

Pronunciation in the context of language revitalization

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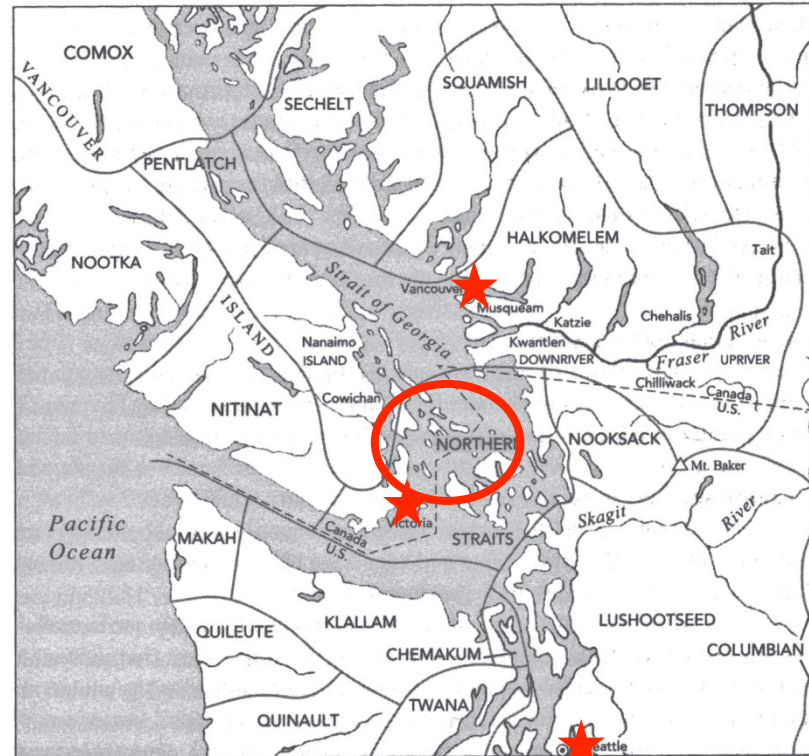


Introduction

- Existing literature: sound change OR attitudes towards it, but not both:
 - **Sound change** in Indigenous minority languages, under the influence of majority languages (King et al. 2009; Stanford & Preston 2009)
 - **Attitudes** towards sound change by community members (Dorian 1994; King et al. 2009)
- Our study – incorporation of both:
 - Attitudes towards pronunciation across SENĆOŦEN speakers of different generations and fluency levels
 - Pronunciation across these same speakers
- Goal of our project:
 - What role should pronunciation take in the context of language revitalization, and teaching SENĆOŦEN to the new generation?

SENĆOTEN

- SENĆOTEN: the language of the WŚÁNEĆ people
 - Coast Salish
- Four communities: BOKÉĆEN, SŤÁUTWŮ, WJOLEŁP, WŚÍKEM
 - some speakers of Hul'q'umi'num' (Coast Salish) also reside in WŚÁNEĆ.
 - BOKÉĆEN has chosen Hul'q'umi'num' as its official language.
- Unique orthography:
 - developed by the late PENÁĆ (David Elliott Sr.)
 - adopted as standard by the WŚÁNEĆ School Board, 1984



