

Language Choice Motivations in a Bribri Community in Costa Rica

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Abstract

A growing body of research has been undertaken in a variety of contexts worldwide to explore language preference and use as well as the attitudes and beliefs that may impact the maintenance and revitalization of endangered languages. There has also been considerable examination of the motivations that impact second language learning and the choices speakers make regarding second language learning and use. However this research has rarely extended to exploring the motivations influencing language choices in contexts where one of the languages is an endangered mother-tongue language. Analyzing a portion of the data gathered from a larger study on language attitudes and practices, this study explores the language choices of members of an indigenous community in Costa Rica and the motivations that appear to influence those choices. An analysis is also made of the relationship between the language choice motivations that are present and current indigenous language revitalization efforts in the community.

Introduction

In spite of increased support for the maintenance and promotion of indigenous languages in recent years, these languages continue to be under an escalating threat of extinction in many areas of the world (Bradley, 2002; Harrison, 2007; Linden, 1991). This continuing threat has resulted in an ongoing need for an exploration of contributing factors that may impact the success of language revitalization efforts being undertaken to preserve endangered languages. One of these factors, attitudes about a language, has long been viewed by researchers “as a decisive influence on processes of linguistic variation and change, language planning, and the maintenance or loss of languages in a community” (Choi, 2003, p. 82). As a result, several researchers have undertaken studies in a variety of contexts worldwide to explore language preference and use as well as the attitudes and beliefs that may impact the maintenance and revitalization of endangered languages (Baker, 1992; Choi, 2003; Garcia, 2002, 2005; Hornberger, 1988; King, 2000; Lasagabaster, 2003). Many of these scholars have speculated on the causal relationship between attitudes about a language and actual language use and maintenance (Baker, 1988, 2001; Costenla Umaña, n.d.; Lasagabaster, 2003). Both Choi (2003) and Baker (1988) argue that having a positive attitude toward a language is likely to increase language use and consequently aid in the maintenance of the language.

Based on these findings, it would seem reasonable to expect that the opposite would also be true—that a negative attitude would be likely to discourage language use and therefore might result in language shift or loss. A number of authors (Baker, 1988; Hornberger, 1988; Jaspaert & Kroon, 1988; King, 2000; Woolard & Gahng, 1990) have

shown, however, that the relationship between linguistic attitudes and language choice and behavior is not nearly as straightforward and simplistic as it would at first appear. Contrary to the conclusion that a positive attitude toward a language will inevitably result in positive action with regard to language use, research undertaken by Baker (1988) in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, Hornberger (1988) in Peru, and King (2000) in Ecuador revealed an apparent cultural or linguistic pride in the participants' mother tongue languages;¹ however, those positive feelings were not reflected in actual language use. My own research in Costa Rica (Blackwood, 2009) on language attitudes and practices has yielded similar evidence of the difficulty in correctly predicting language behavior based on language attitudes. This apparent disconnect between language attitude and linguistic action leads to the question of whether attitude is as much of a "decisive influence ... on maintenance or loss of languages in a community" as Choi (2003) contends, or if there are other factors which may motivate language choice and use, and additionally, whether information regarding those motivational factors may prove to be useful in informing decisions regarding language revitalization efforts.

In an attempt to answer these questions and identify the probable underlying motivations that impact language choices and behavior with a view toward informing practices surrounding language revitalization efforts, this study will analyze data previously gathered as part of a larger study of language attitudes and practices in a Bribri indigenous community located in southeast Costa Rica.

Literature Review

Previous research related to language choices and motivations has focused primarily on learning a language as a second or additional language or the language or languages people choose to use when the option is available to use more than one. However, there appears to be little published research addressing the intersection of language choice motivations and language revitalization efforts. This lack of research is particularly apparent when considering smaller indigenous populations such as the Bribri of Costa Rica. This review of the literature will examine three areas. First, I will explore what is meant by language choice, followed by an examination of perspectives on language motivations. Finally, I will look at the intersection between language choice motivations and language revitalization efforts.

Language Choice

Although Language Choice research is part of a larger body of research which explores the ideas of Choice Theory, Internal Consistency of Choice, and Revealed Preference Theory among others, due to space limitations, I have chosen to focus only on Language Choice.

