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7

Language Shift and Linguistic Insecurity[1]

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Variation in language is constant and inevitable. In a vital speech community some variation disappears as speakers age, and some results in long-term change, but all change will be preceded by a period of variation. Speakers of endangered languages may perceive variation in an especially negative light when it is thought to be due to contact with the dominant language. This contributes to negative evaluations of young people's speech by older speakers, and in turn contributes to the linguistic insecurity of young speakers, which may result in even further shift toward the dominant language. In this paper we discuss language variation in the context of shift with respect to the notion of linguistic insecurity and what we identify as three distinct types of linguistic insecurity, particularly in cases of indigenous language loss in the Americas. We conclude with some observations on the positive results of directly addressing linguistic insecurity in language maintenance/revitalization programs.

1. INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE VARIATION AND ENDANGERED LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION. Edward Sapir famously wrote that "[e]veryone knows that language is variable" (1921:147). Yet pervasive myths about language variation persist, even among linguists. The myths that language can or should remain static, that variation is somehow aberrant, and that that one dialect can be superior to another in some way are all reflective of language ideologies that are common across monolingual and multilingual language communities.

For a variety of reasons speakers in indigenous and minority language communities may perceive variation in an especially negative light. Whether variation is due to attrition, stable existing variation, other demonstrably internal effects, or contact, speakers may negatively evaluate all variation as distracting from good and pure use of the language. One reason for this is the reality of language shift scenarios where the socially dominant language tends also to be most speakers' linguistically dominant language (and there is correspondingly less competence in the indigenous or minority language). This means that speakers often negatively evaluate linguistic variants they perceive to be the result of imposition from the socially dominant language. Moreover, mainstream language ideologies promote the idealization of a standard language (without dialectal variation) and the idea that multilingualism is problematic, and both of these may further exacerbate negative evaluations of linguis-

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tic variation. As Odango (2015:40) points out in an eloquent assessment of the discourse surrounding language endangerment and the effect this has on speakers of the language, what some call "loss," others call "change, transformation, or the development of something new."[2] All of this has implications for the documentation of endangered languages and correspondingly maintenance and revitalization efforts.

The field of documentary linguistics emerged over the last 20 years with a focus on the collection, analysis, and preservation of linguistic data from languages that are or are likely to become endangered. Accompanying this focus from the beginning was 'a concern for supporting speakers and communities who wish to retrieve, revitalize or maintain their languages' (Austin 2016: 148) but as Austin points out this concern is not always accompanied by the provision of documentation materials that are useful for revitalization work. One primary concern in this regard, that we begin to discuss here, is that documentary corpora have tended to consist largely of the speech of older, fluent speakers; fewer include samples of children's ordinary language use. Woodbury (2011:177) additionally points out that documentary efforts most commonly focus on one variety (the "ancestral code") even if other varieties are commonly used in the community.

Moreover, language teaching and learning as part of revitalization efforts often values adherence to the most traditional variants. It is not unusual for an L1 teacher to negatively judge non-standard variants, and even interactions between L2 learners and L1 less-traditionally-fluent speakers show these complications. L2 learner-teachers of Maliseet, for example, have repeatedly asked coauthor Quinn as an academic linguist to weigh in on the "correctness" of variants offered by students with some home knowledge of the language. It is not always easy to distinguish between a genuine familect variant vs. an English-dominant individual's simple mislearning or misremembering (or an English contact effect, or some combination of all of these).

