

# LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT

A presentation by:

CLARA LING BOON ING (111614)

NUR FARAH NADIA BT MEOR RAZMAN (111621)

# INTRODUCTION

- Language Death/Shift:

Tsunoda (2006, p.37) claims that language death or language shift is that “...a given language is still used as the vehicle of communication by certain members-most likely, elder members-of the community but that it is no longer transmitted to the younger children of the community as a whole. A language may be considered dead when this happens”.

Language shift happens when communities who share a native language abandon it and shift to speaking another one instead. It can happen rapidly or slowly and may lead to language death which is the disappearance of a language.

# METHODOLOGY

- The purpose of this presentation is to examine causes and consequences of the rapid loss and endangerment of languages occurring in a global scale, especially for speakers of the minority language and to identify an endangered language and to discuss some steps for diagnosing, halting and reversing language shift. Our research methodology includes:

## 1. Textual reading:

### a. Books

- i. Lev Michael (2011) *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*
- ii. Tasaku Tsunoda, (2006) *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization: An Introduction.*
- iii. Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2011). *An Introduction to Linguistics.* United States: Wadsworth Cengage Learning

## b. Thesis

i. Maureen Hoffmann (2009) *Endangered Languages, Linguistics, and Culture: Researching and Reviving the Unami Language of the Lenape*

## 2. Case study

i. Devan Jagodic (2011) *Between Language Maintenance and Language Shift: The Slovenian Community in Italy Today and Tomorrow*

ii. McEwan, E. & Fujita. (2013) *Gaelic Revitalization Efforts in Nova Scotia: Reversing Language Shift in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

# RESULTS

Based on the related studies done, we found out the causes of language shift or death can be divided into natural or environmental causes, political or military, social causes, language policy, cultural and religious causes and linguistic factors. As such, language shift will lead to loss of identity, loss of cultural significant practices and disrupts the transmission of cultural knowledge. Thus, language shift can be reversed by preserving these languages by studying and documenting their grammars-the phonetics, phonology and by recording for posterity the speech of the last few speakers.

# RAPID LOSE AND ENDANGERMENT OF LANGUAGES IS OCCURING ON A GLOBAL SCALE. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CAUSES OF THIS?

- Tsunoda (2006, p. 57) claims that a language may be endangered due to language shift. He further divides the causes of language endangerment into:

- 1.natural/environmental
- 2.political, military
- 3.social
- 4.language policy
- 5.cultural/religious
- 6.linguistic

## Tsunoda (2006, pp. 58-61)

Causes	Explanation
Natural/ Environmental	Decline or loss of population.: natural catastrophes (volcanic eruption, earthquake, droughts, floods and famine), diseases, in particular imported or epidemic diseases, such as sexual transmitted disease, smallpox, measles, influenza, common cold, leprosy, malaria, violent acts by humans such as warfare, slavery, massacres, and genocide
Political/ Military	<b>Dispossession of the land:</b> Due to invasion, conquest, colonization, settlement or grazing. <b>Relocation of the people:</b> People may be relocated to an unfamiliar-and often inhospitable- environment for settlement. Relocation may be voluntary as in the case of migration but in most cases relocation is often executed by force, for example, as prisoners. (In Tokuyamamura, Japan, in a deep valley north of Nagoya, was well known of its unique features of its dialect. The government decided to build a dam there, to secure water supplies and for human consumption and irrigation. The villagers were forced to leave their home village, and were dispersed, losing contact with their fellow villagers.