¹ According to Ibrahim (1999), "Mother Tongue is the first-acquired language whereas L1 is the language of greatest mastery. One's mother tongue can be one's L1, but one can also have an L1 that is not one's mother tongue" (p. 356). Within the indigenous community studied here, however, the term "mother tongue" is used to refer to the indigenous language of Bribri whether or not a person is able to speak it. While they are not always considered synonyms, I have chosen here to use the terms "mother tongue language," "ancestral language," and "heritage language" interchangeably.

References to Language Choice in the literature often focus on the macrosocietal level and involve choices made by someone on behalf of others (Bisong, 1995; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Heller, 1992, 1995). Common examples of this include official language policies regarding the language of instruction in schools or other public institutions or the choice of a lingua franca in a newly liberated former colony. Literature related to language choices at the microsocietal level has tended to focus on choices regarding foreign or second language acquisition rather than addressing the daily decisions individuals make regarding language use that, when combined with the language choices of other speakers, lead to either language maintenance, language shift, or the reversal of language shift.² Edwards (1985, cited in Karan, 2008), attributed language choices to “pragmatic decisions in which another variety is seen as more important for the future” (p. 71). Edwards argued that “‘pragmatic considerations’ such as power, social access, and material advancement” (cited in Karan, 2008, p. 2) were key not only in the study of language use and shift, but also in understanding the success of attempts to reverse language shift (Karan, 2008).

Language Motivation

Research on Language Motivation has historically been connected with the field of second language acquisition or foreign language teaching. It has long been believed that language learners with higher levels of motivation will be more likely to achieve success in acquiring an additional language. However, there has not always been agreement about what constitutes motivation and how different types of motivation should be identified and categorized. Gardner and Lambert (1972) first proposed that language-learning motivation could be viewed as integrative. When integrative motivation is present, the language learner or user believes that particular language skills are necessary in order to fully participate in social groups that use the target language. This type of motivation, which is often perceived as being more likely to be internally generated, is often contrasted with instrumental motivation, which is thought to stem more from external factors. Instrumental motivation (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991) influences a learner to study a language because there is something to gain from doing so, such as money or a better job. A number of other models of motivation have also been proposed, including Dörnyei and Ottó’s process model (1998, cited in Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005), which divides motivation into three phases: pre, during, and post-actional, and Noels et al.’s (2000) external regulation/integrated regulation scale. None of these models, however, specifically addresses language choice or motivation in the context of endangered languages or examines the motivations that may lead to the loss of a language or the reversal of language loss either at the microsocietal or macrosocietal levels in this context.

Language Choice Motivations and Language Revitalization

Karan (2008) argues that “revitalization of a language involves speakers making thousands of individual language choice decisions,” (p. 2) and he views motivations as being a key factor in shifting those choices in a direction that will lead to the success of language revitalization efforts. Building on previous research by Edwards (1985), Karan (2000)

² Language Shift Reversal and Language Revitalization are terms that are used interchangeably in the literature.

introduced the Perceived Benefit Model of Language Shift, based on the argument that “language choice decisions (as well as language acquisition decisions) are influenced by a limited set of motivators” (p. 2). His more recent work expands on the original four categories of motivations proposed in previous research, and includes two additional types of motivation. While Karan presents these in his work as a taxonomy of separate language choice motivations, he does emphasize the fact that these motivations are seldom truly discrete items and in fact are more often manifested as overlapping and blended combinations of two or more motivations. The six motivators included in Karan’s Taxonomy of Language Choice Motivations (2008) include:

- *Communicative Motivation* – Because language serves a communicative purpose, the choice is made by speakers to use the language that can best be understood by those engaged in the conversation.
- *Economic Motivations* – Language choices are made based on the potential for financial benefit that is attached to a particular language. Karan further divides this motivation into the subcategories of job-related, trade-related, and network-related motivations. This category of motivation echoes the definition of instrumental motivation offered by Gardner & MacIntyre (1991). However, Karan appears to provide a somewhat broader definition than that proposed by the original authors.
- *Social Identity Motivations* – This motivation is related to the desire to identify, or not, with a particular group or person. The four subcategories of this motivation include prestige group-related, solidarity-related, distance-related, or hero/villain-related. This is quite similar to what Gardner and Lambert (1972) term integrative motivation, although these authors do not divide integrative motivation into the same subcategories that Karan proposes.
- *Language Power and Prestige Motivations* – Although Karan notes that there is some reason to argue that this particular motivation type could be combined with Social Identity Motivations, he believes that in particular cases the prestige or power is directly tied to the language itself rather than the group or person who uses the language, and so a separate category is warranted.
- *Nationalistic and Political Motivations* – Language choice resulting from this type of motivation is seen as positioning oneself as a “good citizen” and/or a declaration of loyalty either to a particular nation or in some cases to a particular political party.
- *Religious Motivations* – This type of motivation is in effect when an association has been made between a particular religion or religious being and a language. Karan states that this type of motivation can be a factor in a number of different ways, including when a religious deity is believed to have linguistic preferences, when a language is believed to be sacred, when sacred writings are available only in a particular language, or when the desire to disseminate religious ideas results in choices regarding language behavior.

This Taxonomy of Language Choice Motivations provides a framework by which the motivations that are driving the language choices being made in one indigenous community in Costa Rica can be analyzed.

Research Design Methodology

Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to investigate the motivational factors that determine language choices as well as the relative importance that each of these factors appears to play in the motivation to acquire and use a language, especially in the context of efforts aimed at the maintenance and revitalization of endangered languages. The research questions that will be addressed in the study are:

1. What choices are being made in the community regarding language learning and use?
2. What motivational factors appear to influence language choices in the community?
3. What is the comparative strength of those motivational factors?
4. What impact do participants' language choice motivations appear to have on language revitalization efforts in the community?

Research Setting

The relatively isolated community of Rio Lindo³ is located on a river that in this location serves as a boundary between the countries of Panama and Costa Rica. A majority of the approximately 300 members who live in this relatively isolated community self-identifies as being Bribri, the largest of Costa Rica's eight indigenous groups.⁴ The number of non-Bribri who currently reside in the community is quite small, probably less than three percent. It is difficult to determine an exact number since some community members are from another indigenous group but have married someone within the community and may now identify as Bribri. Only a very few are identified in the community as "outsiders," which means not only are they not Bribri, they are also nonindigenous.

Also unclear is the number of Bribri, not only in Rio Lindo but throughout Costa Rica, who are speakers of at least one of the three Bribri dialects⁵ (Ethnologue, 2005). The last 40 years have seen a growing shift toward Spanish monolingualism in Bribri communities (World Culture Encyclopedia, 2007), and Rio Lindo is no exception. Spanish is currently the language of communication in all language domains within the community, and few community members are bilingual in Spanish and Bribri. The majority are monolingual Spanish speakers (Blackwood, 2009). Within the last decade, English has been introduced into the community more extensively than at any previous time. This is primarily the result of the ecotourism programs that have been established by community members in the expectation of bringing greater financial prosperity to this area, which has long been one of Costa Rica's poorest regions economically. Comprehension and use of

³ The name of the community and the names of all study participants have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

⁴ Costa Rica's indigenous population of approximately 64,000 is small, accounting for 1-2% of its population, the lowest percentage for any nation in Central America. Estimates of the Bribri population range from 9,000-12,000.

⁵ These three dialects are Coroma, Amubri, and Salitre. The first two are spoken mainly on the eastern side of the Talamanca mountain range, and the latter is spoken on the western side.

English, however, is generally limited to simple words and phrases, and typically these are related to some aspect of tourism.

It appears that few children in Rio Lindo are now learning Bribri as their first language. This has been the case in this particular Bribri community since the early 1960s, when the government established a primary school in the community and classes were taught by monolingual Spanish-speaking teachers. Prior to that time, the dominant language of the community was Bribri, although many of the adults were also able to speak Spanish at least to some extent. Today, most, if not all, of those who are able to speak Bribri fluently are in their 60s or older. Rio Lindo currently has both a primary and a secondary school.⁶ In both of these schools the primary language of instruction is Spanish, with the primary school providing instruction in Bribri as a second language⁷ twice a week and the secondary school providing classes in English as a foreign language. Additional funding has been requested from the Ministry of Education to provide instruction in Bribri at the secondary level as well.

