; and laying a foundation upon which future generations can build (what Taylor-Adams and Hall call *continuance*). Taylor-Adams and Hall point out that these motivations for awakening dormant languages lie beyond the main ones discussed in the academic literature on Second Language Acquisition in other language learning contexts (a point also made in previous scholarship, for example, the discussions of "Ancestral Language Acquisition" in White, 2006, and Mutsun awakening efforts in Szoboszlai, 2017). When considered in light of the influential distinction between instrumental vs. integrative motivations for language learning pioneered by Gardner and Lambert (1972), learning to speak a dormant language is not clearly motivated by prototypical instrumental

considerations like finding employment, nor is it immediately obvious how a dormant language contributes to social integration into a functioning community of L1 speakers (which, by definition, a dormant language does not have). Nonetheless, the fact that so many individuals and communities have started the process of awakening dormant languages suggests that motivations for doing so must exist and, therefore, this remains an under-theorized area of SLA research. Or rather, it is an area where traditional SLA research can be usefully supplemented by other disciplinary perspectives, such as Native American and Indigenous Studies, a scholarly literature that some contributors to this collection (e.g., Taylor-Adams & Hall, Macy) turn to for theoretical orientation.

Reinforcing connections between personal and collective identity is another key motivation driving language awakening efforts mentioned in several papers. Baldwin and Olds describe how the revitalization of the Myaamia language is related to reinforcing a Myaamia identity among tribal members that had been attenuated over generations by colonial depredation. That is, one of the motivations for awakening the Myaamia language is to encourage individuals to develop a personal connection to aspects of their cultural heritage in the living present rather than considering them to be the domain of previous generations: "This is purely about rebuilding the tribe's identity, and each individual's contribution to that." In the case of the Zapotec language of San Jerónimo Coatlán, Pérez Rios describes language awakening as focused on strengthening knowledge about communal land thereby strengthening identity. This is echoed by Macy whose analysis recognizes that knowledge about geography and kinship ties, in addition to language, strengthen identity. Bracknell acknowledges that census data are "not a measure of proficiency in language use" (cf. Hinton & Montijo, 1994), and considers recent increases in the number of people who identify as speakers of Noongar in the Australian census to "reflect the importance of language to Noongar identity." For Yerian, Baldwin, and Yiamkis, a multicompetence approach to language awakening offers a way of "progressively awakening and integrating linguistic features and other ways of communicating... back into one's current cultural identity and communicative practices." The importance of identity is also noted by Aaley and Bodt for the Kusunda awakening effort in Nepal, and by Sands, Harvey, and Griscom in several of the African case studies they discuss. All of this situates language awakening squarely within the scope of previous discussions in the academic literature on motivations for language revitalization in general (e.g., Davis, 2018), as well as learning heritage languages that are not considered endangered (e.g., Spanish in the United States) (Carreira & Chik, 2014).

This intimate connection between language and identity in awakening contexts also points to political motivations for engaging in language awakening efforts, as members of historically marginalized communities assert their continuing presence as distinct peoples in the contemporary world. Connections between languages and human rights have been discussed in the literature on language revitalization (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2018; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2023) and are

reflected in international agreements such as the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (United Nations, 1992) or the more recent Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007). Similar considerations are reflected in the social justice motivations discussed by Taylor-Adams and Hall, while Baldwin and Olds explicitly discuss how Myaamia awakening efforts connect to the broader political goal of asserting "sovereign rights as a people… to be a people." In some cases, adopting dormant language *practices,* even when a language as a whole is not dormant, can promote the use of language in ways that emphasize the political goals of an awakening effort. For example, Sands, Harvey, and Griscom describe how the use of the Neo-Tifinagh script among speakers of Amazigh in North Africa is common at political rallies and in public visual domains such as street signs and public buildings. They also discuss other cases on the continent where efforts to awaken languages are intimately linked to establishing land rights, as in the case of Khoekhoe languages of South Africa. Yerian, Baldwin, and Yiamkis argue that a multicompetence approach to learning, with its "rejection of the segregation of languages," can be a powerful act of resistance against the ongoing legacy of settler colonization. So, while the personal motivations of individual learners to connect with aspects of their family's heritage are clearly important, in many cases this is inseparable from a desire to contribute to broader community goals of asserting sovereignty.