The frequency of these questions makes it clear that "correctness" is a major source of insecurity for participants within revitalization efforts. Scholarly documentation of sociolinguistic variation is one way to validate and de-stigmatize variation, and a growing number of scholars are demonstrating this (see Childs et al 2014, Farfán and Ramallo 2010, Nagy 2009, and the papers in this issue)[3]. In this paper we discuss the relationship between linguistic insecurity and language shift generally before focusing on a more locally oriented discussion of three different ways that linguistic insecurity may develop and affect different generations of endangered language speakers. We discuss this specifically in a North American context but also expect that these observations may be more widely generalizable. These are 1) the

[2] Odango gives as an example his own family's access of their Cebuano skills in Cebuano-Tagalog-English code-switching although they have 'lost' the ability to speak fluent Cebuano. In a related example of different types of evaluations of change, early, well-integrated loans in Mi'kmaw using the highly productive causative-transitive *-a'tu* as in *sa'se'wa'tu* 'I change it' (with a loan-stem from French *changer*) are typically considered standard. In contrast, using the exact same construction with a more recent loan, like ***share***-*ewa'tu* 'I share it', is often seen as less legitimate. One fluent speaker recently posted that form on an online language forum, in order to ask others for a more traditional alternative.

[3] of the language. Two examples of this are the Diccionario Comparativo-Histórico de la Lengua Huave (Noyer, ms), and the talking dictionary project of the Mi'gmaq/Mi'kmaq language (Haberlin et al 2016). Both dictionaries seek to document multiple varieties In the case of the Mi'gmaq/Mi'kmaq dictionary project, this is done by having a minimum of three speakers record each headword, in order to "hear differences and variations in how a word is pronounced."

insecurity of speakers who were punished for speaking their native languages; 2) the insecurity of young or semi-speakers with respect to their language proficiency; and 3) the insecurity of non-speakers whose cultural authenticity is questioned due to not speaking their ancestral language. We follow this with a description of some methods that are currently being used to explicitly address linguistic insecurity in language revitalization programs in Maliseet and Mi'kmaw communities of eastern Canada and northeastern Maine.

2. LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES. Widely held beliefs about language structure, form, and use underlie most of the ways that humans think about language varieties and their relative worth. These beliefs about language form and its relationship to social structure are often called "linguistic ideologies" or "language ideologies" (Silverstein 1979, Irvine 1989). Language ideologies may be explicitly expressed views about language as well as more tacit assumptions about language and its use (Gal 1989, Irvine 2012). In the context of linguistic insecurity and language shift, we consider two major types of ideologies to be relevant – essentialist ideologies (i.e. to be X, you must speak X), and puristic ideologies (i.e. that there is one correct form and one correct way of speaking, cf. Bradley 2002, see also the standard language ideology discussed by Milroy 2001, Milroy and Milroy 1999, and Silverstein 1996). An ideology of monolingualism (i.e. that to be multilingual is difficult, or bad in some way) may also be relevant in some contexts. These ideologies play a significant role in many of the specific interactions and observations we report. The essentialist ideology, for example, is demonstrated below with respect to both researchers' ideologies and speakers' ideologies.

Childs et al (2014:168) observe "Western language ideologies, which have been especially prominent in shaping documentary agendas, may be unduly influencing documentary practice in other parts of the world." In their example, provided in the context of documentation in sub-Saharan Africa, they discuss how an essentialist ideology may be demonstrated by researchers when they continue to associate a single language with a single speaker community, exemplifying an "essentialist ideology that equates language loss with culture loss and assumes an isomorphism between language and culture" (Childs et al 2014:182, 180).

With respect to essentialist ideologies held by speakers, an example of this comes from our work in the community of Hopkins, Belize, where Garifuna (an Arawakan language), English, and Belizean Creole (Kriol) are all spoken. In this community young people continue to use Garifuna even while it is now considered endangered in all of the other communities in Belize where it was once spoken. However, Garifuna is now spoken in fewer domains in the village and by fewer young people, and this is something that older speakers frequently commented on. Moreover, it is not uncommon to hear someone refer to an ethnic Garifuna person as having *become Creole* when they are no longer speakers of the language (i.e. lost their ethnic and cultural identity when they no longer use the language; for more see Abtahian, forthcoming). We argue below that essentialist ideologies and in particular ideologies of purism may contribute to linguistic insecurity among speakers or semi-speakers of minority languages who may fear making mistakes in the language or bear the weight of the burden of losing their cultural identity if they are not considered proficient speakers.