## Tsunoda (2006, pp. 58-61)

Causes	Explanation
Social	<p><b>Mixing of speakers of different languages.</b> This may be caused by boarding schools, reservations/settlements, intermarriage.</p> <p><b>Improved communication and mass media</b> in the dominant language (TV, radio broadcast, films, videos, CDs, printing press such as newspapers, magazines and books)</p> <p><b>Indifferent attitude:</b> Language apathy and language negligence. Some people do not care but it is too late when a language is gone.</p>
Language Policy	<p>Assimilation policy and language policy.</p> <p><b>a.The education of children:</b> this has promoted the dominant language. It has drastic negative effects on the minority language.</p> <p><b>b.Imposition of the dominant language:</b> prohibition of the use of the indigenous language in education, punishment and humiliation for the use of indigenous language.</p>



## Tsunoda (2006, pp. 58-61)

Causes	Explanation
Cultural/ Religious	<p><b>Tourism:</b> This brings in speakers of other languages, including those of the dominant language.</p> <p><b>Spread of religion:</b> Tsunoda reports that Holes (1994, p. 161) states “A well-known instance concerns Arabic, which was spread by Islam from Arabia across a vast area which includes Levant, Egypt and North Africa , and replaced local languages such as Aramaic, Coptic and Berber.</p> <p><b>Culture contact and clash:</b> When an ethnic group encounters a culture that is more prestigious than theirs, they will often go through changes of values, shift or cultural assimilation.</p>

## Tsunoda (2006, pp. 58-61)

### Causes

### Explanation

#### Linguistic

**Relative lack of indigenous language literature.** Tsunoda states that Schmidt (1990, p.17) notes that aboriginal language literature, if it is available, is usually limited to the spheres of religion (hymn books, Bible translations), linguistic work (grammar and translation), school curriculum materials (basic readers, elementary storybooks).

Moreover, the format and quality of production of aboriginal language literature is very limited to basic black and white photocopied materials which compare very poorly to the glossy, colour illustrated and often elaborated presentation of dominant languages such as the English literature. This creates a rather poor impression of the worth of the aboriginal language as against English.

## Tsunoda (2006, pp. 58-61)

### Causes

### Explanation

#### Linguistic

**Language purism:** Some people may choose to retain their language in its “pure form”. It may seem strange but according to Tsunoda, Fishman (1964, p.64) reports that “language purism can lead to language loss”.

a. The younger generation of a community refrains from speaking their traditional language because they know or think that their language is incorrect or wrong and/or because they are criticized for speaking that way.

b. In return, the older generation may prefer not to teach the language to the younger generation at all, rather than to have it “corrupted” by the younger generation which does not speak it well or does not treasure their ancestral language.

## WHAT CONSEQUENCES MIGHT IT HAVE, ESPECIALLY FOR SPEAKERS OF MINORITY LANGUAGES?

- **1. Loss of identity**

Hoffmann (2009, p.21) discusses that the consequences of language shift and death will lead to the loss of identity.

*“Your native language also binds you to others and creates a community of speakers. A leader among the Maori of New Zealand, Sir James Henare, expressed the potential impact of the loss of the Maori language in the following way: “The language is the life force of our Maori culture and mana [‘power’]. If the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us? Then, I ask our own people who are we?” (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 23). Language plays a major role in defining ourselves in relation to, and in contrast with, others.”*

Hoffmann (2009, p.21)

- **2. Loss of cultural significant practices**

Hoffmann (2009, p.21) also states that the loss of language also causes the loss of other culturally significant practices that are dependent on the language.

*“Oral histories are lost if no one can speak the language any more. Likewise, traditional songs, poetry, and other verbal art forms are lost. Even if the language has been written down, language loss may cause written tales to be lost as well, if they were not translated into another language first. For example, it was not until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone that modern experts were able to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics. When a community loses its language, it also loses many other aspects of its culture. Language loss has a significant impact on both the collective and the individual identities of a community.”*

Hoffman (2009, p.21)

- **3. Disrupts the transmission of cultural knowledge.**

Michael (2011, p. 136) reports that language shift may cause losses of cultural knowledge, especially detailed knowledge of environments and resources. Michael discusses Harrison's (2007, pp. 24-27) example about:

*“...the finely grained lexical distinctions drawn by the speakers of Tofa in semantic domains such as types of reindeer, which are classified in terms of sex, age, and if male, whether they are gelded. Harrison argues that the shift in Toda communities to Russian has blocked the transmission of this kind of local knowledge, remarking “we might even go a step further that the knowledge Marta (a speaker of Toda) possesses cannot be expressed in an intact or efficient way in Russian.”*”

“Language shift” can be defined as a process in which *“the habitual use of one language is being replaced by the habitual use of another”* in *“bilingual towns, villages, or neighborhoods”* (Gal 1979: 1).