Research Participants

- *Students* – Nine students (4 female and 5 male) from the secondary school were interviewed individually. These students were in grades 7-9 and ranged in age from 13-24⁸ years old. Only one student per family was interviewed. While some students indicated that they had lived at some point in their lives in other communities, with the exception of one student, all indicated that those other communities were also located within the Talamanca region and a majority of the students indicated that they had lived their entire life in Rio Lindo.
- *Parents* – Thirteen parents were interviewed for the study. In three interviews both the mother and father were present, resulting in a total of ten parent interviews. All of the parents who were interviewed have children in either the primary or secondary school or in many cases in both schools; however, these parents do not correspond in all cases to the secondary students who were interviewed. The majority indicated that they had never lived anywhere outside of Rio Lindo and all but three parents had lived only in the Talamanca region. Two of the three parents who had lived elsewhere were not Bribri, but had moved to Rio Lindo because their spouse or domestic partner was Bribri. The mothers typically work in the home, in agriculture, and in the community's tourism projects. The fathers work predominantly in agriculture, and a small number also assist with tourism.

⁶ Primary school in Costa Rica is grades 1-6, generally divided into two "cycles," 1st through 3rd grade being known as Primer Ciclo (First Cycle) and 4th through 6th grade as Segundo Ciclo (Second Cycle). At the time of this study, the Rio Lindo secondary school had Grades 7-9, which is known as Tercer Ciclo (Third Cycle). Typically secondary school in Costa Rica extends through 11th grade.

⁷ It is probably more correct to refer to these classes as being Bribri as a foreign language, since students seldom encounter the language outside the classroom.

⁸ Many of the students currently enrolled in the secondary school had finished primary school several years previously and had not had the opportunity to continue their education until a secondary school was established in Rio Lindo in 2006.

- *Teachers* – Five teachers were interviewed: three from the primary school and two from the secondary school. Three of these teachers are themselves Bribri who are able to speak Bribri but aren't necessarily fluent in the language and two are non-Bribri "outsiders" who do not speak the language. The average length of time they have been teaching is approximately 13 years. None of them had spent their entire career working in Rio Lindo.

Data Collection

This study draws on data collected over a three-week period during May 2008 as part of a larger study of language attitudes and practices in a Bribri community in Costa Rica. Data sources include audiotaped semistructured interviews conducted in Spanish with 9 secondary students, 13 parents, and 5 teachers; field notes written for each of these interviews; and observations made of community use of language in a variety of settings at different times, including church services, soccer matches, school recesses, work sites, and community gathering areas such as the soccer field or the dining hall of one of the tourism projects where community members frequently come to use the phone. I conducted all of the interviews and observations.

Data Analysis

Employing Karan's (2008) Taxonomy of Language Choice Motivations as a framework for analysis, the 24 interviews that had been transcribed previously as part of a larger study on language attitudes and practices, as well as the field notes from informal conversations and observations from that study, were examined, and segments of text⁹ which were identified as illustrating Rio Lindo community members' language choices and language choice motivations were coded according to one of the six motivation categories. Although Karan notes that motivations are often "complex and combined," for this study text segments were not assigned to more than one category. Because one of the research questions being explored in this study relates to the comparative strength of each motivating factor, it seemed important to code the text segments in only one category. For each segment, I made a judgment regarding which category the text appeared to best fit.

Ultimately, any overlap between categories was rare, and when it was noted, with the exception of Economic motivation, usually appeared to exist between the two categories with the greatest number of segments assigned to them, rather than between these two categories and the other four. In addition, some text segments were identified that seemed to indicate motivations that did not fit into any of the six motivation categories found in Karan's taxonomy. To accommodate these cases, an additional category of "Other" was created which was later refined further to categorize what I believe are additional motivating factors.¹⁰ Having extracted all text segments from the interview transcripts and grouped them under specific motivation categories, all text was reread to find additional

⁹ This segment of text was often a sentence, but did not necessarily have to be for the purposes of analysis.

¹⁰ The motivations identified as "Other" do not appear to me to fall within any of the motivational categories as described by Karan (2008) in the Taxonomy of Language Choice Motivations. These additional motivational factors included Education and Enjoyment. This is addressed in more detail in the Discussion section of the paper.

text segments that could serve as confirming or disconfirming evidence. It should be noted that indication of a Language Choice Motivation was made in some cases in reference to the participant him/herself, and in other cases to the community in general or to a particular segment of the population such as teenagers.

