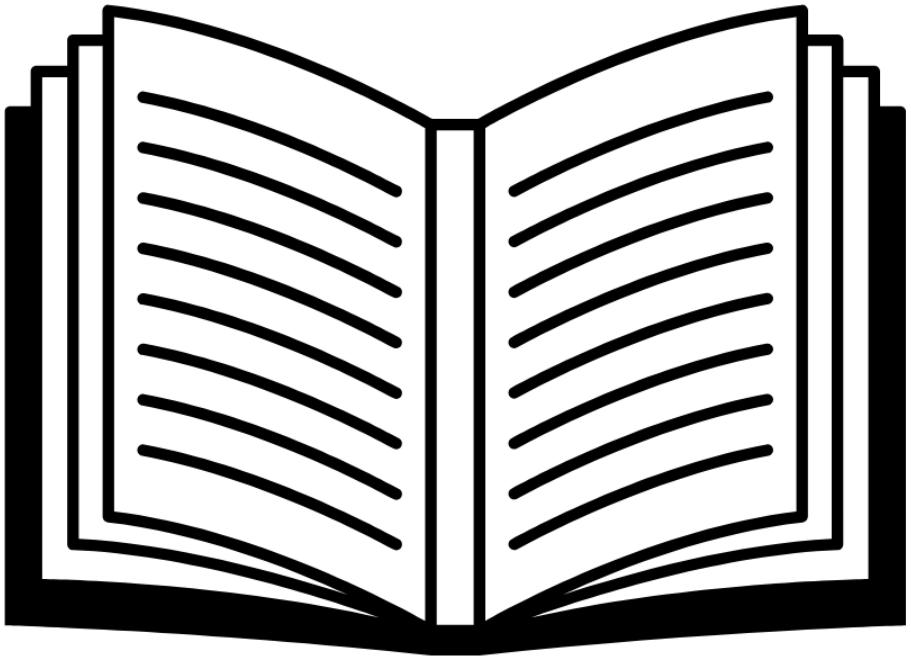
Beyond the Intangible:
Literature and Endangered Language Revitalisation



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Abstract

This thesis explores the revitalisation of endangered languages through literary practices, including translation, children's literature, publishing, festivals, and literary prizes. It examines how languages become endangered and highlights the importance of early intervention. Through case studies of literary translation projects, the thesis argues that accessible translation databases and youth-oriented, evolving literary language are crucial for effective revitalisation, alongside a pluricentric approach to standardisation. The role of children's literature in intergenerational transmission is emphasised, identifying the availability of age-appropriate materials, dialogic book sharing, and parental engagement as key strategies. The thesis also assesses the contributions of publishing houses, literary festivals, and prizes, noting their potential to both support and hinder revitalisation. Finally, it considers innovative approaches such as large language models and multimodal storytelling, proposing a framework of literary strategies to support endangered language revitalisation.

Keywords: Endangered languages, Language revitalisation, Literature

Introduction

Of the approximately 6000 languages that exist, only 600 can be considered safe from extinction in this century (Krauss 1992, 7). The rest are considered either ‘endangered’ or ‘moribund’. Krauss predicts that any language with fewer than 100,000 speakers is at great risk of extinction –having no known living speakers. This devastates those communities whose languages are lost. Almost 40 percent of learners worldwide does not have access to education in the language they fluently speak and understand (Walter and Benson 2015, 300), a figure which rises to over 90 percent in some countries (World Bank 2021, 9), which further disadvantages already vulnerable communities. Language death also has a great emotional impact on the communities that are affected: Gibson et al. (2021) found that higher levels of community language use were linked to 26 percent lower suicide rates in remote/rural areas and 34 percent lower suicide rates in communities where discrimination was more prevalent. With language death also comes a loss of scientific knowledge and opportunity for research in linguistics and anthropology, as well as a loss of cultural traditions, knowledge and values. The project of revitalising endangered languages is therefore a vast, yet urgent one.

The term ‘endangered language’ is difficult to define. A language is reclassified from endangered to moribund when it is no longer being learned as a mother tongue by children; by this point, a language is doomed to extinction unless it is successfully revitalised, which is unlikely (4). Krauss’s 2007 framework for the degrees of language endangerment adds more distinct categories besides safe and extinct: stable, instable/eroded, definitively endangered, severely endangered and critically endangered (1). These are similar to UNESCO’s degrees of endangerment regarding intergenerational language transmission, the most widely used metric for assessing a language's vitality: safe, stable yet threatened, unsafe, definitively endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered and extinct (UNESCO 2003, 7-8). UNESCO does not offer an exact number of speakers for each category and defines endangered languages in

their *Atlas of the world's languages in danger* (Moseley 2010) as: "a language is endangered if it is not being passed on to younger generations" (10). This usually happens to languages with a smaller amount of speakers, but even languages with an amount of speakers greater than 100,000 can become endangered, if there is, for example, forced assimilation. Therefore, a more exact definition of the term 'endangered language' simply does not exist. Furthermore, a language can be considered endangered in one place and 'safe' in another, which is the case of Basque, that is more endangered in France than in Spain. There are also languages marked as 'vulnerable' rather than endangered. These are languages that are "not immediately endangered but do not have a status equal to the dominant and majority languages" (Salminen 2010, 32). In conclusion, the term 'endangered language' cannot be clearly defined, and as such this thesis will not make any attempt to attach a specific number of speakers to the definition and will only apply the term to languages which are considered to be between 'unsafe' and 'critically endangered' by UNESCO's standards.

Moreover, the term 'language' itself is difficult to define, as the line between a language and a dialect is heavily debated. As this thesis will only discuss endangered languages and exclude dialects, it will use the ISO 639-3 standard. The ISO 639 criteria for a language as opposed to a dialect are the following:

a. "Two related language varieties are normally considered to belong to the same individual language if speakers of each language variety have inherent understanding of the other language variety at a functional level […]
b. Where spoken intelligibility between language varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central language variety that both speaker communities understand is a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered language varieties of the same individual language.

c. Where there is enough intelligibility between language varieties to enable communication, they can nevertheless be treated as different individual languages when they have long-standing, distinctly named ethnolinguistic identities coupled with established linguistic normalization and literatures that are distinct." (ISO 2023, 21)

This thesis will also make a distinction between language revitalisation and language preservation. Language revitalisation, the focus of this thesis, has the goal of restoring or strengthening a language in "regions where it prevailed before being displaced by other, more powerful or prestigious languages" (Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina 2020, 897). Language preservation, however, aims to preserve and document a language, for example its linguistic features, rather than to necessarily increase its usage.

A great variety of revitalisation strategies have already been attempted, which differ in effectiveness by a considerable amount. For example, immersion schools have shown to be especially effective when community members and parents control the curriculum and its execution (McIvor and McCarty 2017). Additionally, Hinton (2018) mentions that the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program that she co-developed, as well as similar programmes, are able to significantly increase proficiency in adult speakers through daily conventional use. Overall, community-led approached to revitalisation have proven to be very effective in increasing language use, preserving cultural heritage and improving education, but a lack of funding and institutional support often make these difficult to implement (Watimelu 2024). The effect of fictional literature in revitalisation is one that has not been well studied yet, however. Written literature can be an effective method in language revitalisation, because it is not only capable of increasing literacy in an endangered language community, but it can also communicate cultural values and traditions, mythology and shared heritage. It can therefore strengthen cultural identity and pride, which is especially relevant in communities where an

endangered language is seen as inferior to the dominant language. It also offers children a way to engage with their mother tongue outside of an educational setting, and more 'prestigious' novels offer the chance to increase a language's social status, which will be elaborated on further below. Language is an especially vulnerable example of cultural heritage, because it is intangible and can disappear in a generation. Literature is a way for language to become tangible heritage that lasts. In short, literature is a tangible vessel for language as intangible cultural heritage. As of 2023, language was still rarely included in state-sponsored measures for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (Braber and Howard 2023, 146). This is in part because language is seen as a 'vehicle' of intangible cultural heritage, rather than heritage itself. UNESCO initially did not include language in their list of intangible cultural heritage. However, according to Smeets (2004), language perfectly fits the definition. He mentions that UNESCO's 2003 definition of intangible cultural heritage that is to be safeguarded is "transmitted from generation to generation, that it is constantly re-created and that it provides groups and communities with a sense of identity and continuity" (156). More recently, UNESCO has amended their definition and now states, as quoted by Sarma (2015): "Language is not just a means of communication but it also represents the rich fabric of cultural expressions. It carries an individual's or a community's identity and mediates value systems, social codes, world-views and the sense of belonging" (62). Traditionally, language revitalisation grew out of (socio)linguistics, not cultural heritage studies. This thesis shifts the focus from language as a system to language as social practice.

Through qualitative analyses, this thesis will examine several language revitalisation projects that have utilised fictional literature as a way to prevent language death. These projects will include literature festivals, literature used in school curricula, surveys about literature conducted in endangered language communities, publishers that focus on endangered languages, literary translation and literary prizes. It will then be determined what methods and

strategies these projects have used and how effective they are in accomplishing language revitalisation, through a variety of methods based on the nature of each project. Some projects already include a pre-post comparison in their results, which can be used to determine which factors contributed to either positive or negative results, based on interdisciplinary theory from scholars namely in socio-linguistics, education, literary studies and anthropology. For others, a comparative analysis with similar already completed projects will be conducted. From this, a framework will be created in the form of a detailed diagram, with criteria pertaining factors – such as target demographic and format– for the effective revitalisation of languages through fictional literature. The creation of a framework that is universally applicable to all endangered languages will most likely not be possible due to limitations and challenges such as differing national policies regarding language revitalisation and the intentional eradication of certain languages. However, a series of strategies will be devised that can be applied on a case by case basis. Therefore, the primary goal of this thesis is to answer the question: “What strategies can be found in projects that have used fictional literature as a method of language revitalisation and how can these strategies be applied effectively beyond these specific projects?”

Theoretical framework

Linguist David Crystal has written about language death and endangerment extensively, for example in his book *Language Death* (2000). In this book, he claims that "languages need communities in order to live" (154). Crystal empathises that a language revitalisation project can only work if the community is directly involved with it, rather than if a project is solely organised by those outside of the community. He provides a list of 19 steps –in no particular order– that must be taken by a team of both community members and specialists in order to successfully revitalise a language. Some of these strategies (loosely) relate to literature, namely the standardisation of the written language and a publicly usable alphabet, the publishing of stories, poems and articles, the increase in written language use, and the increase of the language's presence in schools. These are only a few of the 19 steps, so it is important to note that –though it plays a big part in revitalisation– the introduction or stimulation of fictional literature cannot be the only revitalisation method that is employed. Revitalisation attempts through literature do not, for example, include key strategies such as reinforcing the use of the language in domestic settings, expanding the use of the spoken language in the public domain, and getting the language recognised as an official regional language. Crystal has furthermore developed six core factors in language revitalisation, namely:

1. An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their prestige within the dominant community. (130)
2. An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their wealth relative to the dominant community. (132)
3. An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their legitimate power in the eyes of the dominant community. (133)
4. An endangered language will progress if its speakers have a strong presence in the educational system. (136)
5. An endangered language will progress if its speakers can write their language down. (138)
6. An endangered language will progress if its speakers can make use of electronic technology. (141)

Crystal explains that linguists and others from outside the language community who participate in revitalisation projects should not attempt to 'take ownership' of a language or texts: "Linguists are not the ones to instil a sense of enthusiasm within a community on behalf of a

language; nor are they able to function as teachers of culture, nor – in most cases – as fluent teachers of the endangered language" (159). It is therefore essential that revitalisation efforts that utilise fictional literature stimulate community participation, in the form of creative writing in this case. Crystal therefore suggests that literature used in revitalisation should always be written by people from within the community, even when commissioned by those outside it, and the endangered language community must have influence in the project itself. However, this can be difficult to realise if the community itself resists attempts at revitalisation, for example if the language's *prestige* within the dominant community is low, causing members of the community to feel as if their language is not worth saving. While Crystal emphasises that the revitalisation specialists must work in service of the community, not in place of it, this could therefore be detrimental to the project, if the issues of social status and prestige are not addressed first.

