

Language development and language revitalization in Asia¹

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Abstract

Language revitalization and minority language education programs face serious obstacles when the minority language has not yet been developed beyond its traditional oral state. Language development activities, therefore, must precede and contribute to the literacy and mother tongue education components of a language revitalization program. The minority community faces a serious challenge when, for example, no writing system exists for the ethnic language, or when, for whatever reasons, an existing writing system is no longer appropriate for the language.

However, practitioners in applied linguistics and minority language education are developing participatory ways of assisting such communities in the process of language development. These include collaborations in designing or revising appropriate writing systems for the languages and for promoting mother tongue literature. This paper presents, in two parts, (I) an overview of language development efforts around the world, emphasizing the interactive aspects of language development and the facilitation of minority language literature development; and (II) a description of the Chong language development and language revitalization project in Thailand.

Part I. Language development and language revitalization around the world

The world's linguistic diversity is under siege. That is certain. Whether the numbers are linguist Michael Krauss's vision of catastrophic loss at 90 percent or some of the more optimistic projections that see "only" half of the world's language dead or dying by the end of the century, no one is suggesting that the danger is a hoax. Many, many languages are going to die. So what? What does "catastrophic language loss" mean and what is being done about it?

Earl Shorris (2000) presents a poignant example of the meaning of language death in an article entitled "The Last Word" in the August 2000 issue of *Harper's Magazine*. He writes that only a living language—of all the human arts and sciences—can "describe a unique and irreplaceable world." He goes on to describe a personal experience in the rain forests of southern Mexico when a brilliantly blue butterfly settled close by, prompting the following reflection.

There are nine different words in Maya for the color blue in the comprehensive Porrúa Spanish-Maya Dictionary but just three Spanish translations, leaving six butterflies that can only be seen by the Maya, proving beyond doubt that when a language dies six butterflies disappear from the consciousness of the earth.² (Shorris, 2000, p.43)

The sense of urgency that accompanies calls for language revitalization grows out of the phenomenal acceleration of language loss. In 1992 Krauss reported 187 indigenous languages still spoken in the United States, about 80% of them moribund. In 1996, he reported 175 indigenous languages still spoken in the U.S. That's an alarming loss of 12 languages in 3 years (Bielenberg, 1999, p. 111).

What can be done about it? Noted sociolinguist Joshua Fishman (1991, 2001) has presented a practical framework (see fig. 1) for ordering language planning priorities to help speakers of a

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² The author appears not to consider the possibility that there are other, perhaps related, indigenous language groups who may have a vocabulary adequate for the nine blue Mayan butterflies or that it is quite possible that the average Mayan-speaker is not conscious of more than three different blue butterflies. Nevertheless, the author makes a telling point that these kinds of minority languages provide a vocabulary capable of describing the diversity they know in their own environment that cannot be easily or adequately described by any replacement language.

threatened language revitalize their language and reverse the language shift that has taken place, *if they so desire*. Although outsiders can be the impetus—even the implementers—for various kinds of language development activities, there is no outside-in alternative for language revitalization. As Nancy Dorian (1998) observes, the motivational rewards of ethnic language use are intra-cultural. “Such rewards cannot be supplied from the outside. They are to be had from within the social web of the community itself or not at all” (p. 21).

Fishman calls his model the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). On this scale Fishman divides priorities between those that apply to languages in a weakened state and those that apply to languages in a strong position. The “bridge” between the weak side and the strong side is the school (that is, a formal education program that recognizes and uses the minority children’s ethnic language).

Figure 1. Condensed adaptation of Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Malone, 2003)

Weak Side	Stage 8	So few fluent speakers that community needs to re-establish language norms; often requires outside experts (e.g., linguists).
	Stage 7	Older generation uses language enthusiastically but children are not learning it.
	Stage 6	Language and identity socialization of children takes place in home and community.
	Stage 5	Language socialization involves extensive literacy, usually including non-formal L1 schooling.
Strong Side	Stage 4	L1 ³ used in children’s formal education in conjunction with national or official language.
	Stage 3	L1 used in workplaces of larger society, beyond normal L1 boundaries.
	Stage 2	Lower governmental services and local mass media are open to L1.
	Stage 1	L1 used at upper governmental level.