3. LANGUAGE SHIFT AND LINGUISTIC INSECURITY. Individuals are often self-conscious about their use of what they perceive as non-standard varieties of a language, a phenomenon that is sometimes described as linguistic insecurity. Labov (1966) first defined linguistic insecurity as a mismatch between speakers' ideal of a standard language and their actual linguistic competence; Meyerhoff further explains it as "speakers' feeling that the variety that they use is somehow inferior, ugly, or bad" (2006:292). In practical terms this may refer either to the individual's insecurity about whether the language variety itself is "good", or the individual's insecurity about their proficiency in the language variety. Functionally speakers express these two cases in similar ways. For example, speakers in Belize use the terms "bad" or "broken" English to refer to Belizean Creole (Kriol), but the same terms may also be used by speakers who consider themselves to be non-fluent second language speakers of English when referring to their English (for more on this distinction with respect to linguistic insecurity see Martinez and Petrucci 2004).

Much of the literature on linguistic insecurity in multilingual situations focuses on speakers' insecurity about their knowledge of the dominant or majority language, rather than on the indigenous or minority language. Less of the literature on linguistic insecurity is focused on the issue of speakers' perception of incompetence in their heritage language, sometimes expressed as some aspect of the grammar of the language being difficult to learn or use. Goble reports this for 3rd generation Mexican Americans, whose insecurity about their proficiency in Spanish is "exacerbated by familial teasing" (Goble 2016:29), eventually contributing to intergenerational loss of Spanish. Wyman (2009) also documents this phenomenon in her longitudinal study of rapid language shift (*language tip*) in a Yup'ik community, where she finds both decreased proficiency on the part of young speakers as well as expressed insecurity about their ability to use Yup'ik correctly. Wyman asserts that there is an "assumption that young people who speak dominant languages in endangered language communities orient away from local practices, physical spaces, and/or marginalized identities" (Wyman 2009:347). To counter this assumption, however, she gives many examples of young non-fluent speakers of Yup'ik who are nonetheless highly oriented toward local practices and motivated to maintain the language. Lee's (2009) study of Navajo adolescents similarly demonstrates that young people may be highly motivated toward language maintenance, even while they are not highly proficient speakers themselves. Wyman recommends that teachers who work to reverse language shift must build students' linguistic repertoires so that they can interact comfortably with older generation.

The relationship between linguistic insecurity and language shift in multilingual communities is neither straightforward nor necessarily causal, but speakers' expressions of linguistic insecurity are also often correlated with shift toward the dominant language, with speakers then demonstrating shame or embarrassment about using the L1. Bonner (2001), for instance, discusses adults' perception of Belizean Garifuna children's "shame" in speaking Garifuna accompanying a shift to widespread use of Belizean Creole, which is perceived both as more prestigious and more useful in a multilingual context. Wyman also concludes that: "if youth feel embarrassed about their mixed language practices, they are likely to shift further toward dominant languages" (García 2009, cited by Wyman 2009).

In Indonesia, where Abtahian et al (2016) document large-scale shift away from even the big local languages of Indonesia toward use of the dominant national

language Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia),* numerous accounts tie decreasing use of local languages to speakers' insecurity about proficiency in their own local languages, particularly with respect to speech levels. Poedjosoedarmo (2006), for instance, observes that "competence in using the polite form of the Javanese language is falling rapidly" (113), and surmises that the effects of increased use of Indonesian result in confusion between *Krama* (high register) levels, reduced vocabularies and substitutions from Indonesian. She goes on to observe, however, that "the most far reaching effect...is that many people, aware that they are not very competent at manipulating the levels, simply use the Indonesian language instead of Javanese in contexts where it is necessary to be formal and polite," (117), and that "many young people, even those for whom Javanese is the language of the home, cannot use the polite levels correctly." (119). These observations highlight the existence of linguistic insecurity among young speakers of Javanese, whose concern over being *sopan* ('polite') has resulted in avoidance of the higher speech levels in Javanese and accelerated shift toward Indonesian. Elsewhere in Java young people demonstrate their linguistic insecurity by citing a fear of making mistakes (Smith-Hefner 2009, Setiawan 2012, Zentz 2014) as one reason for abandoning the use of the high register in favor of either low Javanese (*ngoko*) or Indonesian, both of which are also seen as more communicative and more egalitarian.[4]