Prestige is a necessary factor in language revitalisation. Crystal, among other linguists, indicates that increasing the social prestige of a language within the dominant community will aid in language revitalisation: "[…] for without prestige, and the power which this brings, no language movement can succeed" (101). Speakers of an endangered language may feel shame associated with the social status their language carries and as a result stop teaching it to the newer generations and even resist revitalisation projects. This is in part because high-prestige languages are more often linked to technological advances –as opposed to indigenous languages, for example, that are associated with harmful stereotypes of being "'antiquated' or incompatible with modern technology" (Pine and Turin 2017, 9). Additionally, learning a low-prestige language is often considered to not be worth the effort in a society with a dominant language that has much higher prestige (Bergier and Olko 2016, 319). Prestige of a minority language within a dominant community can also increase government support for the revitalisation of a language. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) mention that governmental policies

are more likely to promote languages with more prestige and widespread use and discourage the use of the local language (123). Crystal (2000) therefore mentions that "a strong literary tradition can be a source of great prestige" (113). This is one of the reasons why involving a literary approach in language revitalisation is very beneficial.

Fishman (1991) is another key figure in the field of language revitalisation, though he refers to it as 'reversing language shift' (RLS). Fishman places the most emphasis on intergenerational transmission and usage of the endangered language in both the home and in public domains. Like Crystal, Fishman highlights the importance of community and posits that RLS cannot be successful without a high level of community involvement. While Fishman shares Crystal's view that the language's presence in education (schools) is essential for effective revitalisation, Fishman adds that if 'mainstream' schools do not maintain a close relationship to parents of children in the community, it can have a negative effect on RLS efforts. Parents in the community should therefore be involved in developing the curriculum. When this is linked to literature, it means that simply adding new literature to the school curriculum will not be inherently successful in promoting intergenerational acquisition and therefore, revitalisation. Fishman discusses an oral history project by Leisy Thornton Wyman (1997) called the Kipnuk Language and Culture Preservation Project, in which a book of elders' narratives was created in the Yup'ik language in Alaska. The main goals of this project were to enhance intergenerational transmission and to standardise the language. To realise these goals, the decision was made to write in two different writing systems: the one used mainly by elders and a phonetic one used in schools. Difficult words were kept undefined in the text so that young people would feel encouraged to ask elders about them, strengthening the influence of community in intergenerational transmission (21). Reinforcing intergenerational transmission through a strong community identity is thus the first step to RLS. However, the order in which RLS/revitalisation should happen is an aspect that Fishman and Crystal disagree on. Fishman

argues that strengthening intergenerational transmission must come first, then standardisation, with institutional support coming last, while Crystal assigns no order to his strategies, as mentioned above.

Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) is introduced in *Reversing Language Shift* (1991) and is used as an evaluative framework consisting of eight stages that serve to evaluate minimal to severe disruption in the intergenerational transmission of a language. Fishman designed it to both gauge how far languages had shifted from being passed down generationally, and to direct efforts at language revitalisation. He insists that revitalisation must start with a 'diagnosis' of where on the GIDS a language lies, indicating the functions the language still has and which generations speak it. A language which has very little intergenerational transmission, for example, has fewer benefits from an increase in prestige. Languages in stage 6 are spoken intergenerationally, usually only within a family context. This is considered the most crucial stage in the GIDS and the main focus of revitalisation. If this stage is lost, the language can no longer be sustained through formal education, status or media. If this happens, revitalisation efforts must mainly focus on regaining intergenerational transmission before attempting to, for example, raise prestige for the language.

Overall, there is not much theory specifically on the use of fictional literature as a tool in the revitalisation of endangered languages, even though it is oftentimes one of the first steps revitalisation programmes take. This is why the theoretical framework for this thesis consists mostly of Crystal's and Fishman's theory on language endangerment and revitalisation strategies in general.

Literature review

As mentioned above, there is very little research directly linking fictional literature to language revitalisation and no academic literature discussing the specific strategies of language revitalisation through fictional literature. There is, however, literature on individual literary projects that contribute to revitalisation, which will be discussed in more depth in this thesis. The main theme discussed in academic literature is literary translation, with few studies on children's literature and literary activities such as festivals and prizes.

Viinikka-Kallinen's (2019) article analyses Alf Nilsen-Børsskog's novel series Elämän jatko as a turning point in the use of the endangered Kven language in literary fiction. Written entirely in Kven, the novels demonstrate the language's expressive range and literary viability at a time when it was rarely used in extended written form. Viinikka-Kallinen shows how the works contribute to language standardisation and teaching, and how this sustained fictional use of Kven has played a central role in strengthening the language's status and supporting the linguistic and cultural emancipation of the Kven community.

There are a few articles that discuss literary translation in relation to language revitalisation. Iso-Ahola (2017) investigates how translators of fictional literature contributed to the revitalisation of the endangered Karelian language between 1980 and 2014. It shows that, despite limited financial reward, lack of linguistic models, and the absence of a monolingual community, translators played a key role in developing written Karelian and its literature, making literary translation an important tool in language revitalisation. Belmar (2017) uses Basque as a case study to examine the role of literary translation in minority languages' cultural systems and its contribution to language revitalisation. The author discusses the main issues that arise when using literary translation in revitalisation, including language standardisation and planning, text selection, target audiences, diglossia and bilingualism, and the disjunction between original writing and translations. Finally, Garbacz (2024) examines Övdalian

revitalisation with a particular focus on literary production and translation, highlighting how choices of morphological form shape the process. The study shows that most authors and translators adopt a highly traditional, morphologically conservative variety of Övdalian that differs a lot from the contemporary spoken variety of the language, despite significant change in the case system over the past century. Garbacz argues that this preference raises critical questions about whether the revitalisation is driven by community practices and top-down promotion of an idealised, archaic literary standard.

Despite intergenerational transmission being a much-discussed aspect of language revitalisation, there is hardly any research on the link between intergenerational transmission and (children's) literature. Zamaraeva, Sergeeva and Fil'ko (2018) examine methods used to preserve the Evenk language suggested by both experts and native speakers, through a survey on inhabitants of the Evenk Municipal District of the Krasnoyarsk Krai. The study focuses on developing educational and fictional literature in Evenk. Surveys and expert interviews highlight recommended measures for language revitalisation, emphasising that the promotion of Evenk fiction and learning resources can support the preservation of the community's unique cultural heritage.

Finally, using Sámi literature as a case study, Broomans (2025) explores the function of literary prizes in the recognition and circulation of minority literatures. After outlining the Sámi as an indigenous minority group and introducing literary prize theory and cultural transfer, the study situates Sámi literature within more general issues of minority literature and authorship. It then surveys Sámi-specific, national, and Nordic literary prizes and provides a comparative analysis of awards received or nominations made by Sámi writers. The article concludes by assessing how literary prizes contribute to the overall recognition and revitalisation of Sámi literature.

1. Early intervention and why languages become endangered

In order to successfully revitalise an endangered language, it is important to know why a language goes extinct in the first place. There are many reasons for language endangerment. Historically, colonisation has played a major role in forcefully endangering languages. Some examples of this are the residential school systems in North America, the violent displacement of indigenous populations causing community loss, and the suppression and even prohibition of minority languages. While this still happens in several parts of the world, language endangerment in recent times mainly happens due to a combination of social, political, economic and cultural pressures from the wider society a minority language community is based in. Speakers may gradually stop using their native language in favour of a more powerful or widely used one in order to integrate into the majority culture and increase their social status, or to get better access to jobs (Jan et al. 2024). Parents may choose to raise their children in the dominant language because they believe it will help them be more successful. Another factor for language loss is the increasing engagement with English-language media and the internet. A study on usage patterns of the Arabic language in international schools found that many students in showed a strong preference for American cinema and English-language content over media in their native language (Alblaihi's 2024, 222). Besides globalisation, urbanisation and migration are shown to have a significant impact on the intergenerational transmission of endangered languages. An article by Efimov, Lapteva and Mikhailova (2015) shows that Sakha people living in towns are more likely to adopt the dominant language, Russian, than Sakha villagers, due to their disconnect from traditional linguistic communities. Furthermore, insufficient institutional support plays a big role in language endangerment, especially the lack of representation of minority languages in formal education and the rise of bilingual education that prioritises the dominant language (Bromham et al. 2022; Alblaihi 2024). Due to the many different factors causing language endangerment, early intervention is the best strategy for

revitalisation. Languages that do not reach stage 6 of the GIDS have a higher likelihood of responding positively to revitalisation programmes.

That being said, the most successful documented language revival so far has been Hebrew, which was considered a dead language but is now spoken –in a different form called Modern Hebrew or Israeli Hebrew– by over ten million people. It was a revival, not a revitalisation, but it can still be used as an example of the methods used to save a language from extinction. Part of the reason why the revival of Hebrew was so successful is due to the extensive documentation of the language in literature (for example, the Hebrew Bible and the Mishnah), and the accessibility of those works and the prestige of the language (Zuckermann and Walsh 2011, 119) thanks to its religious status. Zuckermann and Walsh say the following about language revitalisation and revival:

> The three principles of linguistic revival and survival are:
> 1. If your language is endangered → Do not allow it to die!
> 2. If your language died → Stop, revive, survive!
> 3. If you revive your language → Embrace the hybridity of the emergent language! (117)

First, they further highlight the need for early intervention, but most pertinently, the need to embrace hybridity –the "cross-fertilisation from the revivalists' mother tongue(s)" (114). Loanwords and adapted forms are natural and can aid revitalisation rather than hinder it. They also emphasise that is key to have realistic goals and expectations. The success of Modern Hebrew is in part thanks to the idea that it is simply not possible to retain all its original structural complexity and that the language must evolve. In contrast to most other endangered or extinct/dormant languages, Modern Hebrew did have the advantage of institutional support and national self-determination, as Hebrew was envisioned to be the unifying language of Israel and Jewish people around the world (119). This presents a limitation on the use of literature in revitalisation: most endangered languages do not have the institutional support and status that Hebrew had. The implementation of revitalisation strategies needs visibility and government funding, which marginalised communities with endangered languages often lack. The need for

early intervention stated by both Fishman and Zuckermann and Walsh illustrates another limitation to the use of literature in endangered language revitalisation. If the endangerment has progressed to such a degree that people cannot read or produce writing in the language, literature on its own cannot be used for revitalisation. When a language has progressed past stage 6 of Fishman's GIDS, literature can only help revive it. Nonetheless, the use of literature is still a valid revitalisation strategy when used in combination with other methods, like immersion schools and community-focused interventions.

2. Literary translation

A major way in which literature has been used in endangered language revitalisation is through literary translation. Translation in general plays vital role in language preservation and revitalisation. Translation from an endangered language to a dominant language allows for endangered language communities to continue practicing their language without forced assimilation. It also allows for cultural heritage like the traditional ways of life to be legitimised through international exposure. Translation from a dominant language to an endangered language allows for inclusion and participation by the endangered language community (González Núñez 2016). In this chapter, an analysis will be conducted on a diverse collection of case studies involving literary translation used in revitalising languages. It will be determined where they succeed and where they can be improved. First, increasing the prestige of a language will be discussed, followed by an argument in favour of literary translation databases, supported by the revival of the Wampanoag language and the possibility for use in Karelian. Then, it is discussed what issues arise in literary translation relating to standardisation and the establishing of a literary language, using Basque, Övdalian and Karelian as examples, followed by the support of a pluricentric approach to standardisation, based on the case of South Estonian. From these factors, a general step-by-step plan for the use of literary translation in language revitalisation will be developed.