Language development

Several things need to happen before an ethnic minority language can be used in formal instructional programs in primary and secondary education levels. “Language development”⁴ in this context refers to the kind of applied linguistic and sociolinguistic activities that are designed to increase the domains of use of a language, whether a majority language or minority language, whether safe or endangered. The activities in focus here, of course, are those that relate primarily to minority languages in general and endangered languages in particular.

Writing systems. Mark Sebba (2000), referring to the writers of Caribbean Creole languages, emphasizes the need for collaboration between local community speakers and trained linguists—that is, between “users” and “experts”—in the development of a truly practical orthography for the language (p. 926). It is not that difficult for a trained linguist to devise an elegant orthography for an ethnic minority group which accounts for the most important linguistic features of the language but which is not acceptable to linguistically untrained users of the language, often for very good and important sociolinguistic reasons.

Other linguists (Daniels & Bright, 1996; Downing, P. et al, 1992) have concluded that good writing systems are no longer automatically those that phonemically represent the language’s sound system;

³ “L1” refers to the children’s 1st language or Mother Tongue.

⁴ Educators, psychologists and sociologists also use the term “language development” in reference to language and cognitive development mainly in children. A “Google” search using “language development” as the search term will yield half-a-million choices, the vast majority of which are those related to child language development not to minority language development.

rather, the trend now is toward seeing writing as it is related to language as a whole, as a system for making language (not speech) visible.

Cultural considerations frequently override linguistic considerations when it comes to decision-making in orthography development. Writing systems and social systems are intricately interwoven. Thus, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics become very important fields of study.

According to Crystal (2000), “writing down” a language involves (1) analysis of the sound system of the language, (2) preparation of materials to aid in learning about the language (e.g., dictionaries, grammars), and, potentially, (3) controversy. For example, linguistic ecologists caution against the random introduction of writing and literacy into previously oral-only language environments (Mühlhäusler, 1991, 1996), claiming that ‘reducing’ languages to writing does indeed—and ironically—diminish a rich oral heritage to something *less* than it was, that the effect of literacy upon the ecology of minority languages in any given place is, at best, problematic. They argue that, for example, developing a writing system requires the selection of a dominant dialect that *ipso facto* leads to the denigration of other less powerful varieties of the language ergo reducing linguistic diversity rather than saving it.

Others disagree. Robinson (1997) suggests that, although the implications drawn from Mühlhäusler’s ecological approach for those who intervene in local language situations must be taken into account, the negative consequences that Mühlhäusler predicts of that intervention do not necessarily follow. Language dialects and varieties have demonstrated an amazing resistance to the effects of literacy and the standardization that goes with it (English, being a prime example). Robinson notes that the vitality required by minority languages to continue to exist in very unfavorable socioeconomic and political contexts rarely can be nurtured without some degree of outside intervention (cf. Fishman, 2001). On a level *laissez faire* playing field, the strong beat up on the weak (in languages as well as in economies). The trick for those who favor intervention is to do so with knowledge of and sensitivity toward the social, economic and cultural ramifications of our presence.

Crowley (2001) responds to Mühlhäusler’s criticism of literacy interventions by arguing that it implies a backward motion, back to a pre-colonial past in which the many small languages of the Pacific region lived in harmony and vitality with each other. Crowley argues that literacy has long ago been brought into the linguistic and cultural lives of most of the minority communities and that it has been shaped and used by them for their own purposes. The dire consequences predicted by Mühlhäusler have not resulted. To eliminate literacy from the resources available to a threatened community is to consign them to a romanticized and impossible future.

The debate is not over. Those involved in language revitalization must exercise both caution towards the long-term effects of their interventions and decisiveness in taking action while a narrow window of opportunity is open. No one is suggesting this is an easy task.

Standardization. Given the need for literacy, what form will the written language take? That is a language development question. Adegbija (1998, 2003) offers a typical sequence of standardization activities for the Okó language of Nigeria, West Africa.

