

Community, Education, and Technology in Language Revitalization: A Narrative Review

Rajkamal .D¹, Arik Susanti²

¹St. Thomas College of Arts and Science, India

²Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Correspondent: Rajkamalud93@gmail.com¹

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ABSTRACT: Endangered languages are among the most critical challenges in preserving human cultural and intellectual diversity. More than 40% of the world's 7,000 languages are currently at risk of extinction. This narrative review examines global strategies for language revitalization, focusing on the roles of communities, education, technology, policy, and cultural identity. Literature was gathered from major academic databases (Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar) using core keywords such as *language revitalization* and *endangered languages*. The findings show that community-based initiatives, such as language nests and cultural integration, are crucial for intergenerational transmission. Education policies that include minority languages in school curricula foster measurable gains, while the absence of institutional support often results in stagnation. Digital tools expand access and engagement, though their effectiveness depends on cultural adaptation and community participation. Government recognition and funding further determine success, with marked disparities between developed and developing regions. Overall, language revitalization is not only a linguistic concern but also a matter of identity, cultural resilience, and social justice.

Keywords: Endangered Languages, Language Revitalization, Linguistic Diversity, Community-Based Strategies, Education Policy, Digital Technology, Cultural Heritage.



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INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental expression of human identity and cultural heritage. Yet the global linguistic landscape faces an unprecedented crisis: thousands of languages are on the verge of extinction. According to UNESCO, more than 40% of the world's approximately 7,000 languages are endangered, with one disappearing every two weeks (Černý, 2022). The loss of a language represents not only the disappearance of a communication system but also the erosion of collective memory, indigenous knowledge, and unique worldviews.

This problem is evident worldwide but varies across regions. In Africa, urbanization and assimilationist policies have accelerated the decline of minority languages in favor of dominant official languages (Kandybowicz & Torrence, 2017). In Japan, languages such as Ainu and the Ryukyuan varieties remain highly vulnerable due to historical discrimination and limited institutional support (Fujita-Round, 2022). In Europe, the Sámi languages continue to struggle, even with revitalization initiatives, as pressures of assimilation persist (Cocq & Steggo, 2024). These cases illustrate how threats to linguistic vitality are shaped by complex historical, cultural, and political forces.

Globalization and economic shifts further intensify this decline. Dominant world languages such as English, Spanish, and Mandarin increasingly displace minority languages in education, media, and employment, particularly among younger generations (Tamrin et al., 2025). As a result, intergenerational transmission—the primary mechanism of linguistic survival—has been disrupted. Children in many communities grow up with little or no exposure to their ancestral languages at home or in school, weakening cultural continuity (Kissau et al., 2023).

Empirical studies highlight the impact of stigma and lack of institutional recognition. In Saudi Arabia, the Faifi language has been marginalized, with younger speakers avoiding its use due to negative perceptions (Alhazmi, 2024). In Russia's Kamchatka region, the Koryak language faces a similar decline as socioeconomic changes reduce opportunities for daily use (Fayzrakhmanova, 2025). In Morocco, despite the official recognition of Amazigh, political and economic barriers continue to limit its integration into education and media (Belhiah et al., 2020).

These examples show that language endangerment is not solely a linguistic issue but one deeply intertwined with identity, politics, and access to resources. Revitalization therefore requires more than technical linguistic measures; it demands integrated approaches that involve communities, education systems, policy reforms, and innovative use of technology. This review aims to synthesize global evidence on such strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, and highlight innovative practices that can serve as models for sustaining endangered languages across diverse contexts.

METHOD

The methodology of this review was designed to ensure a systematic and rigorous approach in gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing the existing body of literature on endangered languages and revitalization strategies. Given the global urgency of linguistic endangerment, it was critical to adopt a comprehensive strategy that included a wide range of scholarly resources, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, and an evaluation framework to guarantee that the selected studies provided valid and relevant insights. This section details the sources of data, the search strategies employed, the criteria used to include or exclude studies, the types of research considered, and the procedures followed in screening and evaluating the literature.