Literary translation projects contribute to revitalisation in several different ways. Firstly, a key strategy in these projects is the translation of classic literature to an endangered language. This lends prestige to the language and shows that it is not 'subordinate': "translations of classics can raise the status of the target language, showing doubters that [the target language] is quite as good as any other language" (Iso-Ahola 2017, 182). It demonstrates that the language can handle complex narratives and abstract ideas. Translating stories that the learner is already familiar with also allows them to focus more on the language itself, instead of spending more

cognitive effort on understanding the plot. This helps them improve vocabulary and grammatical awareness and increase their fluency and comprehension, rather than struggling to follow unfamiliar storylines or concepts that can distract from the language-learning process. Furthermore, Belmar (2017) argues that translation from minority languages into major languages, especially languages other than the dominant language, increases prestige and can incentivise people to write more texts in the minority language (38). He also explains that translating major languages into minority languages serves to make minority languages "more modern", which in turn raises their status and 'language dignity'(38). This is caused by both the expansion of vocabulary to include modern words and phrases and the standardisation of the language, and by making the language accessible in digital spaces, such as online literary translation databases.

The uses of literary translation databases

The Rosetta Dashboard (Fraisse et al. 2019) is a project created to collect information about all translations of a single original work and to digitally share that data through an interactive map. The novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by American author Mark Twain is used as an example. This novel has been translated into 62 languages, 22 of which are "under-resourced" (6), but of which only 2 are considered endangered by UNESCO. The linguistic information that is shared on the Rosetta Dashboard is considered very useful for language preservation and research but generally does not aid in the revitalisation of those endangered languages. Its main strategy of revitalisation is actually aimed at supporting language preservation through the availability of resources, rather than direct teaching or immersion. However, in some cases, these kinds of databases for the purpose of preservation *have* helped in language revitalisation. A database of written literature could, for example, aid in the standardisation of the written language. Fraisse (2023) describes the Rosetta Dashboard as a "data-driven visualization tool

for points of divergence between translated texts and their original source" (8) and mentions that the interpretive nature of literary translations is an issue in this regard. While it is true that translation is highly subjective, this thesis argues that a translation database can nonetheless be an essential part of endangered language revitalisation and extinct language revival.

Jessie Little Doe Baird is a linguist most known for teaching herself the extinct Wampanoag language (also called Wôpanâak, Massachusett or Natick) and founding the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project in 1993 (Woodward 2018, 72) in order to reconnect the four recognised Wampanoag tribes with their lost intangible cultural heritage. This language was extinct –or rather, dormant– for more than a century, until Baird started to study databases of written Wampanoag, such as a Wampanoag translation of the Geneva Bible and a dictionary. Using these textual sources, Baird, along with Kenneth Hale, put together an extensive list of vocabulary items and grammar rules, created programmes for the training of certified Wampanoag linguists and teachers, and has been steadily increasing the numbers of Wampanoag language speakers (77). The Rosetta Dashboard compiles parallel texts and other linguistic resources used for translation, such as dictionaries. The example of Wampanoag highlights the necessity for databases like this. Woodward also mentions that one of the methods that the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project uses to increase the number of native speakers is the creation of story books for children and that the main way of teaching is through a 'culture-based' curriculum. This aligns with Fishman's view that reinforcing intergenerational transmission through a strong community identity is key to language revitalisation. Though Fishman also claims strengthening intergenerational transmission should come *before* standardisation, this was not possible with Wampanoag, as there were no living speakers. Therefore, transmission could not happen without standardising and textually documenting the language first. The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, as well as the example of Hebrew discussed above, illustrate how documented written sources of the language through literature

and literary translation can be valuable when reconstructing dormant languages. While Baird did have access to a dictionary, she developed the grammatical rules based on the little translated literature that was available in the language. Historical translations in endangered and extinct languages should therefore be made publicly available for research and use by the language community itself.

Though this thesis argues in favour of the accessibility of historic translations for the purpose of language revival, the open-access publication of newly translated work may in fact counteract revitalisation efforts. Literary translators often struggle to make a living when translating to and from endangered languages and might even have to pay to have their translation published (Iso-Ahola 2017, 171). Providing free access to their work limits their income even further, and governments are not always interested in subsidising translation work for endangered languages. Many translators who work with endangered languages are, however, volunteers, because they are invested in the revitalisation efforts and promotion of their language. This is the case with many translators of Karelian. As will be further discussed below, literary translation databases can be helpful tools for translators. However, their role in revitalisation is conflicting. While they are meaningful sources of the language that increase the language's visibility, accessibility, and potential for revival if the language goes extinct, they do not address the precarious economic conditions under which many literary translators work and may unintentionally reinforce expectations of unpaid labour. For revitalisation efforts to be sustainable, increased access to translated literature must therefore be accompanied by institutional support and fair compensation for translators, rather than relying solely on voluntary contributions. Language revitalisation can therefore not be accomplished by literary translation alone, though it can contribute to the overall revitalisation effort.

In the case of the Karelian language, a 'definitely endangered' Finnic language spoken in parts of Russia and Finland, literary translators specifically aim at improving the language's

status within the dominant culture(s), in part by developing a formal written language (Iso-Ahola 2017). During the 1930s, about 350 works of literature were published in Karelian in Russia, most of which were translations, but a written language was never adopted on a large scale because Karelian was banned in the Soviet Union in 1940 (167). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, language activists and Karelian culture and language associations led the revitalisation efforts for the Karelian language, and the issue of standardisation emerged (167). Since there were multiple different spoken varieties of Karelian, the solution was to create several separate standards, of which the Olonets and Karelian Proper literary languages are most commonly used (Klementyev, Kovaleva, and Zamyatin 2012). Iso-Ahola (2017) mentions that "the lack of a common written language also causes problems because there are only a few people competent in the written variants of the lesser varieties, which means that the translations that are made into those varieties may not be revised" (167-8). This creates a dilemma in revitalisation projects: picking just one standard written language results in the exclusion and erasure of other varieties yet having multiple different varieties of a written language prevents a strong and consistent literary tradition. The latter is an issue for several reasons. Firstly, it harms the status of the language within the dominant community's literary tradition. Commercial Finnish and Russian publishers are less likely to publish literature in an even smaller language variety of an endangered language. It also prevents people from learning the language by making use of a wide range of literature. One possible solution to this is that books could be published in any variety of Karelian, but with footnotes defining specific dialect words and phrases, so that it can still be read by the entire Karelian population. However, a digital database that compares points of divergence in translation, like the Rosetta Dashboard, could also be helpful in this case. Firstly, it would make translations in Karelian more easily accessible, both for existing speakers and those who wish to learn the language. Since children are no longer learning Karelian as their native language (166), it is important that Karelian texts

are accurate and available. The Rosetta Dashboard, for example, has a way of seeing how far the structure of a translated work diverges from the original (Fraisse 2023, 10). This can make it easier to spot whether works are translated accurately. Being able to compare translations also gives the revitalisation team a starting point when it comes to standardisation. If there are more specific inconsistencies between two translated works in the same variety of written Karelian, they can be easily spotted and amended.

Based on the two case studies above, it can be concluded that literary translation databases, such as the Rosetta Dashboard, could help in the revitalisation of endangered languages and even revive other extinct languages in the future. Literary translation databases make texts in endangered languages more accessible and aid in the languages' standardisation. These case studies also contradict Fishman's (1991) view that standardisation should not be the first step in revitalisation. In the case of Wampanoag, standardisation was necessary because no other official framework for the language existed until then and in order to teach a language, a standard set of rules is essential. In Karelian, the standardisation of varieties of the written language helped create a significant corpus of translated works –as well as a smaller amount of original works. The revitalisation efforts of Karelian started with literary translation, and speakers of Karelian have reported that both their interest in and their usage of the language increased since revitalisation efforts began. One of the initial steps of endangered language revitalisation through literature is therefore the documentation of literary translations in an online database, or at the least, an accessible archive. Moreover, the inclusion of endangered languages in translation databases gives them equal status and shows that they too have a place in the modern digital age.

Standardisation and the literary language used in translation

The way languages are standardised through literature is not always beneficial to revitalisation efforts. Belmar (2017) uses Basque as an example and expresses that literary translation brought about "new settings for the language, new concepts to be expressed and new ideas to portray" (37). Translation is, in the case of Basque, not a byproduct of revitalisation, but one of its central strategies. Though he argues in favour of giving translation a major role in revitalisation programmes, whether translations or original works are actually more important to revitalisation efforts is debatable. Belmar explains that translators often deliberately avoid using calques and loan words "in an effort to break free from the dominant language" (38). This serves to make them more authentic representations of the target language, but it makes readers find the translations unnatural. Speakers of Basque usually prefer reading a text in its original form rather than the Basque translation, hindering attempts at making the language more wide-spread beyond the domestic sphere. Belmar proposes a solution: establishing an 'intermediate model' which would avoid both "unnecessary foreign interference, but also fossilising purism" (40). An advantage of this would be the inclusion of multiple different registers (formal and informal), which Belmar indicates is oftentimes lacking in minority languages (40).

The issue with the Basque literary language in translations being overly formal also arises with Övdalian literary translation. Övdalian (also called Elfdalian) is a language spoken by about 2500 people in Western Sweden (Garbacz 2024). Övdalian usage has been in steady decline since the 1920s, in part due to the closing of village schools and preschools, causing children to adopt the majority language –in this case Swedish– instead (Sapir 2017, 52). Revitalisation efforts started in the 1980s (50), which resulted in more than 30 books being either written or translated in Övdalian since (Garbacz 2024, 18). Since Övdalian still has many Old Norse and Proto-Germanic linguistic features, the language is considered 'archaic'. Speakers find that the language, as a part of their intangible heritage, plays an important part in their identity, which results in them wanting to preserve the older 'archaic' form, rather than the

form that is currently being used in speech (Sapir 2017, 50). A choice must be made between the continued use of the (intangible, dynamic) language as it is actively being used, and the preservation of the (tangible, literary) language as cultural heritage. According to Garbacz (2024), only one author of Övdalian literature chose a variant of Övdalian "that was not made artificially more conservative" (18) and was being used by living speakers at the time of writing. Garbacz also mentions that "a substantial part of the Övdalian literature is written by non-native speakers" (25) which could explain why the written language often sounds unnatural. Övdalian language activists, however, argue that 'modernising' the language, which nowadays has more Swedish influences, will threaten the language status of Övdalian and could potentially allow people to claim it is "just a Swedish dialect" (27). Belmar's idea of an 'intermediate model' could potentially be beneficial to Övdalian revitalisation, but the issue of standardising different vernaculars would still arise. Though the Övdalian revitalisation programmes' strategy of choosing a more archaic variant of the language that is rarely spoken has the support of activists and older community members, it is detrimental to its survival as a modern, living language. Rosenkvist (2010) claims that "there are no longer any monolingual speakers of [Övdalian]" (232). Many bilingual speakers of Övdalian are likely to prefer Swedish over Övdalian because "they are insecure about whether the variant they speak (or write) is pure enough" (Garbacz 2024, 23). It is clear that intergenerational transmission of Övdalian is in decline, so primarily appealing to the older generations will not help the language survive in the long term and is therefore an ineffective revitalisation strategy for this language. In this case, the main goal of literary translations used in revitalisation efforts should therefore not be preservation and standardisation of the target language, but appealing to the younger generations. This is further supported by Melerska's (2011) placement of the Övdalian language around the 6th or 7th stage in Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). As mentioned above, stage 6 is essential in revitalisation efforts and must be reached for the language to have a bigger

chance of survival. While stage 7 languages can still have a relatively large number of speakers, these speakers are usually ‘beyond child-bearing age’, and the language is not used in many different spheres (Melerska 2011, 48). This further demonstrates how the focus should lie on the younger generations when translating literature in endangered languages around stage 6 of the GIDS.

