Reappearing Voices: Modern-Day Language Revival

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## Reappearing Voices: Modern-Day Language Revival

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century there have been several language revival movements. The most notable of these movements was the revival of Hebrew. However, Hebrew was not the only language to be revived. Linguists have been

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language or customs and do not see many "positive outcomes." Modern-day linguists believe "this is the result of shortage of sufficient [...] funding, lack of technical expertise, and lack of integration of school- based programmes with community language programmes."

Irish was clearly an endangered language. By comparison, the key period of numerical decline in Welsh was the first half of the twentieth century." <sup>6</sup>

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According to language professor Kari A. B. Chew, the Chickasaw Nation located in Oklahoma has been losing its language – Chikashshanompa' – and culture due to "colonization and forced assimilation [...] leading to devastating and rapid language decline." The natives of the Chickasaw Nation do not pass on their language leading to decline. The children learn Chikashshanompa' as a second language, if at all, causing the number of speakers to dwindle and become primarily the elderly. "

language is both socially and culturally important for not only the Chickasaw people, but other native people as well.

A specific example for the futuristic lens would be the Navajo language reclamation. The Navajo language and people can best be remembered for their wartime contributions as the Navajo Code Talkers in World War II. As the society industrialized further, the Navajo language started to dwindle, especially since it was a word-of-mouth language. Teresa L. McCarty, Mary Eunice Romero, and Ofelia Zepeda discussed the revitalization of the Navajo language, and the purpose of language in their article "Reclaiming the Gift: Indigenous Youth Counter-Narratives on Native Language Loss and Revitalization". Many of the indigenous Navajo speakers feel their language makes them special and gives them a sense of importance: "It is said that when the languages were created, language identified the people—who we are, where we came from, and where we are going [...] This sentiment is widely shared among Native speakers. "My language, to me [...] makes me unique [...] makes me Navajo [...] makes me who I am." <sup>10</sup> Current speakers of the Navajo language define their language as a part of their identity. However, before the arrival of European colonists the around three to five hundred native languages were spoken, but after Europeans arrived that number decreased to around a little over two hundred languages. 11 "Only 34 are still being naturally acquired as a first language by children [...] 84 percent of all Indigenous languages in the United States and Canada have no new speakers to pass them on." 12 Native languages such as Navajo have been in a gradual slow decline in recent decades, ......

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but with the perseverance of the current speakers and the feeling of cultural identity that goes along with the language, the Navajo speakers will reclaim their language.

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Several linguists and language researchers have come to the conclusion that not enough indigenous languages are being saved, while some believe that the revival does not bring the languages back to what they once were. Russ Rymer, author of the article "Vanishing Voices,"

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Linguists that think this because modern-day Hebrew is so different from ancient Hebrew and that it has become a "hybrid language" because new words were added to an ancient language to make it fit into modern times.<sup>15</sup>

Christina Eira, a linguist with the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages

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!! younger generations to learn. "When even a single language falls silent, the world loses
an irredeemable repository of human knowledge." 17

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