In a striking example from McCarty, Romero, & Zepeda's (2006) study of Native language shift and retention in the US Southwest, Navajo adults in one community estimated the percentage of Navajo-proficient youth to be 30-50%, while youth in the same community routinely gave estimates between 70 and 80%. McCarty et al (2006:670) conclude from this as follows:

> [T]here was wide divergence in how youth and adults responded to questions about language proficiencies among the young, with youth consistently providing much higher estimates. Recognizing that self-assessments of language proficiency are problematic, the divergent responses of youth and adults nonetheless signify local perceptions of language vitality that have important implications for language choices. A bilingual adult who believes the child to whom she or he is speaking has little knowledge of or interest in using Navajo is likely to address the child in English. For their part, youth may possess greater Native language proficiency than they show, 'hiding' it out of shame or embarrassment. The net effect is to curtail opportunities for rich, natural adult child interaction in the heritage language.

With reference to the same study, Lee (2009) reports that Navajo students "would chose not to speak their language if they felt scolded or teased by their relatives or peers for mispronunciation or grammatical errors of Navajo words and phrases," and further, that "when they were shamed for their efforts, students expressed frustration and reluctance to keep learning" (Lee 2009: 309, cf. Lee 2007).

In fact Grinevald and Bert (2011) list linguistic insecurity as a crucial element in one of four clusters of factors that define a typology of speaker types in situations

[4] With respect to the example of shift away from use of the high Javanese register in favor of Indonesian both Abigail Cohn (pc) and a reviewer have pointed out that this brings up the interesting question as to whether linguistic insecurity may also be related to pragmatic complexity.

of language endangerment. These four clusters are i) language competence; ii) sociolinguistic: exposure to language vs. vitality of language at time of acquisition; iii) performance: use and attitude; and iv) self-evaluation of speakers and linguistic insecurity. With respect to the last they write, "a profound sense of linguistic insecurity… can colour interactions in unexpected ways. This insecurity can extend to total denial of any knowledge of the language, in spite of proof to the contrary" (Grinevald and Bert 2011:48).

Penobscot teacher Gabriel Paul also observes (p.c. 2016) a further potential source of anxiety: linguists themselves. While contemporary field linguists are trained not to prescriptively correct native speakers, historically they have often felt free to do so, particularly as part of the documentary dynamic of evaluating which speakers are the "best" in a community. (Linguists collaborating in revitalization teaching may still participate in this dynamic in subtler ways, despite their best intentions, for example by allowing themselves to occupy unchallenged an offered or established status as expert.) Paul also notes that outsider linguists may sometimes have more practical competence in the language than heritage learners themselves. This can be fraught in any number of ways. Younger speakers may be criticized (by elders, by themselves, or even by linguists) for failing to speak as well as a recently-arrived outsider. Learners may be frustrated by seeing an outsider quickly pick up a language they have been exposed to but never acquired. In short, this situation can be a stick prodding directly into sensitive areas of authenticity and loss.

Given this relationship between expressions of linguistic insecurity and language shift, we might then also expect to see the opposite - that if speakers do not express insecurity about their own proficiency (or negatively evaluate others'), variation may also not be perceived as negatively, and the situation is more likely to be one of language maintenance/stable multilingualism. This has implications for how we think about linguistic insecurity, as it suggests that one element of successful language maintenance or revitalization may be to directly address linguistic insecurity and its sources. While we often think of linguistic insecurity as a direct reflection of external sociolinguistic pressures (prestige, etc.) and the process of language shift (i.e. as the language is used less, younger generations' competence in it is less traditional), we also see that once established, linguistic insecurity itself can further drive language shift.

