

*in*Field

## Language activism

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**Margaret Florey**

*Monash University*

&

**Susan Penfield**

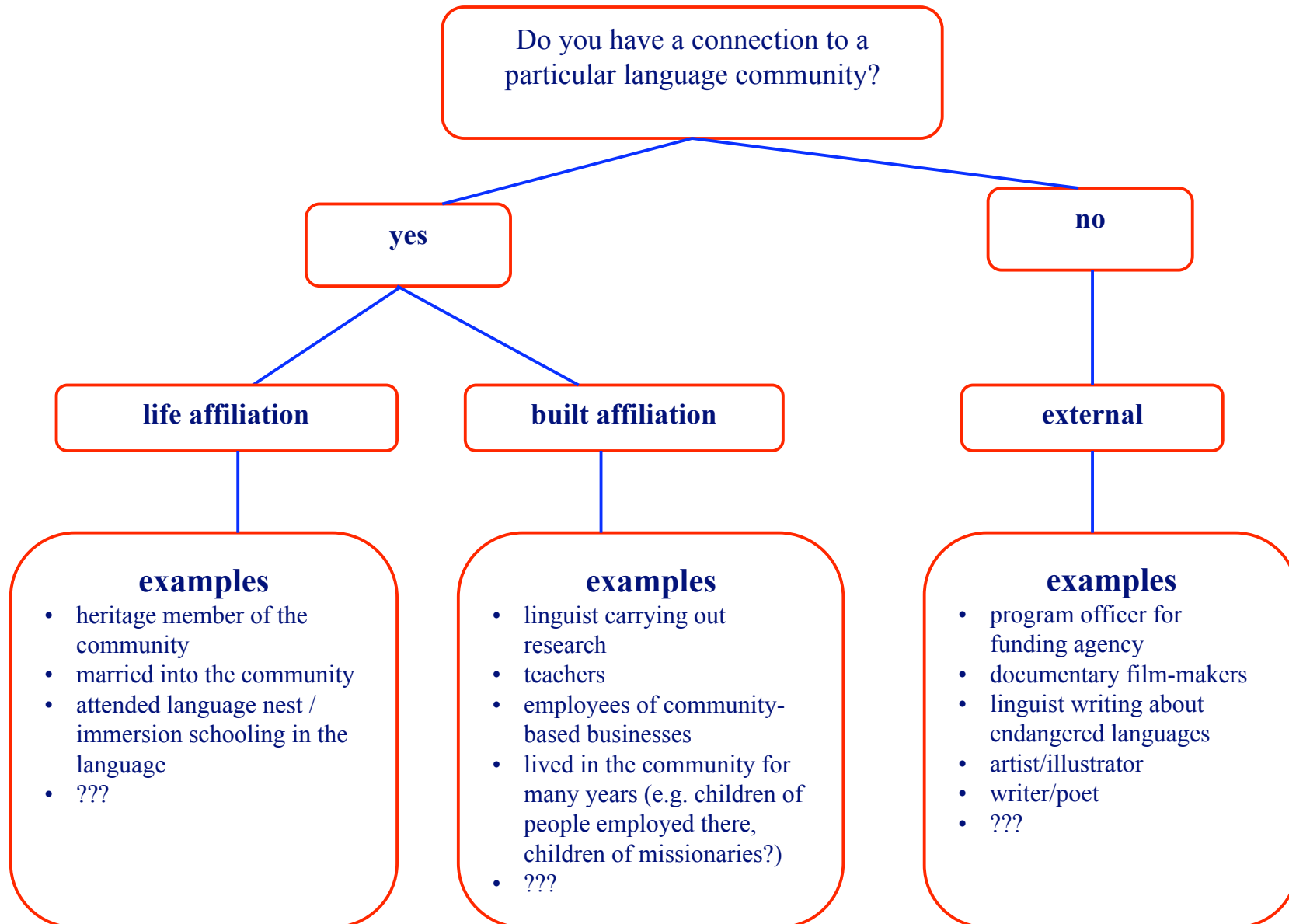
*University of Arizona*

## Day 3

- Training and skills transfer
  - *This class focuses on the skills language activists need, and how these skills can be acquired.*
  - *We discuss where the training does or should take place— whether in community settings, regional workshop, or universities, or ... ?*
  - *We will explore ways in which skills can be transferred more widely to other members of language communities.*