- *codification* of the language (that is, analyzing the structure, rules of the language);
- decisions about the *choice of script*. Will the language use a Roman script (as the colonial language uses) or an indigenous or some other script? Will the marking of tone be included or omitted from the orthography (cf. Bernard 2001; Bird, 1999)? What will be the impact of the syllable structure on the orthography? In recent years, experiments have shown that for pre- or non-literate people, the syllable is the smallest analyzed segment of language (cf. Downing, et al., 1992). Writing systems created by the linguistically unsophisticated speakers of preliterate languages have been syllabaries, paralleling this perception of language.
- *identifying the distinctive phonemes* that require separate symbolization
- identifying the *social, psychological and pedagogical aspects of the language* that will affect the orthography development

- *constant involvement of the community* (through the Ókó Development Union or ODU) in
 - orthography development
 - program evaluation
 - primer development
 - supplementary texts
 - dictionaries
 - creative writing
 - administering the project
 - promoting the language revitalization effort
- *harmonizing earlier orthographies* (building on linguistic insights & ODU participation)

Vocabulary expansion. Dictionaries are typically an early strategy for standardizing a previously unwritten language (cf. Bernard, 1998; Diarra 2003). Modern computer technology provides a dramatic assistance in this particular language development activity.

- In a two-week seminar with computers using now obsolete desktop publishing software, five trained Kom-speakers (Cameroon, West Africa) produced a 2,000-word dictionary from a 25,000-word body of literature that they had written during those two weeks. Compare this to the approximately 10 years required by a linguist in the language to compile a 5,000-word dictionary (Bernard, 1992).
- In Angola, the Institute of National Languages (ILN) produced a series of subject glossaries for use in schools and in the electronic media (Diarra, 2003). The ILN also plays a role in the choice and description of national languages with regard to their utility in literacy and education in Angola.

Production of materials. The lack of curriculum and instructional materials is often cited as one of the key obstacles to mother tongue education involving minority languages. The difficulties of developing these materials ought not to be minimized but they are not insurmountable. Papua New Guinea, with a total of some 800 languages, having set their educational goals for mother tongue pre-primary level education for the nation's children, is now supporting 3-year programs of elementary education in over 300 community languages (Klaus, 2003). The key to overcoming the educational materials hurdle appears to be a bottom-up approach that equips and empowers the local community to produce their own elementary-level, culturally appropriate curriculum and instructional materials. That is a task that government education departments in developing countries simply cannot perform on their own. However, with adequate training, education departments are well positioned to support and assist the local efforts. Two brief examples:

- *In PNG, local community writers and educators collaborated with an international NGO and bilateral donor⁵ to produce the 17-volume Kaugel Reading Series containing 96 Kaugel stories which, in addition to numerous teacher-student generated stories, are currently in use in 15 elementary-level mother-tongue classrooms serving some 600 children (Malone, in press).*
- *Instructional materials, literature and training materials have been produced successfully by members of minority language communities around the world: South America (Aikman, 2001), North America (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1994), Asia (Geary, 2001), Africa (Dutcher, 1998) in collaboration with institutes, universities, and NGOs who have provided technical assistance where needed (Malone, 2003).*

Training. The training aspect of language development and language revitalization becomes critical as soon as minority language literacy and education becomes a focus. This is the point at which collaborations between the interested and committed local community members and academic institutions that are able to contribute more technical linguistic and education assistance

⁵ The NGO was SIL International and the bilateral donor was the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

(e.g., language analysis, research, primer development and literature production) come into play. These collaborations involve the integral participation of the minority language community. The work is done *with* them, not for them. Thus, training—and training of trainers—is a major focal point. Sheila Aikman (2001) relates how Harakmbut community leaders are being trained in linguistics for their revitalization project. Bernard (1996) describes the training and equipping of indigenous language writers in Mexico. McCarty et al. (2001) describe the training of Native American teachers in the linguistic and cultural basis of bilingual education in North America.

Research. Participatory research studies of attitudes toward and uses of local language (and other languages in the linguistic environment) are essential if the kind of social and cultural sensitivities promoted by linguistic ecologists (Mühlhäusler 1995, 2002) are to play a role in language revitalization. In Part II of this paper, Suwilai will be sharing how the Thailand Research Fund has supported the community-based sociolinguistic survey that has been conducted as a base for the Chong Language Revitalization Project.