Findings

The data analyzed in this study provides insight into the language choices and the language choice motivations influencing those choices in an indigenous community in Costa Rica, as well as addressing the impact that community members' language choice motivations appear to be having on language revitalization efforts in the community.

The first research question, which asked what choices community members are making regarding language learning and use, may appear on the surface to be perhaps the simplest of the four research questions. However, analysis of the data indicates that the choices being made are far from generalized across the community, and language choices can vary a great deal from person to person. As a result of the establishment of the primary school in the early 1960s, and subsequent admonishments by the monolingual Spanish-speaking teachers, many parents at that time choose to stop speaking their mother tongue language, Bribri, and start speaking only Spanish in their interactions with their children. This previous language choice has led to the current generation of parents, the majority of whom are not able to speak Bribri and therefore cannot transmit knowledge of the language to their children. Recognition that Bribri is endangered has led to a renewed interest in the language in recent years and has resulted in the inclusion of Bribri language classes twice a week in the primary school and individual efforts on the part of some community members to relearn the language they knew as children, but subsequently lost. As one mother indicated,

nosotros hemos ido aprendiendo porque nosotros ya lo perdimos pero estamos aprendiendo ... no puedo manejarlo, pero he superado mucho porque antes no sabía nada, nada, nada, ahora por lo menos ... casi que la mitad

[we have been learning (the language) because we lost it, but we are learning ... I can't speak well, but I have come a long way because before I knew absolutely nothing, but now at least [where I don't know I use Spanish, but] it's about half]

However, not everyone is as enthusiastic about their heritage language. Evidence of this can be found in the following statement by a father who spoke of his own lack of ability to use Bribri and his choice to spend time studying English. He noted:

yo creo que el inglés es muy importante que sería muy bueno que aprendieran el inglés y el español ... Ahora quieren rescatar el bribri, pero los menores, los jóvenes no lo ven con buenos ojos ... pues ellos mismos están dejando de tercero.

[I think that English is very important and it would be very good that they (the students) learn English and Spanish ... Now they want to rescue Bribri, but the younger people, the youth, do not agree ... the students themselves ... they themselves are putting (Bribri) in third place.]

In every setting where observations were done, including church services, soccer matches, recess, work sites, and community gathering areas, only once was Bribri heard being used. It is evident from interviews and observations that the language of choice in the community is overwhelmingly Spanish; however it is also clear that at least some¹¹ community members are making the choice to learn or relearn their heritage language or a foreign language such as English.

We will now move to an examination of research questions two and three, which attempt to identify what motivational factors appear to influence language choices in the community and the comparative strength of those motivational factors. As Table 1 shows, the primary motivations for language acquisition and use in this community are Communicative and Social Identity Motivations. In this particular context it appears that Language Power and Prestige and Religious Motivations have no motivational power whatsoever, while Economic, Nationalistic, and Other motivations are quite weak in comparison to the two primary language choice motivations.

	Communicative	Economic	Social Identity	Language Power & Prestige	Nationalistic & Political	Religious	Other
Students	22	0	19	0	0	0	7
Parents	13	1	17	0	0	0	8
Teachers	4	4	29	0	2	0	2
Totals	39	5	65	0	2	0	17

Table 1 Rio Lindo Language Choice Motivations

Unlike parents and students, teachers seldom mentioned Communicative motivations as a reason for language choices in the community and they were also the only group who mentioned Nationalistic and Political motivations. It should be pointed out, however, that the two teachers who noted the importance of students knowing and using the official language of the country are the only teachers at the primary or secondary school who are not Bribri and they themselves are unable to speak Bribri. It is unclear from the data collected why this was not mentioned by other participants, although it is possible that those who self-identify as Bribri may identify more strongly with the Bribri indigenous group rather than with the nation of Costa Rica, and therefore would not be as likely to indicate a Nationalistic or Political motivation.

Karan (2008) states that “[P]eople normally choose to use a language understood by their interlocutors” (p. 3). This was a primary motivator for members of the Rio Lindo community. As one secondary student noted, *“En el resto de Costa Rica no (hablan Bribri)”* [In the rest of Costa Rica they don’t speak Bribri], and one of the teachers concurred that *“uno tiene que hablar español para poder tener comunicacion”* [A person has to speak

¹¹ Exact numbers are unavailable.