---

---

## What are the steps to diagnose, halt and reverse language shift?

Fishman has proposed the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) as a tool to determine a language's relative vitality or endangerment on a scale “from full use by many users to no use by any users” (Lewis and Simons 2010: 105).

**Table 2: EGIDS – Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale adapted from Fishman 1991 (reproduced from Lewis and Simons 2010: 8).**

LEVEL	LABEL	DESCRIPTION	UNESCO
0	International	The language is used internationally for a broad range of functions.	Safe
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level.	Safe
2	Regional	The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services.	Safe
3	Trade	The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders.	Safe
4	Educational	Literacy in the language is being transmitted through a system of public education.	Safe
5	Written	The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form in	Safe



6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language.	Safe
6b	Threatened	The language is used orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children.	Vulnerable
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it among themselves but none are transmitting it to their children.	Definitely Endangered
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.	Severely Endangered
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.	Critically Endangered
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community. No one has more than symbolic proficiency.	Extinct
10	Extinct	No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language, even for symbolic purposes.	Extinct

# Halting Language Shift

**Table 3: Revitalization EGIDS Levels (reproduced from Lewis and Simons 2010: 117).**

LEVEL	LABEL	DESCRIPTION
6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by all children as their first language.
6b	Re-established	Some members of a third generation of children are acquiring the language in the home with the result that an unbroken chain of intergenerational transmission has been re-established among all living generations.
7	Revitalized	A second generation of children are acquiring the language from their parents who also acquired the language in the home. Language transmission takes place in home and community.
8a	Reawakened	Children are acquiring the language in community and some home settings and are increasingly able to use the language orally for some day-to-day communicative needs.
8b	Reintroduced	Adults of the parent generation are reconstructing and reintroducing their language for everyday social interaction.
9	Dormant	Adults are rediscovering their language for symbolic and identificational purposes.

# Reversing Language Shift

- Preserve these languages by studying and documenting their grammars-the phonetics, phonology and by recording for posterity the speech of the last few speakers.

The greater a language's level of endangerment, the further along it is in the process of shift, with the ultimate outcome of shift being language "death" or obsolescence. (Fishman 1991: 81).

**Table 1: A summary of Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) adapted from Fishman (2001: 466) and Lewis and Simons (2010: 3). The chart should be read from the bottom up, starting at Stage 8.**

STAGE	SITUATION	GOAL
1	The language is used for local and regional mass media and government services	Using the language in education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels
2	The language is used in the local or regional work sphere	Using the language in local and regional mass media and government services
3	Children attend schools providing some or all education through the medium of the language	Using the language in the local/regional (i.e. non-neighbourhood) work sphere, both among in-group members and out-group members
4	The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form throughout the community	Setting up schools that offer some or all instruction in the minority language, either public or private, and either substantially under majority curricular and staffing control or substantially under in-group curricular and staffing control

5	A new generation of children are learning to speak the language as a first language	Setting up schools for literacy acquisition in the language, for the old and young, outside of and supplementary to their compulsory education
6	A cohort including teenagers, younger adults and parents of young children use the language in daily life	<b>Restarting intergenerational mother tongue transmission of the language in an intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community context</b>
7	Cultural interaction in the language primarily involving the community-based older generation(s)	Creating a cohort including teenagers, younger adults and parents of young children who speak the language comfortably with one another and with older people
8	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation	Reconstructing the language as it was actually used, and adult second language acquisition of the language

Almost extinct or  
endangered language.