The role of institutes and universities. One important pattern that is developing in language revitalization programs is collaboration among the ethnic language community, the schools and academic institutions. This last group ranges from institutes attached to universities to government agencies to independent non-government institutes. The following are a brief sample of this scope:

- American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI, U.S.), training bilingual NA teachers, and formally associated with the University of Arizona (McCarty et al., 2001);
- Institute of National Languages (INL, Angola), a government-funded institute, promoting language development in six selected languages (Diarra, 2003);
- Indian Language Publishing Center (CELIAC, Mexico); promoting and facilitating the writing and publishing of indigenous literature by indigenous authors (Bernard, 1996);
- Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development (ILCRD), Mahidol University-Salaya, in Thailand.

The ILCRD, an institute attached to Mahidol University and involved in training students from around the world in applied linguistics, has only recently become involved in language revitalization. The background and current status of that involvement is described in Part II.

Part II. Language development and language revitalization in Thailand: The case of the Chong revitalization program

Multilingual situation in Thailand

Situated in the heart of South East Asia (SEA), Thailand, with its 60 ethnolinguistic groups, represents the definitive characteristic of SEA as one of the most complex areas of languages and ethnicities in the world. Standard Thai, which is based on a variety of Central Thai, is the only official language of the country. It is the language used as the medium of instruction in schools and the language of mass media whereas other minority languages are used as regional or local languages of differing social status (displaced, town/market or enclave languages [Smalley 1994]).

Minority languages in Thailand are facing the same destiny as the world's other minority languages; they are declining at different rates. The major regional Thai languages (Northern, Northeastern and Southern Thai) show signs of language contraction, especially in the loss of vocabulary and aspects of grammar, and some small languages have ceased being the language of the speech community or even the language in the home. At the moment there are at least 14 languages in Thailand that are imminently endangered. Samre and Kasong languages of Trat province have almost no hope for survival after the next one or two generations because the few speakers left cannot provide a foundation of preservation against the dominant Thai language. For languages like Chong, Nyah Kur, Gong and So (Thavung), however, there is still some hope because a number of good speakers are available and there are enthusiastic speakers who want to keep their language alive. In addition to the

urgent need for linguistic documentation, these minority language situations appear to be able to support revitalization programs.

1. Language revitalization project implemented in Thailand: The Chong Language Revitalization Project

The Chong language

Chong is an ethnolinguistic minority group found in eastern Thailand. It belongs to the Pearic sub-branch of the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austroasiatic language family. Chong is very famous among linguists for its four contrastive registers, or voice qualities, of clear, breathy, creaky and breathy-creaky. Phoneticians have been very much interested in investigating the articulatory mechanisms associated with these voice qualities (Surekha 1982, Theraphan 1991, Edmondson 1996). The majority of Chong speakers live in Khao Khitchakut district, Chanthaburi province. Now only a few speakers live in Pongnamron and other districts in Chanthaburi province, but in the past they were more numerous. It is rather difficult to state with any precision the current population of Chong speakers. According to the Mahidol University Ethnolinguistic Map Project (Suwilai and others, 2002), there are about 4,000 Chong speakers. However, the ability of the people to speak Chong varies widely. Most of the younger generation, especially those under 20 years of age, do not speak the language at all. Even among the elderly people, Thai has become their first language in many social domains of daily life. The ethnic language is no longer spoken in the home with the children. Because of the rapid decrease in the number of Chong speakers, this language is considered to be endangered and can be classified at stage 7 of Fishman's GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) which is only one stage above the most severe level of language endangerment (Fishman 1991; also see Part I of this paper).

How the Chong revitalization program began

The Chong revitalization started off as a small project with the cooperation of some elderly Chong speakers and Mahidol linguists.⁶

I first met the Chong people about 10 years ago during one of my linguistic field trips. An elderly man showed me a book with a long list of Chong words written in his own way. I was very much impressed by the Chong people's concern about the decline of their language and culture. In 1999 I had a chance to invite them to teach their language to the MA linguistic students as language informants in the Field Methods class.

From this successful Field Methods class, the Mahidol staff members and students learned the Chong language and its structure well enough to do further applied linguistics work and at the same time, the Chong people became confident that their language could be systematically written and taught to their children and other people.