3.2 ANTICIPATING ADVERSITY

Another theme that emerges from the contributions to this volume is how language awakening practitioners must find ways to work through challenges that inevitably arise. Taylor-Adams and Hall discuss two main kinds of common challenges. The first is emotional: Because languages typically reach a state of dormancy (or near-dormancy) due to historical injustices that contemporary communities continue to navigate, there is significant emotional burden associated with language awakening, as individuals and communities must confront ongoing legacies of trauma. Hall discusses her personal experience in this regard: "Learning my language gave me the awareness of what happened to my lineage and broader communities to cause language to not be spoken. I became aware of the trauma that occurred to my family and to all native people." Baldwin and Olds suggest that older generations of Myaamia people who directly experienced the trauma of the boarding school system in the United States, where generations of young people were punished for using their communities' languages, might not be able to fully participate in language awakening efforts because it would simply be too painful for them to relive the trauma. Viles, while emphasizing the many benefits of awakening a dormant language, does not shy away from describing its emotional toll: It can create a sense of responsibility and "bring a lot of pressure and guilt (think: am I doing enough to help my culture continue?)."

Another kind of challenge discussed by Taylor-Adams and Hall is a lack of resources for getting the awakening process off the ground, creating many practical issues that must be addressed to sustain momentum in the long term. Since living fluent speakers of a dormant language are not available to learn from, and typically, there are no ready-made, learner-oriented resources (the latter a problem encountered in many other language revitalization settings), the early stages of language awakening require people to invest a great deal of effort into developing a set of methods and materials to guide their learning. Moreover, as Yerian, Baldwin, and Yiamkis point out, "all teachers are also learners, so trying to use the language can feel like starting from zero for all involved" (cf. Hinton, 2003). There can be limitations on human and financial resources as well. For example, Aaley and Bodt devote a section to some of the practical impediments to Kusunda awakening efforts in Nepal: the limited duration of language classes; a shortage of qualified teachers; time and money needed to bring together a geographically dispersed pool of potential learners; and the necessity for adults to devote many hours each day to earn a living, leaving little spare time for language learning. Their paper includes practical recommendations to ameliorate many of these factors, e.g., increased training opportunities for teachers, financial compensation for people who participate in language programs, and the allocation of land for the creation of a physical Kusunda community. Sánchez Avendaño and Porras Cabrera also discuss how the necessity of supporting oneself in a cash economy, and concomitant geographic dispersion, have impacted the Brorán language: "Uno de los procesos que afecta el mantenimiento de la cultura y la revitalización del idioma es la migración de jóvenes hacia el Valle Central de Costa Rica para buscar opciones de empleo." ["One of the processes that affects the maintenance of culture and revitalization of the language is the migration of young people to the Valle Central of Costa Rica to find employment opportunities."] Among the challenges faced by the Myaamia language awakening effort when it was first getting started in the 1990s, Baldwin and Olds include the fact that "[t]here was no professional training for this kind of work at the community level and there were no jobs in language revitalization that one could apply for." The influx of financial resources from the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma's business enterprises became a key turning point, and many of the programs supported by the Tribe and the Myaamia Center at Miami University of Ohio are geared toward ensuring that there are "places where young professionals can take their degrees and their energies and their interests to do the good work of the Nation."

Also, to be included in the list of resource-related challenges, and a recurring theme in several papers, is the fact that existing scholarly and applied literature often lacks relevance for language awakening contexts (a gap this special issue addresses). As noted above, Taylor-Adams and Hall consider how traditional theories of motivation in mainstream Second Language Acquisition research do not quite capture the nuances of motivation in language awakening contexts. Zahir and Zahir propose an alternative method of language vitality assessment largely because existing models

developed for languages still widely spoken (even when threatened or endangered) do not produce meaningful results when applied to dormant ones. Baldwin and Olds discuss limitations of disciplines such as linguistics that offer concepts, methods, and training to support language awakening efforts. They credit the involvement of linguist David Costa as a key catalyst in the early stages of the Myaamia reclamation effort, a partnership that endures to this day, and they continue to value the insights that linguistic analysis can afford. However, their earliest approaches to language teaching were heavily influenced by Baldwin's training in linguistics, and they do not consider those methods to have been particularly effective. That experience with a very linguistics-focused approach early on led them to conclude that "linguistics is not going to solve the need to revitalize languages."