- **Language activism**
- **Definition:** a language activist is "a person who focuses 'energetic action' (OED) towards language."
- **Suggested revised definition:** a language activist is
  - a person who focuses energetic action towards the language rights of minority peoples
  - a person who focuses energetic action towards supporting language rights

## Revised framework for language activism



- **Introduction:** is it possible to train someone to be a language activist?
  - Can you train someone to acquire the passion for language activism?
  - Can or should you convince somebody that they need to move beyond their prescribed role?
  - What is your ethical responsibility?
  - If someone self identifies as a language activist, can you train them in the skills that they need to
    - help fulfill the community's goals for the language?
    - achieve their own goals for the language?

- If training is possible
  - can you train different language activists' roles in the same workshop?
  - what are the pros and cons of combined training?

## Day 3— exercise 1

1. Working in a small group (~20 minutes)
  - finalize the group presentation of your training program for the scenario you were given on Day 2
2. Each group makes a 5-minute presentation of their ideas for training

- **Group 1**— You are an internal language activist. You have been given an opportunity to be a keynote speaker at a mainstream linguistics conference. The audience is predominantly linguists. We can assume that most of them are not community connected. The topic you've been given for your keynote address is language activism. You have this opportunity to raise awareness amongst the audience in the kinds of things they need to know about in order to add language activism to their present role of linguist for the sake of endangered languages.
  - Outline six to eight key points you would want to make
- **Group 2**— You are an internal language activist. You have been invited to train a class of graduate students in linguistics, all of whom are planning to work on a family of related languages. The first 6 weeks of the semester are devoted to language activism. As an internal activist, you want to train the young linguists in how to support the communities as activists.
  - Map out the broad content for these 6 classes.
- **Group 3**— You are a filmmaker who specializes in documentary filmmaking. You have been asked to train a group of people in how to use film to promote language activism. The group includes internal language activists and external language activists with community ties. For your weekend workshop you will have 30 students and 4 video cameras.
  - List at least six key skills you want them to learn in this weekend workshop
  - Can you think of some specific activities that you might want to engage in with these students?
- **Group 4**— You are an external activist who has been working with some members of a community for 5 years. This is a community in which only a few people have been interested in language activism and in working to support their language. Recently, a group of younger community people who don't speak their heritage language have become interested in language work, and they've approached you and asked you to teach weekly classes over 6 weeks about how they can use language activism to raise community awareness about their language.
  - Map out the broad content for these 6 classes.

- **Settings for training:** where does or should training for language activism take place?
  - community/grassroots settings
  - regional workshops
  - summer schools
  - universities or other institutional settings

- Educational institutions are obvious training sites. However, training is not restricted to educational settings.
- For example, we've identified media as a rich opportunity to bring the message of language endangerment to wider attention.
- Training in media skills can help language activists to
  - find media opportunities
    - TV, radio, print media (newspapers, magazines, journals), internet
  - make effective use of media opportunities

## Skills transfer

- How can we facilitate enacting the kinds of policies and protocols that we looked at in Day 1 which set out the rights of Indigenous peoples to control intellectual property and strategies and actions?  
E.g.
  - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
  - UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
  - Convention on Biological Diversity
- Training is an essential step to activate autonomy and Indigenous control
- In training workshops, we can only reach a small group of people
- It's important to focus on training trainers to reach a wider audience build and capacity

## Homework

- Tomorrow we will begin with a class discussion about the following statement:
  - "The best efforts in documentation and revitalization are not going to be effective without increased attention towards activism at both the local level and the international level."
- Tonight, think about the following questions:
  - Is this statement valid?
  - Do you agree with it? Why or why not?
  - What are the arguments for or against the statement?
  - How are documentation projects enhanced by increasing activism?  
How can activism make documentation activities more effective?
  - How are revitalization projects enhanced by increasing activism? How can activism make revitalization activities more effective?