Foreseeing the loss of their ethnic language in the near future, the Chong cooperated with Mahidol staff and students in developing a Thai-based Chong orthography in November 1999 with the hope that it could be a useful tool for maintaining their language and culture.

The Chong revitalization program was officially established in the year 2000, with cooperation between the Chong community of speakers and Mahidol academic staff that included SIL education specialists as consultants⁷. The community also secured independent support from the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) for their research project called "The Maintenance and Revitalization of Chanthaburi Chong Language". For this project, the Chong people carried out a sociolinguistic survey in two main sub-districts where the majority of the people are Chong speakers. The purposes of the survey were to determine the number of Chong speakers and to assess their ability in Chong and their attitudes toward the Chong revitalization project. More than 1,700 Chong people participated in the

⁶ The following paragraphs in italics are Dr. Suwilai's personal recollection of the beginnings of the collaboration between the ILCRD and the Chong community.

⁷ SIL International is an NGO involved in language development and minority language education projects around the world.

investigation, and more than 90% supported the Chong revitalization program. The Chong language committee, composed of members from the community, also compiled a Chong word list, producing a Chong dictionary with the words arranged by semantic fields.⁸ This first phase of the project was followed by the development of the language revitalization program, which included teaching Chong as a subject in school and by converting a local building into a community learning center for the larger community.

The Chong Revitalization Program therefore started with

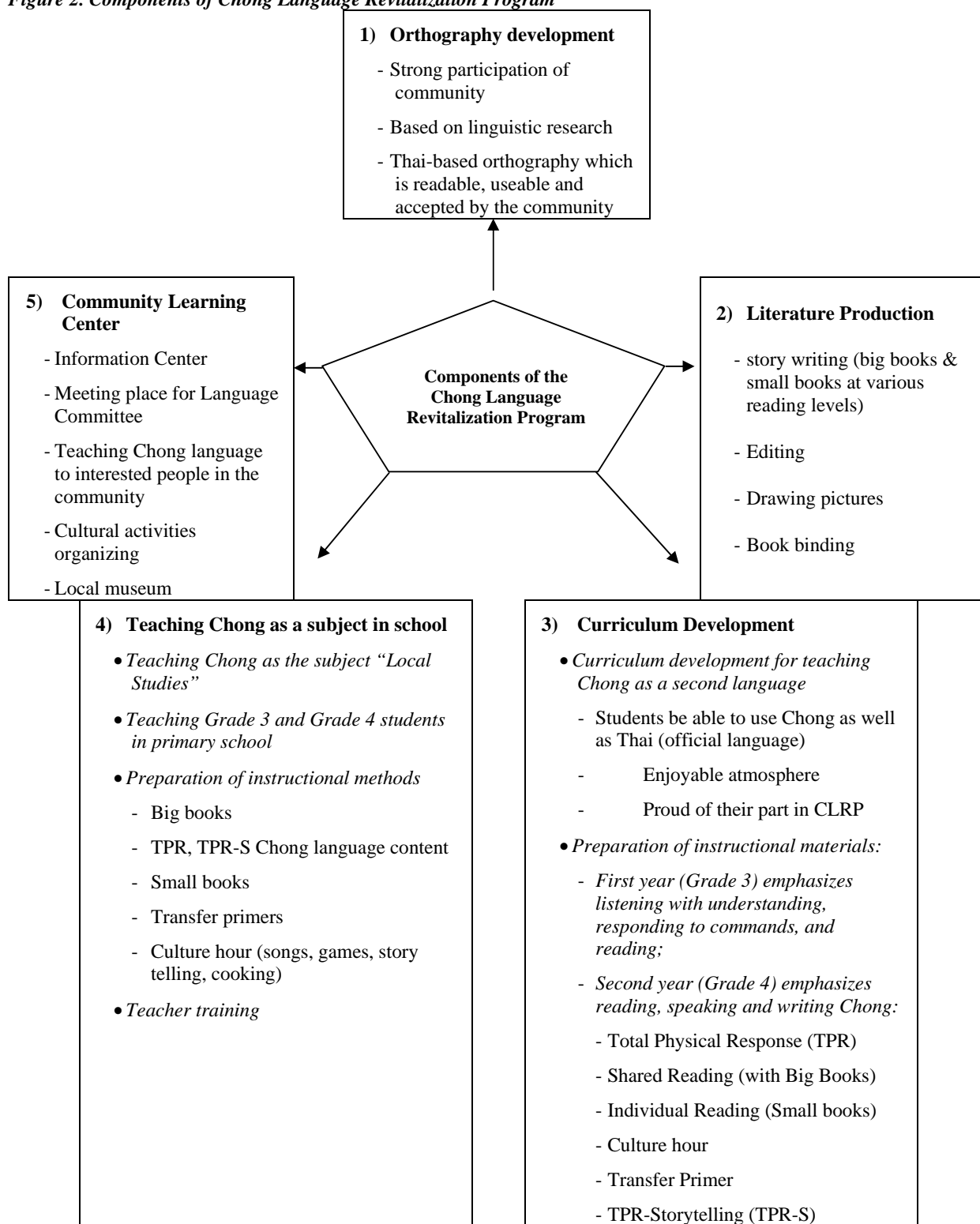
1. the community's motivation and commitment to keep their ethnic language alive and their desire to help their younger generation learn and use Chong as well as Thai. The community strongly participated in language development activities such as orthography development, followed by curriculum development and literature production;
2. financial support from the Thai Research Fund (TRF). The TRF provided the grant for Chong community members to conduct the revitalization project as their own community research; and
3. technical support from an academic institution, ILCRD, Mahidol University.