4. THREE TYPES OF INSECURITY IN LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT SCENARIOS. In language shift and/or revitalization scenarios, we can often observe at least three types of linguistic insecurity, corresponding to different sources of embarrassment or "shame"[5]. Often, these follow a temporal succession, as three generations or three cohorts:

1) the insecurity of speakers who were punished for speaking their native languages (Reyhner 2004)[6]

[5] In this paper we have largely tried to avoid the use of the word 'shame' in discussing the sources of linguistic insecurity. Although this word is widely used and in all of the cases we cite comes from the expressions of speakers themselves, a reviewer pointed out that the term may come across as judgmental of speakers in placing blame for language loss on speakers themselves.

[6] This is particularly relevant in those places in North America and Australia where residential schools for indigenous children were established (see Reyhner 2013), but also may be extended to multilingual

2) the insecurity of young speakers who might be criticized by older fluent speakers for not speaking the language correctly (Lee 2009, Zentz 2014)
3) the insecurity of non-speakers whose identity/authenticity/solidarity is questioned due to not speaking their ancestral languages (Wyman 2009)

The first type is well-established enough to need no further discussion here, except to underscore how in popular and community-level discussion (and often in scholarly and pedagogical discourse, too), this is typically the only kind that receives significant attention, at the expense of concerns of the other two groups.

The third type is particularly severe for community members who have little or no proficiency in the language: this too gets at least some general acknowledgement, often being reported by this cohort as a major factor behind feeling "incomplete," or insecure, not just in their general ethnic/national identity, but perhaps even more importantly, also in their individual connection to living and deceased elder-speaker family members. We can add that this is the generation that feels quite insecure as (primarily) L2 learners in a reclamation effort, in particular because the pressure to "get it right" is compounded by the idea that the future of the language depends on them correctly and completely learning it. Ceteris paribus, L2 heritage learners of endangered languages are therefore likely to experience levels of linguistic performance anxiety much higher than even those encountered by typical foreign-language learners. This anxiety can in turn hinder precisely the intergenerational contact needed for continued transmission: one teenaged L2 heritage learner of Penobscot (central Maine, USA) reported disliking speaking in front of fluent speakers at all – preferring to speak only with less advanced students. With respect to factors that will lead to successful revitalization, there is a recognized need to establish or re-establish communication between different generations of speakers. The linguistic insecurity that an effectively L2-learner heritage speaker can feel facing a fluent speaker is a particularly fraught version of general L2-learner performance anxiety, which can drive them to minimize intergenerational communication.

Equally if not more likely to drive intergenerational avoidance is the second type of linguistic insecurity, one that has not been given much attention: younger/less-traditional speakers' fear of judgment from older/more-traditional speakers. In the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Mi'kmaw communities (of eastern Canada and north-eastern Maine, USA) that coauthor Quinn has worked in, there are many competent speakers who avoid or minimize speaking in front of more fluent speakers, or even do not speak publicly at all. Fear of being laughed at is almost uniformly the reason given for this decision. This suggests that the phenomenon of former speakers ("S/he used to speak when we were younger, but not anymore") may not come just from negative experiences from outside the speech community (e.g. school-based mistreatment), but also from within. Following are observations from revitalization work in these communities:

a) One Passamaquoddy native speaker (significantly, one of the youngest in his community) reports a strong (and familiar) sympathetic experience while watching an elder correct L2 learner-teachers in an immersion class-

classrooms where linguicide is not institutionalized but where individual teachers may choose to forbid the use of the indigenous language, as has been described by some Garifuna speakers in Belize, for example (Abtahian forthcoming).

