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**Language Endangerment and Revitalization: Causes,
Consequences, and Global Responses**



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Abstract

Of the roughly 7,000 languages spoken in the world today, linguists estimate that between half and ninety percent will no longer be spoken by the end of this century. This article synthesizes research on language endangerment as a concrete, real-world problem in linguistics rather than an abstract concern. It first defines and operationalizes language endangerment using established vitality frameworks, then examines the primary drivers of language shift, including colonization and forced assimilation, economic and educational pressure, urbanization, and digital exclusion. It reviews what is lost when a language falls silent, presents three case studies of language shift and reversal (Hebrew, Welsh, and Hawaiian), and evaluates the documentation and revitalization strategies linguists and communities use in response, along with critical perspectives on their limitations. The article concludes that language endangerment is not primarily a linguistic problem but a social and political one, and that its outcomes depend less on the internal structure of a language than on the institutional support and intergenerational will available to sustain it.

Keywords: Language endangerment, language death, language revitalization, linguistic diversity, sociolinguistics, language policy

Introduction

Somewhere in the world today, the last fluent speaker of a language will wake up with no one left to talk to in their native tongue. This is not a hypothetical scenario. Linguists estimate that of the roughly 7,000 languages spoken globally, between 50% and 90% may fall silent by the year 2100, with a language disappearing on average every few weeks (Krauss, 1992; Harrison, 2007). Language endangerment is frequently treated in popular discourse as a matter of nostalgia, the regrettable but ultimately minor cost of modernization and global connectivity. Within linguistics, however, it is increasingly understood as an active, measurable crisis with identifiable causes, well-documented consequences, and a growing body of practice aimed at reversing it (Hale, 1992; Simons & Fennig, 2023).

This article reviews that body of work with three goals. First, it establishes how linguists define and measure endangerment, moving beyond the intuitive but imprecise notion of a “dying language.” Second, it examines the social, political, and economic forces that drive language shift, and what is lost, culturally and

epistemically, when a language ceases to be spoken. Third, it considers how communities and linguists have responded, using three well-documented cases, Hebrew, Welsh, and Hawaiian, to illustrate that language shift, while common, is not always irreversible.

Although previous studies have examined language endangerment from sociolinguistic, policy, and documentation-focused perspectives (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Krauss, 1992), relatively few have comparatively analyzed language revitalization cases through the combined lens of language ecology theory and Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, and fewer still have connected that theoretical comparison to the more recent literature on digital and AI-assisted revitalization strategies emerging since 2020 (Meighan, 2021; Low et al., 2022; Mager et al., 2023). This article addresses that gap through a comparative synthesis of Hebrew, Welsh, and Hawaiian, interpreted through both theoretical frameworks and situated within the current digital revitalization literature.

Research Questions

RQ1: How is language endangerment defined and measured within linguistic theory, and which indicators best capture a language's long-term vitality?

RQ2: What social, political, and economic mechanisms drive the shift from a vital language toward endangerment and eventual extinction?

RQ3: Under what theoretical conditions has documented language shift been slowed, stabilized, or reversed, and what do such cases share that distinguishes them from cases of continued decline?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this article is to synthesize existing theoretical and empirical research on language endangerment in order to identify the conditions under which language shift can be stabilized or reversed. This general objective is pursued through four specific objectives:

- To review established frameworks for defining and measuring language vitality, specifically UNESCO's (2003) six-degree vitality scale and Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale.
- To identify and explain the primary causal mechanisms of language endangerment documented in the literature, including colonization, economic and educational pressure, urbanization, and digital exclusion.
- To examine three documented cases of language stabilization or revival,

Hebrew, Welsh, and Hawaiian, through the combined lens of language ecology theory and the GIDS framework.

Significance of the Study

This synthesis carries both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it tests whether two frameworks developed somewhat independently, language ecology theory (Haugen, 1972) and the GIDS model (Fishman, 1991), converge on a consistent explanation when applied jointly across cases from unrelated linguistic and political contexts; convergence of this kind strengthens confidence in intergenerational transmission, rather than institutional recognition or raw speaker counts, as the decisive variable in language survival. Practically, the findings are relevant to three audiences. For linguists and documentary fieldworkers, the analysis clarifies which forms of intervention are most likely to alter a language's trajectory rather than merely record it. For education policymakers, the case comparisons indicate at what stage in a language's decline a given policy tool, such as immersion schooling versus symbolic official status, is likely to be effective. For communities engaged in their own revitalization efforts, the analysis offers a comparative basis for evaluating which strategies used elsewhere are most transferable to their own circumstances, and which, such as aspects of the Hebrew case, are not.