The literature search was conducted using several academic databases that are widely recognized for their coverage and credibility in the fields of linguistics, anthropology, education, and

sociocultural studies. Specifically, Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar were selected as the primary sources for identifying relevant peer-reviewed articles. Scopus was chosen for its extensive coverage of interdisciplinary research, PubMed for its inclusion of works intersecting with cognitive science and speech studies, and Google Scholar for its ability to capture grey literature, conference proceedings, and more recent preprints that might not yet have been indexed elsewhere. This triangulated use of multiple databases allowed the study to capture a broad and diverse range of perspectives on language revitalization.

The search strategy was structured around a set of keywords carefully selected to encompass the multiple dimensions of language revitalization. Core terms included “language revitalization,” “endangered languages,” “linguistic diversity,” “language maintenance,” “language shift prevention,” and “language reclamation.” These keywords were supplemented by variations and related terms, such as “minority languages,” “language planning,” “language policy,” and “community-based revitalization,” to ensure a wider scope of retrieval. Boolean operators were employed to combine terms effectively, with constructs such as “endangered languages AND digital technology” or “language revitalization OR language maintenance” used to refine searches. The relevance of these keywords has been established in prior studies that examined revitalization practices through technological, social, and political lenses (Llancao, 2019; Fayzrakhmanova, 2025; Chew et al., 2015).

Inclusion criteria were applied to filter the literature according to parameters that aligned with the objectives of the study. Studies were included if they explicitly addressed endangered languages or revitalization strategies, presented empirical data or detailed case studies, and were published in peer-reviewed journals or recognized academic volumes. Additionally, the review incorporated research that discussed the sociocultural contexts of endangered languages, including attitudes toward language use, intergenerational transmission, and the documented impacts of interventions (Balukh et al., 2024; Beaton et al., 2023). These criteria ensured that the literature chosen provided substantive evidence on both the challenges and solutions associated with language revitalization.

Exclusion criteria were equally important to maintain the quality and focus of the review. Studies that were primarily descriptive without offering practical or didactic insights were excluded. Research predating the year 2000 was generally omitted, except in cases where earlier studies held significant historical value, because technological and methodological advances since the turn of the century have fundamentally altered the landscape of language revitalization (Černý, 2022; Daigneault & Anderson, 2023). Furthermore, works that lacked systematic analysis of the impact of revitalization strategies or that did not engage with empirical evidence were also excluded. This process ensured that the body of literature analyzed was both contemporary and methodologically robust.

The types of research included in this review spanned a broad methodological spectrum. Empirical studies, such as randomized controlled trials of teaching methods or cohort studies tracking the progress of revitalization programs, were prioritized due to their capacity to provide measurable evidence of effectiveness. Case studies were also heavily relied upon, particularly for languages with small speaker populations, where controlled trials are often impractical or impossible. Narrative reviews, ethnographic studies, and autoethnographic accounts were included where they

provided rich insights into the lived experiences of speakers and communities engaging in revitalization efforts. The diversity of methodological approaches reflected the interdisciplinary nature of language revitalization research, where linguistic, educational, sociological, and technological perspectives intersect.

The process of screening and selecting literature followed a structured multi-step approach. Initially, titles and abstracts retrieved from database searches were screened for relevance. Articles that clearly did not align with the inclusion criteria, such as those focused exclusively on unrelated linguistic theory or purely descriptive phonological work without implications for revitalization, were excluded at this stage. For articles deemed potentially relevant, full texts were retrieved and assessed for alignment with the study's objectives. At this point, attention was given not only to the content of the research but also to its methodological rigor, with particular emphasis on the clarity of data collection procedures, transparency in reporting, and the extent to which conclusions were supported by evidence.