Overall, one of the most important lessons for people who are just getting started is to anticipate all these kinds of adversities. Baldwin and Olds discuss ways that the Myaamia awakening effort had to adjust and adapt its goals and expectations multiple times over the years in response to unforeseen challenges and circumstances they encountered. As an example, they discuss the Myaamia response to the recent COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as unforeseeable a challenge as ever there was. Rather than letting the pandemic shut their language programs down, they adapted to the circumstances and were able to successfully move to an online format, which now is making some of their language programs more accessible to a much larger audience than previously. As they point out, it is unrealistic to assume that the broader social, political, and historical forces that led a language to into a state of dormancy are not still operative (at least to some degree). Rather, the process of awakening a language will often be shaped by contemporary manifestations of those very same circumstances. Some challenges may be foreseeable, but others will not be apparent until they are encountered. By anticipating adversity, people engaged in language awakening will not perceive it as an aberrant outcome and will be better prepared to resolve it when it inevitably arises.

In the face of adversity, it is important to have a vision of a better life for the language community. Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds provide an assessment of the impact of language revitalization on community well-being. In doing so, they provide a vision, backed by evidence, in which continued efforts over a long period of time, some three decades in the case of the revitalization of the Myaamia language, are shown to have measurable benefits to community members. This applies to educational attainment, health, and community cohesion. It is our hope that by sharing studies such as this one, in combination with perspectives at various stages of language revitalization efforts can provide encouragement to practitioners as they take the various challenges of this long-term process.

3.3 KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Reflecting the goal of this special issue to be a resource for revitalizationists everywhere, several of the papers discuss the importance of drawing on inspiration from other communities. Baldwin and

Olds recommend sharing information across communities, and while there is no one formula that will work in all circumstances (cf. §3.4 below), learning from the experience of others is one way to sustain momentum in the long term. At a very general level, this can include setting a vision for what might (eventually) become possible in a particular community still in the early stages of an awakening effort, as well as finding concrete solutions to challenges commonly encountered, like developing community support and accessing funding and other resources to support the work. In the Myaamia case, Baldwin and Olds discuss how in the early stages of their awakening efforts, support from other tribes played a critical role, for example in the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma's efforts to re-introduce dance traditions in their community in the early 1990s. Although not strictly linguistic, such sharing across tribal communities generated significant interest in cultural revival efforts and laid the foundation for future language-focused work.

Addressing the litany of potential impediments to language awakening discussed in §3.2, many papers in this special issue explicitly offer advice and strategies for dealing with them that can be adapted by others who wish to awaken languages in their own communities. This includes theoretically grounded but practical methods for getting language programs started. For example, Yerian, Baldwin, and Yiamkis outline a "multicompetence" approach to guide awakening efforts that they illustrate with case studies from the Myaamia and Ó tissi (Achumawi/Pit River) languages (both from the present-day United States). Contrary to many previous approaches to language revitalization that emphasize monolingual immersion in a target language as the primary means to develop proficiency, multicompetence encourages the gradual expansion of learners' linguistic repertoires alongside other languages they already know. Viles discusses his experience with a Language Nesting method developed by Zahir (2018), which offers a way for individuals to begin building language use into everyday activities. Viles is careful to ground his discussion in the specific experience of Nuu-wee-ya' language communities and the history of colonial violence in the northwestern United States, but by chronicling his experience as a learner, teacher, and practitioner, he seeks to "provide insights to other learners and contribute to an evidence-based approach for language revitalization." In a somewhat different but equally replicable vein, Bracknell, writing about the Noongar language of Western Australia, recommends incorporating Indigenous languages into the performing arts to both generate community interest and awareness and develop fluency among the participating artists and performers. Zahir and Zahir's social network approach to assessing language vitality and the program assessment methods presented by Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds are explicitly offered as practical tools for other language revitalizationists. All these papers offer general models and methods that people can adapt as their language awakening efforts get underway in their own communities.