Spanish in order to be able to communicate]. Communication was also a motivation for at least one secondary student to learn English:

Me gustaría tener clases de inglés también. Vienen extranjeros y uno necesita decirles algo.

[I would like to have English classes too. Foreigners come here and you need to be able to tell them something.]

Although several participants also indicated a need to know Bribri in order to communicate with anyone they might come in contact with who spoke Bribri but did not know Spanish, when asked if they knew anyone who was a monolingual Bribri speaker, no one could answer affirmatively. However, even when confronted with that reality, they still insisted that it was important to know Bribri “just in case.” In a number of cases students also pointed out that one of their parents was a monolingual Spanish speaker. This made speaking Spanish in the home a necessity, even though they did at times speak Bribri with the bilingual parent, although this might be limited to only isolated words or simple phrases.

The strongest Language Choice Motivation was Social Identity, which was mentioned approximately 25 percent more than the next strongest motivation. Text segments identified for this motivator related to both Karan’s subcategories of Solidarity-related and Prestige Group-related motivations. In the case of Solidarity-related motivation, participants indicated a desire to maintain their culture through the use of their language. In expressing their strong belief in the importance of maintaining the language, community members used a variety of terms indicating a desire to “rescue, recover, and preserve” the language as well as terms indicating a sense of ownership such as “our” and “ours.” When asked to give a reason for the need to revitalize the language, emphasis was always placed on the fact that the language was something unique to the Bribri indigenous group, and therefore an important piece of their culture and their identity as a group. Responses repeatedly pointed out that

Es la tradición de la gente siempre... hay que mantener siempre el costumbre y la cultura

[It is always the tradition of the people ... there is a need to always maintain the custom and the cultura]

El grupo indígena habla su dialecto es considerado más indígena.

[The indigenous group that speaks their dialect is considered more indigenous]

When arguing for the use of Bribri in the school, one parent declared that for this community Bribri is important:

Porque el bribri es el idioma de nosotros. Puede ser que uno puede aprender en bribri porque el idioma es de nosotros, no es como español

[because Bribri is our language. It may be that one can learn in Bribri because the language is ours, unlike Spanish]

However, even though the participants appear to articulate a motivation to revitalize the language, there also appears to be a motivation to move away from Bribri and closer to monolingual Spanish-speaking status. Karan terms this a Prestige Group motivation. While this type of motivation can motivate people to choose to use a language, it is also “present when people choose to not use or to not acquire a language variety in order to disassociate themselves with a low prestige group who normally uses that form” (2008, p. 4). No participants identified this type of motivation for themselves, but several noted that others in the community feel a certain amount of shame associated with being indigenous and speaking an indigenous language, which results in their unwillingness to learn or use Bribri. One parent observed that

Mucha gente sabe hablar bribri, pero uno le habla en bribri, no contesta en bribri, solo en español y no sé si es que tienen pena o tienen no sé qué

[Many people know how to speak Bribri, but if you speak to them in Bribri, they don't answer in Bribri, only in Spanish, and I don't know if it's because they are ashamed or they are I don't know what]

And another parent, in speaking of his own children and their apparent shame related to their heritage language, noted:

cuando están aquí en casa pues casi no ellos no le da pena pero fuera de la casa cuando hay personas que hablan español ellos quieren hablar nada más español, es como se dan vergüenza del origen de ellos

[When they are here in the house they aren't really ashamed but outside the house, when there are people who speak Spanish they only want to speak Spanish, nothing else, it's like they are ashamed of their origins]

However, although it is typically young people who are identified as experiencing shame regarding their indigenous heritage and language, this isn't true of all young people in the community. One secondary student asserted:

Nosotros somos indígena y no nos debe dar pena hablar la lengua de nosotros. No me da pena hablar

[We are indigenous and we shouldn't be ashamed to speak our language. I'm not ashamed to speak it.]

Prestige Group-related motivation accounts for approximately 30% of the total number of Social Identity motivations identified, so it would appear from just looking at the numbers that Solidarity-related motivations are much stronger. However, this may not necessarily be the case, for reasons I will discuss later in this paper.