Theoretical Framework

This article draws on two complementary theoretical traditions. The first is the ecology of language framework, which treats a language's vitality as a function of its interaction with other languages and institutions within a given social environment, rather than as a fixed property of the language itself (Haugen, 1972; Mühlhäusler, 1996). Under this framework, endangerment is analogous to a niche contraction: a language loses ground not because it is structurally weaker than a competing language, but because the social functions, or “domains,” it once occupied, such as education, government, and media, are progressively reassigned to a dominant language.

The second is Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), introduced above, which operationalizes language vitality as a function of intergenerational transmission specifically, rather than aggregate speaker numbers or institutional recognition alone. GIDS treats reversing language shift as a staged process: interventions are most effective when they target the specific stage of disruption a language is experiencing, and efforts aimed at a later stage, such as introducing a language into higher education or national government, are unlikely to

succeed if the earlier, more fundamental stage of transmission within the home has not first been secured (Fishman, 1991).

Together, these two frameworks generate the analytical lens applied to the case studies below: language ecology theory explains why a language loses ground in the first place, by identifying which domains it has been displaced from, while the GIDS framework predicts which interventions are likely to be effective, by identifying which stage of intergenerational disruption a revitalization effort must address.

Methodology

This article is a narrative literature review rather than a systematic review or original empirical study. A narrative approach was chosen because the purpose of the article is theoretical synthesis, applying two established frameworks jointly across cases, rather than exhaustive quantitative aggregation of a single, narrowly defined research question, which is the typical goal of a systematic review (Grant & Booth, 2009).

Sources were identified through Google Scholar, JSTOR, and the Linguistic Society of America's Language journal archive, using search terms including "language endangerment," "language revitalization," "language vitality," "Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale," "language ecology," and "digital language revitalization." Reference lists of retrieved sources were also hand-searched to identify additional relevant work, a snowball technique commonly used in narrative reviews to supplement database searches (Grant & Booth, 2009).

Sources were included if they (a) were published in a peer-reviewed journal, university press monograph, or UNESCO or SIL International reference publication; (b) directly addressed language endangerment, vitality measurement, or revitalization; and (c) in the case of the three focal cases, provided empirical or historical detail on the Hebrew, Welsh, or Hawaiian language situations specifically. Sources were excluded if they addressed multilingualism or second-language acquisition without reference to endangerment or vitality, or if they could not be verified against a publisher or indexing record. In total, 23 sources met these criteria and are cited throughout the review; four of these, addressing digital and AI-assisted revitalization, were published between 2021 and 2023 to ensure the review reflects developments since the foundational frameworks (Haugen, 1972; Fishman, 1991) were first introduced.

As a narrative synthesis, this review does not apply a formal quality-appraisal instrument or report inter-rater reliability, and it does not claim to be exhaustive of the

field. Its contribution is interpretive: connecting sources that have not previously been read jointly against the same theoretical framework, rather than aggregating effect sizes or outcomes across a predefined set of comparable studies.

Defining and Measuring Language Endangerment

Not all languages under pressure are equally at risk, and linguists have developed formal frameworks to classify a language's vitality rather than relying on impressionistic judgments. UNESCO's widely used scale identifies six degrees of vitality, ranging from “safe”, spoken by all generations, through “vulnerable”, “definitely”, “severely”, and “critically endangered”, to “extinct.” Classification depends on factors including intergenerational transmission, the absolute number of speakers, the proportion of speakers within the total population, and the range of domains, such as the home, school, workplace, and media, in which the language is still actively used (UNESCO, 2003; Moseley, 2010).

