

Guest Editor's Note

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January 2022 marks the beginning of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in order to “draw global attention on the critical situation of many indigenous languages and to mobilize stakeholders and resources for their preservation, revitalization and promotion” (UNESCO). Aiming to ensure indigenous peoples’ rights to preserve, revitalize and promote their languages in sustainable ways, the global initiative centres Indigenous, minoritised and/or endangered language communities and their specific needs which should be in the focus of language revitalisation efforts as it has been pointed out earlier (e.g. De Korne and Leonard 2017; Shulist and Rice 2019).

As language revitalisation is “not so much about bringing a language back; but rather, bringing it forward” (Hornberger and King 1996, 440), a key aspect of language revitalisation efforts is to break the process of the intergenerational language shift and make sure that the Indigenous, minoritised and/or endangered languages are actively used within the upcoming generation(s) of the respective language community in order to achieve a sustainable language maintenance.

Linguistic practices and ideologies of young people in multilingual settings have been the focus of much sociolinguistic research during the past decades (see e.g. Nortier and Svendsen 2015). However, children and youth belonging to Indigenous, minoritised and/or endangered communities, their language practices and language attitudes remain yet a relatively unexplored area of sociolinguistic interest, especially in the field of language revitalisation and language documentation. Instead, the research focus has often been on older generations who have been described as both language experts and traditional knowledge-bearers (Hinton 2014).

This special issue of *Multiethnica* is dedicated to language revitalisation, focusing on children and youth perspectives. Bringing together five different examples from varying global contexts of language revitalisation in action, this issue aims to position children and youth of Indigenous, minoritised and/or endangered language communities as “central stakeholders in their communities’ linguistic and cultural futures” (Wyman et al. 2014, xv).

In the first paper, Øystein Vangnes and Hanna-Máret Outakoski focus on urban language revitalisation in the two Scandinavian cities of Tromsø (Norway) and Umeå (Sweden), exploring a new domain for language use among Sámi children and youth called *Giellariššu* (Language Shower). In contrast to traditional immersion programmes (often called *språkbad*, ‘language bath’, in the Nordic countries), the *Giellariššu* is directed to younger Sámi learners of various backgrounds and offers short but intensive sessions of Sámi language learning. Aiming to provide an additional arena for Sámi language use beyond school and home among younger Sámi learners, the *Giellariššu* is oriented towards a variety of children and youth activities such as games, arts, drama but also traditional Sámi cultural activities.

Drawing on participant narratives and evaluations provided by pupils and their parents as well as involved teachers/leaders, the paper discusses the *Giellariššu* as a strategic programme for Sámi language revitalisation in urban spaces.

The second paper by Mirjana Mirić explores various local initiatives such as language classes, workshops and publishing activities addressed to primary school-age children to promote and preserve Gurbet Romani in the East Serbian town of Knjaževac using both observations and semi-structured interviews with pupils and school staff. Although Gurbet Romani seems to be a vital language variety in the area as it is still transmitted to younger generations within Romani families, the paper shows how the use of Gurbet Romani is limited to private domains and intergroup communications. Thus, the projects discussed in the paper aim not only to empower Romani children and motivate them to use Romani also in more public arenas, but they also contribute to making Romani Gurbet more visible in the linguistic landscape of Knjaževac.

In the third paper, Madoka Hammine explores how experiences of Indigenous language learning and emotions are connected. Drawing upon interviews with young new speakers of Yeayaman, one of the Indigenous languages of the Ryukyu-an islands (Japan), the paper argues that the emotional needs of the Indigenous language learners must be in the centre of language revitalisation and proposes the notion of compassionate listening practices as a suitable strategy.

The fourth paper by Jasmine R. Jimerson looks at *Ionkwahronkha'ohhátie'* (we are becoming fluent), a grassroots Kanien'kéha (Mohawk Language) initiative that has been created by L2-speakers who had earlier graduated from adult Kanien'kéha immersion programs. Drawing on qualitative interviews with five children who are all family members living together with adult *Ionkwahronkha'ohhátie'* participants, the paper explores how children perceive adult Indigenous language learning practices and speaking relationships, giving insight from a children and youth perspective in how language immersion programmes affect the participants' family members.

In the fifth and final paper, Gunta Kļava focuses on language revitalisation in online spaces highlighting two projects created by the Livonian Institute at the University of Latvia in order to promote Livonian language learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper discusses how online Livonian language lessons and a series of songs written by Livonian authors intended for children and young people can contribute to strengthening the linguistic situation of the Livonian language both inside and outside the community.

Although all five papers describe different contexts of language revitalisation, certain similarities can be recognised regarding theoretical and practical implications of language revitalisation focussing on children and youth. It becomes clear that young members of Indigenous, minoritised and/or endangered language communities are affected by local and global challenges such as for example increased mobility, varying access to language learning programmes and language policies on local and national levels. Not to mention that many Indigenous and minoritised communities are stigmatised and/or face discrimination, which contributes further to their marginalisation and vulnerability (for further information, see United Nations n.d.).

Another global challenge is, of course, the COVID19-pandemic that has had and still has a, in many cases, devastating impact on Indigenous and minoritised language communities as they often are in a vulnerable situation due to the lack of

access to essential services and facilities for example within the health sector as well as important information in their respective language(s). The papers in this special issue also consider the ongoing COVID19-pandemic in explicit and implicit ways as it has affected both concrete language revitalisation activities. In addition, the pandemic had an immense impact on the research questions and methods presented in the papers.

For example, Vangnes and Outakoski describe how the pandemic has had a damaging effect bringing the *Giellariššu* activities more or less to an end as physical meetings were allowed neither in Sweden nor in Norway, and the format of the activities wasn't designed for online language learning. But even if the restrictions are lowered or taken away, it is not certain if the Language Shower-project can continue due to the uncertainty of local prerequisites and resources.

In other cases, the COVID19-pandemic has had a more positive effect on Indigenous and minoritised language learning. Mirić states, for example, that the children were more eager to participate in the Romani classes and showed more interest when they were organised online compared to the regular ones before the pandemic. Additionally, Kļava describes how the pandemic and the sudden need to develop digital learning solutions for Livonian had a beneficial impact. The revitalisation efforts now are accessible for both Livonians and other people interested in learning the language and the Livonian culture. Through language revitalisation activities online, it is also possible, as Kļava points out, to reach Livonians living in the diaspora and who usually couldn't access the more traditional language learning resources.

The COVID19-pandemic, further, also opened the floor for new research questions within the field of language revitalisation. As Jimerson illustrates, the focus of her article came first to light when the immersion classes moved online, and the children of the participants joined their family members 'in the background' as families were forced to stay at home together in accordance with the lockdown restrictions. In addition, local restrictions due to the pandemic have also impacted research methodologies. This is exemplified by Hammine, who was forced to interview her research participants via Zoom instead of meeting them in person.

Altogether, the contributions in this special issue underline the importance of a continuing focus on the children and youth perspective in the field of language revitalisation, raising exciting and new perspectives that invite further examination and discussion on a global scale. The International Decade of Indigenous Languages provides a prosperous context to increase collaborations to preserve, revitalise, and promote Indigenous, minoritised and endangered languages around the world.

Finally, the impact of the COVID19-pandemic has also had significant, and in many cases, dreadful consequences on the working conditions and routines within the academic community. We want to thank all peer-reviewers who dedicated their time to review the contributions, and without their valuable feedback, this special issue would not have been possible.

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