Map 1 Halkomelem Territory

Map from Suttles, 2004

SENĆOTEN Language Status

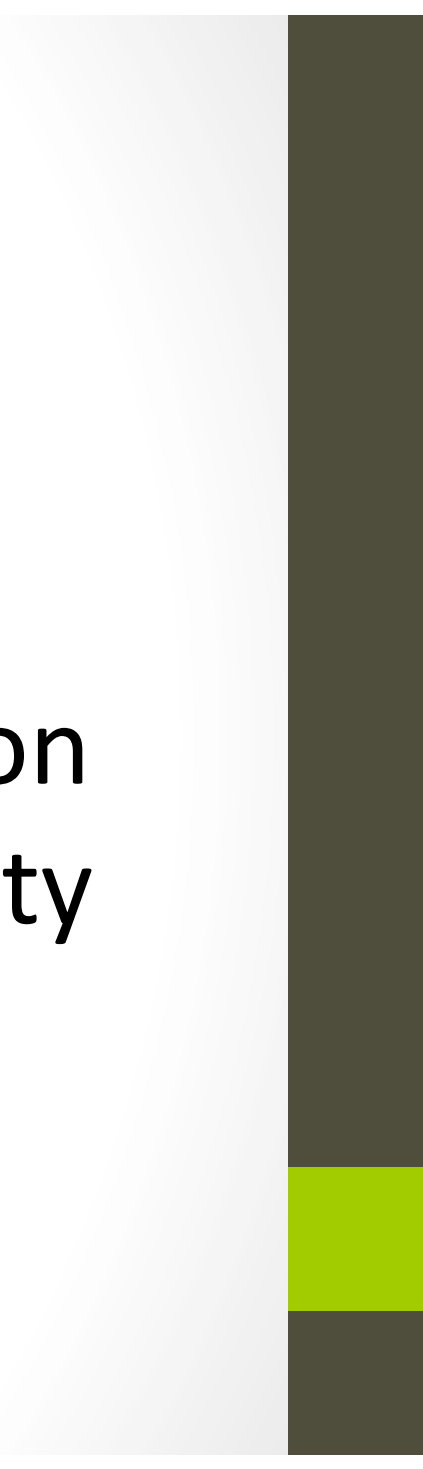
- Approximately 20 speakers (FPCC, 2008), including:
 - **Elders:**
 - acquired SENĆOTEN fluently as children
 - **Understanders :**
 - heard the language as children and are re-awakening as speakers
 - **Teachers:**
 - learned SENĆOTEN as young adults and have taught the language at ŁÁU, WELNEW School for many years
 - **Language Apprentices:**
 - younger adults
 - learned SENĆOTEN through Mentor-Apprentice programs and are now part of the teaching staff at ŁÁU, WELNEW School
- Vibrant language revitalization program, including a language nest and a growing immersion school.
- Language Apprentices beginning to raise their families in SENĆOTEN.

SENĆOŦEN consonant chart

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Lateral	Post-alveolar	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Stops	p p'		t t'			(k) k ^w k' ^w	q q' q ^w q' ^w	ʔ
Affricates		tʃ'			t ʃ tʃ'			
Fricatives		ʃ	s	ʃ	ʃ	x ^w	ʃ ʃ ^w	h
Nasals	m m'		n n'				ʃ ʃ'	
Resonants				l l'	j j'	w w'		

Research Questions

- Two questions:
 1. What attitudes/perceptions do community members have about the (changing?) pronunciation of SENĆOŦEN?
 2. To what extent do these attitudes/perceptions correspond to the reality of SENĆOŦEN pronunciation, across generations and fluency levels?
- To answer these questions
 1. Interviews with 13 SENĆOŦEN speakers
 2. Word-list recordings with 12 speakers



Interviews:

Perception of pronunciation variation among community members

Methodology

- **Speakers:** 3 fluent elders; 3 understanders; 3 teachers; 4 apprentices = 13 speakers

- **Survey:**




All interviewees

- General feelings about the importance of pronunciation
- Awareness of variation in pronunciation
- Awareness of variation in pronunciation in language learners
- Variation in pronunciation in individuals' speech

Learners only

- Difficulties in pronunciation (learners)
- Causes of difficulties (learners)
- Pronunciation teaching (learners)

Results - Variation

- **Variation** = at the moment vs. **change** = over time
- Familial or sub-dialectal variations:
 - E.g. ΠΙΤΕΜ 'bird': [t^θit^θət^θəm] vs. [tsitsətsəm]  
- Free variation
 - E.g. ΣΚΑΧΕ 'dog': [sqexaʔ] vs. [sqexaʔ] 
- Respecting elders: knowing their way of speaking and speaking like them

Results - Change

All participants agreed: SENĆOŦEN is changing.

On the one hand...

- **Elders:**
 - “Mostly the new generation that’s making the changes.”
 - Important to sound as similar to the Elders as possible. (3 responses)
 - Concerned about mispronunciation, but reluctant to correct people. (3 responses)
- **Apprentices:** Think of their proficiency as limited to school contexts right now

But on the other hand...

