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2017

This article was originally published at:
http://www.elpublishing.org/itempage/155

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Supporting Indigenous language revitalisation through collaborative post-secondary proficiency-building curriculum

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Abstract

One contemporary strategy for reversing language shift undertaken by Indigenous communities includes engaging with educational institutions. In Canada language revitalisation strategies in Indigenous communities increasingly include adult language courses and programmes, often delivered through partnerships between communities and post-secondary institutions. A challenge for revitalisation strategies at the post-secondary level is creating programmes founded in Indigenous educational traditions and values within largely Euro-Western focused institutions that have themselves played a role in the colonisation of Indigenous communities. A component of shifting the legacy of colonial power relations and building Indigenous-based programmes in post-secondary institutions is to ensure these programmes are explicitly informed by, support, and respond to community needs, goals and perspectives. Here we provide a brief description of the Indigenous language revitalisation programmes offered at the University of Victoria (Canada), which seek to support the creation of new adult speakers and teachers. Our description begins with the context for the development of these programmes, and then focuses on exemplifying and discussing an *Indigenous Language Teachers' Package* curriculum resource developed to support community-based language instructors as they work towards meeting their students' proficiency-building goals. By outlining some of the complex factors taken into consideration, challenges faced, and sharing one university team's responses to community needs, goals, and perspectives, we aim to contribute to the growing scholarship on post-secondary proficiency-focused Indigenous language programming.

Keywords: proficiency-building, Indigenous second language learning, curriculum resources for Indigenous languages, language revitalisation and reclamation

1. Introduction

The papers in this volume address the question of what could make a difference to the increasing number of speech communities around the world who experience marginalisation, discrimination, and staggering declines in the use of their ways of communicating. Although for centuries educational institutions have been a 'primary means for extinguishing Native languages and cultures' (Suina 2004:281), they can also be 'powerful sites for language learning and can have a positive synergy with community language revitalisation efforts' (Poetsch & Lowe 2010:157). As a consequence, one contemporary strategy for reversing language shift being undertaken by many Indigenous communities includes engaging those same institutions to assist with reviving languages and cultures (McCarty 2003). In Canada, the majority of formal teaching of Indigenous languages occurs in K-12 schools as a second language subject. Increasingly, however, language revitalisation strategies in Indigenous communities also include adult language courses and programmes, often delivered in partnership between communities and post-secondary institutions. As communities lose their elderly adult speaker base, there is a growing need for language learning opportunities for parents of young children and other adults (Gessner et al. 2014) as well as a need for those who have become new speakers to teach in existing K-12 language programmes. Here we provide a brief description of the Indigenous language revitalisation programmes offered at the University of Victoria (British Columbia, Canada), which seek to support the creation of new adult speakers and teachers. Our description begins with the context for their development. We then narrow our focus to exemplify and discuss the *Indigenous Language Teachers' Package for Linguistics 159, 259, 359, 459*, a curriculum resource developed at the University of Victoria to support the language teachers in building proficient speakers who demonstrate that they have internalised in significant ways the underlying systems of the language they are learning. This internalised knowledge is demonstrated through performance in terms of vocabulary use, pronunciation, communication skills, word order usage, and an ability to connect the linguistic forms appropriately to context.

As many language activists and scholars have pointed out, one challenge of revitalisation strategies at the post-secondary level is creating programmes founded in Indigenous educational traditions and values within largely Euro-Western focused institutions that have themselves played a role in the colonisation of Indigenous communities (Haynes et al. 2010). An important component of shifting the legacy of colonial power relations and building Indigenous-based programmes in post-secondary institutions is to ensure that they are explicitly informed by, support, and respond to community needs, goals, and perspectives (e.g., Adley-SantaMaria 1997; Battiste, Bell & Findlay 2002; Castagno et al. 2015; Leonard 2012; Nock 2015).

Creating new speakers is at the heart of most language revitalisation efforts, and therefore, community partners increasingly express a desire to find the most effective and efficient methods for developing learners' proficiency in communication, including comprehension and production. The concept of proficiency-building is employed here as an alternative to 'fluency' (a term often used in discussion of Indigenous language learning). Proficiency-building refers to activities that aim for learners to become able speakers, to understand and be understood by other speakers, both other learners and first-language speakers, in contrast to other activities that may lead to greater knowledge of the language (such as learning in English about Indigenous language concepts) or subject-based learning which is unlikely to result in superior speaking and understanding levels. In North America, in addition to school-based immersion programmes (McCarty 2003), pedagogical models such as the Master-Apprentice Program (Hinton 2001; Hinton, Vera & Steele 2002), Accelerated Second Language Learning (Greymorning 2005, 2010), and various others (see, e.g., Sarkar & Metallic 2009) are a response to the proficiency-building goals of communities. These aims create a challenge for post-secondary institutions on how to address the need for proficiency-building in the design and implementation of their language revitalisation curriculum. Despite the increase in pedagogical models for teaching Indigenous languages, little research has focused directly on post-secondary Indigenous language curriculum (for recent discussion see, e.g., Hornberger, De Korne & Weinberg 2016; Miyashita & Chatsis 2013, 2015). In this paper, we illustrate an Indigenous language curriculum that integrates language structures, appropriate cultural and language content, communicative practice using task-based (Nunan 1989) and focus-on-form techniques (e.g., Nassaji 2000), as well as methods proposed in the Master-Apprentice model (Hinton 2001; Hinton et al. 2002). By outlining some of the complex factors taken into consideration, challenges faced, and sharing one university team's responses to community needs, goals, and perspectives, we aim to contribute to the growing scholarship on post-secondary proficiency-focused Indigenous language programming.