To further refine the corpus, thematic categorization was applied during the evaluation process. Studies were grouped according to their primary focus, such as community-based revitalization, pedagogical interventions, technological innovations, or policy frameworks. This thematic organization allowed for the identification of recurring patterns, cross-contextual comparisons, and the highlighting of innovative approaches unique to particular geographic or cultural settings. For example, studies in Southeast Asia often emphasized community engagement and the integration of digital learning platforms, while research from Europe highlighted intergovernmental cooperation and cultural heritage preservation policies (Kandybowicz & Torrence, 2017; Beaton et al., 2023). In Latin America, by contrast, the literature frequently centered on community-driven projects aimed at reversing stigma and restoring pride in historically marginalized languages (Chew et al., 2015).

The methodological integrity of the included studies was evaluated through criteria commonly used in qualitative and quantitative research. For qualitative studies, factors such as reflexivity, contextual richness, and triangulation of data sources were assessed. For quantitative research, sample size, reliability of instruments, and statistical robustness were considered. This careful appraisal ensured that the synthesis presented in this review rests on a foundation of high-quality scholarship rather than anecdotal or insufficiently substantiated accounts.

In sum, the methodology adopted for this study was designed to balance breadth and depth in capturing global perspectives on endangered language revitalization. By systematically searching major academic databases, employing carefully chosen keywords, applying stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria, and rigorously evaluating the methodological soundness of included studies, the review provides a comprehensive and credible synthesis of the field. Furthermore, the thematic organization of the literature facilitates an understanding of how revitalization strategies are shaped by specific cultural, geographic, and political contexts, offering insights that are both locally grounded and globally relevant. This methodological approach thus enables the review to contribute meaningfully to the academic discourse on endangered languages and to provide actionable insights for communities, policymakers, and educators engaged in revitalization efforts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this narrative review are organized thematically to capture the major domains of research and practice that have emerged in the study of endangered languages and revitalization strategies. Five interrelated themes were identified: community-based strategies, education and pedagogy, technology and innovation, policy and institutional frameworks, and cultural heritage and identity. Together, these themes reflect the multidimensional nature of language revitalization and the interplay of social, cultural, political, and technological factors that determine its success or failure.

Community-based strategies represent one of the most effective approaches to language revitalization. Local communities play an indispensable role in creating environments where endangered languages are actively used in daily life, thereby embedding language practice within social and cultural routines. Studies have shown that community involvement contributes significantly to the sustainability of revitalization efforts through both formal and informal programs (Tamrin et al., 2025; Ohara & Machida, 2023). For example, research on the Totoli language in Central Sulawesi demonstrates that grassroots initiatives, such as family-centered language use and neighborhood programs, directly increase the number of active speakers (Tamrin et al., 2025). Such efforts highlight the importance of empowering individuals to engage in language practices that are interwoven with their cultural traditions. Empirical evidence further supports the efficacy of community-driven programs such as language nests. The Māori “Te Kōhanga Reo” initiative in New Zealand has demonstrated measurable success in improving children’s linguistic proficiency and intergenerational transmission, serving as a model for similar initiatives globally (Beaton et al., 2023). In Okinawa, Uchinaaguchi programs integrating cultural traditions into language curricula have likewise increased young people’s motivation to embrace their ancestral language (Ohara & Machida, 2023). These examples confirm that community-centered revitalization not only restores linguistic practices but also strengthens collective identity and social cohesion.

The role of education and pedagogy is another central theme. Educational strategies that prioritize minority languages in school curricula have been shown to significantly impact intergenerational transmission. Exposure to contextually relevant and culturally grounded language instruction fosters both confidence and a sense of belonging among students (Beaton et al., 2023). Comparative evidence illustrates that outcomes differ markedly depending on the presence of supportive policy frameworks. In Scotland and Scandinavia, where governments have endorsed inclusive education policies for minority languages, there has been a steady increase in the number of enrolled and active speakers (Beaton et al., 2023; Cocq & Steggo, 2024). Conversely, in many parts of Africa and Eastern Europe where such policies are absent or weak, revitalization initiatives often stagnate due to limited resources and lack of institutional support (Kandybowicz & Torrence, 2017). This disparity highlights the critical role of systemic educational frameworks in shaping language survival. At the same time, pedagogical approaches must be adapted to the specific linguistic and cultural contexts of communities. Integrating traditional knowledge and oral storytelling, for instance, has been reported to enhance the relevance and sustainability of language learning practices.