room: "I felt suppressed, like I wasn't any good enough." (Dwayne Soctomah, p.c. 20160602)

b) A Maliseet language revitalization activist and L2-learner teacher similarly observes both of her own experience and those of her students: "I didn't realize how much anxiety affected the learning of the language until we started to address the issue [directly]." (Alma Brooks, p.c. 2016)
c) Younger-generation speaker and Mi'kmaw language teacher Alwyn Jeddore identifies fluent-speaker correction and belittling of other speakers and L2-learners as a major problem for the revitalization effort, dedicating a lengthy online community video post to identifying and promoting awareness of this negative effect. (He offers this in the context of a speech community where fluent speakers often decry younger speakers' lexically and idiomatically mixed "Miklish" (cp. "Spanglish"), and even suggest that it ("Miklish") is "killing the language.")

We could add to this numerous in-passing remarks from current and would-be heritage learners in all of these speech communities that all converge on this: fear of being laughed at by fluent speakers is an intensely strong motivator away from even attempting to use the language. All observations suggest that this dynamic of fear significantly restricts comfortable interaction between generations of speakers and/or learners.

5. ADDRESSING LINGUISTIC INSECURITY. To begin to properly address these complications of language insecurity/shame, we need to:

a) Better understand the generational differences and social factors affecting language shift in any community.
b) Problematize (or even discourage) purism/prescriptivism.
c) Recognize and address linguistic insecurity, and particularly raise awareness of how ideologies of purism contribute to the linguistic insecurity of young speakers, which may result in even further shift toward the dominant language.

Towards (a), within the academic sphere, we can aim specifically for more active collaboration between variationist sociolinguists and documentary linguists, incorporating tools and knowledge from sociolinguistics into both documentation and revitalization work. This might include documenting not just overall attitudes toward the language, but also, among other things, how individuals within each generation view the speech norms of the others, and how that informs their use, or non-use, of the language with each other. It also includes the documentation of as much linguistic variation as is possible or reasonable, whether hypothesized to be due to internal or external factors.

Towards (b) and (c), a few suggestions can be made. First, as linguists typically collaborate with school- or classroom-based approaches to revitalization/stabilization/reclamation, it is important to identify ways in which these can reinforce existing or emergent standard-language ideologies, and the linguistic insecurities they engender. These approaches often reproduce negative and exclusivist treatment of language variants (often similar to those that have marginalized the

language as a whole). Colonial-language classroom norms historically most often promote an ideology of a single "correct" variant, and also give primacy to written literacies. The two norms are closely intertwined: conforming to the latter can create a pressure to select and impose a standard to which costly-to-print materials can or must adhere. Both in restricting acceptable inter-speaker variation, and in demanding the centrality of written literacy skills, this can often marginalize the participation of L1-speaker generation(s), whose linguistic expertise may not include much experience in these school-based norms. (Hence two commonly heard observations from fluent speakers: "I want to teach...but I can't read and write / but they don't like the way I talk.")

Second, domain-of-use variation also hampers intergenerational language use. In one Passamaquoddy community, few fluent speakers now use the native number system in full; most shift mainly to English for this. In the local school, however, children are mainly taught numbers, colors, and animals. What children learn most fully, then, is precisely what their elders have least mastery of. For L1 speakers, this can cause a variety of reactions, from frustration at the unrealistic impracticality of what's being taught, to self-doubt about their own personal competence in the language. Articulately and widely problematizing these often unspoken or unquestioned norms may be another way linguists can help reduce or remove obstacles to effective revitalization.