- “Remember that language is a living thing.”
-- YELKÁŦŦE, quoted by STOLŦEŁ
- Remember that individual Elders spoke differently from each other (accent, dialect, specialized vocabulary). (1 response)

Results - Change

- Most common reasons suggested:
 - Lack of fluent Elders to speak to: speeding up language change. (6)
 - Influence of English (through the orthography) (2)
 - E.g. W̱JOŁEŁP: [sartlip] instead of [xʷṯ'ətəp]
 - Need to develop “SENĆOŦEN muscles”
 - Influence of Hul'q'umi'num'. (2)
 - **Elders / Understanders:** Notice mixing of SENĆOŦEN and Hul'q'umi'num'
 - The world is changing; contexts SENĆOŦEN is spoken in are changing. (2)
 - (Sound related) changes in the natural world :
 - have changed W̱SÁNEĆ people's listening habits
 - have made it more difficult to hear distinctive sounds of SENĆOŦEN.

Second language learners: Children

- Younger children master the “difficult” sounds of SENĆOŦEN more easily than adult learners! (6 responses)
 - especially <Ł X ǂ> [† χ χʷ]
- Concerns: sound substitution, mixing of SENĆOŦEN and English (+ mumbling)
- Sounds of concern:

Orthography	IPA	# responses
C, Ć, Q, ǂ, ǂ́, K, ǂ	k, kʷ, k'ʷ, q, qʷ, q', q'ʷ	3
I	ʃ'	3
Ł ~ ǂ	†~θ	2
Ć ~ J	ʧ ~ ʧ'	1
X ~ ǂ ~ W	χ ~ χʷ ~ xʷ	1
S	s	1
Vowel sounds		1
Consonant clusters (adding vowels to break them up)		1

Second language learners:

Adults

- Praise for adult second language learners' progress (3 responses)
- Sounds of concern:

Orthography	IPA	# responses
B (English influence, via orthography)	p'	2
D (English influence, via orthography)	t'	1
C, Ć, Q, K, K̄, K, K̅ > collapse to C	k, k ^w , k' ^w , q, q ^w , q', q' ^w	1
Ń (Hul'q'umi'num influence)	ŋ	1
W̄ ~ X	x ^w ~ χ ^w	1
Ƨ	λ'	1
Ƨ̄	ts' ~ t ^h	1
Ł	ł	
Consonant clusters (adding vowels to break them up)		2
Glottal stop (presence vs. absence)		
Intonation		

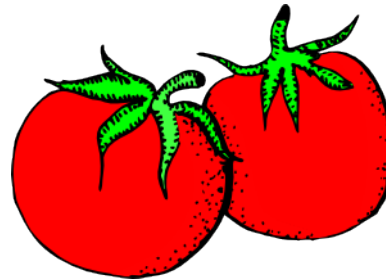
Results – Language Learners

How to get to sounding like the Elders ...

- **Apprentices:** Maintain contrasts in minimal pairs. (3 responses)
- Listen to connected speech:
 - archival recordings
 - public speakers at community events
- Try to remember how the Elders spoke.
- Keep connections to how the language used to be used.
- Experiential learning; making language learning fun.
- Keep striving for accuracy.
- Role of literacy?
 - Writing helps with pronunciation.
 - Speaking first: Don't let learners start writing too soon.
 - Naming the letters of the SENĆOŦEN alphabet?
 - Listening / transcription exercises?

Discussion

- How much does pronunciation matter in the context of language revitalization?
 - Finding the balance between staying true to the elders vs. letting the language evolve
- Listening to the community:
 - Acknowledge and accept:
 - Dialectal variation: ʔ
 - Free variation: vowels
 - Study and teach:
 - Ejectives: B, D
 - The K series: C, Ɓ , Ɓ' , K, Ɓ , Q
 - Intonation (Apprentices)



Word-List Elicitation: Ejectives



Ejectives

- In particular [p' t']
- Montler (1983):