Cross-community support can have other kinds of impacts, helping to sustain momentum and overcome challenges related to inadequate or inaccessible documentation. One set of examples

comes from communities whose ancestral languages are too sparsely documented to support awakening efforts directly, so they draw instead on information from closely related languages or dialects. In the Brorán case discussed by Sánchez Avendaño and Porras Cabrera, the language has entered a state of dormancy in Costa Rica, but revitalizationists have been able to draw on knowledge and language documentation from Naso, a closely related variety still spoken in Panama. Several similar examples are found in the survey of language awakening in Africa discussed by Sands, Harvey, and Griscom, where the "choice to adopt a language related to the heritage language of the community appears to be a common consideration when the extent of language resources of the heritage language is low." Specific examples they discuss include descendants of Cape Khoekhoe speakers in South Africa focusing on the Namibian Khoekhoegowab language, the Elmolo people in Kenya who are learning Arbore, and the Ngoni people in Malawi for whom isiZulu is the target of awakening efforts, rather than their ancestral language Chingoni. These cases are reminiscent of others discussed in the literature where communities who are awakening (or revitalizing) a language come to rely on information from closely related languages to fill gaps in the documentation, e.g., Wailaki people drawing on Hupa documentation (Begay, Spence, & Tuttle, 2021), Wôpanâak (Wampanoag) awakening efforts drawing on information from other members of the Algonquian language family (MacArthur Foundation, 2010), and Kumeyaay communities in Alta and Baja California who have supported each other's efforts to create new generations of speakers despite dialect differences and the imposition of an international border (Rodriguez, 2020). The communities discussed by Sands, Harvey, and Griscom go even farther in this direction, however, in apparently setting aside erstwhile differences between languages completely. On the assumption that whatever linguistic differences separating the varieties in question might once have reflected social differences as well, such cases complicate in interesting ways the connection between language awakening and promoting a specific local identity. However, Sands, Harvey, and Griscom also suggest that the decision to base awakening efforts on other linguistic varieties (dialects or closely related languages) is in some cases controversial (e.g., Cape Khoekhoe), so the extent to which the details of specific languages and identity can be decoupled is an active site of disagreement, in at least some awakening contexts.

3.4 LOCAL AWARENESS

Although most papers in this special issue offer, implicitly or explicitly, models and methods that other language awakening efforts can emulate, many authors emphasize the importance of tailoring programs and activities to align with one's local situation. Aaley and Bodt are careful to caution readers that "language awakening efforts can never have a 'one solution fits all' approach." What is necessary and possible in rural Nepal may not be directly applicable in Native American tribal communities in the United States or in various parts of Africa (some urban, others rural) discussed by Sands, Harvey, and

Griscom. As Baldwin and Olds point out, even in a region like the present-day United States, where tribes share broadly similar histories of colonization and are enmeshed in similar legal and bureaucratic frameworks, various factors affect what is possible, such as whether or not a tribe has federal recognition, the extent to which tribal citizens live in close proximity to one another versus more dispersed (as in the Myaamia case), and the level of support from tribal governments at particular moments and over time as tribal leadership changes. As they put it, "each process is going to be a little different for each community. That's just the way it is."

In a related vein, Aaley and Bodt discuss the relevance of local traditions and cultural practices that come into play. For example, clan exogamy is the prevailing marriage practice among the Kusunda, but the clans are geographically dispersed, so it is rare for Kusunda people to marry one another. This, in turn, makes it more challenging to create households where both parents will be motivated to learn the language and pass it on to their children. Aaley and Bodt's recommendations for strengthening the Kusunda awakening effort include encouraging ways for more Kusunda to marry other Kusunda. This strategy is also reported by Porras Cabrera and Sánchez Avendaño for the Brorán awakening effort in Costa Rica, which has drawn on linguistic similarities with the closely related Naso language of Panama: "Como consecuencia del encuentro naso-brorán en 1992 y al parecer como parte del plan de revitalización, tuvieron lugar tres matrimonios entre hombres de Brorán y mujeres de Panamá." ["As a consequence of the Naso-Brorán gathering in 1992 and apparently as part of the revitalization plan, three marriages between Brorán men and Panamanian women took place."] The general issue of marriages to speakers of politically dominant languages has been previously noted in the literature on language revitalization (e.g., Rodriguez, 2020). These kinds of challenges, and the remedies proposed by the authors, are rooted in specific local circumstances. The general point is that a clear understanding of community dynamics along numerous dimensions – historical, cultural, political, etc. – is of central importance.