Efforts to increase numbers of proficient speakers and domains of language use are often referred to as *language revitalisation*. As we understand it, at its heart, language revitalisation is not only an educational or linguistic process, but rather, it is also a social process of creating social and cultural spaces in which community members are empowered to use their language in meaningful ways. Language revitalisation is, in addition, one facet of a larger enterprise, which Leonard (2011:141) calls *language reclamation* (see also Leonard 2012), defined as 'claiming – or reclaiming – the appropriate cultural context and sense of value that the language would likely have always had if not for colonization'. Language revitalisation is thus a process that goes beyond purely linguistic concerns: It is also embedded in cultural revival, and is a response to and a means of

overcoming histories of colonisation and oppression. This realisation highlights the foundation of the work we are doing alongside community partners – namely, that of decolonising education, and engaging as language warriors and allies in the journey to reviving Indigenous language use in communities (e.g., Battiste 2013; Brayboy 2005; Mellow 2015).

The team involved in developing the curriculum described here has four members: Dr. Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins is a settler-Canadian of Polish heritage and a Professor in Linguistics at the University of Victoria. Dr. Strang Burton is a linguist at the University of British Columbia and a multimedia developer for the Sto:lo Nation in British Columbia. His family is originally from Scotland. Dr. Onowa McIvor is Swampy Cree from Northern Manitoba, Canada and an Associate Professor in Indigenous Education at the University of Victoria. Aliki Marinakis has an M.A. in Linguistics and is of Greek and British descent. She has also been the Programme Coordinator of the Indigenous Language Revitalization Programs in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria for the past 10 years. All four authors are grateful visitors on Coast and Straits Salish territories and have been working for a decade or more in the field of Indigenous language education.

To provide context, we begin with a description of the Indigenous Language Revitalization Programs offered at the University of Victoria, and their guiding principles. We then turn, in Section 3, to outlining some of the challenges faced in the development and delivery of the programmes, focusing on language courses. Section 4 describes some of the properties of the *Teachers' Package* developed to support the language courses and language teachers. In section 5, we discuss some impacts of the project, and future directions.

2. Language revitalisation programmes at the University of Victoria

2.1. Structure of the programmes

There are five programmes (three undergraduate and two graduate) focused on language revitalisation at the University of Victoria (UVic), most involving partnerships between three academic units. All have been developed over the past 13 years through various processes of partnership and collaboration with Indigenous communities and language stakeholders primarily in British Columbia, but also including communities elsewhere throughout Canada. The undergraduate programmes in particular were created partly in response to the linguistic, political, and geographical realities faced by the 34 distinct languages (most with tiny speaker bases) of the First Nations of British Columbia (see Gessner et al. 2014); the

programme design has attempted to take these realities into account. Each UVic programme focuses on supporting different elements of the communities' language reclamation processes.

The **Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization (CALR)** was developed and is delivered in partnership between programme initiator the *Enow'kin Centre* (an Indigenous post-secondary institution in British Columbia), UVic's Department of Linguistics, and UVic's Division of Continuing Studies. It consists of roughly one year of full-time coursework, and focuses on providing contexts, frameworks, and understandings around language loss, maintenance, and recovery with the goal of equipping those working to revive their languages with strategies and knowledge about successful language revitalisation activities, locally and internationally. Alongside core non-language courses, there is one required language course, and two electives that can be satisfied with additional language learning or other courses. The Certificate is often offered in community-based contexts in a cohort model. The reasons for this are outlined more fully in Section 2.2.

The **Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization**, offered through Indigenous Education within the Faculty of Education, was developed alongside a **Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization (BEDILR)**. In addition, a **Graduate Certificate and a Master's Degree in Indigenous Language Revitalization** were created in partnership with the Department of Linguistics at UVic. The graduate programmes were designed to bring together language champions (many of whom were proficient speakers) from diverse language backgrounds and communities across Canada to build strengths in language advocacy and revitalisation strategies, Indigenous research methodologies, curriculum development, and language acquisition expertise. The Diploma, Bachelor of Education, and graduate programmes in Indigenous Language Revitalization are the result of the vision of UVic Professor Emerita Dr. Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams, and were created after extensive consultation, led by Dr. Williams, with various First Nations stakeholders across the province of British Columbia. The *Indigenous Language Teachers' Package* discussed here has been developed for the Diploma and Bachelor of Education programmes, and it is these that are the focus of this paper. Figure 1 outlines how the programmes are structured and connected to each other:

Figure 1: Original laddered design of the undergraduate language revitalisation programmes at the University of Victoria

Years 3 & 4 – Bachelor of Education in ILR
(4 language courses)