A related and highly influential framework is Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), which treats intergenerational transmission, whether parents are raising children in the language, as the single most decisive indicator of a language's long-term survival. A language can have thousands of speakers and still be endangered if none of them are children; conversely, a language with very few speakers can, in principle, stabilize if transmission to the next generation is actively maintained. This distinction matters because it shifts the analytical focus from raw speaker counts, the statistic most often cited in the popular press, to the structural conditions that determine whether a language has a future (Fishman, 1991; Romaine, 2007).

Applying these frameworks at a global scale reveals a striking imbalance in linguistic diversity: approximately 96% of the world's languages are spoken by only about 4% of its population, while a small number of dominant languages, including English, Mandarin, Spanish, and Hindi, account for the majority of speakers worldwide (Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Simons & Fennig, 2023). This concentration means that most of the world's linguistic diversity is carried by small, and often already shrinking, speech communities, which are disproportionately vulnerable to the pressures discussed in the next section.

Causes of Language Endangerment

A language rarely disappears because it is somehow linguistically inadequate. Every studied language, regardless of how few speakers it retains, constitutes a complete

grammatical system capable of expressing the full range of human experience and abstract thought (Evans, 2010; Mühlhäusler, 1996). Endangerment is therefore best understood not as a property of languages themselves but as an outcome of social, political, and economic pressure on the communities that speak them. Four overlapping causes recur across the literature.

Colonization and Forced Assimilation

Historically, the most aggressive driver of language loss has been deliberate state policy aimed at suppressing minority and Indigenous languages. Residential and boarding school systems in settler-colonial states, including the United States, Canada, and Australia, routinely punished children for speaking their home language, removing them from their families for extended periods specifically to interrupt transmission (Fishman, 1991; Crystal, 2000). These policies did not merely discourage a language; by targeting children during the exact window in which intergenerational transmission occurs, they were structurally designed to sever it. Mühlhäusler (1996) documents comparable dynamics in the Pacific region, where colonial administrations actively promoted a small number of contact languages at the expense of hundreds of local ones.

Economic and Educational Pressure

Even absent explicit suppression, families frequently shift toward a dominant language because it is tied to employment, formal education, and social mobility. Where schooling, government services, and media operate exclusively in a majority language, parents may reasonably conclude that raising children in that language will better serve their prospects, even at the cost of the heritage language (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). This dynamic is self-reinforcing: as fewer children acquire the heritage language, its practical utility declines further, accelerating the shift toward the dominant language across successive generations (Romaine, 2007).

Urbanization and Migration

As speakers relocate from rural, linguistically concentrated communities into cities, they are typically dispersed among speakers of other languages, which weakens the dense, localized social networks that everyday language use depends on. Nettle and Romaine (2000) argue that this dispersal is particularly damaging because minority languages are often sustained less by formal institutions than by informal, high-frequency interaction, precisely the kind of interaction that urban migration disrupts.

Media and Digital Exclusion

Languages without a meaningful presence in broadcast media, print, or digital technology face a compounding disadvantage. Younger speakers, who increasingly conduct much of their social and informational life through digital platforms, have progressively fewer everyday occasions to use a language that is absent from those platforms, which accelerates generational shift toward digitally dominant languages (Harrison, 2007). This factor has become more significant since the frameworks above were first developed, and recent work treats digital vitality as an increasingly important, if still under-measured, component of overall language vitality (Simons & Fennig, 2023).

Table 1 summarizes these four causes and their primary effect on language vitality, illustrating how each mechanism operates through a distinct pathway even though all four ultimately reduce opportunities for intergenerational transmission.

Table 1: ***Primary Causes of Language Endangerment and Their Effects***

Cause	Primary Effect on Language Vitality
Colonization and forced assimilation	Interrupted intergenerational transmission; punitive suppression of home-language use
Economic and educational pressure	Gradual family-level shift toward the dominant language for schooling and employment
Urbanization and migration	Dispersal of speakers; weakened informal, high-frequency social networks
Media and digital exclusion	Reduced everyday relevance for younger speakers; accelerated generational shift

Consequences of Language Loss

The disappearance of a language is not simply the loss of a communication tool; it is the loss of a particular, often irreplaceable, system for organizing and transmitting knowledge. Endangered languages frequently encode detailed ecological and botanical classification systems, kinship structures, oral histories, and culturally specific problem-solving strategies that have no equivalent record in any other language (Harrison, 2007; Evans, 2010). Harrison's (2007) fieldwork among speakers of highly endangered languages documents cases in which unique taxonomies of local

plant and animal life, developed over centuries of close environmental observation, exist nowhere outside the endangered language itself.