Baldwin and Olds acknowledge that, especially where a language awakening effort is just getting started, comparison with other communities whose efforts are farther along can lead to a sense of discouragement. They discuss how the Myaamia awakening, when it was getting off the ground in the 1990s and early 2000s, had to avoid making unfavorable comparisons with Hawaiian language programs that had developed in the 1970s and 1980s (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001), long considered one of the great success stories of the language revitalization movement. Baldwin and Olds recommend avoiding these kinds of explicit comparisons, emphasizing that the particulars of local context and communities must be the basis for both short-term and long-term goal setting and evaluation. In developing the garden as a central metaphor for language awakening work, Baldwin and Olds recommend starting with a careful assessment of a community's current situation, locating the boundaries of the garden and assess what is already growing there before planting anything new.

Language awakening strategies should be geared towards generating sustained interest and broad participation, based on an honest evaluation of where the language is and what realistic short-term and long-term goals might be. The centrality of this philosophy to the Myaamia awakening effort is also reflected in the approach to program assessment described by Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds. While their framework is general enough to be adapted to other circumstances, they emphasize that "assessment measures need to be community-specific (aligned with cultural values and knowledge systems), and program indicators of success (measures) need to be culturally tailored."

In considering the local capacity to support a language awakening effort, it is also important to have a clear sense of the resources currently available. This can include human resources, such as the core individuals who often serve as the initial catalyst for what later becomes a more broad-based, community-driven effort. In cases where a language has not been actively used by anyone for some years but where there are still living speakers with some degree of fluency (e.g., Kusunda and Noongar), understanding how those individuals can contribute to an awakening effort is important. In more prototypical cases of language awakening where there are no known living speakers, access to language documentation and methods to interpret it are essential (Baldwin, Hinton, & Pérez Báez, 2018; Spence, 2018). Beyond providing the raw materials for developing an understanding of a language's grammar, vocabulary, etc., Baldwin and Olds credit the fortuitous unearthing of voluminous documentation on the Myaamia language as a key catalyst in generating interest in the language and supporting the awakening in its formative stages. Even today, training younger generations to interpret language documentation from the past is a crucial component the Myaamia language programs' capacity building endeavors.

3.5 BEYOND PROFICIENCY: BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Another recurring theme found in multiple contributions to this volume is the limitations of an approach to language awakening centered narrowly on developing proficiency without attending to broader goals related to decolonization and promoting community well-being. Language awakening often begins with focused efforts by a committed core of individuals who wish to connect on a personal level with aspects of their family's history. This is reflected, for example, in the survey and interviews analyzed by Taylor-Adams and Hall where "key individuals are discussed as significant in the community's language efforts;" in Zahir and Zahir's identification of highly connected "influencers" in a social network who "are key in affecting language socialization and linguistic comprehension and production;" and in Baldwin and Olds' discussion of their own reasons for investing so much of their lives and careers in the Myaamia awakening effort. While such influencers are certainly important for getting things off the ground early on, Baldwin and Olds emphasize that developing a high degree of language proficiency for just a select few individuals "leaves out the whole rest of the community" in

ways that can be detrimental to long-term sustainability. In their own case, they considered it fundamentally important to develop a much broader level of support for language awakening in their community. Initially, this was especially important for convincing tribal leadership to commit financial resources to the programs they were trying to build. But over the years, as younger generations of learners have increasingly participated in programs, both locally at the tribal level in Oklahoma and in efforts directed by Baldwin at the Myaamia Center, personal relationships that individual tribal members have developed with the language have resulted in a groundswell of support within the tribe. This has proved crucial not only for sustaining support for programs developed by Baldwin, Olds, and others involved from the beginning, but also in developing new generations of individuals who will be able to continue the efforts into the future. Crucially, they maintain that this level of sustainable interest and support is necessary for high levels of language proficiency to develop, rather than vice versa. This is reflected in the approach to evaluating the effectiveness of Myaamia language and cultural programs discussed by Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds: The assessment model they develop illustrates the utility of community-driven criteria that evaluate positive impacts of language and cultural programs on a community such that "a language proficiency skill measure is not currently appropriate."