Year 2 – Diploma (5 language courses)

Year 1 – CALR (1-3 language courses)
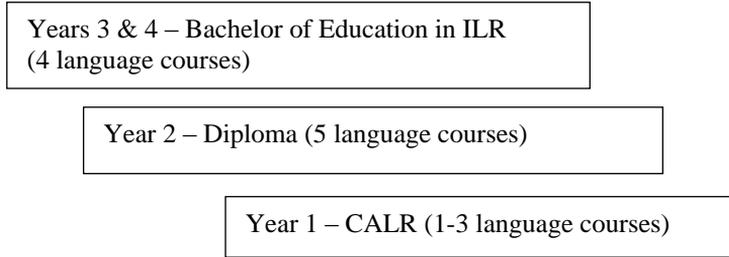
Although the Diploma and Bachelor of Education programmes meet the standard credentialing requirements within the university, they have been designed to be community-based and language-focused. As such, all courses are offered in a cohort model composed of members of the partnering language community. In addition, almost all the courses are offered in community, although when possible and desired by the community partner, the students come to the university to take certain courses so that they have the experience of being on campus.

The Diploma and Bachelor of Education target accelerated language learning in order to support community partners in creating new speakers. The Diploma was initially designed to ladder from the one-year Certificate with an additional year and with six of the 11 courses focused on language learning. The goal of the Diploma is to build proficiency and language competency in the target Indigenous language, as well as to academically prepare learners to carry on to the Bachelor of Education if they choose to do so. (See Section 5 for a recent re-design of the Diploma driven by community goals.) In turn, the Diploma ladders into the Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization, which contains the required courses and components (including practicum) to professionally certify teachers in the provincial system to teach across the curriculum. The ultimate goal of the Diploma and Bachelor of Education is to graduate certified teachers with enough language proficiency to teach in immersion schools.

2.2. Guiding principles for the Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization

The leading principle driving every element of the development and delivery of the community-based language programmes at UVic is the necessity to be responsive to the needs and directions expressed by First Nations community partners, and by doing so, to support the empowerment and self-determination of those communities. Self-empowerment and Indigenous control are vital to

successful language resurgence efforts. But, as pointed out by Walsh (2010:24), '[t]oo often language revitalisation attempts to focus excessively on educational institutions that are usually not under the control of the Indigenous community'. The partnership and community-based design/delivery of the Diploma and Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization at UVic attempt to ensure a central element of Indigenous control.

A comprehensive review of the undergraduate programme was undertaken in 2014; the evaluator, McGregor (2015:19) writes:

> The [Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization] was conceived as a pathway towards … transformation of Indigenous communities, one that would use educational tools and processes to extend new learning opportunities for Indigenous peoples, to renew and revitalise their languages, to rebuild or redesign educational systems that would no longer colonize and marginalize Indigenous peoples… The scope of these goals is significant and challenging, as conversations with the program staff and faculty made evident.

To support these goals, there are three guiding principles:

1. the laddered approach (where the Certificate ladders into the Diploma, which ladders into the Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization) allows opportunities for successful completion at various exit points;

2. community-based delivery ensures the languages are situated in the traditional territories to which they belong;

3. community-driven partnerships ensure programmes are only offered with language communities that seek to support their own language reclamation goals.

The laddered nature of the programmes provides opportunities for community members to partake in the parts of them that relate directly to their goals and academic levels. Not everyone in a particular community wants to be a certified teacher, for example, or has the academic background or disposition to best fulfill that role. The Certificate and Diploma offer students the opportunity to become language advocates and build their language proficiency and academic skills, without assuming they are destined to become language or school teachers.

Students have sometimes been unsuccessful in other academic contexts and/or are survivors of Canada's residential/day school system. Most are also parents and grandparents and have strong extended familial and cultural ties,

as well as financial and caregiving responsibilities in their communities. Designing the programmes so that they are community-based ensures that students who may not otherwise leave their communities to attend university are able to undertake post-secondary education and earn university credentials in a way that is personally and culturally relevant. Students are able to learn their language with their grandmother next door to call upon as a resource, or with their child in their arms to sing to. The language learning, then, can be contextual and culturally-situated, as has been shown more generally to be appropriate for education in Indigenous communities (see, e.g., discussion in Hermes 2007 and references therein). This is not to say that Indigenous language learning in urban areas should not be supported; here we are explaining the principles that led to the development of these programmes.

The partnership model, based on protocols and consultative decision-making with the community partners guarantees that every programme is adapted to a particular linguistic and cultural context. The community partners also have crucial responsibilities in its delivery, one of which is to support the recruitment and inclusion of local instructors, language experts, and language mentors.

The same guiding principles that shape the programmes also make them expensive and labour-intensive to deliver. Holding true to these guiding principles, and to achieving the results the community partners seek, creates great challenges about how to best support delivery. Additionally, integrating community priorities with provincial and institutional requisites can also be a challenge. For example, due to the large number of education courses required by the provincial teacher certification body, only four language courses remain in the last two years of the programme. Nevertheless, these language courses are still its anchor.

