

## **Problematizing language and revitalization:**

### **Why language documentation hits a wall in revitalization**

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Language documentation and revitalization research gives us a great opportunity to utilize our expertise in contributing to solutions to the serious worldwide social problem of language/culture endangerment.

Language documentation places its central focus on the creation of rich, authentic, multipurpose records of the target language. This represents a major shift from traditional descriptive and theoretical linguistic work which focuses on analyses and abstract patterns behind the observed linguistic facts. The strong emphasis placed on primary data in language documentation is undoubtedly driven by a sense of responsibility for addressing the problem of language endangerment.

Language documentation research is committed to creating records and knowledge of the heritage language for its preservation and revitalization. In that sense, we can say that language documentation research is done in connection to and in service of preservation and revitalization. It is therefore not surprising that language documentation and language revitalization are often talked about in combination and are perhaps perceived as a single set of research activities. Many researchers, especially those who have worked extensively on grammar, tend to assume that the products of language documentation research would automatically benefit revitalization. However, we often encounter situations where the outcome of documentation research fails to make an impact on revitalization activities in the community. This occurs frequently enough to suggest that it is a systematic problem. In this talk, I will discuss issues with the common conceptions of ‘language’ and ‘revitalization’ as sources of this problem.