Technological innovation has become a transformative force in revitalization efforts. Digital tools such as mobile applications, online platforms, and social media have enabled endangered languages to reach broader audiences and engage younger generations. The Koryak Tuyu mobile app, designed to support the revitalization of the Koryak language in Russia, exemplifies how tailored applications can enhance language engagement and learning (Fayzrakhmanova, 2025). Similarly, the Living Dictionaries project has demonstrated the potential of collaborative online platforms to create global learning communities that preserve Indigenous knowledge while promoting accessibility (Daigneault & Anderson, 2023). Social media has expanded opportunities for speakers of endangered languages to share cultural practices and linguistic content, thereby enhancing visibility and creating supportive digital ecosystems (Deschene, 2019). Nonetheless, technological initiatives are not without challenges. Projects that fail to incorporate community input or adapt to cultural contexts often result in limited adoption and, in some cases, community resistance (Siragusa, 2015). Studies have emphasized that successful technological interventions depend on participatory design and sustained engagement, as seen in the integration of digital storytelling and cultural pedagogy in Uchinaaguchi learning programs (Fine, 2019). These findings underscore the need for a balance between technological innovation and cultural sensitivity.

Policy and institutional support constitute a fourth thematic strand. Government recognition, funding, and policy frameworks exert profound influence on the vitality of endangered languages. In countries such as Canada and Finland, strong policies have supported Indigenous language revitalization by allocating financial resources for education and community-based initiatives (Low et al., 2022). In Iceland, policy-driven support for media and education in Icelandic has reinforced language survival despite pressures from globalization. By contrast, many developing countries face greater challenges due to insufficient resources and weak political commitment. Research on African contexts reveals that colonial legacies and the prioritization of official state languages often undermine local language use, limiting opportunities for mother-tongue education and cultural practice (Zuckermann, 2020). Comparative analyses suggest that while developed nations typically provide structured and well-funded programs, developing nations must rely more heavily on local initiatives that often operate in opposition to national policy frameworks (Balukh et al., 2024). This disparity highlights the urgent need for policy reforms that recognize linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a hindrance to national cohesion. The evidence points to a global imbalance in institutional support, which shapes the capacity of communities to implement sustainable revitalization strategies.

The final theme concerns cultural heritage and identity, underscoring the inseparable link between language and intangible cultural traditions. Endangered languages serve as repositories of music, mythology, oral history, and traditional ecological knowledge. The loss of a language therefore represents not merely a reduction in communication but also the disappearance of cultural memory (Černý, 2022; Tamrin et al., 2025). In Aboriginal Australian contexts, language preservation has been directly tied to the safeguarding of sacred traditions and relationships with ancestral land (Alhazmi, 2024). Projects that reconnect communities with traditional song archives, for instance, have empowered youth to reclaim cultural practices while simultaneously learning their ancestral language (Llancao, 2019). In Brazil, the Guarani language continues to reinforce ethnic identity and transmit cultural values through ritual and storytelling practices (Tamrin et al., 2025). Empirical evidence indicates that when language revitalization is integrated with cultural expression, such as music and ritual, it strengthens intergenerational solidarity and fosters resilience (Fayzrakhmanova,

2025; Namyalo, 2023). These findings suggest that cultural identity is not merely a byproduct of language revitalization but an essential driver of its success.