3. The *Indigenous Language Teachers' Package* project

In supporting the delivery of language classes with community partners, there were two challenges in particular that led us to develop an *Indigenous Language Teachers' Package*. First, as mentioned, the communities worked with to date were and are intent on producing new speakers who are able to communicate with each other in everyday contexts. Given that the programmes at UVic are post-secondary level and that new speakers are adult learners, the curriculum has needed to consider how adults learn languages, how languages are taught in a post-secondary setting, and what post-secondary expectations for language-learning might be. It must also, most importantly, encourage use language use in numerous communicative contexts so as to lead to increased student proficiency. Second, as these programmes are community-based, the course instructors are almost exclusively community members who are not trained as post-secondary academic instructors, and often they do not have experience teaching in a university setting or negotiating institutional policies or procedures. Such policies

and procedures vary from practical issues such as checking class lists online, to more academic issues such as deciding on and implementing assessments, and negotiating and navigating the differing community and university needs and expectations about the form language courses will take (Nock 2015). In addition, the instructors themselves have varying levels of teaching experience, and of language proficiency. We needed to balance our approach, therefore, to align with where instructors were in their teaching, rather than imposing an institutional framework for them to fit within, yet still providing them with the tools to function and teach within that institutional context.

Given the expressed needs and expectations of community partners and the instructors, we prepared a resource package that would support the course instructors in the various aspects of their teaching, and would help to support an increase in communicative language proficiency amongst the students. Due to the fact that the programmes needed to be designed to be offered in different communities and for different languages, an additional goal was to create a package that was specific enough to be truly useful but general enough to be adaptable for a variety of communities and languages. Similarly to the curriculum developed for several Aboriginal languages of New South Wales, we therefore assumed that the courses would be as flexible as possible, taught by Indigenous instructors or co-taught with a speaker, and that 'development of speaking and listening should be given priority' (Cipollone 2010:172).

3.1. Context of development

Community-based language instructors were the first to request and explain the additional support they needed as they taught their language at the post-secondary level, often for the first time. They sought clear curriculum and clear outcomes at each level (Years One-Four). They also wanted clearer guidelines for administrative procedures and assessments. One issue, for instance, involved 'course challenges'. Specifically, in all of the cohorts there have been students who are latent speakers of their language or have some level of proficiency; these students wanted to be able to bypass lower level language courses, but guidelines were needed to determine when and how to test proficiency levels.

As team members focused on language teaching, we wanted to encourage a shift from the patterns we saw of teaching through translation and grammar-focused lessons towards more communicative teaching methods. However, we also wanted to adjust teachers' comfort levels with a range of techniques proven to assist with language proficiency development, including immersion and task-based approaches. We were also faced with the vast diversity of languages that exist in British Columbia (and in Canada more generally). Those that we have worked with include SENĆOŦEN, Kwak'wala, Dene-Zahtie, Nuu-cha-nulth, ʔayʔaǰuθəm, and Tahltan; however, there are many

others. In addition, the students recruited for the community-based programmes came with varying degrees of language exposure, from absolute beginners (perhaps having grown up away from their territory), to latent or mildly proficient speakers, to others whose first language was their ancestral tongue. The context of instructors also had to be considered. Most Indigenous language speakers today are in high demand as they are a scarce resource and therefore a commodity in the job market. They often hold down multiple jobs – in the tribal schools, for their Nation, for the local school district and other organisations, well into their retirement years. Adding the university to their list of part-time jobs made capturing their time and attention to 'train' to be a university instructor difficult at best. Last, the community partners and language teachers often had justifiable intellectual and cultural property concerns based on past experiences that needed to be discussed and addressed in legal agreements between the tribal entities and the university.

3.2. Process of development

Once the demand for language curriculum became clear we began to consult with both current instructors and students in the UVic programmes. We strived to learn about what they needed and what they were hoping for, and then sought experienced language curriculum experts to work with. We knew the contexts; they knew the science of building effective communicative language learning curriculums. We examined the literature on proven and emerging effective communicative teaching practices, and thought about how other languages are taught at universities, particularly English as an additional language. Although the context is very different (mainly the potential for those students to be immersed in the language everywhere in their everyday lives), we borrowed and re-created the best of these resources, adapting them to Indigenous-specific contexts. We were also guided by our knowledge and experience of the Indigenous-specific Master-Apprentice Program (MAP) methods (Hinton 2001; Hinton et al. 2002), and the Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) model (Greymorning 2005), in addition to other immersion methods such as Total Physical Response (TPR: Asher 1977) that have been widely utilised in Indigenous language learning contexts such as within the ground-breaking immersion Chief Atahm School in British Columbia. (See McIvor 2015 for a review of adult language learning strategies in Indigenous contexts and common conditions needed for successful learning outcomes.)

4. The *Indigenous Language Teachers' Package*

The result of our extensive collaborative process was a set of teachers' resource materials for Years One through Four (100-400 level). In this section, we first

briefly describe the *Teachers' Package* and then discuss the guiding principles that inform it, and provide some examples that illustrate its content.