Pluricentric standardisation

Belmar’s suggestion of an intermediate model has potential. The style of translation can be adapted to match the genre and target group of a work of fiction. Classical novels and poetry, for example, can still be written in the traditional literary style, while Young Adult fiction is adapted to feature a more modern and recognisable form of Basque and Övdalian. The idea of a book with footnotes explaining specific terms that was mentioned above for the different regional varieties of the Karelian language can also be applied to these two languages, but with the conservative and the contemporary varieties. Different editions of the same book could also be published and marketed specifically to each target group.

When standardising a language that has multiple different varieties, linguists and language planners tend to follow one of two methods: monocentric standardisation or pluricentric standardisation. Most of the world’s major languages, such as English, French and Spanish, are considered pluricentric, as they are standardised in different ways according to their local varieties, while Russian is considered monocentric, because it only recognises one official standard, despite being used in numerous different countries and having several major speech varieties (Kamusella 2018). This thesis argues for the pluricentric approach in language revitalisation. Weber’s (2023) analysis of Estonian media landscape confirms that the monocentric media policy in which the Literary Standard is heavily prioritised over other Estonian varieties is harmful to revitalisation efforts by speakers of South Estonian. South

Estonian encompasses four different dialects: Võro, Seto, Mulgi and Tartu (38). Specifically the largest dialects, Võro and Seto, have historically come under pressure because of this. Estonian media claimed in the year 2000 that mandatory Võro and Seto classes in school could 'threaten' children (Brown 2004). According to Weber (2023), there had been a South Estonian-based literary language before the establishment of Standard Estonian (39), but South Estonian gradually disappeared from media in favour of the standard. Allas (2019) states that the amount of books published by young authors in South Estonian is on the decline, mainly caused by the younger generation's decreasing language proficiency, which discourages them from creating literature in their local language (61). The status of South Estonian as a 'lesser' dialect of the official language of Estonian, rather than its own language variety, contributes to the marginalisation of non-standard language varieties and exclusion in the literary- and media landscape, which ultimately leads to a decline in speakers and intergenerational transmission.

Difficulty with pluricentric standardisation arises when the variants have very few speakers, as was the case with the dialects of South Estonian. One might wonder whether it is 'worth it' to make the language pluricentric rather than choosing a monocentric standard as a way to 'unite' the community. However, pluricentric standardisation is necessary for the survival of the target language. As mentioned above, people, especially young people, are discouraged from using their language when they feel shame about not speaking the 'right' variety of it. The main goal of language revitalisation is to increase language usage and intergenerational transmission. Imposing a monocentric standard on endangered languages is therefore counterproductive to revitalisation. In the case of South Estonian, several dialects with common features were combined into a standardised language variety. This is the best real-world example of Belmar's intermediate model proposal. There is room for different dialects, while also creating a language standard different from the common one imposed by the government.

Strategies

From this chapter it can be concluded that the following strategies should be applied when aiming to revitalise endangered languages specifically with the help of literary translation:

1. A(n online) literary translation database or archive must be compiled which collects both texts in the target language and a/the majority language.
2. The language's grammar and vocabulary must be standardised.
    a. If a language has several major variants, this must be done in a way that includes those variants by using a pluricentric method and to develop several different standardisations.
3. A literary language must be established.
    a. Firstly, if there are many local dialects or language variants, this can be done by combining several 'smaller' dialects that share features into a separate literary standard from.
    b. Secondly, attention must be paid to different vernaculars. The most essential vernacular to include in literary translation is the modern, spoken variety of the language that is used by the younger generations. This variety is dynamic, so it will need to be updated regularly to include new slang.
    c. Thirdly, another formal literary language can be established according to the more conservative variety of the language, to appeal to older generations and activists. This variety should not be the main priority in language revitalisation, but can be used for high-prestige texts such as classics.
4. The type of literary texts that gets translated must be selected. Eventually, when the language has a more established literary translation corpus, there can be more variety in what is published. However, the following two take priority:

a. Children's literature will benefit the intergenerational transmission of the language and its future survival.
b. High-prestige texts such as classic novels, work from well-known authors and prestigious poetry will raise the language's international status.

To clarity these strategies, it is important to note that the standardisation of a language differs from establishing a literary language. Haugen (1966) described language standardisation in four steps: the selection of a norm, the regulation of linguistic forms, the expansion of vocabulary and style to meet the needs of new functions and the acceptance of the new standard (933). A literary language is simply a style or form of language specifically used in literary writing (Awa 2019), or a functional register for the context of literature. Establishing a literary language involves the creation of an aesthetic, expressive, and symbolic style, rather than a standardisation of grammar, vocabulary and such.

3. Children's literature

According to both Crystal (2000) and Fishman (1991), intergenerational transmission of a language is the most important aspect of revitalisation. Literature is advantageous to intergenerational transmission for several reasons. Firstly, studies by De Graaf, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp (2000), as well as Deitcher, Aram and Abramovich (2024) state that the parents' own reading behaviour and literacy beliefs, as well as the availability of books at home, are beneficial to children's language education. Frequent reading behaviour increases literacy in children and thus in the endangered language community in the long term. The increase of literacy is a central focus of language revitalisation for several reasons. Firstly, a high level of literacy in a language helps to systematically teach the language through formal education (Fishman 1991; Grenoble & Whaley 2006). In *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*, Hinton, Huss and Roche (2018) specially mention literacy, as it allows for more documentation of the language and helps transmit the language beyond just the family or formal education, allowing learners to access and interact with written forms of the language. It can also increase prestige and legitimacy and make it suitable for use in modern social domains such as online (Grenoble and Whaley 2006). Rodriguez et al. (2009) highlight three aspects of the 'literary environment' that affect children's language learning, namely: "(1) the frequency of children's participation in literacy activities (e.g., shared bookreading, storytelling); (2) the quality of mothers' engagements with their children (e.g., cognitive stimulation and sensitivity); and (3) the provision of age-appropriate learning materials (e.g., books and toys)" (678). This chapter seeks to determine the best ways in which intergenerational transmission can be achieved through children's literature, using the three aspects affecting children's language learning above. Ways to increase literary interest in children are researched for the first aspect. For the second, methods used by the Kipnuk Language and Culture Preservation Project are used to demonstrate how intergenerational transmission can be stimulated by the books

themselves, and a survey on Evenk speakers' preference about children's books is used to signify what the children's literature used in revitalisation would look like. A framework by Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal (2022) is used to explain necessary components for successful transmission from parent to child, with examples based on literature. For the third, children's book requirements and guidelines for different age groups are researched and "Easy to Read Books" in the endangered Tatar language are discussed as an alternative option.

Frequency of participation

Increasing the frequency of children's participation in literary activities can be achieved with methods such as the introduction of more children's literature in formal education. However, focusing on the quality of children's literature and making books for children more attractive to increase their interest in reading will yield more positive results than solely focusing on the quantity of literature made available. Bayraktar (2021) studies the effects of children's literature on children and the preferences of the types of books of children around 7 and 8 years old. She recommends children's literature to have "bright and attractive covers" (353) as well as colourful, realistic pictures or illustrations within the books. It is also suggested that concepts and narratives should be appropriate to the vocabulary and interests of a child's developmental phase, and that characters should be relatable to the child's lived experiences. For this, Bayraktar suggests child or animal characters. She also mentions children's literature should include concrete concepts rather than abstract concepts and include humour and mystery within the plot. It is mentioned that parents and teachers play an important role in choosing suitable books for the child (354). Li (2024) states that reading interest is the main factor in the frequency of children's participation in literary activities, and that a child's reading interest is influenced by its reading environment: family cultural capital, the school reading environment and community reading culture all play a role (84). Li finds that the family reading environment

has the most significant effect on children's reading interest, followed by school and lastly community (95). A study by Walgermo et al. (2018) has found that literary interest already has an effect on children's reading development within the first year of formal schooling. Van Der Sande et al. (2023) also find evidence for the hypothesis that reading motivation affects proficiency and that increasing reading motivation also increases reading comprehension. Books in a wide array of topics that are relatable to the children's lives and pertain to a child's interests therefore have a higher likelihood of increasing literacy and language skill. Increasing reading interest in children can best be done by improving the literary environment in families, schools and communities.

Parent-child engagement

The second aspect of the literacy environment that affects children's language learning, the quality of mothers' engagements with their children, is mainly relevant in the earlier stages of development before formal education. Firstly, while this thesis recognises that mothers are generally the more active parent when it comes to didactic interactions such as reading to the child (Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2012), this thesis will speak of *parents'* engagements rather than *mothers'* engagements with their children, in order to not exclude any valuable roles in intergenerational transmission. The importance of this aspect is highlighted by Fishman (1991), as stage 6 of the GIDS, the most crucial stage, is based on the language mainly being transmitted intergenerationally within families (466). Wyman's Kipnuk Language and Culture Preservation Project (1997) is an example of how children's literature can stimulate intergenerational transmission in an interactive way. As mentioned above, a book of elder's narratives was developed where older, difficult words were kept in the text to create opportunities for young people to interact with and learn from the elders (20-1). This stimulates children to seek out these learning opportunities, rather than laying the burden solely with the parent or educator to

read to the child. A survey about Tura settlement residents' recommendations on children's literature in the severely endangered Evenk language in the Evenk Municipal District of the Krasnoyarsk Krai sheds light on the type of stories parents and experts think would contribute to revitalisation (Zamaraeva, Sergeeva, and Fil'ko 2018). The results of this survey indicate that the Tura settlement residents generally believe children's literature should be created using the common version of the language that is used in everyday life, with elements and narratives that pertain to the traditional Evenk way of life, such as themes of nature, traditional occupations and folklore. It is also agreed upon that the Evenks themselves should have a major influence on the creation of this literature. Native speakers have observed that interest in the language and its literature has declined due to urbanisation and the emergence of modern technologies, which have increased exposure Western cultural influences and reduced engagement with traditional practices. This emphasises the importance of incorporating depictions of traditional ways of life in revitalisation literature, to encourage renewed interest and cultural (re)connection. As the language disappears, so do the traditions communicate through the language. Incorporating these traditional practices into physical literature is also a way to preserve them. This way, even people who have moved away to cities can engage with the language and obtain knowledge about the Evenks' intangible cultural heritage. Inhabit Media, an Inuit-owned publisher, is already implementing a comparable strategy by publishing children's books that centre Inuit languages, cultural practices and knowledge. A review on its 'Animals Illustrates' series by Campbell (2017) mentions that the books are unique in that they some of the few books on Arctic animals created in the Arctic by authors with first-hand knowledge. Campbell also mentions that the books include a section on traditional uses of the hides and meat, as well as descriptions of mythical animals from Inuit folklore. The texts thus include unique information from Inuit culture, thereby supporting the preservation and intergenerational transmission of Inuit intangible cultural heritage through written literature.

Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal (2022) have developed a 'holistic framework' for the successful transmission of Irish from parent to child in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht – Gaeltacht referring to an area officially designated as 'Irish-speaking' (19)– but this framework can be applied to other endangered languages too. Rather than defining success solely in terms of linguistic accuracy or frequency of use, the authors argue that caregivers and practitioners conceptualise success through the concept of "saibhreas teanga" ('richness of language'), which consists of three interrelated components: competent language use, local language use, and embodied language use. Competent language use relates to linguistic competence of the child, but emphasises communication over rigid correctness. Parents or caregivers may therefore wish to encourage children to use correct forms without overtly correcting inaccurate forms (27-8). Frequent exposure to children's books is a good way to do this, as they expose children to well-formed Irish in a non-judgemental way, allowing them to self-adjust over time. Local language use relates to the way parents encourage children to use local dialects, engendering a sense of community, while standard orthography is often preferred in writing to support literacy development and inclusivity, particularly for children not socialised through Irish at home. An earlier project by Smith-Christmas found that "in one of the families that Smith-Christmas worked with for the IRC project, she noticed in reading books to the children that the caregivers had gone through some of the books and written the local equivalents of certain lexical items" (31). A way to include local dialects in children's books without having to have countless variants of the book published, which is costly and yields little profit, is through libraries. A single variant of the book in the standard orthography can be published and introduced in libraries with the local equivalents of lexical items added in notes. The model's final component, embodied language use, conceptualises Irish as a 'way of being' (35), not merely a school or performance language. Caregivers aim for children to choose Irish voluntarily and to use it to navigate their social and emotional worlds (35). Children's books could help children

associate Irish with pleasure, empathy, and experiences rather than obligation or authority. They could also stimulate social bonds between children who have read the same books. For this purpose, it is important that literature is not framed as 'schoolwork', and reading could be introduced by parents as a bedtime activity or recommended by teachers as a method of relaxing *after* school.

Umek et al. (2003) do find that teachers reading to *pre*schoolers supports the child's language development: "Children aged four to five years who were systematically read selected children's books in their preschool groups, achieved significantly higher scores on the Vane language development scale, both in receptive and expressive language skills" (133). A successful revitalisation programme using literature would therefore have to stimulate parents as well as preschool teachers to consistently read to children in their target language. Rodriguez et al. (2009) mention cognitive stimulation as a deciding factor in the quality of parents' literary engagements with children. It is therefore essential that children's exposure to books is interactive, rather than a passive listening activity. An example of how literary experiences can be made more interactive for young children is dialogic book sharing. This is an interactive form of shared reading in which the parent and child engage in back-and-forth 'dialogue' about the book's content (Murray et al. 2022). A key feature of dialogic book sharing is joint attention, with gaze following –"the parent following their infant or young child's direction of interest" (3)– being cognitively and emotionally beneficial to the youngest children. Around 9-12 months, children develop the ability to point at objects of interests, but parents' pointing and naming aspects of the book is also key to language acquisition (4). According to a study by Dicataldo, Rowe, and Roch (2022), parent-focused interventions that sought to improve parent-child interactions during shared book reading improved Italian preschoolers' early language and literacy abilities:

> Repeated exposure to books, even without a specific intervention, can still lead to benefits in expanding children's vocabulary. However, the implementation of dialogic book reading

> strategies produced greater results for receptive and expressive vocabulary, suggesting that the increasing parent-child interaction concerning target words during shared book reading using strategic conversations and specific prompts produced greater benefit in terms of vocabulary in general (13).

A successful revitalisation programme incorporating children's literature would therefore greatly benefit from researchers specialised in methods of dialogic book sharing, so they can increase its usage in literary parent-child interactions through interventions early in the children's lives.

Age-appropriate literature

To increase literary motivation and promote dialogic book sharing in service of intergenerational transmission, an ample amount of children's literature that parents approve of needs to be present in the target language. This brings up the last aspect of the literary environment that affects children's language learning raised by Rodriguez et al. (2009): the provision of age-appropriate learning materials. In this case, books. Škarić and Salhab (2024) state that age-appropriate content that matches the child's level of competence is essential to children's language improvement and development. Çer (2016) divides the level of age-appropriateness for children up to 6 years old in three groups: birth to 24 months, 24 to 48 months, and 48 to 64 months (78). According to him, the design of the books should prioritize the child's reality, their interests and linguistic and cognitive capabilities, as well as portray emotions, ideas and perspective that correspond to the child's age group (78). Books for children from birth to age 2 should generally have a good visual quality, meaning good-looking illustrations, bright colours and a good-looking main character (89). Elements that will make the child unhappy, like depictions of negative emotions, will have a negative effect on their desire for books (89). Children aged 2 to 4 years old are able to comprehend the main character's actions and behaviours when rendered clear and obvious (90). This can help the child identify with the character (91). Finally, books for children aged 4 to 6 should feature main characters

related to their area of interest, like animal characters, plants or objects that the child can encounter and be curious about (92).

The African Storybook initiative highlights the need for age-appropriate material for children. Texts in South African children's native languages are in extremely short supply, while texts in the languages of the former colonial powers are dominant (1). Vogelzang et al. (2024) demonstrates that children from minority language households consistently underperform in literacy when they do not receive education and reading materials in their first language (473). When early literacy development takes place in a language children are not fully fluent in, comprehension and engagement with the texts suffer. The African Storybook initiative directly addresses this structural disadvantage by providing accessible, culturally relevant stories in children's native languages, thereby supporting the development of early literacy skills that research shows are compromised when native language resources are lacking. By enabling parents, grandparents, and teachers to read with children in their home languages, the initiative supports the intergenerational transmission of languages, strengthening early literacy development and helping maintain the use of South African languages through age-appropriate children's books.

For people with reading difficulties due to disability or low reading motivation, or those who are learning the target language as a second language, "Easy to Read Books" could be an option. "Easy to Read Books" are written or edited in Easy Language, which means that sentences are shorter and grammatically clear, difficult or long words are generally avoided and everyday language is used (351). A multilingual publisher based in Finland called Bokpil has started a project using "Easy to Read Books" in the revitalisation of the Tatar language (Stahlberg and Nasretdin 2021, 352). They developed a new Easy Language called 'International Tatar', which is internationally understandable, in order to reach Tatar readers in the global Tatar diaspora (358). According to Stahlberg and Nasretdin: "The aim of the Easy to

Read books is to encourage the reader to read the whole book with less effort and to awaken interest and thus to support the discovery and exploration of further books" (356). O'Rourke, Pujolar and Ramallo (2015) mention that, despite being a necessary part of language revitalisation, new speakers are largely ignored as a linguistic group, with the focus lying mainly on native speakers (15). These "Easy to Read Books" can be very helpful for revitalisation, as they are more approachable to learners.

Strategies

The strategies to increase intergenerational transmission with children's literature that can be developed from this chapter are:

1. Promoting the creation of age-appropriate children's books. Books should correspond to the age group's linguistic and cognitive capabilities and express emotions and ideas from the perspective of a child that age.
    a. "Easy to Read Books" are not restricted to any particular age group and are designed for readers who face challenges engaging with traditional literature due to disability, learning difficulties, or other factors, such as low reading motivation.
2. Promoting the use of dialogic book sharing.
    a. Training parents, caregivers or educators in strategies such as gaze-following and encouraging the child to point out parts of the story. This can be done through a workshop or simply a pamphlet explaining what dialogic book sharing is.
    b. Provide age-appropriate and engaging reading material that pertains to the child's interests.
3. Increase parents' own interest in reading.

a. This could be accomplished by providing accessible and engaging reading material for adults. Establishing reading groups where parents can share books could create social motivation and a local reading community.

The main limitation with using literature for intergenerational transmission is that it only works when children are taught the language when they are very young. As stated by the experts in Zamaraeva, Sergeeva and Fil'ko's (2018) interview on literature in the Evenk language, "the main problem in creating and preserving literature in Evenk is the problem of preserving and reproducing of the language itself. Modern generation[s] cannot perceive literature in the Evenk language while they do not speak this language anymore" (686). Older children can only experience linguistic growth from books if they are already able to read those books. The main method discussed in this thesis is keeping the child interested and active in reading. While this is important to prevent children from losing their language skills, the benefits of linguistic growth and cultural knowledge cannot be realised if the child is not actually able to read the books provided to them.

4. Literature festivals

Literature festivals employ several strategies in service of language revitalisation. They increase not only the prestige of the language's literary tradition but also interest and enthusiasm for reading the language. They spread (international) awareness of the language's literary tradition and can encourage people to participate in (communal) writing activities. Literature festivals are also public intergenerational spaces, creating new cultural domains for the language outside of the home, an aspect of language revitalisation Grenoble and Whaley (2006) place emphasis on. Furthermore, literature festivals can encourage traditional publishing through book launches and the awarding of literary prizes, which will be further elaborated on below. They can also generate a profit to be used for the revitalisation programmes through ticket sales, donations and sponsorships, vendor fees, and book sales. Olko (2021) suggests connecting language revitalisation to tourism, underlining the need to market revitalisation. A popular festival, perhaps one with different 'guest nations' each year like the Hyderabad Literary Festival in India, could appeal to tourists. In this chapter, a hypothetical literature festival programme will be designed with revitalisation goals in mind, using examples of contests and events from the Urdd National Eisteddfod and Voiced: The Festival for Endangered Languages.

The Urdd National Eisteddfod

As mentioned above, Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal's (2022) notion of embodied language use includes the view that language is a 'way of being' and a commitment to 'live through' the language (20). One of the goals of language revitalisation is therefore the linking of the target language to the cultural and individual identity. González-Reverté (2023) emphasises how festivals are unifying: they contribute to identity formation because they "deploy[…] social identities through celebration" (808). The Urdd National Eisteddfod is a national youth festival on Welsh language and culture. Welsh was considered endangered in the past, as the amount of

speakers had almost halved in the 20th century (Stanulewicz and Skrzypiec 2010). However, the amount of speakers has risen and the language is now considered ‘vulnerable’ by UNESCO (Moseley 2010, 38). The revitalisation is in part thanks to the amount of institutional support it receives, which national festivals are a part of. Although the Urdd National Eisteddfod is not strictly a literature festival, there are literary elements such as traditional poetry readings and competitive recitation, translation, poetry writing, script writing and prose writing, comic creation and more. Rhodes (2021) mentions that the Urdd National Eisteddfod functions rather like a “bubble” of the Welsh language which “[helps] to annually insulate and invigorate the Welsh language” (565). The wide range of subject matters increases the amount of functional domains Welsh can be used in. Because the festival has Welsh-language events and competitions for all ages, it also stimulates children to create new Welsh writings and contribute to the literary tradition out of a want, not a need to do it for school or for researchers, increasing reading motivation and ‘embodiment’ of the language. The festival not only has events for native Welsh speakers, but according to the competition timetable for the 2026 edition, hosts recitations specifically for Welsh learners too, as well as schools/units with ‘additional learning needs’ (Urdd Gobaith Cymru 2026), making the festival very inclusive to all levels of Welsh speakers and learners. The Eisteddfod is mostly competitions-based. The three major literary competitions during the Urdd National Eisteddfod (the Chair, the Crown and the Prose Medal) as well as nearly 200 other competitions, are all individual competitions. It has long been proven that competition breeds innovation, but Bullinger et al. (2010) also claim that community-based competitions like these give participants the chance to communicate and cooperate. The absence of team-based literary competitions at the Urdd National Eisteddfod represents a missed opportunity to encourage collaborative creativity and shared language development among young speakers. According to Bullinger et al.’s findings, competitions should be planned with both the organisers' strategic objectives and the participants' cooperative tendencies –how

well the participants cooperate with others– in mind. To generate ‘highly innovative solutions’, both highly cooperative and highly competitive participants are suitable, but they require different approaches. If the goal is to build a strong community and generate creative ideas, the contest should support highly cooperative participants, for example by offering community features where participants can interact. If the main goal is to collect highly original ideas, the contest can focus on competition and individual submissions, with little need for community tools. When both innovation/creativity and community building are important, as is the case in language revitalisation, contests should support both individual and team entries so that different working styles are included (300-1).