This knowledge is generally unrecoverable once the last fluent speaker dies without transmitting the language, since even careful linguistic documentation captures only a partial record of what fluent, spontaneous, everyday use of a language contains (Krauss, 1992). Beyond the loss of specific content, scholars also point to a loss of linguistic diversity as a resource in its own right: comparative linguistics, cognitive science, and the study of human language capacity more broadly depend on access to a wide range of structurally different languages, and each language lost narrows the empirical basis on which such research can draw (Evans, 2010; Hale, 1992).

Case Studies in Language Shift and Reversal

While the trend toward language loss is broad and well documented, it is not universally irreversible. Three cases, spanning very different political and historical contexts, illustrate both the severity of the problem and the range of possible responses to it.

Hebrew: Revival After Near-Total Disuse

Hebrew is the most frequently cited example of successful large-scale language revitalization. Having functioned for roughly 1,700 years primarily as a liturgical and literary language rather than a vernacular, Hebrew was revived as a spoken first language beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries through a deliberate, ideologically driven movement, and became the daily language of a new national community in Israel within a few generations (Zuckermann, 2020). Zuckermann's (2020) analysis emphasizes that this case, while inspirational, is also atypical: it involved an unusual combination of a strong existing literary corpus, a highly motivated and centrally organized speaker population, and state-level institutional support that most endangered language communities lack.

Welsh: Institutional Support for an Endangered Vernacular

Welsh illustrates a different trajectory: a living vernacular that declined steadily under English-language dominance in education and administration but was stabilized, rather than revived from dormancy, through sustained policy intervention. Welsh-medium education, official bilingual status, and Welsh-language broadcasting were introduced over several decades in response to advocacy and legislation, and the proportion of Welsh speakers, while still a minority within Wales, has shown signs of

stabilization in some regions as a direct result of these institutional commitments (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

Hawaiian: Community-Led Immersion from a Critically Endangered Base

Hawaiian had declined to fewer than 50 child speakers by the early 1980s, placing it among the most severely endangered languages in the world at that time. Its subsequent partial recovery is attributed largely to grassroots ‘Aha Pūnana Leo language-nest preschools, which immersed young children in Hawaiian from infancy, followed by the development of Hawaiian-medium schooling through the secondary level (Hinton & Hale, 2001). Unlike the Hebrew case, the Hawaiian effort began without state backing and depended on sustained community organizing before achieving formal institutional recognition, illustrating that revitalization can originate from the community level even under adverse initial conditions.

Responses: Documentation and Revitalization

Building on lessons from cases such as these, linguists and communities have developed a range of practical responses to endangerment, which are generally grouped into documentation and revitalization.

Documentation

Field linguists work with remaining fluent speakers to record vocabulary, grammar, narrative, and naturalistic speech before a language falls silent, producing dictionaries, reference grammars, and audio or video archives intended to preserve as much of the language as possible even where fluent, everyday use does not continue (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Documentation is generally treated as a necessary but insufficient response on its own: it preserves a record of a language but does not, by itself, sustain it as a living means of communication (Krauss, 1992).

Revitalization

Revitalization efforts aim to rebuild active, intergenerational transmission rather than only archive what remains. Common strategies include language-nest immersion programs for young children, modeled on the Hawaiian and Māori examples; master-apprentice programs that pair fluent elders with adult learners in sustained one-on-one immersion; and Indigenous-language immersion schooling through the primary and secondary levels (Hinton & Hale, 2001; Spolsky, 2003). Spolsky's (2003) assessment of Māori language regeneration in New Zealand similarly credits language-nest programs, known locally as Kōhanga Reo, with reversing a decline that formal schooling alone had failed to halt, while also noting that sustaining gains made in

early childhood immersion into adolescence and adulthood remains an ongoing challenge.

Policy Change

Some governments have reversed earlier suppression policies by granting minority languages official status, funding bilingual or immersion education, and supporting language use in courts, government services, and public media. Fishman's (1991) framework for reversing language shift treats such institutional support as an important condition for stabilizing an endangered language, but stresses that policy change alone is generally insufficient without corresponding commitment at the level of the family and community, where intergenerational transmission actually occurs.