4.1. The *Package* components

The *Teachers' Package* consists of the four components: (1) a *Teachers' Guide*, (2) a *Guide to Feedback and Assessment*, (3) a *Guide to Class Activities*, and (4) four *Course Shells* – templates that are the primary resource particular to leveled courses. Each can be populated by language instructors with their particular language for their particular context. The content of the components is:

- *Teachers' Guide*: This contains practical advice for teachers instructing for the first time at the post-secondary level. It includes sections on how to create learning outcomes and lesson plans, work with Elder speakers, and understand students' learning styles. It also provides support around technical elements of working with an institution, such as how to submit grades, utilise resources, and encourage course evaluations. It introduces and contextualises how to assess language learning, such as how to make use of language journals, and overviews communicative language teaching strategies. It is the foundation for *Class Activity* guides as well as *Course Shells*.

- *Class Activities*: These are a collection of sample classroom activities related to the materials in the Scope and Sequence (see below) covered by the *Course Shells*. This guide provides explicit examples of activities that encourage communicative practice in the classroom.

- *Feedback and Assessment*: This is the smallest booklet, and gives an introduction to assessment, a collection of sample grading rubrics, grading guidelines, and ideas for providing feedback to students. These include example self-assessment tools as well as teacher-led assessment.

- *Course Shells*: These includes Scope and Sequence documents for the four levels of language courses, leading a potential instructor from themed unit to themed unit week-by-week, and suggesting outcomes, general communicative tasks associated with each outcome, and appropriate forms of feedback. They even suggest sample sets of phrases to use week-by-week. However, the samples are all in English, as it is the instructor or the speaker(s) who bring the language content and expertise. The themed units of the *Course Shells* link examples of in-class activities and ways of assessment to the booklets on *Class Activities* and *Feedback and*

Assessment. At each level, the Scope and Sequence samples included in each *Course Shell* build on the previous *Course Shell*. Although the Scope and Sequence curriculum contained in these documents is closest to what a standard university language curriculum for a non-Indigenous language might look like, even here the ideas are suggestive and generative, and are included as samples only, so that teachers can use them as they see fit.

4.2. Guiding principles for the *Teachers' Package*

As stated in the introduction, at its heart, language revitalisation involves creating social spaces in which community members can use their language in meaningful ways. In recognition of this, a guiding principle in developing educational resources has been 'Primacy of Meaningful Use'. That is, educational materials for language revitalisation, teaching vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation – indeed, even creating proficient or semi-proficient speakers – are not ends in themselves; rather they succeed only insofar as they support meaningful use in and by the community. Based on this principle, we developed and prioritised a combination of three approaches to working with languages at post-secondary level, ranked in order of importance (with the first being the highest priority, though not always the starting point of the courses):

1. Task-based learning materials, designed to fit with tasks that arise in community language spaces ('real usage')
2. Communicative tasks that support or ladder into task-based learning ('structured usage')
3. Communicative tasks combined with attention drawn to language features ('focus on form')

This combination of approaches is congruent with long-standing research into effective second language teaching in general (e.g., Nassaji 2000; Nassaji & Fotos 2010; Nunan 1989). The added challenge is that it must be adapted to the specific social spaces in which Indigenous languages can be taught and used. A series of examples in the following section illustrate the materials created to support the guiding principles with these three approaches in mind. The communicative language teaching approaches have been well known in applied linguistics for decades but have not necessarily been in practice in many language classrooms in Indigenous communities. In addition, the curriculum is not based in a specific language; as mentioned above, the materials have been designed for use by many different language communities.

4.3. Examples

The following sections give examples of three types of elements in the UVic package in order of priority: community task-based (real usage), communicative tasks (structured usage), and focus on form materials (drawing attention to communicative language forms already in use).

4.3.1. Task-based learning materials

The materials package includes samples of various task-based activities, largely based on ideas from the Master-Apprentice method (Hinton 2001; Hinton et al. 2002). Topics covered include (but are not limited to):

- Small talk
- Sharing a meal
- Greetings
- Household interactions
- Board games
- Classroom management

A more in-depth example is the following sample sequence for activities related to meals from the third-year level *Course Shell*. (Note that communities do not translate these phrases, but rather look for rough parallels in their languages relevant to their own cultural situation.)

> WEEK 1
> *I'd like to thank the cooks.*
> *I'd like to thank my hosts for allowing me to visit their traditional territory.*
> WEEK 2
> *I'd like to thank my family.*
> *We'd like to thank your family.*
> *I'm really glad to see everyone here.*
> *We'd like to thank you all for travelling here today.*
> WEEK 3
> *[insert fixed phrases for a common prayer before meals]*
> *Creator/Ancestors, we thank you for everything we receive here today. We thank you for our strength, and our good feelings. Amen/That is all/Thank-you, etc.*

4.3.2. Communicative tasks laddering into task-based learning

Primacy is given to authentic task-based learning, i.e., to tasks that use 'any material which has not been specifically produced for the purpose of language teaching' (Nunan 1989:54; see also Little, Devitt & Singleton 1989:23 and Martínez & Peñamaría 2008:57); however, the materials created also include more structured communicative tasks. For this type of material, students are introduced to a certain structure and form through practice and examples (though not generally explicit grammatical instruction), and then are given tasks that require them to use those forms to communicate in a directed fashion. The structures of importance vary from language to language, but common structures are related to speech acts such as giving commands, asking permission, or expressing possessive relations.