Considered as a whole, the motivations and methods for awakening dormant languages discussed throughout this special issue imply an understanding of languages as more than mere instruments for communication. Rather, they are part of the fabric that connects members of communities to one another even when separated by space (geographically dispersed communities like the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma described by Baldwin and Olds, or the Kusunda of Nepal discussed by Aaley and Bodt) and time (considering members of earlier and future generations as connected to the contemporary community). Re-introducing the use of a dormant language into a community can therefore strengthen social ties, both in the present and for generations to come (Taylor-Adams and Hall's continuance). Viles, for example, emphasizes that in his Nuu-wee-ya' community "we need to adopt methods that allow motivated people to independently increase their language use, while also promoting social connection between people" (emphasis added). Zahir and Zahir's model of assessing language vitality based on social networks "veers away from assessing speaker proficiency and language deficiency to focus on social language interaction by members of a language community." Sands, Harvey, and Griscom's survey of language awakening efforts across the African continent leads them to identify a process of reconnecting through language, which they define as "an intentional introduction, reintroduction, or creation of linguistic practices to deepen connections with culture, community, and ancestors." Pérez Ríos considers how language awakening can be a place-based process motivated in part by extant environmental knowledge and reinforce continued ties between a people and their land. Baldwin and Olds came to realize that re-connecting people with each other by means of the Myaamia language "is really a healing process for our community;" given the fraught historical

circumstances from which language awakening typically emerges, this is a plausible way to generalize the social motivations for language awakening in other contexts as well. Similar statements can be found in other contributions to this volume, e.g., Macy's project to recenter language authorities in linguistic research as part of a broader project to "promote healing and growth of cultural values within the community by fostering the right environment for revitalization to take place." The overarching theme is that language awakening is less about learning to speak a particular way than it is about leveraging shared methods and developing communicative practices to resist damage-centered narratives of extinction and loss and instead promote healthy and durable relationships within and across communities. (This can be considered a confirmation of Leonard's (2011) insights into language reclamation as a "broader social process," noted above.)

4. CONCLUSION: INTELLECTUAL MERIT AND BROADER IMPACT OF STUDIES IN LANGUAGE AWAKENING

This special issue includes many contributors who are in various fields of academia, and academic readers across disciplines do constitute one intended audience of this special issue. This is because the collective voices of the contributors stand to make significant contributions to the academic community, broadly defined, in ways that should inform academic endeavors and render sectors of academia better suited to support awakening language efforts. To begin with the disciplinary areas that we, as editors (and linguists), are familiar with—language documentation and description—it is clear that the experiences shared here invite deep reflection about the impact of the quality of documentation for future revitalization efforts. The contributors provide evidence that validates, once again, language documentation as an endeavor with value for scientific inquiry, but more importantly, for the purposes that language communities may deem most important. The uses of historical documentation described by Baldwin and Olds, Macy, Sánchez Avendaño, Viles, and Yerian, Yiamkis and Baldwin provide strong counterarguments to past critiques about language data collection generating linguistic cemeteries (cf. Lehmann, 2001, p. 4) and invalidate recommendations to deprioritize the documentation of endangered languages based on its (perceived) reduced scientific worth (cf. Newman, 2013). In fact, the contributions from Sands, Harvey, Griscom and from Aaley and Bodt describe situations in which a lack of documentation considerably hinders language awakening efforts. Fortunately, best practices in terms of methods and ethical principles and prioritization of community interests are now well-established (cf. Cruz Cruz, 2022; McDonnell, Holton, & Berez-Kroeker, 2019). In this special issue, language documenters can read community insights demonstrating that the value of language documentation is not bound by timelines and expiration dates or by the value assigned by an academic researcher based solely on their own research agenda.

Instead, the contributions to this volume confirm that language documentation and accessible archiving are paramount to the very language communities.

Language documenters can also gain an understanding from this special issue about the relevance of documenting a diversity of genres and domains that reflect community life and cultural practices, even if they do not necessarily appear as directly relevant to questions from the academic discipline of linguistics. Further, the experiences of revitalizationists working with historical archival materials make it clear that all documentation of an endangered language should take into consideration second language learners who will need explicit instruction in aspects of the structure of the heritage language and may be learning the language without a socialization community.