Gaelic Revitalization Efforts in Nova  
Scotia: *Reversing Language Shift in  
the 21st Century*

# Introduction

- Scottish immigrants and their descendants have been speaking Gaelic in Nova Scotia since the last quarter of the 18th century. Gaelic users and supporters are working to revitalize the language in the province in the early 21st century.
- Gaelic in Nova Scotia is classified as a language that is undergoing shift and is the subject of revitalization efforts.
- In most areas of its former heartland, Cape Breton Island, Gaelic is at EGIDS **Stage 8b “Nearly Extinct”**:
- In eastern Nova Scotia where Gaelic was spoken in the 18th through 20th centuries, for example in Pictou and Antigonish Counties, it is currently at **EGIDS Stage 9 “Dormant”**:

- More generally, language revitalization can be defined as “the attempt to add new forms or new functions to a language which is threatened with language loss or death, with the aim of increasing its uses and users” (King 2001: 4).



# Efforts proposed to revitalize Gaelic

Use Gaelic in some higher level educational, occupational, governmental and media efforts

Obtain the legal right and funding to set up Gaelic-medium public school

Develop new Gaelic teaching materials for the curriculum and train fluent Gaelic speaking teachers.

Provide Gaelic literacy instruction to children and adults at the local or community level, under Gaelic community control

Encourage and support Gaelic speakers who become parents to use Gaelic in the home when raising children

Train young adults and older adults to be Gaelic-medium childcare providers

Create Gaelic-medium daycare and preschools to support families

Develop other “family-friendly” Gaelic institutions and events

Generate interest in Gaelic among teenagers and young adults and parents of younger children

Provide effective instruction in spoken Gaelic for teenagers, young people and parents

Locate as many Gaelic-speaking elders as possible and socially re-integrate them into Gaelic-medium interaction

Documentation: record everyday spoken-language, expressions, oral traditions from native speakers

Create courses and programs in which adults acquire Gaelic as a second language

Bring native Gaelic-speaking elders into contact with interested adults through the medium of Gaelic

# Discussion

- The GIDS and EGIDS are the keys to revitalizing language shift however they are said to be limited and static. Why? Because...
  - They do not take account of unique local conditions, and they do not predict or describe the events of the past or the future.

But

They can be used to help formulate a set of goals and define the intermediate steps that are needed to reach those goals.

*In this way, the scales are useful tools for language revitalization goal-setting and planning.*

# Conclusion

- A language dies and becomes extinct when no children learn it. It may also die when all of the speakers of the language themselves are killed or in means of surviving under the threat of political repression or even genocide.
- Thus, the documentation and preservation of dying languages is very important for social and cultural reasons. Language clubs and even governments must attempt to reverse the dying out of a language and all efforts must be taken into consideration.

# Reference

Devan, J. (2011) *Between Language Maintenance and Language Shift The Slovenian Community in Italy Today and Tomorrow*.

Retrieved from

<http://jeful.ut.ee/public/files/Devan+Jagodica+195-214.pdf>

Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2011). *An Introduction to Linguistics*. United States: Wadsworth Cengage Learning

Hoffmann, M. (2009) *Endangered Languages, Linguistics, and Culture: Researching and*

Reviving the Unami Language of the Lenape. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/Linguistics/Theses09/HoffmannThesis.pdf>

McEwan, E. & Fujita. (2013) *Gaelic Revitalization Efforts in Nova Scotia: Reversing Language Shift in the 21st Century*.

Retrieved from

[https://www.academia.edu/3300840/Gaelic\\_Revitalization\\_Efforts\\_in\\_Nova\\_Scotia\\_Reversing\\_Language\\_Shift\\_in\\_the\\_21st\\_Century](https://www.academia.edu/3300840/Gaelic_Revitalization_Efforts_in_Nova_Scotia_Reversing_Language_Shift_in_the_21st_Century)

Michael, L. (2011) *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages (Ed)*. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press.

Tsunoda, T. (2006) *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization: An Introduction*. Berlin, Walter de GruyterGmbH& Co.