The following sample suggested sequence from the fourth year course demonstrates this type of material. For this task, students first practice with structures and phrases related to directions; then, they participate in structured tasks, where they must communicate information giving each other directions.

> WEEK 1
>
> *Do you know a good place to dipnet?*
>
> *Yeah, I know a great place near Yale.*
>
> *You take Highway 1 up past Hope, then follow the old road for a couple of miles.*
>
> WEEK 2
>
> *Do you know a good place for gill-netting/fishing with a line?*
>
> *Yeah, the best place is along the Chilliwack River.*
>
> *You know the bridge along Highway 1?*
>
> *Just walk down to the river from there.*

4.3.3. Focus on form materials supporting communicative practice

The *Teachers' Package* generally avoids any explicit teaching of grammar, but does follow in limited part the 'focus on form' approach (Nassaji 2000) where certain formal properties of communicative tasks are highlighted so that students' attention is drawn to them. Discussion of the highlighted features may not go beyond drawing attention to these language features at this point.

Again, the areas for this kind of 'focus on form' vary from language to language, but examples include how to mark possessive on words. Below is a sample activity that illustrates this approach for drawing limited attention to the tense system. It will not work exactly parallel in all languages, but fits with the tense system of many of the languages our programme has involved. The sample includes both instructions for the activity itself, as well as instructions on how to set up and close it.

Figure 2: Sample activity – In-class group exercise

In-Class Group Exercise **Sentence Structure Puzzles**			
ENTIRE CLASS TOGETHER			
The teacher is going to read a series of sentences, and the students will try and figure out when the action takes place. Students will mark their guesses on the timelines by putting an X under NOW, or towards the future or past sides.			
[Substitute words in your language here. You probably do NOT want to show the English. That is just for your reference here]	PST	NOW	FUT
Ilh kw'atestes te swiyeqe the slhali. [The man looked at the woman]		———————	
Kw'atsetescha te swiyeqe the slhali. [The man is going to look at the woman]		———————	
Kw'okw'etsetes te swiyeqe the slhali. [The man is looking at the woman]		———————	
Halem tsel la te Lhq'alets. [I'm going to Vancouver]		———————	
Tsel lam la te Lhq'alets. [I went to Vancouver]		———————	
Yalh kw'els e lam te Lhq'alets. [I just went to Vancouver]		———————	
Halemtsel cha la te Lhq'alets. [I'm going to go to Vancouver]		———————	

Time: 5-10 mins.

Before the Task

- Get the class motivated to talk about the topic: What are some situations where it is important to distinguish the past from the future? What are some situations where it is important to distinguish an action going on now from one in the past?

- Review the vocabulary to be used in this exercise, and introduce any vocabulary items that are new. Try to keep it down to no more than three new items.

- You can repeatedly return to this task, adapting it and changing the questions and response-types. For more advanced classes, introduce more complex vocabulary and patterns (see ideas on next page).

During the Task

- Say each sentence orally to the students, as they mark the time of the event on the timeline.

- Help the students to perform the task if necessary, and give feedback to their responses.

After the Task

- Review the answers with the students, and ask e.g. for a show of hands on how many gave each answer.

- Give a mini-lesson noting common errors that learners make with these forms.

   The example above is designed in a way that will help the students to become familiar with past versus present versus future events. This particular structural distinction may or may not be relevant for your language, so choose the structures that are important and challenging in your language.

The full *Teachers' Package* consists of a variety of materials, in a suggested sequence, similar to these examples.

5. Where are we now? Practical outcomes

As illustrated above, the design of the *Teachers' Package* with its attention to curriculum has led to production of a guide for instructors that can inform their teaching practice and strategies. The *Package* provides instructors with resources, ideas, and, if they so desire, structures to follow. The curriculum

Package assumes that the language instructors (or the speakers with whom the instructor is working) are the experts in their language. The language content is 'generative' (Ball & Pence 1999) rather than prescriptive, and so the expertise of the instructor and speakers is required in order for the course shells to be 'filled in' and taught. This assumption of expertise also informs how the materials have been introduced and then adopted by the instructors, as discussed below.

Following the completion of the *Teachers' Package* project, we were eager to deliver the curriculum to the community-based instructors and to determine whether the curriculum itself is effective. The short answer, arrived at from conversations with six instructors and from classroom observations, is that effectiveness depends on the instructor and how the elements of the *Package* are taken up. Although more formal surveys, interviews, and observations would be necessary in order to fully assess the impact of the *Package* across the programmes, from initial instructor feedback we determine that it has the *potential* to be very effective. In some cases, instructors who have taught their language before have continued to teach in the ways they are most comfortable with. Their teaching 'comfort zone' is not necessarily based in communicative practice or following the principles of this curriculum. In these latter circumstances, the guides were not as effective as hoped. Other instructors, however, not as experienced in their own methods, or more open to new approaches, or more importantly, who have the time and opportunity to engage fully with the *Teachers' Package*, have taken up the curriculum more enthusiastically. Nevertheless, if a different question were asked, namely, 'Was producing the *Teachers' Package* a useful exercise?', the response would be an unequivocal 'yes' from the curriculum team. In particular, the curriculum project provided useful resources, and direction in further curriculum development and programme changes.