All papers in this special issue that describe language revitalization activities provide examples of the range of structural details and pragmatic contexts relevant to language revitalization that must be considered in language documentation endeavors. Sánchez Avendaño and Porras Cabrera describe challenges their efforts have faced when applying the existing documentation to language teaching. Pérez Ríos specifies that historical documentation of a community, in addition to narrow linguistic documentation of language structures, is relevant to revitalization efforts given that these attend to the cultural, territorial, and ecological knowledge systems that are often communicative priorities (inter alia). Griscom, Harvey, and Sands show different revitalization trajectories in Africa with communities whose languages have been documented compared to those with only limited documentation. Thus, efforts to generate extensive documentation of the world's languages should continue, whether conducted entirely by members of language communities themselves, or, when external collaborations are warranted, with their authorization and participation throughout the research process (Leonard and Haynes, 2010). Further, we are reminded by Macy that multilingualism is a fact of language communities. The multilingual profiles of documented language authorities for Kiksht and other Chinookan languages highlight the fact that the notion of a monolingual speaker as the ideal language consultant is not a reasonable profile to pursue in many, if not most, language documentation scenarios. Thus, this volume contributes strongly to the literature on principles and best practices in language documentation.

An important contribution of the papers in this special issue is the central role of community perspectives in directing revitalization efforts in ways that also influence any academic endeavor involved in the process. Indigenous methodologies and the concept of relationality are central in the research by Macy, and by Taylor-Adams and Hall. Both papers describe the process and outcomes from bringing into dialogue academic methods such as Grounded Theory guided by established Indigenous methodologies alongside perspectives derived from their own positionalities, which are described in detail. The study described in Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds is entirely

community-defined, thus, serving as an example of broader impact when research is driven by community interests and principles.

A language awakening effort is a unique and challenging type of language learning process, and it is one that has received minimal attention in the literature on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (cf. Taylor-Adams, 2022). In this special issue, however, the relevance of SLA for language awakening and the contributions that language awakening contexts can make for the advancement of SLA theory are raised with clarity. Taylor-Adams and Hall present a range of data from a diversity of perspectives to engage with theories of second-language learning motivation. In particular, they raise the relevance of community and relationships for persisting in especially challenging SLA conditions. The chapter by Yerian, Yiamkis, and Baldwin engages with translanguaging and multicompetence theories in the SLA practices for awakening the Myaamia and the Ó tissi languages in the United States. In both articles, the relevant theories inform the employed SLA strategies. At the same time, and especially in Taylor-Adams and Hall, the language awakening context informs and challenges the theories to be inclusive of a diversity of contexts beyond those of classroom-based teaching of international languages.

Information science and archiving practices also stand to gain insights from the chapters in this special issue by understanding the value of metadata details and the relevance of individuals other than the one who may have initiated and led a data gathering effort. Macy centers "language authorities," language community members who contribute their knowledge to the documentary record, in any documentation effort given their agency as participants in the research, the role they acquire within the language community, and the relevance they may have for a community member searching for archival data on their heritage language. This puts into question the usefulness and even the ethics of elevating a documenter in an archival record at the expense of obscuring the identities of the community members who provided the very language data that comprise the archival records (cf. Darnell, 2021).

One more noteworthy contribution of the papers in this volume is the importance of developing strength-based and culturally relevant assessment models for language awakening efforts. Since the publication of Hale et al. (1992), scores of academics have developed frameworks to measure language vitality. Zahir and Zahir provide an overview of the various methods proposed over the last 3 decades. In all cases, these methods are deficit-based, measuring language endangerment rather than vitality. Zahir and Zahir address this with their social-networks approach to show the importance of strength-based approaches to assessing vitality and to understand the social underpinnings of language vitality and language revitalization. Related to this, Shea, Mosley-Howard, and Hirata-Edds pursue four research questions about the impact of revitalization on academic attainment, physical

and mental health, community engagement, and continuance following theoretically-grounded strengths-based methods of inquiry.

One of the editors was motivated to assemble this special issue after being in a group discussion of mostly European academics when one of them dismissed language awakening as an oddity, citing the Myaamia and Wampanoag cases but thinking that language awakening did not go beyond these two cases. Aside from the fact that such a misinformed comment was surprisingly dismissive of well-known and longstanding cases of language awakening in European contexts, it pointed clearly to the dearth of information about the myriad efforts in place at present. Thus, as we close this introductory chapter, we hope it will be abundantly clear now that the revitalization of languages after dormancy is sought in contexts all around the world and constitutes a growing international movement in linguistic human rights. Extending the metaphor developed by Baldwin and Olds in their article, there are already many language gardens around the world that, after a period of neglect, are being tended to once again. As awareness of these efforts spreads and insights like the ones found in the contributions here are shared across ever-expanding networks of language revitalizationists, we can expect that many more such gardens will emerge and nourish their communities once again.

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