Purism/prescriptivism's directly negative effects may also be attenuated by supporting group-level discussions that reframe them as something that need not be accepted unquestioningly, and that can do more damage to rebuilding a speech community than any stigmatized variation ever could. Linguists can offer validation to variation by documenting it in as many ways as possible for that community, language, or project by attempting to explicitly report on dialectal variation, variation by age and social group, and variation due to contact with other languages. Suslak (2009), for example, talks about the positive connotations of Mixe-Spanish code-switching for young speakers, and gives an example of a young Mixe speaker innovating a new use of an old form which then caught on with other young speakers. Language activist, teacher, and youngest-generation L1 speaker Alwyn Jeddore suggests using "Miklish" as a teaching tool, introducing beginning heritage learners to verb forms like ***jump***-*ewi* 'I jump', ***push***-*ewa'tu* 'I push', ***pull***-*ewa'tu* 'I pull' and noun phrases like *ni'n* ***Mom***-*M* 'my mom', *ni'n* ***Dad***-*M* 'my dad', and *ki'l* ***Dad***-*M* 'your dad' as a way of introducing fewer vocabulary items at first while demonstrating the key patterns the language uses to incorporate loanwords.

It also may be helpful to promote a more nuanced narrative that still conveys the severity of what is lost when language is lost, but without reference to the essentialist ideology referenced above (Childs et al 2014) of still-popular slogans like "When language X is lost, so is the (whole) culture and identity of the people." Such framing appeals to an oppressive use of authenticity that layers on yet more anxiety to the heritage learner/reclaiming generation. Most workers in documentary linguistics know the negative effects of this rhetoric; a brief but effective regular response to it may help reduce its damaging ubiquity.

Another technique is to directly address underlying linguistic ideologies, bringing awareness to what many speakers view as common sense ideas about language that may be contributing to linguistic insecurity, an approach that is also commonly taken by instructors teaching classes on language variation and change in

universities. For example, instructors may bring attention to the parallel between pushing to eliminate differences to "unify" a speech community and pushing to eliminate whole languages to "unify" a modern nation-state. With respect to variation, instructors may point out that variation is part of (traditional) fluency and part of most living languages. In Penobscot, for example, variation can carry the interconnected histories of specific families. The two words *mkasess* and *kahkakohs* 'crow', along with some other dialectal differences, may track which families came from the west or the east, reflecting the fact that different groups joined together to survive colonial disruption. Reframing the discussion about variation may help minimize insecurity, similar to emphasizing oral language over written as a way to reprioritize revitalization efforts away from conflicts over orthography.

Finally, very promising preliminary results from a new course in Maliseet (through St. Mary's First Nation and St. Thomas University, with teachers Andrea Bear Nicholas, Darryl Nicholas, Victor Atwin, Alma Brooks, Toni Brooks, Anatasha Lyons, Kelsey Nash-Solomon, and Joleen Paul) and a related effort for Mi'kmaw (through Membertou First Nation, with teachers Stephanie Googoo, Alwyn Jeddore, and Jane Meader) suggest that active, sustained addressing of adult-learner linguistic performance anxiety can make a major difference in L2 heritage-learner success. Both courses – designed in collaboration with coauthor Quinn, but implemented by the teacher groups above – integrate a variety of anxiety-reduction efforts as primary to the process. First of these is the material itself: it is designed with radically minimalist per-lesson learning goals and thorough terminological de-technicalization, two points that actively help minimize learner intimidation (Nicholas et al. 2016). But equally prominent and central to these courses is overt and sustained discussion of the three types of linguistic insecurity. This component goes beyond the standard brief appeal to each learner to relax, have fun and not be afraid to make mistakes. Instead, individual performance anxiety – particularly fear of making mistakes in front of peers – is discussed and acknowledged in the group as a major factor holding back learners. This is discussed both on day one and continually as the course progresses. Through this discussion, the group arrives at a collective recognition that this anxiety is not proof of personal failure/inability, but rather is something every language learner feels. From this explicit recognition of individual anxiety then comes an equally explicit mutual promise of support – not just from the teacher, but crucially, among the fellow-learner peer group. This group-level support for the individual appears to greatly help learners feel secure enough to take the risks and make the in-the-spotlight mistakes crucial to keep moving forward as language beginners (Nicholas et al. 2016).

