

## Introduction: ‘Language Endangerment and Revitalization’

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The papers in this *European Review* Focus are the revised and updated versions of the talks presented at a satellite session on ‘Language endangerment and revitalization’ held on 17 September 2015, during the 45th Poznań Linguistic Meeting, under the patronage of the Linguistics Section of the Academia Europæa. The session was convened by Wolfgang U. Dressler (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Alain Peyraube (CNRS Paris) and Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołaczyk (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) with the support of the Academia Europæa 2015 Hubert Curien Fund, and in cooperation with the Wrocław Knowledge Hub.

The aim of the session was to bring together scholars involved in the research on ‘small’ languages, i.e. languages with relatively few speakers as well as endangered or dying languages. Such languages present a challenge for linguistics in view of their distinct properties as well as the complex social, cultural and political context of their loss. Based on examples from Europe, Asia, Oceania and Mesoamerica, the papers provide a state-of-the-art view on such issues as language documentation of endangered languages, the implications of language ideology and attitudes for language shift and revitalization as well as the theoretical and practical strategies for the revitalization of endangered languages.

More specifically, the papers deal with three issues, i.e. (a) the theory and processes involved in language death; (b) the effects of language contact; and (c) theoretical and methodological aspects of language revitalization.

Drawing on examples from European languages, Wolfgang U. Dressler discusses the role of linguistic, political, socio-economic and psychological variables in his paper on ‘Independent, Dependent and Interdependent Variables in Language Decay and Language Death’.

Two papers deal with language contact phenomena. In his paper ‘On Some Endangered Sinitic Languages Spoken in Northwestern China’, Alain Peyraube examines syntactic evidence for the presence of a linguistic area including languages from four language families, i.e. Sinitic, Mongolic, Turkic and Tibeto-Burman. The

effects of language contact on syntax and morphology are also considered by Elwira Sobkowiak (University of Warsaw) and Marcin Kilarski (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) in their paper on ‘A “Small” Language in Contact with a “Big” One: The Loss of Alienability Distinction in Tének (Mayan) under Spanish Influence’.

The remaining papers document the challenges involved in efforts to maintain and revitalize endangered languages. In ‘Purism, Variation, Change and “Authenticity”: Ideological Challenges to Language Revitalization’, Julia Sallabank (SOAS, University of London) examines the detrimental role of traditionalist attitudes towards language change and variation in Guernésiais/Giernesiei, spoken in Guernsey. Tomasz Wicherkiewicz (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań), Tymoteusz Król (*Wilamowianie* Association) and Justyna Olko (University of Warsaw) discuss the ongoing efforts towards the revitalization of Wymysiöeryś, a West Germanic language spoken in southern Poland, in ‘Awakening the Language and Speakers’ Community of *Wymysiöeryś*’. Another case study from Europe involves Breton (Celtic) and Kashubian (Slavic): in their paper on ‘Language Ideologies and Minority Language Education: Lessons from Brittany for Kashubia’, Michael Hornsby (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) and Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska (Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences) evaluate the models of education in the two languages. And finally, Justyna Olko (University of Warsaw) discusses theoretical and methodological assumptions behind the revitalization of Nahuatl in her paper ‘Unbalanced Language Contact and the Struggle for Survival: Bridging Diachronic and Synchronic Perspectives on Nahuatl’.

The session provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas among scholars intimately involved in research on endangered languages, while the Focus in this journal allows readers to appreciate the complexity of issues that need to be faced in view of the dramatic loss of languages around the world. We thank the journal of *Academia Europaea*, *European Review*, for hosting this important theme.

### About the Authors

**Wolfgang U. Dressler** is currently head of the working group ‘Comparative Psycholinguistics’ and emeritus professor at the Department of Linguistics of Vienna University, as well as researcher at the Centre for Digital Humanities of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and a member of the Austrian and five other Academies of Sciences. Born in 1939 in Vienna, he studied in Vienna, Rome and Paris and taught at several North American and European universities. He has carried out extensive fieldwork on two Breton dialects. He is now working mainly on theoretical and German morphology, early language acquisition (including typology), and corpus linguistics. He has published more than 500 books, volumes and articles.

**Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołaczyk** is full professor and dean of the Faculty of English at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. She is also head of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Speech and Language Processing at AMU. She has published extensively (ca. 150 publications) on phonology, phonetics and second language acquisition. In her

works she has been pursuing and advocating the Natural Linguistic approach to language. Her books include *A Theory of Second Language Acquisition within the framework of Natural Phonology* and *Beats-and-Binding Phonology*. Her recent research focuses on phonotactics and morphonotactics. She is the editor of *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* published by de Gruyter Mouton and organizer of Poznań Linguistic Meetings (PLM). She received a Senior Fulbright scholarship in 2001–2002 (University of Hawaii at Manoa) and was visiting scholar at the University of Vienna (1991–1994, 1998). She is a member of Academia Europaea and Agder Academy as well as the Linguistic Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences and nearly 20 professional organizations. She is a corresponding member abroad of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (since 2016). She is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna, 2012–2016, 2016–2020. In 2013–2014 she was the President of Societas Linguistica Europaea. She has supervised 22 PhD dissertations.

**Alain Peyraube** is currently Emeritus director of research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS, Paris, France) and Chair professor of Chinese Linguistics at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS, Paris). As a specialist in Chinese historical syntax and linguistic typology of Sinitic languages, Alain has authored five books (on Chinese locative constructions, on the historical evolution of the dative structures in Chinese, etc.) and around 200 articles on Chinese linguistics. His latest research has been carried out within a broadly functional and cognitive framework, using a cross-linguistic perspective and includes projects on grammatical change in Early Southern Min and language contact in Northwest China.