Components of the Chong revitalization program

The Chong project has so far focused on five different areas: orthography development, literature production, curriculum development, teaching Chong as a school subject and creation of a Community Learning Center. Once revitalization activities have begun, they must be continued and managed by the community members themselves. Several training workshops were organized for the Chong language committee in this respect, with particular focus on five components of the project.

⁸Another version of the Chong dictionary, the Dictionary of Chong Dialects, is now being compiled by Mahidol linguistics staff members.

Figure 2. Components of Chong Language Revitalization Program



Orthography development. Since Chong had been used only orally, the writing system had to be developed so that it could be used as a tool to record the stories, traditions, customs and other local knowledge such as herbal medicine and food preparation, to use it for teaching Chong language and producing instructional materials.

Chong orthography development is based on linguistic research focused on the phonemic analysis of the sound system of the language. One primary belief for this is that the decisions about which symbols to use for which sounds are done by or accepted by the native speakers. Thai script was selected for the Chong orthography for convenience although the languages are phonologically different (Chong language is not genetically related to Thai.) Apart from Thai loan words in Chong, the vocabularies are very different. Chong has more final consonant sounds than Thai. Chong phonology comprises 21 consonants and 9 pairs of short and long vowels. Though Chong does not have tones as in Thai, it has special phonological features called 'registers' resulting from "variations in the length, thickness, and tension of the vocal chords" (Crystal, 1985): clear voice, breathy voice, creaky voice, and a unique combined breathy-creaky voice. Thai-based orthography was decided on for Chong because most potential users had basic knowledge of the Thai writing system from their compulsory education (cf. Smalley, 1994). This knowledge is transferable to Chong literacy. A Thai-based orthography is also convenient in terms of pedagogy and proliferation, i.e. Thai script can be easily reproduced on typewriters and personal computers. The principle for Chong orthography development was 'one sound, one symbol': a single symbol would stand for a distinct sound in the phonology. In Thai, there are many symbols for one sound, but only one symbol was selected for a sound in Chong, meaning that only a portion of Thai symbols are used in the Chong system. In addition, the three-way grouping of consonants according to inherent tones, middle, low, and high groups, in the Thai system was not followed in Chong orthography, and only consonant symbols from the middle and low groups in the Thai system are used.

Three orthography meetings were held before completing a tentative orthography. Then the orthography was tested to see how well the Chong people could read it (cf. Kosonen, 2003⁹). Results showed that the orthography system that has been developed was readable and acceptable to the community. An alphabet chart with key words and pictures was then produced for teaching purposes. It was obvious that the Chong speakers were very proud of their ethnic language orthography because it was developed with their active participation. The orthography represents their Chong identity as members of a unique ethnic community who are citizens of Thailand.