Taken together, the results of this review illustrate the interconnectedness of community involvement, educational frameworks, technological innovation, policy support, and cultural identity in shaping the outcomes of language revitalization. Community-based initiatives provide the foundation for daily language use, while education ensures structured intergenerational transmission. Technology extends the reach of endangered languages, policy frameworks institutionalize support, and cultural heritage reinforces the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity. Comparative evidence from diverse regions highlights both successes and shortcomings, revealing that revitalization strategies must be context-specific yet informed by global best practices. The global perspective emphasizes that while language endangerment is a universal challenge, solutions require nuanced, culturally grounded, and collaborative approaches to ensure the survival of the world's linguistic heritage.

The findings of this narrative review reaffirm and extend prior scholarship on endangered language revitalization by highlighting the recurring importance of community engagement, educational frameworks, technological innovation, policy support, and cultural heritage in sustaining linguistic diversity. These results align closely with earlier studies which argue that community involvement is indispensable in establishing environments where endangered languages are normalized as everyday means of communication (Lakaw & Friedman, 2022; Sallabank, 2017). The evidence reviewed here confirms that initiatives such as language nests, cultural festivals, and family-centered programs continue to provide strong foundations for language survival. Nevertheless, differences in outcomes between developed and developing nations illustrate the uneven availability of resources, infrastructure, and institutional backing. While developed nations often provide structured initiatives supported by policy and funding, developing nations face systemic barriers that impede progress (Kandybowicz & Torrence, 2017).

These findings must be situated in relation to the broader literature that underscores how systemic factors condition revitalization outcomes. Policy frameworks are consistently identified as decisive, with research showing that sustained government commitment to minority language education correlates with improved intergenerational transmission (Fayzrakhmanova, 2025). For instance, Scandinavian and Scottish models demonstrate how structured educational inclusion fosters long-term linguistic resilience (Beaton et al., 2023; Cocq & Steggo, 2024). By contrast, in contexts where policies prioritize dominant or colonial languages, as in many African nations, endangered languages remain marginalized with little institutional support, thereby accelerating their decline (Zuckermann, 2020). Beyond policy, social and economic dynamics such as migration, urbanization, and the pursuit of upward mobility exert additional pressure, displacing minority languages from daily domains of use (Sallabank, 2017). The combination of unsupportive policies and socioeconomic shifts creates structural disadvantages that undermine local revitalization efforts, even where communities are highly motivated.

The role of institutions extends beyond government agencies to include non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, and academic institutions. Studies emphasize the value of partnerships that draw on interdisciplinary expertise, local leadership, and external support (Belhiah et al., 2020). Civil society initiatives, for instance, have proven particularly influential in

filling gaps where state resources are inadequate. Yet the sustainability of such programs remains contingent upon longer-term policy alignment and financial stability. Without institutional support at multiple levels, community-based programs risk remaining isolated pilot initiatives rather than scaling into systemic change. These observations echo prior literature that cautions against relying solely on grassroots mobilization without parallel institutional frameworks to sustain revitalization beyond individual projects (Černý, 2022; Ramírez-Carbajal et al., 2025).

Technological interventions provide an additional layer of complexity in this discussion. The uptake of digital platforms and mobile applications demonstrates significant promise, particularly for engaging younger generations who are often more digitally literate. The Koryak Tuyu application and initiatives such as Living Dictionaries illustrate the potential of technology to democratize access and foster global learning networks (Fayzrakhmanova, 2025; Daigneault & Anderson, 2023). However, the literature also points to failures where technologies have not been adapted to local cultural contexts or where user communities have been excluded from the design process (Siragusa, 2015). These shortcomings underline a systemic issue: the risk of technological determinism that assumes tools alone will drive revitalization. Instead, technology must be integrated into holistic strategies that include community participation, culturally relevant content, and educational frameworks. In this regard, technological innovation must be reconceptualized as a facilitator rather than a substitute for human and cultural engagement (Fine, 2019).

