

**Michael Hornsby and Wilson McLeod (Eds.): Transmitting
Minority Languages: Complementary Reversing Language
Shift Strategies**

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Intergenerational transmission of minority and heritage languages is considered a key mechanism for reversing language shift, as noted by Fishman (1991). However, this process is influenced by a wide range of social, cultural, economic, ideological, and linguistic factors that may interrupt normal transmission and make it even more challenging. This book, therefore, aims to provide knowledge into how language transmission is carried out in various contexts focusing on different strategies and tactics for successful language transmission to secure minority and heritage language maintenance.

In his introductory chapter, Michael Hornsby briefly discusses language maintenance issues among minority and diasporic communities, then touches upon some alternative, non-traditional ways of intergenerational transmission as demonstrated by the different case studies presented in this volume. This introduction is essential since it gives readers the necessary background information to understand the upcoming content.

Twenty-one authors have contributed to twelve chapters of the book. ‘*The saibhreas model*’, which translates to ‘richness’ in Irish, is suggested by Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal in Chapter 2 as a tangible means to examine caregivers’ objectives toward successful intergenerational language transmission. The authors maintain that caregivers’ primary goal is for their children to achieve saibhreas in their language use, which can be divided into three constituent components: competent, local, and embodied language use.

In Chapter 3, Macleod discusses the situation of Gaelic in the Isle of Lewis, Scotland. She reports on five families attempting to reintroduce Scots Gaelic into their homes. According to the author herself, “The parents in this study have shown how they [successfully] managed to strengthen language socialization opportunities for their children” (p. 69) even when they (parents) were not active speakers of the language themselves, to repair the broken intergenerational language transmission.

Moving to Chapter 4, Chantreau and Moal focus on the influence of family breakups and recompositions on Breton language transmission. Based on data gathered from semi-structured interviews and an online questionnaire, this research shows that it is impossible to pinpoint a particular consistent impact of family separation and recomposition on the transmission of Breton due to the significant variability in participants’ cases.

The case of intergenerational language transmission among Irish-speaking families in the Muscraí Gaeltacht area is covered by Ó hIfearnáin in Chapter 5. Although recent research predicts Irish language decline in Gaeltacht

communities in the near future (Ó Giollagáin & Charlton, 2015), the present study highlights three contributory factors in Irish language maintenance over an extended period in such a minority setting: 1) parents' strong language skills; 2) parents' decision and determination to bring up their children as Irish speakers; and 3) local community institutions.

In Chapter 6, Dołowy-Rybinska explores the linguistic strategies and practices of minority language transmission between native speakers of Upper Sorbian (minority language) and speakers of a dominant language (German) in a bilingual school setting. The study conducts a field research encompassing curricular and extracurricular observations of learners' linguistic and cultural practices, in addition to interviews with students in the Upper Sorbian Grammar School. Drawing on results extrapolated from the data, the author examines the different types of language transmission in light of several political, linguistic, cultural, and social factors.

Chapter 7 discusses the decreasing use of the Māori language in domestic settings among originally Māori speakers. Olsen-Reeder maintains that the prominent use of English and the absence of interaction in Māori at home prevent any successful intergenerational transmission of the language, leading to its imminent demise. Based on the author's doctoral research in 2017, English language choice in the Māori speaking community can be attributed to many internal, external, or listener factors. The chapter calls for promoting the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages in the home environment to prevent their gradual dissipation.

In Chapter 8, Sallabank observes the journey of adults seeking proficiency in Guernesiais (Guernsey, Channel Islands). The study conducts interviews with 40 participants and observations of the aforementioned initiatives for language transmission. The study reveals many obstacles participants undergo to reconnect with their linguistic heritage and reactivate their proficiency. Nonetheless, the author argues for peer-to-peer adult transmission as an effective strategy for developing proficiency among new speakers and thus maintaining endangered languages.

Chapter 9 probes the revitalization efforts of Basque using the language socialisation paradigm. For decades, language revitalization efforts in the Basque region emphasized a unidirectional model in which parent-child transmission constituted the cornerstone of such a process. The authors argue that the traditional vertical paradigm fails to account for how transmission takes place and calls for considering the use of a more holistic model (Language Socialisation), which results in a better understanding of the intergenerational continuity of language transmission by highlighting the roles of the educational system, community, and children agency.

In Chapter 10, Kennard studies the effect of using Breton at home on specific morphophonological features of immersion-school teenage learners. The study

accumulates data from students with varying linguistic backgrounds and tracks initial consonant mutation as well as the use of grammatical gender. The results reveal that learners who frequently interact with their parents or grandparents in Breton are likelier to exhibit Breton-like morphophonological features than those who experience minimal interaction with fluent speakers at home.

Chapter 11 inspects the language use, maintenance, and transmission phenomena among Russian-speaking families in three different settings, namely Cyprus, Estonia, and Sweden. The findings show that despite all the support Russian parents provide to their children, they still need to consistently use the heritage language with them to transmit it successfully.

In Chapter 12, Nandi et al. investigate the role of parental top-down family language policy in indigenous language transmission among Galician- and Basque-speaking families in three Spanish-dominated contexts: Galicia and Navarre (Spain) and Buenos Aires (Argentina). The authors suggest that implementing linguistic practices aimed at transmitting minority languages helps new speaker parents establish their own agency at home and contributes to the revitalization of indigenous tongues in their respective communities by influencing societal language behaviour and creating alternative bottom-up language policies.

In Chapter 13, Fiorentino sheds light on the under-studied case of transnational adoptive children. The author asserts that parents who adopt a child from another culture who speaks an entirely different language may encounter a difficult situation in which they must deal with the complexity of bilingual development. The chapter explores such difficulties by conducting a case study on an Italian family who adopted an eight-year-old child from Chile. Results show that although parents exhibited an initial tendency for bilingual development, language replacement started soon after the Italian community's need for integration and social empowerment arose.

In the concluding chapter, Wilson McLeod further discusses several key points drawing on the different case studies included in the present volume.

Following recent trends in sociolinguistics, this book represents “an alternative way of looking at the issue of language transmission” (p. 366) among minority and diasporic communities in the twenty-first century. It successfully shows the complexity of the topic at hand and calls for investigating language transmission from a broad perspective. This book is highly recommended as an essential reference for researchers, scholars, and students interested in language minorities and diversity.

References

- Fishman, J.A.**(1991). *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
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