The final research question looks at the possible impact participants' language choice motivations may have on language revitalization efforts in the community. It is difficult to measure impact with any degree of certainty using the limited data available here; however, it appears that Social Identity motivations may have the greatest impact on language revitalization efforts. It is clear that in actuality Bribri is not necessary for communication and no other motivation is indicated as a factor for revitalizing the language except the desire of community members to preserve a part of their culture.

Discussion

The data analyzed for this study provide an indication of both the language choices and the motivations for those choices in a Bribri indigenous community in Costa Rica, as well as touching on the possible impact those Language Choice Motivations may have on language revitalization efforts. It is evident from statements made by the participants that community members have a positive attitude toward languages and language learning and a desire, at least in theory, to know more than one language. For a few participants this positive attitude has translated into motivation to learn English or to learn or relearn Bribri; however, this is not always the case, possibly due to conflicting motivations. It became apparent in conducting the analysis that a simple tally of the number of mentions of a particular Language Choice Motivation was not sufficient to grasp the actual strength of a particular motivation. Using the limited data available, it is not possible to quantify the strength of each individual token. It became clear that a data collection instrument specifically designed to measure language choice motivations in an indigenous context would be necessary in order to capture the nuances related to the motivational strength which appears in this study, as well as to give a clearer picture of the motivations at work in the community. The findings showed few references to Economic motivations; however, from my observations I believe that this is a greater motivating factor than what was indicated. All three subcategories of Economic motivations—job-related, trade-related, and network-related—appear to be factors in the choice to use Spanish as a primary language of communication, as well as in the choice to learn English. However, a simple tally of text segments by motivational category does not clearly reveal that fact.

The findings provided here also demonstrate the possible need for further expansion of Karan's Taxonomy of Language Choice Motivations. I identified two additional motivations that Karan does not appear to address. These two motivations are Education and Enjoyment. In the case of Education, participants indicated the necessity of knowing Spanish in order to become educated, since this is the language of instruction in schools, and most books are in Spanish. While I believe Karan would link this to job-related motivation that does not appear to be the case in this community, since labor is largely agricultural in nature and this motivation appears to be focused more on being able to identify oneself as an educated person rather than on the benefit of education for future job prospects. The other motivation I identified which Karan does not include is Enjoyment. In this case, it is related to the fact that it is not unusual in Central America for people to have a hobby, and for some people that hobby is learning languages. Their motivation for

learning and using¹² a particular language stems from the simple fact that it is enjoyable for them to do so, and not necessarily the idea that it will benefit them in a particular concrete way. Further research is necessary to verify the validity of claiming that these two additional motivations exist as separate categories from those already proposed by Karan.

Perhaps the most important finding of this particular study is the need to emphasize cultural connections as a way to enhance the chances for success in efforts at language revitalization. Unlike Casesnoves Ferrer and Sankoff's (2003) study in Valencia, Spain, identity does not appear to be the primary determinant of language choice in Rio Lindo, since identification as Bribri does not necessarily translate into language use. It does appear, however, that cultural identity is the only real motivation for choosing to learn or relearn the Bribri language.

Conclusions and Limitations

As pointed out at the beginning, relatively little research has investigated the relationships between language choice motivations and language revitalization efforts. This study has made a modest contribution to an understanding of this area of investigation, but considerable research is still necessary to create a robust research base that can give a clearer picture of the complex connections that appear to exist between motivation, language choice, and language revitalization efforts. The findings reported here, of course, need to be interpreted with caution because the number of participants was limited and restricted to only one community. The region of Talamanca in which the community of Rio Lindo is located is extensive and includes many different communities of Bribri speakers. Language choice motivations are likely to vary within and among those communities. The limited scope of the current study prevented an exploration of those potential differences across a larger section of the indigenous population. Future research in the following areas can help to expand on the findings of this study and provide a fuller understanding of language choice motivations and their connections to language revitalization:

1. What instruments can be used to most accurately measure language choice motivations?
2. What patterns of language choice motivations are present across Bribri indigenous communities in Costa Rica?
3. How can those who are responsible for efforts to revitalize a language capitalize on the language choice motivations indicated by community members?

I believe that this type of research has the potential to provide information that can inform decisions related to efforts to maintain revitalize endangered languages and contribute toward making the preservation of these languages a reality.

¹² In reality, actual use of a particular language may not be possible. For example, a person may learn some Japanese or Russian, but the lack of available interlocutors often prevents use of the language for interaction.

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