



Workshop Briefing Report 1

Workshop theme: Language revitalisation, mobility and the transformation of community

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Executive summary

- This paper reports on the deliberations of the **Revitalise** project's first workshop held at Aberystwyth University on 22-23 May 2017. The workshop was entitled '**Language revitalisation, mobility and the transformation of community**', and its aim was to provide an opportunity to reflect critically on recent changes in notions of community and their implications for our understanding of how to approach language revitalisation. Key conclusions arising from the workshop are listed below.
- **Territorial and networked understandings of community and space (pp. 5-7).** Traditional territory-based understandings of the factors influencing language vitality continue to hold relevance. At the same time, consideration needs to be given to how a rise in personal mobility and changes in the nature of social relations are impacting people's language practices. On this basis, it is necessary to develop understandings of the factors influencing language vitality that combine traditional territorial narratives with consideration of more networked understandings of space and society.
- **Language use and online social networks (pp. 7-8).** Research indicates that the single biggest factor influencing the language choices of minority language speakers across social media platforms is the nature of the intended audience. Therefore efforts to promote minority language use on social media should focus on seeking to create spaces or situations where the 'share of voice' enjoyed by the minority language is increased.
- **Migration, multiculturalism and language revitalisation (pp. 8-11).** Language revitalisation efforts are now taking place within increasingly multilingual and multi-ethnic contexts, rather than the more traditional context of majority-minority bilingualism. Consequently, greater consideration should be given to whether policies and strategies designed to promote immigrant integration cohere with those that promote language revitalisation. In addition, efforts to promote minority language acquisition should give consideration to the pedagogical questions that arise when introducing the target language to 'new speakers' who have very diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- **Aspects of the practice of minority language revitalisation (pp. 11-13).** The 'professionalisation' of language revitalisation efforts is a trend that has become increasingly evident over recent years. Such a trend brings benefits, yet it can also give rise to tensions. Moreover, broad public engagement in different language revitalisation initiatives remains vital. Yet, the general decline witnessed in many locations in levels of civic participation and the robustness of social capital means that maintaining such broad engagement is likely to be a challenge.
- **Methodological issues (p. 13).** Research seeking to assess levels of language ability and language use should be based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Also, given the emergence of increasingly mobile and networked social practices, use of ethnographic methods could help to uncover the factors that influence people's day-to-day language use practices. Yet, such work should be combined with more longitudinal research that considers the potential influence of some key decision junctures that arise during life, which can hold linguistic significance.