Voiced: The Festival for Endangered Languages

Voiced: The Festival for Endangered Languages, which took place at the Barbican Centre in London in October 2025, included literary activities in its programming without the use of contests. Activities, of which many were related to poetry, were spread over ten days. Four of these activities will be discussed, namely the Creative Voice Hub, The Endangered Languages Archive, a workshop on macaronic poetry and a ‘translation circle’.

The Creative Voice Hub is an ‘immersive area’ present throughout the whole festival, featuring newly created poems in a multimedia format with audiovisual designs, showing how language is linked to the decline of biodiversity (Barbican 2025, 2). This link is due to the factors that threaten both biological and linguistic diversity: urbanisation and industrialisation (Olko 2021, 142). Climate change is a modern and relevant topic, which helps show that the language has a place in the modern era and can handle complex topics, further highlighted by the innovative multimedia approach. The topic is also especially relevant to indigenous communities whose living environments may be disproportionately affected by climate change and language endangerment. One reason why endangered language use decreases is because

people from those language communities believe that “the local language does not have any value in the modern world” (140). However, considering that high numbers of endangered species in an area correlate with higher linguistic diversity (142), these languages can prove to be valuable sources of unique knowledge on these issues. Combined with the Creative Voice Hub are various Participation Spaces designed to encourage public involvement and collaboration in celebrating and preserving languages and dialects. Both the Creative Voice Hub and the Endangered Languages Archive are free to visit, making participation more accessible.

The second highlighted activity is a workshop on Macaronic poetry hosted by poet Chris McCabe (2). A Macaronic text is a text in which more than one language is used as the means of expression (Seynnaeve 2002, 155). Macaronic poetry is beneficial to endangered language revitalisation because it lowers the barrier to creative use and can stimulate learners to create works of fiction in the endangered language they are learning. As mentioned above, the fear of not speaking the language ‘right’ is a major obstacle to using endangered languages. By mixing the target language and their own native language, they can use what they have already learned while not being hindered by forms and vocabulary they do not know yet. Furthermore, many endangered language lack a full standardisation with an extensive modern vocabulary and established literary genres. Macaronic poetry would allow people to use the language creatively without running into these obstacles, by simply ‘borrowing’ from other languages. Hugueny-Léger (2024) argues in favour of translingual and multilingual creative writing. Firstly, she mentions that by sharing their personal experiences, translingual writers give users who are aware of their own hesitations a sense of legitimacy (9). Exploring more than one language in creative writing can also “allow participants to develop and express their uniquely crafted writerly voice” (10). Multilingual writing can also have unique narrative properties such as defamiliarization (9), and it can add depth to the characters, for example by showing what mistakes they make in other languages that point to their own nationality (10). Macaronic poetry

can also be understood to some degree by fluent speakers, learners and non-speakers, making it ideal for shared cultural spaces like festivals. It encourages intergenerational and intercultural conversation about the text. Lastly, artistic experimentation can challenge stereotypes of the endangered language being traditional, strictly oral or not fit for the modern era.

Another highlighted activity of the Voiced festival is a Translation Circle, which is a poetry translation workshop, led by both a poet and a translator (Barbican 2025, 2). The press release claims it "foster[s] a sense of community and cultural exchange through the power of poetry" (2). The importance of literary translation in language revitalisation has already been explained above, but collaborative translation can offer additional benefits, including intergenerational transmission, community ownership and agency, and the dissemination of translation skills in the community. Intergenerational transmission can be strengthened by the interaction between different age groups when working together, including fluent speakers and learners, elders and young people. This creates natural opportunities for teaching and practicing and creating linguistic forms. Younger people in a translation group could, for example, introduce elders to new concepts and work together to bring the concept into their language. When community members translate together rather than relying on outsiders, they exercise agency over their language, fostering pride and investment in the language's future. This relates to the final point of increasing translation skill in the community, increasing the amount of translators from within the community.

The final activity highlighted is the Endangered Languages Archive. The importance of an archive or database for literature in endangered languages has already been elaborated on above, but the Endangered Languages Archive as presented in the Voiced festival is a digital repository that makes collections of endangered language from all over the world accessible to visitors (Barbican 2025, 2). The archive is also accessible online, so the festival mostly brings visitors awareness of its existence and a guide to using it.

Strategies

The hypothetical literature festival for an endangered language suggested in this thesis prioritises the creation of new, contemporary texts over historical 'heritage' texts, in order to emphasise the relevance of the language in the modern era. While heritage texts are important sources of knowledge, they are already established and studied, while contemporary genres can expand vocabulary and shift the language from preservation to production. Fixating on heritage texts can unintentionally reinforce narrow ideas of authenticity and exclude new speakers. Contemporary writing demonstrates that a language is actively used to express present-day experiences, not only to preserve the past. Placing emphasis on contemporary works supports living writers and creators, who can be financially sustained from the visibility and professional validation. Contemporary genres are also more accessible and engaging for younger audiences, as they reflect current forms of communication and lived experience, thereby supporting broader participation and sustained interest, which is particularly important to revitalisation, where long-term language transmission depends on youth participation.

This is what the programme of a hypothetical three-day literature festival focused on a specific endangered language could look like, based on the findings from other literature festivals discussed in this chapter:

Day One	Day Two	Day Three
08:00-09:30 – Opening Ceremony	08:00-08:30 – Morning Language Warm-Up	08:00-08:30 – Morning Language Warm-Up
09:45-11:45 – Children's Storytime	08:45-11:15 – Poetry Writing Workshop	08:45-11:15 – Creative Writing Workshop
12:00-13:00 – Announcement of newly published literature	11:30-13:00 – Results of the group poetry writing contest	11:30-13:00 – Results of the group short story writing contest
13:15-14:45 – Multilingual Literature Workshop	13:15-14:45 – Results of the individual poetry writing contest	13:15-14:45 – Results of the individual short story writing contest
15:00-16:30 – Translation Lab	15:00-16:30 – Literary Experimentation Lab	15:00-16:30 – The Festival Archive
16:45 - 17:00 – International Cafe	16:00 - 17:00 – International Cafe	16:00 - 17:00 – International Cafe

Table 1

A real literary festival would most likely feature multiple events running in parallel in order to manage audience size and logistics. However, the programme presented here is intended as an illustrative model based on the findings and has therefore been deliberately simplified. The endangered language should be the primary working language festival. This encourages identity formation through celebration of the language, but it also encourages learners to take risks and participate in conversation, facilitating their learning. The Opening Ceremony would therefore be primarily in the revitalised language and include short readings of poetry or creative writing. The goal of this is to normalise hearing the language in an 'official' capacity. A translation can be provided digitally or on paper afterwards. In order to promote tourism, international awareness of the revitalisation programme and raise international support, there are International Cafes at the end of each day where people from different cultures and language backgrounds can interact and talk about the festival and their own languages. These are also accommodating to new speakers who may not be fully comfortable using the language yet. The Morning Language Warm-Ups would serve a similar function to the Opening Ceremony: normalising use of the endangered language. They would be led by a fluent speaker and encourage participation by learners. This is also a way to become more familiar with

pronunciation in case learners are more used to engaging with the language in literary form. Children's Storytime refers to a space where parents and children can engage with and purchase children's literature, with activities such as readings from newly published books and a workshop where children can create their own comics to strengthen their literary motivation and potentially inspire them to create works of fiction in the future. This is also a good opportunity to educate parents about dialogic book sharing as mentioned in the previous chapter. Newly published literature will be announced and made available to purchase during this festival to financially support the author/translator and revitalisation efforts. As determined above, the festival's priorities for the contests should be both community building and innovation. That is why there are both group contests and individual contests, in contrast to the Urdd National Eisteddfod. The Multilingual Literature Workshop is inspired by the Macaronic poetry workshop during Voiced. The aim is to create Macaronic texts that feature more than one language as a means of expression. This workshop is mainly aimed at new speakers who will actively learn to use the target language creatively without running into the obstacle of not being completely fluent in the language. The Translation Lab is inspired by the Voiced festival's collaborative translation workshop. It is a space where participants can work live on texts. Emerging translators or people looking to become more involved are paired with experienced translators, potentially building long-term infrastructure and increasing the amount of translation in the community, which is beneficial for revitalisation both for creating more literature in the target language and improving literary quality and consistency. Poetry and prose workshops are held to encourage and introduce people to literary production. Participants are given a modern, relevant topic as a prompt and may choose to work individually or in a group. Examples of prompts that may be given are technology, migration and climate. The Literary Experimentation Lab is similar to the Multilingual Literature Workshop in the way that it explores untraditional forms of writing. However, its main focus is on new, experimental forms

of literature. One example of this is new media literature, which explores literature across new platforms, such as social media poetry and digital storytelling. Other forms of experimental literature that can be explored here are blackout poetry and collage writing. This workshop creates new functional domains for the language in which it can be used in a playful way which appeals to younger generations. Finally, the Festival Archive is a repository of festival outputs from all the years it has been hosted. Everything that is produced during or for the festival, such as the short stories entered into the competition and the results of translation and creative writing workshops, are made easily accessible both during the festival and online. The archive also supports creators who did not win the contests and gives them a place to share their work, aiding in exposure.

5. Traditional book publishing

This chapter explores how literary publishing contributes to language revitalisation and maintenance through several case studies on publishing houses that focus on endangered languages and books published in endangered languages.

Firstly, the main way in which traditional book publishing contributes to language revitalisation is by ensuring long-term preservation and accessibility through print books. As illustrated above with the examples of Hebrew and Wampanoag, the long-term preservation of text in endangered language can contribute to an eventual revival, but in the present day physical books are able to make literature accessible to people who have no access to digital formats, such as elderly people and young children, for example. Furthermore, the literature on digital preservation emphasises that digitisation does not guarantee the long-term survival of texts without ongoing curation and strategies to mitigate format obsolescence and technical change (Routhier Perry 2014). The availability of print publications can also help ensure the continued access to texts in endangered languages and texts about endangered cultural heritage in contexts where digital content may be subject to restriction or removal, including forms of government regulation or censorship. Reading print books may also have benefits to language development in general. A meta-analysis by Delgado et al. (2018) shows that reading on paper improves comprehension compared to digital reading, which suggests that print publications can directly support language learning –a key component of revitalisation.

Publishing also enables communities to reclaim narrative authority and economically benefit from their own cultural production in the form of paid authorship and translation opportunities. Huia Publishers, a Māori owned independent publisher, specifically mentions that it supports projects that ensure their tribes and clans "have sovereignty over their own stories" (HUIA n.d.). This means that all books written by Māori people and published through Huia Publishers only financially benefit members of the Māori community in Aotearoa/New

Zealand. Up the early 20th century, texts featuring the Māori were Anglocentric and mainly written from a colonial perspective that enforced stereotypical ideas about the Māori (Della Valle 2011). In the 1970s, Māori writing in English emerged and, as Della Valle describes it, "counter-colonised the genres of the Western canon and the English language"(97) to tell Māori stories. The existence of a Māori-specific publishing house ensures that the Māori now have agency over their depiction in literature and are the sole benefactors of it. Publishing can thus be a way to take control of the narrative surrounding a minority culture. Furthermore, publishing print books in this context also serves to establish and strengthen a written literary tradition for a language that has historically relied on oral storytelling. Print books provide a means of preserving these narratives and traditions in a stable and durable form, while also facilitating wider circulation beyond immediate community contexts and enabling access to new generations of readers.