Learner success (itself a definitional challenge) is always the result of a complex of factors, of course. But we can at least report that student evaluations of the Maliseet course have been overwhelmingly positive, with representative observations below suggesting that the above strategies for managing linguistic insecurity have been effective:

> - "I love this course! Instructors are excellent and willing to work with each student. Feel comfortable to make mistakes and learn the correct way to speak Maliseet."

- “In 3 short weeks I have learned more of the Maliseet language than I have in my entire life.”

- “like pace, like taking the time to revisit, liked not writing”

- “I am even teaching my children, family, and friends.”

Teacher observations from the Mi’kmaw course designed on the same principles have also been positive:

- “...and there's a lot of laughter, we're all comfortable around each other and we love to laugh; almost always the students tell me how they love how we can all laugh together at things but yet we can stay serious and focused...”

- “They're interacting with speakers more outside of classes, taking opportunities to be corrected by elders and the odd time they might get a speaker laugh at them but [they] shrug it off and just remind them that 'Hey, I'm learning too'...”

- “They're becoming more comfortable too; and that fear of "I'm scared to make a mistake", "If I say something wrong, they'll laugh at me"---that fear seems to be going away, and now they're becoming more brave to even go out into the speaking community and try out their new words and take the opportunity to be corrected.” (Alwyn Jeddore, 20160421)

Taken together, these evaluations and observations, many of which explicitly reflect on the issue of linguistic insecurity, suggest that active, positive engagement with anxiety factors can substantially enhance learner participation and success. Better recognition and understanding of the three types of linguistic insecurity, then, can potentially improve language revitalization/reclamation outcomes in deep and varied ways.

6. CONCLUSION. Although all varieties of language are variable and changing, variation in language is frequently overlooked, dismissed, or criticized. Moreover, researchers and activists working in language documentation and language revitalization frequently neglect documentation and discussion of linguistic variation. This is partly due to the fact that among speakers of endangered languages, variation, especially variation that is thought to be due to contact with the dominant language, is often perceived negatively. Criticism of language variation generally, and specifically of variation due to contact with the dominant language, contributes to negative evaluations of young people’s speech by older speakers, and in turn contributes to the linguistic insecurity of young speakers, which may result in even further shift toward the dominant language. And possibly even a feedback loop: one in which speakers fearing fellow-speaker criticism shift ever more to the dominant language---which in turn deprives them of remaining chances to learn the speech norms that older-generation speakers expect them to maintain. No one is judged for using too much English in their English, as it were: when this is the best interactional option for a less fluent speaker, language shift accelerates that much more quickly.

Language maintenance and revitalization depends on communication between different generations of speakers (*intergenerational transmission*, Fishman 1991). But the problem of linguistic insecurity can interfere with intergenerational communication. In addition, although documentary linguistics has 'a concern for supporting speakers and communities who wish to retrieve, revitalize or maintain their languages' (Austin 2016: 148), language documentation often prioritizes the "best" speakers, and so can add to the insecurity of "lesser" speakers.

For this reason, we see that documenting variation and explicitly addressing speakers' perception of variation in endangered language communities is a necessary part of documentation and revitalization efforts. With respect to documentation, this may include the recognition and documentation of regional dialectal variation, but should also include the documentation of within-community variation. Including documentation of the variants that are used by young people in the speech community, for instance, is one way of validating those varieties. Moreover, given what has been observed from the Maliseet and Mi'kmaw revitalization-teaching efforts, one of the most effective strategies may simply be explicit discussion about variation and linguistic insecurity among speakers, among learners, and between both groups.

While the above remarks reflect experience across a variety of speech communities, we recognize that they are still primarily anecdotal. We also recognize the real-world language shift scenarios are tremendously diverse: they may involve all or none of the factors and dynamics observed here. We therefore view these observational generalizations not as proven claims or principles, but chiefly as important questions to ask ourselves as we strive for better approaches to the documentation of human language.

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