Initially, our practice was to provide the curriculum packages to language instructors, and encourage use of them in ways that are helpful to them. However, it is clear that meaningful use of the *Course Shells* requires supported engagement in a one-on-one face-to-face interaction with the language teacher(s), where lesson plans can be explained effectively and attached to outcomes and activities. Where the *Teachers' Package* has been most successful is as a jumping off point for instructors – a source of ideas, and outcomes to meet – and as a reference point for programme administrators, since the guides provide useful examples and concrete activities, outcomes, examples of rubrics/assessment, and lesson planning. The most utilised element of the *Teachers' Package*, thus far, has been the *Activities* guide, which provides hands-on examples of accessible classroom language learning activities. Except in the case of one instructor, the Scope and Sequence documents, or the *Course Shells*, have not been taken up as hoped, so far. However, in the most recent programme launch (January 2016) instructors commented on their usefulness, so perhaps there is a shift on the

horizon. For example, a syllabus and course weekly plan for the Tahltan language indicate that one instructor is using the 100-level *Course Shell* as a course template in the way it was intended. In any case, what it is possible to say is that there has been the most success when a programme administrator or coordinator can sit with an instructor and engage in the *Teachers' Package*, or when an instructor seeks guidance and resources. Instructors who have worked with the administrator or coordinator more often do begin to make use of the *Course Shells* as well as the guides. However, due to lack of financial resources and time, this does not happen in every partnership.

In an attempt to support the language instructors further, over the last few years we designed and hosted three two-day *Instructor Workshops* where community language instructors were invited to come to UVic and participate in workshops put on by skilled practitioners of language teaching and learning, such as applied linguistics faculty members. Language instructors who were teaching in the programmes during the time the curriculum was being built were consulted and engaged in the development of the *Teachers' Package* during the first of these workshops. During the second and third gatherings we included workshops that illustrated and exemplified ways of utilising the curriculum.
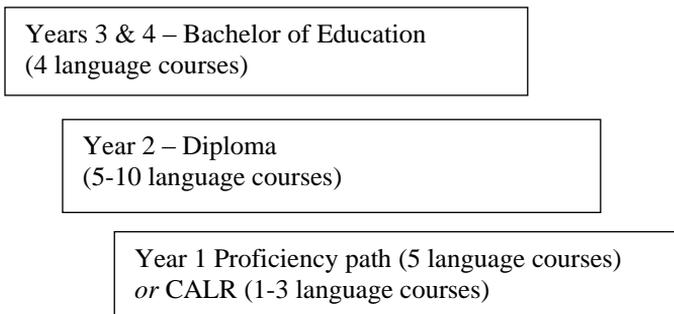
Because we have not had the resources to provide language instructors with more extensive modeling and practice in the techniques illustrated in the *Teachers' Package*, and because we have not been able to conduct systematic surveys, we are not able to explain with any certainty the reasons for the reception and use of the *Package*. It is possible that we are assuming too much understanding of the teaching/learning process on the part of the instructors; it is possible that the curriculum is too general and thus is difficult to adapt to specific cultural and linguistic environments. Unquestionably it would be useful to provide more sustained support and training in the use of the *Teachers' Package* in the future.

Programming and approaches that support community language revitalisation and reclamation cannot be stagnant. Just as languages themselves are not static, we continue to learn and adapt our approaches accordingly. Next steps need to include building even clearer and more concise learning outcomes for each course. Related to this will be development of a two-page 'quick' reference sheet indicating the concrete learning outcomes, informed by benchmarks and 'can do statements' from an adult language learning assessment tool developed by a research team coordinated through UVic (Jacobs & McIvor 2015) which we hope will be a useful guide for the instructors. Again, these would provide a place to start and a clear understanding of the goals of the course. Time is always going to be an issue in language revitalisation. The language instructors are constantly time-pressed because they are often oversubscribed and pulled in many directions.

The development of the *Teachers' Package* did not benefit the language instructors to the extent hoped within the first realisation of the Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization, but it is hoped that they will further benefit and inform instructors in current and upcoming partnerships. The first two student cohorts of the Bachelor course graduated in 2015. Since beginning the delivery of the first two cohorts in 2010, students and community partners have consistently said 'we need more language'. Therefore, in order to continue to be strong post-secondary allies, and to continue to be responsive to community needs and perspectives, UVic needed to revisit and adjust programming to better meet the community goal of focusing on building proficiency in language.

As a result, in 2014-15, the Diploma programme was reshaped to allow for communities to choose either a proficiency-building path that included five language-learning courses and four other courses designed to support the language-learning journey, or a Year One Certificate that is especially focused on learning *about* language revitalisation contexts and successful practices. This provides options in Year One for communities with different goals.