The case of Alf Nilsen-Børsskog's novel series *Elämäm jatko*, widely regarded as the first literary works to depict the Kven culture from a native perspective (Viinikka-Kallinen 2019), parallels developments in Māori literature in the way they became 'counterstories' (13) to their colonial portrayals, and further illustrates how literary production and publishing enable minority cultures to reclaim narrative authority and challenge externally imposed representations of their culture. The books were written and published from 2004 to 2015 in the highly endangered Kven language, the first Kven language literature to be traditionally published (12). The books have been used to standardise and teach the Kven language, demonstrating that even a single author's contributions can have significant impact on revitalisation. According to Viinikka-Kallinen, "[Nilsen-Børsskog] justified his choice of language by saying that it was impossible for him to write a genuine, honest story about the members of the Kven community of his youth in any other language" (18). This further illustrates the close relationship between language and intangible cultural heritage, as the use

of Kven enabled the transmission of embedded cultural knowledge, values, and modes of expression that would have been difficult to convey authentically in another language. In this way, Nilsen-Børsskog's work demonstrates how literary production in an endangered language can function not only as a tool for linguistic revitalisation, but also as a means of preserving and revitalising intangible cultural heritage.

Furthermore, publishing print books can be seen as an act of intergenerational transmission. The example of Inuit publisher Inhabit Media mentioned above already illustrated how children's literature can support the transmission of cultural knowledge and traditional practices. The texts do this by combining practical skills with ecological knowledge and folklore, allowing the texts to be used as a way to preserve the culture and teach younger generations. Theytus Books, one of the first indigenous-owned publishing houses in Canada, exemplifies this, and an argument can be made that all publishing is a form of intergenerational transmission. On its website, the following is said about the publishing house's name: "In Salish, 'theytus' means 'preserving for the sake of handing down.' For founder Randy Fred, the name 'Theytus' symbolizes the goal of documenting Indigenous cultures and world views through books" (Theytus n.d.). By exclusively publishing works by Aboriginal authors, Theytus ensures that younger generations have access to culturally authentic literature.

Youth engagement with endangered language literature is further boosted by collections that focus specifically on children's and youth literature, such as the IBBY-UNESCO Collection of Remarkable Books for Young Readers in Indigenous and Endangered Languages. The IBBY-UNESCO Collection calls for publishers, librarians and institutions worldwide to submit youth literature in indigenous and endangered languages (IBBY 2025). A focus on youth literature enforces the sense that the language is capable of adopting modern contexts and that the language is not only used with the elders of the community. Books chosen for this collection will be displayed alongside dominant-language children's books at international book fairs

(IBBY 2025), raising them to equal symbolic status. Traditional publishing plays a critical role in language revitalisation by ensuring that books are distributed through mainstream channels such as bookshops, libraries, and schools, thereby granting endangered-language texts institutional visibility and legitimacy that support literacy development, readership formation, and the intergenerational transmission of the language.

Strategies

The examples above suggest several strategies for increasing the impact of publishing on the revitalisation of endangered languages:

1. Print as a long-lasting medium. Print promotes literacy and comprehension while guarding against digital obsolescence, censorship and restricted access.
2. Community-owned publishing houses. These provide financial and institutional support while guaranteeing cultural and narrative agency as well as accuracy.
3. Intergenerational focus. Producing youth literature and educational literature ensures the transfer of language and culture to younger generations.
4. The encouragement of counter-narratives. Publishing authentic community stories challenges historical misrepresentations and strengthens cultural identity.
5. Literature as language standardisation. The publication of written works in endangered languages aids in the development of orthographic standards and literary standards and assists linguistic and literary education.
6. Presence in libraries and bookshops, on festivals and in schools. Increasing mainstream status of the language, bringing it to an equal level as the dominant language.

6. Literary prizes

Literary prizes bring legitimacy, visibility and prestige to the language, encourage literary production and raise academic interest. Nevertheless, their role in language revitalisation remains significantly under-researched. This chapter investigates the advantages and disadvantages of literary prizes as a method of increasing language prestige in service of revitalisation through a case study of two literary prizes, 'Ostana Prize – Writings in the Mother Tongue' and 'Nezahualcóyotl Award of Literature in Indigenous Languages', as well as Broomans' (2025) analysis of two Sámi literature prizes, 'Saami Council's Prize for Literature' and the 'Gollegiella Award'. Guidelines will then be established on how literary prizes can best be incorporated into language revitalisation programmes.

The Ostana Prize – Writings in the Mother Tongue, hereinafter simply called the Ostana Prize, is an annual event in Ostana, Italy, which has a total of 85 inhabitants, most of which are speakers of the Occitan language. The Occitan language and culture is 'definitely endangered', despite revitalisation efforts by activists to revitalise. In 2009, an organisation called Chambra d'Òc launched a march across the Occitan Valleys to demand the inscription of Occitan on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage (Chiarini 2013, 3), and Ostana in particular is invested in reviving Occitan identity through the creation of new rituals and use of the language in public spaces (13-14). The Ostana Prize was thus established in service of the revitalisation of Occitan and other minority languages around the world. The event was first organised by Chambra d'Òc in 2008, and is now supported by municipal and regional authorities (Premio Ostana 2025). Aside from a prize for literature in the Occitan language, the Ostana Prize includes prizes for translation, young writers and international literature. It is distinct from other literary prizes because it explicitly centres writing in 'mother tongues', many of which are endangered. As mentioned above, prestige is crucial in language revitalisation. When a language is seen as valuable and respected, speakers are more likely to maintain and transmit

it. By awarding international recognition to authors who write in these languages, the prize challenges the idea that only dominant or global languages are suitable for serious literature and publicly affirms that minority languages are capable of artistic depth and contemporary expression.

In the chapter on literary festivals, it was mentioned that competition breeds innovation. However, research has shown that prestigious literary prizes can sometimes do the opposite. For example, France's most prestigious literary prize, the Prix Goncourt, as well as other well-established literary prizes in France, has been known to consistently favour 'mainstream' options (Den Toonder 2021). Den Toonder mentions that these have mostly included established white male authors who receive literary consecration through the prize. While literary prizes have potential to be valuable assets to language revitalisation, it is also necessary to acknowledge that they have historically often been vessels for exclusion. The Ostana Prize differs in this aspect. Due to the focus on minority languages around the world, the prize inherently promotes diversity and amplifies marginalised voices. Ostana also hosts literary events surrounding the prize that highlight women's contributions to literature, such as the 2025 event 'Mother Tongues, Women's Rights & Material Cultures', hosted by Soulama Maténé Martine, who won the Ostana International Prize "in recognition of her dedication to defending women's rights and promoting mother tongues" (Vendraminetto 2025) and the 2024 event 'Female writing and worldview: from Medieval "fin'amor" to contemporary Occitan literature' by Miquèla Stenta (Premio Ostana 2024). Literary prizes for endangered languages should focus on advocating for underrepresented perspectives in general, as language revitalisation depends on broad, socially diverse participation, rather than engagement limited to the relatively privileged group typically recognised by literary prizes. Dane (2020) notes that literary prizes often implicitly enforce biases in the selection process, for example by excluding books that have been self-published or published online, or having high enough submission fees

that smaller publishers and less well-known authors cannot afford to be nominated (125). Literary prizes also commonly charge publishers a marketing fee for promotion of the title (128), which for more prestigious prizes, especially in the United Kingdom, can be thousands of pounds (129). There is no mention of how works are selected for the Ostana Prize, whether they accept submission or whether authors are invited by the organisation. This is where the Nezahualcóyotl Award of Literature in Indigenous Languages has a unique approach. According to the regulations on its website, it is open to anyone over the age of 18 –with a pseudonym– whose native language is one of Mexico's 68 indigenous languages and whose work is unpublished (Dirección General de Culturas Populares, Indígenas y Urbanas 2025). The work having to be unpublished and submitted under a pseudonym could decrease the likelihood that an already famous author will be consciously selected and consecrated when applied to more prestigious literary prizes. This is a point the Ostana Prize could improve on, despite being a prize for minority languages. Winners of various categories in the Ostana Prize frequently already have several other awards and are often well-established authors and creators in their respective languages. In 2024, five winners had already won at least one other award, while three, including the winner of the youth prize, had not (Premio Ostana 2024). In 2025, six winners had already received prior awards or distinction, while only two, whose work consisted mainly of music instead of literature, had not. Recipients of the Ostana Prize are recognised for their meaningful contributions to language revitalisation, a central aim of the prize. Nonetheless, revitalisation efforts also rely on emerging authors at earlier stages in their career, whose work could benefit substantially from the increased visibility and economic benefits brought on by the award, raising questions about how consistently the prize amplifies marginalised voices. In this respect, the Nezahualcóyotl Award adopts a more effective approach.

A key limitation of literary prizes specifically designed to promote endangered languages is their relatively limited visibility compared to more prestigious and well-known literary awards. As a result, they tend to attract primarily audiences and participants who already have a vested interest in (specific) endangered languages, raising questions about their ability to contribute much to broader international prestige and revitalisation. Broomans (2025) mentions that for both Sámi prizes she discusses in her analysis, there is strong institutional support, with the prizes' focus specifically being language revitalisation and maintenance (357-9). However, to quote Broomans, "the knowledge and appreciation of literature written in the specific language area are limited. Within Sápmi territory, the winners are appreciated, but beyond Sápmi there is less recognition" (359). The goal of Sámi language revitalisation is clear through the prizes' winners –the 2022 Saami Council's Prize for Literature went to a poem dealing with eating disorders, a topic not previously addressed in Sámi poetry (358), thereby signalling the importance of expanding the language's literary functional domains– but the effectiveness is debatable. A requirement of the Nezahualcóyotl Award is that every submission must be presented in two versions: the original text in an indigenous Mexican language and a full Spanish translation of the text (Dirección General de Culturas Populares, Indígenas y Urbanas 2025). This requirement of translation to a dominant language, when applied to the Sámi prizes, could increase the scope of influence of the prizes. It could also help the Sámi language build a strong professional field of translation. Broomans (2025) mentions that Swedish publishing houses are reluctant to publish Sámi literature translated to Swedish, but that literary prizes might convince publishers of the language's literary worth (355). Additionally, the Sámi prizes might benefit from the Ostana Prize's method of creating categories for international literature next to the award for Occitan literature, bringing people from all over the world to Ostana and increasing global interest in the revitalisation of Occitan. Lastly, Broomans notes that there is little competition in the Sámi prizes and that many prize

winners have been awarded both of the mentioned prizes or have been nominated several times (358). According to her, “the collective goal to maintain the Sámi language and to promote Sámi literature seems to be more important” (358). The Sámi language could benefit from a specific youth prize or a youth category in existing prizes to diversify and enlarge the pool of established Sámi writers. The Saami Council's Prize for Literature is the only one of the prizes discussed which explicitly features children’s fiction. It is awarded once every two years, alternating between adult and children's literature. Including children’s literature in a literary prize is valuable to language revitalisation, as it supports early literacy and encourages intergenerational transmission. Additionally, by recognising and promoting high-quality literature for children about the Sámi culture, literary prizes can strengthen cultural identity and pride and help to improve the overall literary tradition.

The cases examined in this chapter suggest that literary prizes can contribute to endangered language revitalisation in distinct but complementary ways. The Ostana Prize shows how an international focus can support minority languages by fostering cross-border networks and increasing their visibility and status. Although the emphasis on established authors may limit opportunities for up-and-coming writers, whose early recognition could be crucial in sustaining literary production in endangered languages, this limitation is somewhat addressed by the existence of a youth category, which brings attention to new voices and innovative perspectives, and the gender and age diversity within the jury and among recipients. The Nezahualcóyotl Award highlights the importance of structural accessibility in the selection process for literary prizes: the requirement of anonymous submission lowers barriers related to reputation and visibility, allowing less established authors to compete on more equal terms, while translation into a dominant language increases publication opportunities and readership. Finally, Sámi literary prizes have the advantage of focusing explicitly on language promotion, encouraging engagement with contemporary topics that expand the language’s functional

domains. However, they have limited international and even national visibility, despite strong institutional support. The Sámi Council's Prize for Literature also includes a category for children's literature, which supports language revitalisation by fostering early language learning and intergenerational transmission.