Literature production. Reading minority language literature is essential for language revitalization and minority language education. Writers workshops were organized to train the Chong native speakers how to write stories, produce handmade books and evaluate different reading levels within the community. Writers were encouraged to write as many stories, folktales or modern narratives as possible. Young artists were in charge of drawing pictures for the stories. Twenty-seven big books for shared reading in the classroom, 50 small books of individual practice level 1, and 60 small books at levels 2, 3 and 4 have been produced thus far.

Curriculum development. The main target group of the Chong Revitalization Program is the younger generation of the Chong community. Before the project began few of the young people spoke Chong in their daily communications. Even the elderly people did not speak Chong in many social domains of their daily lives so it was difficult for parents to speak Chong to their children. More than ten years ago, Chong parents were advised to stop speaking Chong with their children as a way to improve their success in Thai schools (Chong speakers, personal communication). One of the best ways to encourage children to learn and speak Chong, according to the Chong people, was to teach the Chong language in school. However, Chong needed to be taught in school as a second language.

The community actively participated in the curriculum development process, preparing all instructional materials and volunteering to be trained as Chong teachers. The Chong language curriculum was designed with the objective that the children learn to speak, read and write Chong within an enjoyable atmosphere, gaining an appreciation for their language and being proud of their part in the revitalization of their cultural heritage.

The first year of teaching and learning (beginning in Grade 3) emphasizes listening, understanding, responding to Chong commands and reading Chong stories. The second year (Grade 4) focuses more

⁹ Kimmo Kosonen's paper is included with other parallel session papers on this web site.

on reading, writing and speaking Chong. For this program, community members produced big books for shared reading, small books for individual reading, a transfer primer and lessons for TPR and TPR-Storytelling,¹⁰ including Chong songs and games. Cultural activities are also organized as a part of the curriculum.

Teaching Chong as a subject in school. Teaching Chong in school has been a dream of the Chong people that has come true. Chong is now taught to Grade 3 and Grade 4 students in a primary school in the Chong area as the “Local Studies” subject. Lessons are one hour a day, three days a week, for the whole school year.

The first group of Grade 3 students has now finished the first year (2002-2003) and have gone on to the second, Grade 4, year (2003-2004). A new group of Grade 3 students started the program this year.

Volunteer teachers are selected from Chong speakers who have good Chong pronunciation, are dedicated to the project, and are acceptable to the community. The volunteers are then trained to teach the Chong language by staff and students from the ILCRD. The initial evaluation shows satisfactory results. The students have knowledge of Chong. They can read, write and speak to a certain level. They enjoy learning Chong. Their parents are happy. The teachers are proud of themselves and their students. And the school principal and staff are pleased. This can be seen from the request by the school to teach Chong language to the Grade 4 students and also to provide some occasional Chong language and culture classes for students in other grades in the same school. Also other schools in the area have requested Chong language learning for their students.

Chong Community Learning Center. The revitalization program needs participation and cooperation from the people in the larger Chong community. The Community Learning Center is being established with the primary objective that it will supplement the curriculum offered in school and will also be available as a non-formal learning resource center for other members of the Chong community. It will serve as a meeting place for the Chong language committee, an information center to learn about the language and culture of the people, and, at the same time, serve as a local museum and as a site for cultural activities for special occasions.

Problems, outcomes and impact of the Chong project

It may be too early to talk about the success of the Chong project as many problems have been encountered at almost every stage. Problems of leadership in supervising the program and coordinating various tasks, conflicts between the elders’ dreams and the younger generation’s reality, involvement limited to close friends and relatives of the elderly male Chong leaders, a lack of skills in finance administration and in writing project proposals and reports, a problem in time management between fruit farming and revitalization work and activities, a lack of skills in public speaking or project presenting and a lack of self confidence—all have emerged and threaten the continuation of the project.