Results

Synthesizing the case comparisons and the broader literature reviewed above yields four principal findings, corresponding directly to the research questions posed at the outset.

- Finding 1 (addressing RQ1): Vitality frameworks that incorporate intergenerational transmission as a distinct variable, rather than relying on aggregate speaker counts alone, more accurately distinguish languages that later stabilized from those that continued to decline. In each case examined, GIDS stage at the point of intervention was a better predictor of subsequent trajectory than the absolute number of remaining speakers (Fishman, 1991).
- Finding 2 (addressing RQ2): Language shift in all three cases, and across the broader literature, traces to the same underlying mechanism identified by language ecology theory, the reassignment of social domains, such as education, government, and media, from the endangered language to a dominant one, even where the specific historical driver of that reassignment, colonization, urbanization, or economic pressure, differed (Haugen, 1972; Mühlhäusler, 1996).
- Finding 3 (addressing RQ3): Stabilization or reversal occurred only in cases where intergenerational transmission was directly and deliberately targeted, whether through early childhood immersion (Hawaiian, Māori), legislated institutional recognition (Welsh), or, in the Hebrew case, the reconstruction of transmission from a dormant literary base. Interventions documented in the literature that addressed only symbolic recognition or adult instruction, without a corresponding transmission-focused effort, were consistently associated with continued decline (Krauss, 1992; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

- Finding 4: The Hebrew case, while the most widely cited example of successful revitalization, does not generalize well to typical endangered-language contexts, since its initial conditions, a substantial literary corpus, a centrally organized and ideologically motivated speaker population, and eventual state sponsorship, are largely absent in most contemporary endangerment cases (Zuckermann, 2020; Romaine, 2007).

Analysis

Applying the theoretical framework above to the three cases makes it possible to compare them on a common basis rather than as isolated success stories. Read through language ecology theory, each case represents the recovery of a specific social domain rather than a uniform recovery of the language as a whole. Hebrew's revival is best characterized as the creation of an entirely new domain, a national vernacular, where essentially none had existed for centuries; Welsh's stabilization reflects the deliberate re-assignment of the education and broadcasting domains from English back to Welsh through legislation; and Hawaiian's recovery began narrowly, within the single domain of early childhood care, before expanding into primary and secondary schooling (Haugen, 1972; Zuckermann, 2020; Fishman, 1991; Hinton & Hale, 2001).

Read through Fishman's (1991) GIDS framework, the three cases also differ in which stage of disruption they primarily addressed. The Hawaiian and Māori language-nest movements targeted the most fundamental stage, transmission to children within an immersive environment, before any formal institutional recognition existed, which is consistent with Fishman's claim that this stage is the necessary foundation for higher-stage interventions (Hinton & Hale, 2001; Spolsky, 2003). Welsh, by contrast, addressed transmission and institutional domains simultaneously, using legislation to secure both Welsh-medium schooling and broadcast media at once (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Hebrew is the outlier: because it lacked a living vernacular speech community at the outset, its revival required constructing intergenerational transmission from a largely dormant literary base rather than reinforcing an existing but weakening one, which is part of why Zuckermann (2020) and Romaine (2007) treat it as a poor general template for other endangered languages.

This comparison supports the research question posed above: across all three cases, stabilization or reversal occurred only where intergenerational transmission was

directly and deliberately targeted, whether through immersion, legislation, or, in the Hebrew case, wholesale reconstruction. Cases in the broader literature that rely primarily on documentation, symbolic recognition, or adult-only instruction, without a corresponding effort to secure transmission to children, are consistently associated with continued decline rather than stabilization (Krauss, 1992; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006), which suggests that intergenerational transmission, rather than raw speaker counts or institutional prestige, is the decisive variable identified by the theoretical framework.

Discussion

The Limits of Revitalization

The cases above should not be read as evidence that revitalization is straightforward or that it succeeds uniformly. Romaine (2007) cautions that Hebrew's revival, in particular, is often invoked as a template in ways that overstate its replicability, given the unusual historical, institutional, and demographic conditions that supported it. Most endangered language communities do not have access to comparable resources, and many revitalization programs operate with only a handful of remaining fluent elders, limited funding, and no equivalent of state sponsorship.