Policy implications drawn from this review emphasize the necessity of integrated and context-sensitive approaches. A comprehensive strategy should combine formal education, community-based initiatives, and technological tools, underpinned by strong institutional support. The development of robust curricula for minority language education, supported by teacher training and culturally embedded pedagogy, emerges as a particularly crucial step. Parallel investment in digital infrastructure and tools tailored to local contexts offers a scalable means of supporting revitalization, particularly in regions where geographic dispersion makes in-person programming difficult (Fayzrakhmanova, 2025; Belhiah et al., 2020). The involvement of younger generations remains critical, not only as beneficiaries but as active agents in revitalization programs. Youth-oriented initiatives that incorporate digital media, music, and cultural storytelling may bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and contemporary practices.

The literature also highlights the importance of culturally grounded solutions. Successful revitalization programs often embed local values, practices, and knowledge systems into their design, thereby reinforcing community identity and ensuring long-term relevance. For instance, in Mesoamerican contexts, programs that integrate indigenous music and mythology into language instruction have achieved stronger community engagement and improved outcomes (Ramírez-Carbajal et al., 2025; Bracknell, 2019). Such cases illustrate that language revitalization cannot be divorced from broader processes of cultural preservation. Rather, language and culture must be revitalized in tandem, recognizing that each reinforces the other in fostering resilience and continuity.

Despite the promising evidence, this body of literature is marked by notable limitations. Many studies remain descriptive rather than evaluative, offering accounts of initiatives without systematic assessment of their long-term impact on speaker populations or language vitality (Heinrich, 2021). There is also a lack of empirical work measuring how specific interventions, such as mobile

applications or curriculum reforms, translate into sustained language use outside of formal learning environments. Furthermore, the global distribution of research remains uneven, with disproportionate attention to European and North American contexts compared to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This imbalance not only limits the generalizability of findings but also risks perpetuating inequities in knowledge production about linguistic diversity. Autoethnographic approaches have been suggested as one avenue for addressing these gaps, as they foreground the lived experiences of speakers and learners navigating revitalization in complex sociocultural landscapes (Chew et al., 2015). Expanding this line of inquiry could deepen understanding of how identity, agency, and community dynamics shape revitalization outcomes.

Future research must also address the methodological challenges of evaluating revitalization strategies. Randomized controlled trials, longitudinal cohort studies, and mixed-methods approaches could offer more robust evidence of what works, for whom, and under what conditions. Greater attention should be given to the intersections of policy, technology, and community engagement, examining how these domains interact to facilitate or constrain revitalization. Moreover, interdisciplinary collaborations that bring together linguists, educators, anthropologists, and technologists hold potential for generating more comprehensive and actionable insights. By addressing these limitations, the field can move beyond descriptive case studies to develop a more systematic and predictive understanding of language revitalization processes.

CONCLUSION

This narrative review has synthesized evidence on endangered languages and revitalization strategies, revealing that successful efforts are shaped by a constellation of interdependent factors. The results demonstrate that community-based initiatives, particularly language nests and grassroots programs, are essential in fostering intergenerational transmission and embedding endangered languages within daily life. Education and pedagogy emerged as equally critical, with culturally responsive curricula and supportive policy frameworks driving stronger outcomes in regions such as Scandinavia and Scotland, in contrast to contexts with limited institutional support. Technological innovations, including mobile applications and online platforms, present promising tools for engagement, yet their effectiveness depends heavily on cultural adaptation and community participation. Policy and institutional backing are shown to be decisive, with developed countries benefiting from structured initiatives and funding, while developing nations continue to face systemic barriers. The link between language, cultural heritage, and identity underscores that revitalization cannot be divorced from the preservation of traditions, rituals, and indigenous knowledge systems.

The urgency of addressing language endangerment cannot be overstated, as each lost language represents the disappearance of irreplaceable cultural and intellectual heritage. Comprehensive and integrated policies that combine education, technology, and community participation are needed to sustain endangered languages. Future research should prioritize empirical evaluation of revitalization programs, particularly in underrepresented regions, and explore the lived experiences of speakers to inform adaptive, community-centered strategies. Strengthening global collaboration,

fostering youth engagement, and embedding cultural heritage in revitalization efforts remain crucial pathways toward preserving the world's linguistic diversity.

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