Figure 3: The laddering of the redesigned undergraduate language revitalisation programmes at the University of Victoria (effective 2015)

> Years 3 & 4 – Bachelor of Education
> (4 language courses)

> Year 2 – Diploma
> (5-10 language courses)

> Year 1 Proficiency path (5 language courses)
> *or* CALR (1-3 language courses)

At the initial request of an Elder who had taught his language in one of the partnership programmes for years, one of the additional language learning courses within this new path of the Diploma was developed specifically to support language learning. While providing feedback about the *Course Shells*, he identified that his students needed to understand and establish their own learning path in order to set themselves up for a successful language-learning journey. The wisdom this Elder speaker shared refers to the need for self-empowerment in language learning and reclamation, and as the introduction of this volume discusses, ways to make space for this within institutional frameworks. The new course developed in response to the Elder-instructor's request is called *Learning to Learn: Supporting Indigenous Language Learning*. Further consultation with the language instructors and communities

has led to a much more focused delivery of language teaching in the Mentor/Master-Apprentice approach (Hinton 2001; Hinton et al. 2002), which helps to assist with increasing students' hours of exposure to the language as well as with their own level of personal responsibility for learning. This in turn led to the current delivery configuration in the first term of Year One in the new pathway in the Diploma, whereby a mentorship language course is offered and supported by *Learning to Learn*. This configuration was newly piloted in January 2015, and has thus far been more successful in reaching the language proficiency goals at that level than was seen in the previous two partnerships. The next programme, which began in the autumn of 2015, followed this model, and the team of local instructors has been eager to engage in this communicative approach as well. (See also McGregor, McIvor & Rosborough 2016 for a rich description of this process-in-action in the communities UVic has worked with.)

As in all cases, the instructors retain the autonomy to choose whether or not they use the *Teachers' Package* resources, or which elements, or guides or shells they will use. Having a *Teachers' Package* to be used how and if teachers wish is a stronger position for the UVic programmes than to have no language curriculum to offer. Like all courses, the course syllabi have to be submitted to and approved by the chair of department; however, whether or not this *Package* is used in the language courses, university accreditation is given for the courses.

There is more to do to improve the practical delivery of the programmes, however, including further adaptation to ensure that the programmes remain responsive and meaningful, but the process of this curriculum development helped us to provide resources to the instructors, and to identify new goals along the way.

6. Conclusions

The *Teachers' Package* project described in this paper emerged from an identified need and emergent and explicit goals in Indigenous communities, particularly within British Columbia, for a strong focus on building language proficiency. It developed within a context in which post-secondary language courses are seen as one part of a movement towards building learner proficiency. It arose from the hope that universities can be strong allies and responsive partners to the communities with whom they work. This project also resulted from the hope that universities can find ways to create more effective language teaching and learning environments that push the boundaries of post-secondary institutional frameworks.

The design of the curriculum has attempted to dethrone the assumption that institutions hold all the linguistic and cultural expertise, while recognising that they can provide some useful frameworks, certifications, and knowledge.

Language revitalisation and reclamation is necessarily a community undertaking. Institutions can share tools to support these efforts through effective partnership, and by taking the lead from community partners and language teachers. The need for language education to be based on effective partnership and to be responsive to Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning is called for by community members not only in British Columbia, where we work, but in many other Indigenous contexts globally (see, e.g., Hobson et al. 2010 for some similar insights from re-awakening languages in Australia).

Institutions can demonstrate respectful partnering by offering programmes in community, and, in the specific case of language revitalisation, by promoting and providing education in community-based, communicative language teaching. We have illustrated one example of this through description of the creation of *Course Shell* templates and non-language specific *Teachers' Guides*. Through creating these resources we hoped to highlight the existence and importance of community-based work in which universities are sometimes awarded the privilege of being a part and which, as one reviewer pointed out, they have the political power and authority to legitimise. The *Teachers' Package* was intended to empower Indigenous partners, to take the educational framework and 'fill' it in with knowledge from language experts and community members in their own communities. Each course therefore becomes a linguistic and cultural resource created by and belonging to that particular language community, with no obligation to share the content back to the institution. Community partners and language instructors therefore maintain control, even within the overt structures of the educational institution. Secondarily, by promoting and encouraging communicative-based teaching within communities, we are supporting a move away from translation and exclusively grammar-based teaching methods towards a necessary shift to a focus that includes more applied linguistics teaching methods for Indigenous language proficiency building. This also creates space for community language instructors to teach university courses in ways that are more culturally congruent.

We may ask: so what? Why does this matter? What contribution is this kind of endeavour making? We hope that by sharing the call we received from communities, and our collaborative response, others may benefit from what we have learned. We hope that others will add to, and include their stories from around the world related to this movement towards creating new language speakers and how we can get there. It is through sharing success stories, as well as not-so-successful stories, that we can all support and learn from one another. In doing so we can slow and reverse some of the effects of colonisation by settlers whose languages now dominate the landscapes of Canada. Indigenous languages were once the only ones heard on these lands, and Canada is a stronger nation with Indigenous languages and cultures thriving for the benefit of all. The decline of Indigenous language use took a

targeted nationwide effort and only a shared effort will repair the damage done. We hope that the projects and partnerships we have shared, and others like them, can be part of this reclamation and restoration work for a better future for all who live within Canada.

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