Even in comparatively well-resourced cases such as Welsh and Māori, scholars note that gains achieved in early childhood or school-based immersion do not automatically translate into use of the language across all adult domains, including the workplace and informal social life, without which a language remains institutionally supported but not fully vital in Fishman's (1991) sense (Spolsky, 2003). This suggests that successful revitalization is best understood not as a single achievable outcome but as a continuing, resource-intensive process, one that can stall or reverse if institutional and community support is not sustained across generations.

Globalization: Threat and Opportunity

Globalization is often treated as a uniformly negative force in the endangerment literature, since the same economic and media integration that spreads dominant languages into new domains is a primary mechanism of the niche contraction described by language ecology theory (Haugen, 1972; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). At the same time, globalization has lowered the cost of connecting dispersed speakers of a minority language with one another across long distances, a capability that did not meaningfully exist prior to global digital networks. Whether globalization functions primarily as a threat or an opportunity for a given language therefore appears to

depend on whether a community can convert global connectivity into renewed domains of use, rather than simply greater exposure to dominant languages (Meighan, 2021).

Artificial Intelligence and Language Preservation

A growing body of recent work examines artificial intelligence, particularly natural language processing and neural machine translation, as a tool for documenting and teaching endangered languages more efficiently than traditional fieldwork alone allows (Mager et al., 2023; Haokip, 2022). These tools can accelerate transcription, generate draft dictionaries, and support translation into a dominant language, which may lower the resource barrier that Romaine (2007) identifies as central to why the Hebrew case has not generalized well. However, this literature also raises new concerns specific to AI, including the risk of AI-generated learning materials that are linguistically inaccurate or produced without community involvement, which can undermine trust in legitimate revitalization work (Low et al., 2022). Consistent with Fishman's (1991) emphasis on intergenerational transmission, current assessments generally treat AI as a potential aid to documentation and instruction rather than a substitute for direct transmission between speakers and children (Mager et al., 2023).

Social Media as a Revitalization Tool

Social media platforms have become a documented site of everyday revitalization activity, particularly among younger speakers who might otherwise have few informal opportunities to use an endangered language outside the classroom. Chew's (2021) study of Indigenous language activity on social media during the early COVID-19 pandemic found a substantial increase in the use of digital platforms to sustain language teaching and informal use when in-person instruction was unavailable, suggesting that social media can extend, though not replace, the informal social domains that language ecology theory identifies as essential to vitality (Haugen, 1972; Chew, 2021). This is consistent with the broader argument, advanced above, that revitalization succeeds when it targets intergenerational and everyday transmission specifically, since social media use appears most effective precisely where it recreates informal, high-frequency interaction among younger speakers rather than functioning only as an archive.

Future Prospects for Endangered Languages

Taken together, the digital and AI-focused literature reviewed here suggests that the tools available for both documentation and revitalization have expanded meaningfully

since the foundational frameworks used in this article were first developed, but that the underlying theoretical requirement identified by both frameworks, sustained intergenerational transmission, has not changed. The most plausible near-term trajectory for most of the world's endangered languages is neither the wholesale reversal achieved in the Hebrew case nor unchecked decline, but continued reliance on documentation to preserve a record of languages that stabilize only partially, alongside a smaller number of communities that succeed, as Hawaiian and Māori have, in rebuilding transmission through sustained, resource-intensive, community-led effort supported by digital tools rather than replaced by them (Mager et al., 2023; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

Conclusion

Language endangerment is a real-world problem with measurable causes and consequences: it results from identifiable social and political pressures rather than any deficiency in the languages themselves, and it carries real costs for the communities whose history and identity are carried in a language, as well as for the broader human record of ecological, cultural, and cognitive knowledge that languages encode. It is also, the cases of Hebrew, Welsh, and Hawaiian suggest, not always a one-way process. What determines the outcome in any given case is less the internal structure of the language than the institutional support and sustained intergenerational commitment available to it. This is why linguists increasingly treat language endangerment not as a background fact about linguistic diversity, but as one of the field's most urgent and practically consequential areas of research.

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