“obstruents are usually lenis but never voiced. The glottalized obstruents are ejective but weakly so. **It is often difficult, especially in the anterior consonants, to perceive the contrast.**”
- Concern:
 - [p' t'] pronounced as [b d], under the influence of English orthography
 - [p' t'] are written <B D>

Methodology

- **Speakers:** 3 fluent elders; 3 understanders; 3 teachers; 3 apprentices = 12 speakers
- **Materials:** wordlist created by community member RA to elicit 'difficult' sounds
 - Initial focus: **ejectives**







Table 1: Total number of tokens analysed, by word position. Target ejective bolded

Word-initial (onset)	#	word-final (coda)	#
/t'ájəm/ is on	31	/ŋíʔət'/ blue grouse	30
/t'il'əq/ strawberry	34	/kw'ánət'/ porpoise	35
TOTAL	65	TOTAL	65

Methodology

- Data analysis
 - **Auditory analysis:** transcription
 - Range of pronunciations
 - **Acoustic analysis**
 - Acoustic properties of these different pronunciations

Table 2: Range of pronunciations of word-initial and word-final ejectives

Word-initial		Word-final	
[tʰ]	/tʰilʰəq/ 	[tʰ]	/ŋiʔətʰ/ 
[tʰ]	/tʰájəm/ 	[dʰ]	/kwʰánətʰ/ 
[t̃d]	/tʰilʰəq/ 	[d̃]	/kwʰánətʰ/ 
[t̃]	/tʰilʰəq/ 		

Results

(A=apprentice; U = understander; T = teacher; E = elder)

Table 3: /t'/ realization in word-initial (onset) position, across speakers

Speaker	[t']	[t ^h]	[t]	[t _W]	Total
A1	6				6
A2	6				6
A3	3		3		6
U1			6		6
U2	2		2	1	5
U3		3	4	1	8
T1	5				5
T2	3				3
T3	3				3
E1	5			1	6
E2	3	1	2		6
E3	5				5
Total	41	4	17	3	65

Table 4: /t'/ realization in word-final (coda) position, across speakers

Speaker	[t']	[d']	[d _W]	Total
A1	1	4		5
A2	6			6
A3	6			6
U1	6			6
U2	2	3		5
U3	3	3		6
T1	2	4		6
T2	6			6
T3	6			6
E1	6			6
E2		3	1	4
E3	3			3
Total	47	17	1	65

Discussion

- Most frequent pronunciation: [tʰ]
 - In particular among people actively involved in language revitalization (apprentices, teachers, and elders)
- Infrequent, but occurring: [tʰ] ~ dʰ ~ d
 - In particular among understanders (and elders)
- Montler's (1983) description of ejectives based on work in the 1970s: weak ejectives (Kingston 1985) = [tʰ] ~ dʰ ~ d
- **Ejectives are changing *but not in the direction that people think***
 - Becoming more distinct from their plain counterparts
 - Reflects awareness among speakers/learners that ejectives are “special”

General discussion

Tying it all together

- Pronunciation attitudes
 - Acknowledgment/acceptance of variation and change
 - But also study/teach/learn pronunciations of elders
 - K series, ejectives, intonation
- Pronunciation details
 - Discrepancy between perceived pronunciation and actual pronunciation
 - Ejective contrast: increasing salience
- So what do we do?
 - (Continue to) raise awareness about:
 - natural variation/change
 - perceptions vs. reality
 - Focus on areas of concern within communities
 - Study pronunciation, to know the facts
 - Use findings to help guide pronunciation teaching/learning

General discussion

Methodology and hindsight...

- **Survey:**
 - Ask fewer, more open-ended questions.
 - Group interviews?
- **Phonetic study:**
 - Ask participants to read or retell a story which includes the words to be studied, so they can pronounce them in context.
 - This will also let us study intonation.
 - Or for a word list task, ask participants to read the numbers in SENĆOŦEN too.
 - Collect examples of “easy” sounds as well as “difficult” sounds.
 - Allow pairs of participants to work together?
- Linguists as hitchhikers (L. Grenoble’s plenary)
 - “We are a part of the language community too” – various participants noted that their opinions on language change had been influenced by what they had learned from Sonya, Janet, and/or Tim.

References

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