Strategies

Three central aspects can be identified as necessary for literary prizes to contribute meaningfully to the revitalisation of endangered languages:

1. Gender and age diversity in both awardees and jury members. This can be supported through anonymous submission and the introduction of youth prizes and categories.
2. (Inter)national reach. This can be achieved through the translation of works into dominant languages and the introduction of international categories in prizes.
3. Promotion of the language, especially to new functional domains. This can be achieved through the prioritisation of contemporary, artistic texts, as opposed to traditional literature in the way that it already exists in the language. This also includes children's literature.

7. Innovative literary strategies for language revitalisation

Language revitalisation is increasingly recognised not only as a linguistic project but also as a cultural one, closely bound to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Languages carry shared knowledge, values, and ways of understanding the world, much of which is expressed through stories and literary traditions. Literature therefore plays an important role in maintaining language use and supporting cultural continuity. However, for many endangered or minoritised languages, traditional forms of literary production alone are often not sufficient to address challenges of declining use, limited visibility, and reduced engagement among younger generations. At the same time, the social and cultural contexts in which narratives are created and shared are changing. Stories are no longer experienced only through printed books, but increasingly through digital, multimodal, and interactive forms. These changes create both challenges and opportunities for language revitalisation. They highlight the need for innovative literary strategies that allow endangered languages to be used in ways that feel relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences, particularly children and young people. In this chapter, innovative revitalisation projects using literature will be discussed and new projects will be suggested based on the available literature.

In recent years, the amount of research on artificial intelligence (AI) has increased significantly and with it, the use of AI in educational programmes (Garzón, Patiño, and Marulanda 2025). Ukah's (2025) comparative study on the advantages and disadvantages on AI-enhanced learning has found that disadvantages include the lack of human interaction – something which helps develop social skills and provides personalised guidance– and the limitation to creative thinking and innovation (65-6). It can also lead to the displacement of educators and students' dependency on technology, and could cause issues such as data privacy concerns and algorithmic biases to arise (66). However, Ukah also mentions advantages: personalised learning, global collaboration, interactive and immersive learning, and the

accessibility of learning materials (64-5). The creators of LakotaBERT, a large language model (LLM) customised specifically for the critically endangered Lakota language, argue in favour of utilising their AI, which has been trained on a corpus of Lakota texts from books and websites, to help revitalise the language (Parankusham, Rizk, and Santosh 2025). The authors mention the model's potential for educational tools and automated translation services, stating it could "significantly aid in the preservation and revitalization of the Lakota language" (7). It is the first LLM to incorporate Lakota (7). Meighan (2021) discusses the role of technology in indigenous language revitalisation and concludes that technology can help reclaim pride in indigenous languages by showing that the language can thrive in digital spaces, essentially "decolonizing the digital landscape to better serve Indigenous Peoples, their languages, and their communities" (404). Furthermore, research by Baloch and Riaz (2025) indicates that AI features like speech recognition can improve the speed and accuracy at which endangered languages are documented and revitalised (79). Despite educators' ethical concerns and worry about LLMs' transparency, reliability and the loss of human connection (Rajik 2024, 249), these findings indicate that LakotaBERT could prove to be beneficial to the revitalisation of Lakota and that LLMs in general could contribute to the field of endangered language revitalisation. When applied to language revitalisation through literature, they could speed up translations, increasing the amount of translated literature available in the language. Furthermore, Asselborn et al. (2024) show that LLMs can support reading for the visually impaired (29) and, with the help of human revisions, help restore damaged (literary) texts.

There is significant potential in the integration of digital technologies with literary practices for language revitalisation. E-books, for example, can support language revitalisation efforts by lowering the barriers to publication, as they often do not require the institutional support that traditional publishing requires, however, these are already relatively widespread. More recently, multimodal storytelling has been gaining traction due to the prevalence of digital

media, where text can be combined with other 'modes' likes images, videos and audio (Meier 2022, 1). As younger generations increasingly engage with language and culture online, artistic expression is being reshaped through digital environments, often taking the form of visual and auditory modes and featuring multiple languages (Maamuujav 2025). The development of a new literary tradition in an endangered language that embraces multimodal and digital practices has the potential to be transformative, both by expanding the functional domains in which the language is used and by positioning it within modern creative practices with the capacity to reach international audiences. Such visibility can increase the language's cultural prestige on a global scale, as digital media allows literary works to be shared widely and instantly, reaching audiences far beyond local or regional communities and enabling cross-cultural engagement in ways that traditional publishing cannot. Another form of multimodal storytelling is tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs), a form of interactive fiction which combines narrative, visual, and performative modes. In TTRPGs, participants collaboratively create and enact stories, often using spoken dialogue, gestures, and visual representations such as maps or character art. This interactive environment provides a space for practicing speech and conversational skills in the target language. Furthermore, TTRPGs encourage the creation of new vocabulary, including terms for imaginative concepts, technologies, or fantastical creatures, which can expand the expressive capacity of the language and adapt it to genres such as science fiction and fantasy. By blending traditional storytelling with gameplay, TTRPGs offer both linguistic and creative opportunities, enabling communities, especially younger people, to engage with the language in contemporary, playful, and culturally meaningful ways.

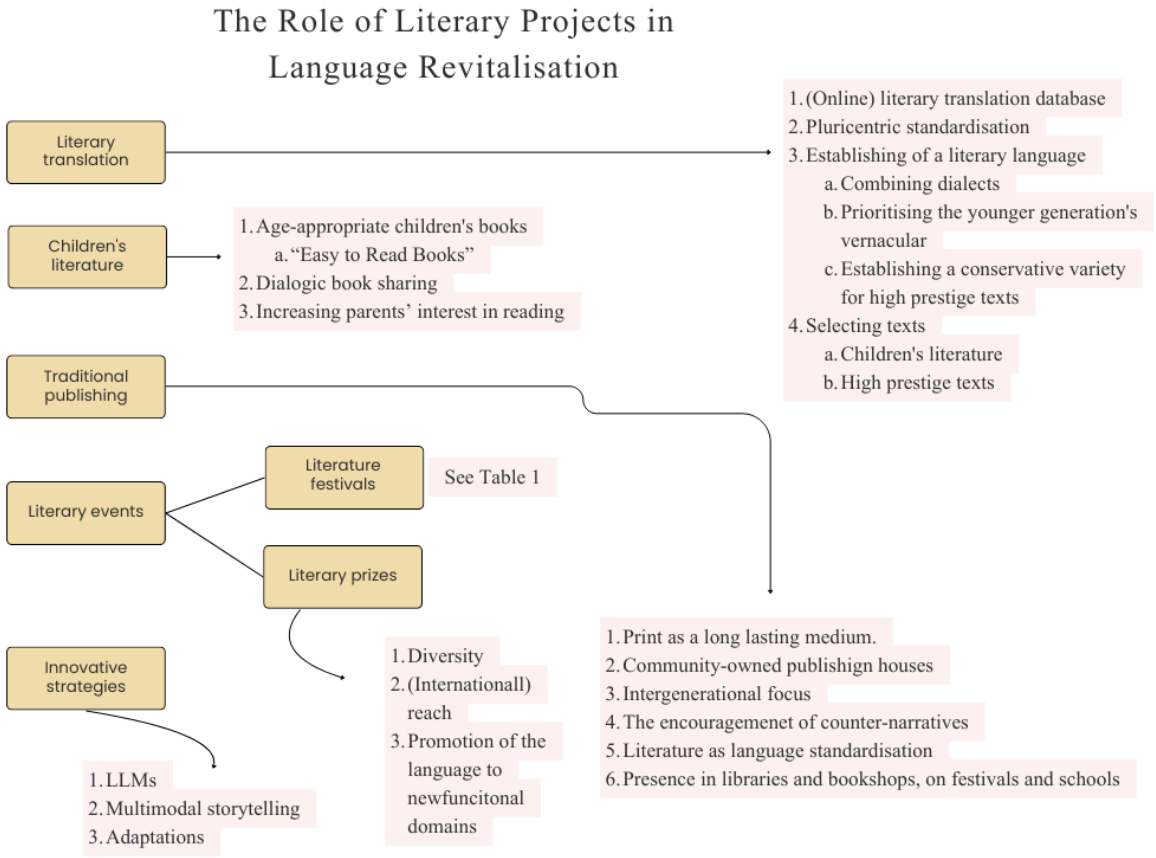
Two fields of study that have not crossed yet are language revitalisation and adaptation studies. Contemporary adaptations or film/TV adaptations of heritage literature could increase youth interest in the language and its literary history. A case study on the use of the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* film adaptation showed that when the film was shown in a British Literature

classroom, the researcher found that students engaged in more literary criticism and were more interested in further reading the book (Beloufa 2023). Additionally, the film contributed to the students' enjoyment in a foreign language classroom and made memorising British cultural aspects of the era easier for them (26). Karaktan and Verma (2025) further support the use of literary adaptations in literary education, highlighting the way adaptations can make texts "more accessible, engaging, and relevant to contemporary students" (109). The advantages of literary adaptations in endangered language learning have not been researched, both due to a lack of literary adaptations present in those languages and the fact that adaptation studies have not been applied to what has mostly been seen as a sociolinguistic field of study, rather than a cultural one. However, if literary adaptations can prove advantageous to literary education and foreign language and culture education, then it is likely it has benefits when applied to learners of endangered languages. For this, there would need to be an increase of the amount of adaptations created based on heritage literature in endangered languages.

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the revitalisation of endangered languages with the use of literature by focusing on the broader revitalisation strategies employed and demonstrated by literary projects ranging from translation work to children's literature to literary festivals and prizes. First, it was explained how languages go extinct and how important early intervention is to the prevention of language endangerment. Then, it was concluded from various case studies on literary translation projects that the creation of an accessible translation database is necessary for the revitalisation of endangered languages. Though in some cases, endangered language activists and native speakers both argue that literary translation should represent a traditional form of the language, this thesis argues that opting for a more youth-focused and evolving form of literary language will aid in language revitalisation. Furthermore, this thesis argues for a pluricentric approach in language standardisation and a focus on youth literature and prestigious literature in translation. The chapter on intergenerational transmission through children's literature resulted in three strategies for the promotion of children's literature: the availability of age-appropriate children's books, the use of dialogic book sharing and the increase of the parents' reading interest. Furthermore, the priorities and possible activities in a small-scale literary festival were developed, after which the strategies traditional publishing employs to aid in language revitalisation were outlined. Print books were discussed as a medium for preservation, as well as for standardisation. It was determined that publishers for endangered languages should be community-owned and focus on counter-narratives, intergenerational transmission and the introduction of literature in public domains. The case studies of literary prizes highlighted that literary prizes can both amplify marginalised voices and result in exclusion. A focus should be laid on diversity, (inter)national reach, and the promotion of the language to new functional domains. Finally, innovative strategies in revitalisation were discussed, namely the use of LLMs, multimodal storytelling and adaptations.

From this thesis, a diagram outlining the most important strategies for language revitalisation projects that used literary methods was created:



For further research, longitudinal studies can be conducted implementing the suggestions in this thesis and quantitively measuring their effectiveness. A comparative analysis could be carried out across different language communities to assess whether language revitalisation through literature has comparable results in different societal contexts. Furthermore, studies assessing whether literary festivals stimulate ongoing language use outside annual events are particularly needed to justify investment in the strategies suggested.

A limitation of the current study is that literary initiatives often require access to formal education, publishing networks, and cultural capital, which requires institutional support and may exclude marginalised speakers within the community. Future research could benefit from incorporating strategies specifically targeted to underprivileged groups. This thesis concludes

that while fictional literature can and should contribute to endangered language revitalisation, it is largely limited to a top-down approach, and can be difficult to implement in contexts where there is little or no institutional support.

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