Yet, the Chong’s people desire and commitment to the program, along with receiving spiritual or emotional support from outside consultants like the ILCRD, have helped the Chong to find solutions to some of these problems. The elderly men have brought their wives and daughters to join in the project as cooks who prepare meals for meetings, as illustrators who draw pictures for the books, as book or story copiers for the elderly with failing eyesight and even as story writers themselves. A young Chong girl is being trained to be in charge of financial administration, bookkeeping and report writing. Each of the three middle-aged male members of the Chong language committee has taken responsibility as a coordinator for book production, for cultural data collection from various locations, for public relations and project speakers and for looking after the Community Learning Center. Two elderly men have been nominated as the deputy Chairs of the Chong language committee to help with

¹⁰ TPR stands for Total Physical Response; TPR-S adds storytelling. For more on TPR and TPRS, see tprworld@aol.com.

supervising, coordinating and expanding the project. Ordinary fruit gardeners have become writers, book producers, teachers, illustrators, supervisors and coordinators of various tasks of the program including financial administration and report writing and they carry out these responsibilities during their limited free time. Remarkably, they have achieved an effective implementation of the major components of the project:

There are the accomplishments of developing a Thai-based Chong orthography, teaching Chong as a subject in the formal school system, producing a number of books for reading various levels and instructional materials, and establishing the Chong Community Learning Center. The success of the project so far can be seen in the positive reactions of the students, parents, Chong teachers, school principal and virtually everyone else involved. All are difficult tasks for villagers whose education is primarily at the compulsory level. What the Chong have accomplished so far has been satisfactory and quite beyond expectations.

The Chong project has had the following impacts:

1. This project has contributed significantly to community empowerment. It has raised the Chong people's self esteem and self-confidence. (Ethnic language revival is closely tied to the revival of the people's ethnic identity).
2. This project has contributed to the promotion of minority language education in the formal school system. (Chong is the first minority language to be taught in school.)
3. This project is serving as a model for establishing revitalization programs for other endangered ethnolinguistic groups in Thailand and other countries.
4. This project will hopefully lead to a reconsideration of the use of minority languages in the county's education policy and their role in the national language policy.

Perhaps the most important indication of this project's success is that it is a model for other revitalization programs now in the planning stages. At the moment three endangered ethnolinguistic groups—Nyah Kur, Gong and So (Thavung)—are participating in projects for Developing Linguistic Tools, Human Resources and Networking, funded by TRF, in preparation for them to carry out their own Language and Culture Revitalization Programs.

2.5 Supporting sustainability of the project

One important question for the Chong language revitalization project is deals with how it can continue to exist and grow without exhausting community energy or money and disappearing after a few years.

The specific issues involved in sustaining the Chong project are discussed below:

1. There is a need to develop a training program to strengthen leadership and administrative skills, especially to attract new key personnel into the project. This needs to include training in task coordination, program supervision, financial administration, project proposal writing and report writing.
2. It is important to expand the project into other Chong communities. The expansion should include:
 - 2.1 School-based Chong language programs in other schools in the Chong area and at different levels (as requested);
 - 2.2 Recruitment and training for more writers (for literature in Chong, curriculum development at different levels) editors, book binders, illustrators, singers, and teachers; and
 - 2.3 Networking and partnership building with academic institutions within and outside the community. Besides ILCRD, the regional university in the area must be involved.
3. Provision of regular funding is essential for the on-going project.

4. Government support would help to provide security and encouragement for the project members and stakeholders.
5. Since Chong people are still shifting to the national language at a rapid pace, it is urgent to document Chong linguistic and cultural data, especially by the speakers in the community themselves.
6. Curriculum, instructional materials, instructional methods of the school-based language teaching, Chong literature that has been produced for reading at various levels, etc. should be evaluated and revised on a regular basis.
7. Activities that keep interest and support of the community and stakeholders should be regularly organized.
8. Cultural tours should be organized for people to visit and join cultural revitalization activities, learn about the language revitalization program, enjoy the varieties of the tropical fruit harvested in the Chong community. This would also be a way to provide the community with more economic resources.

Finally, reconsideration at the provincial level of the educational policy, allowing or promoting minority language teaching as a regular subject in schools, will help to keep languages like Chong alive and will support the growing pride in the ethnic communities. (It is also a way for the community to participate in the educational program for their own descendants according to the wish of the present government policy.) This will also lead to the reconsideration of the national language policy recognizing and revising the status of minority languages and thus contribute to the protection of the world's language and cultural diversity.

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