Language, competence, use, ideology, and community on Rapa Nui

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Rapa Nui (Easter Island) provides a good illustration of a small community experiencing heterogeneous and changing understandings of communicative competence and of the dynamic relationships between language, competence, use, community, and consciousness. Using ethnographic and linguistic analyses of micro-interactional and macro-sociological processes, this paper demonstrates that communicative style repertoires and competence are socially generated and transformed.

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1. Introduction

Language is constantly reconstructed and transformed by its users, who are heterogeneous in their language competences, practices, and ideologies. Local communities are characterized by varying degrees of diversity and fluidity in terms of the linguistic characteristics of the speech varieties, their social distribution, and individual and group communicative competences and practices in using semiotic resources. Language and community change through the friction of daily interaction, as speakers build, adapt, and innovate communicative resources through the myriad of interactions through which linguistic elements and strategies are explored, imposed, accommodated, imitated, compromised or rejected. The course that sociolinguistic change takes is undoubtedly constrained by the existing distribution of language skills and competences in the community, but that too constantly evolves, as do standards of competence.

This heterogeneity plays an important role in shaping the nature of the frictions that stimulate linguistic and sociolinguistic change. The Rapa Nui–Spanish bilingual community of Easter Island, a part of Chile, provides an interesting illustration. Here, contact has led to rapid social change and language shift toward the dominant national language, particularly over the last 50 years. Dramatic changes in language usage, competence, and attitudes, and ethnolinguistic identity formation have taken place. These have taken place in the context of equally dramatic changes in the economy, politics, and culture of the island as a result of the late and abrupt ending of explicit colonial control (1888~1964), the new forms of economic and political integration into the Chilean nation-state that replaced it, and large influxes of new migrants and public and private investments from the Chilean continent. An expanding local heritage tourism industry, and the rise of significant and largely successful (yet often fragmented) political indigenous movements demanding land rights, greater political autonomy, the protection and revitalization of culture, and (more recently) immigration controls have also been part of these changes. Although language shift toward Spanish has remained a dominant force over the entire period, a variety of speech styles have

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emerged in the community. Together with a significant level of critical and reflexive thinking that has emerged within some segments of the community about the process of sociolinguistic change and the possible loss of their ancestral Rapa Nui language, this has also led recently to deliberate and organized language revitalization efforts.

Through an examination of Rapa Nui's contemporary sociolinguistic history together with a fine-grained analysis of interactional discourse data, I argue for treating communicative competence and practice, and more broadly language use, ideology, and community, as changing and dynamically interrelated elements. I begin by discussing how such an approach might depart from or build upon some existing ways of conceptualizing the notion of language competence embodied in academic writings as well as language teaching and in local and translocal linguistic practices and ideologies.

2. Competence and language, practice, ideology, and community

The proposed perspective stands in contrast to certain modern linguistic approaches which adopt individualized, idealized, universal, cognitive, monolingualist, and asocial notions of competence. Chomsky's (1965, p. 3) abstract notion of competence is benchmarked by its distinction from performance and defined as the knowledge of grammar held by "an ideal speaker–hearer in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly" and who is, in principle, capable of generating an infinite number of well-formed sentences (cf. Chomsky, 1986 on his theory of Universal Grammar and Internalized [I-] languages). Hymes (1972) introduced an expanded notion of communicative competence by incorporating the pragmatic dimensions of socioculturally appropriate language use, and others such as Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) and Bachman and Palmer (2010) have since elaborated upon it. Hymes argues in particular that the development of competence involves learning values, attitudes, and motivations that allow the users to accomplish communicative acts, participate in communicative events, and evaluate one's own and other language users' accomplishment (Hymes, 1972, pp. 277–278).

To this I would add and emphasize that while competence is an ability to manage the complex of communicative resources that *individuals* possess and deploy, such resources are *socially* generated, distributed, and organized through interpersonal communicative and language socialization practices in the community (See Kataoka, Ikeda & Besnier, 2013). The deployment of these communicative resources contributes to *creating* the social categories and structures.

In most contexts, one cannot assume homogeneity, sharedness, or uniformity of knowledge and ability within the language community. We must consider how heterogeneity and the social distribution of linguistic resources shape the nature of language and society. Labov (1966, 1969) and others working in variationist sociolinguistics and sociophonetics demonstrated important aspects of structured heterogeneity in language in society, especially at the phonetic and phonological levels. Labov (1972) demonstrated that language users' competence includes sensitivity to the patterns of usage difference across groups and to the social evaluations that are derived from them. He distinguished three broad types of sociolinguistic variables (i.e., linguistic variables associated with social categories such as class, ethnicity and gender) according to usage patterns by language users: those which people are able to talk about ("stereotypes"), those which people are able to manipulate for their own stylistic purposes ("markers"), and others which people are not sufficiently aware to be able to talk about or use for stylistic purposes but which researchers are able to infer. He also demonstrated that members of some subgroups were more sensitive to variability than others. This can be explained by differences in the degrees of efforts that individuals or groups are willing (or compelled) to make to actively monitor and modify language practices to attain communicative ends.

Communicative competence, however, includes far more than an understanding of correlations between linguistic forms and social categories and an ability to use these variants for stylistic purposes. Social categories do not exist *a priori* or as clearly defined and unchanging entities independent of the semiotic features associated with them. Competence includes being aware of and employing linguistic resources within a nuanced and ever evolving system of semiotic associations between linguistic features, stances, and social categories of persons (Bucholtz, 2009; Eckert, 2008; Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 2003). Not only are these linguistic features mobilized by users differentially in different contexts, but their values are also reassessed as they circulate across interpersonal encounters and their indexical relationship to interactionally established stances and macrosociological categories are reproduced or transformed as a result of usage and reinterpretation. Through analyzing, reinterpreting, and invoking social meanings, language users participate in making and remaking of social categories and structures.

In this view, the "communicative practices" (Hanks, 1996) of interpersonal interactions are at the heart of sociolinguistic change. Communicative competence involves not only knowing how to negotiate the interpretive frameworks and "participant structure" (Goodwin, 1990; Philips, 2001) of communicative events, but also knowledge of socioculturally preferred ways of making communicative inferences and actions as well as of the societal and institutional social structures and power relationships that may, to varying degree, characterize and be invoked in interactional language use (see also Besnier, 2013). Linguistic elements potentially have multiple meanings, but not all are equally available to all speakers, or in all roles and contexts. Along similar lines, Bourdieu (1977, 1991[1982]) argues for a shift in the conception of competence that takes into account the sociolinguistic hierarchies embedded in the evaluation of effective communication. Here, competence is seen not only as knowledge of the adequate use of language, such as when to say what and how in any given sociocultural context, but also an ability to command, or to be "listened to, believed and obeyed" by a listener (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 654; see also Bourdieu, 1991[1982], p. 66). Furthermore, interpersonal communicative context is not only where interlocutors take specific stances and participant roles and negotiate personal social relationships between themselves, but also where whole

social structures, institutions, and sociological categories are at least partially constituted, reproduced and transformed. It is where and how, on a daily basis, history is made (cf. Giddens, 1984; Thompson, 1984).

Many modern linguistic conceptualizations of competence are biased toward monolingualism. A "pure" form of knowledge of language is posited and said to be located in the idealized monolingual adult native speaker's mind. This serves as the basic and implicit assumption for a large part of the linguistic work that has been built around the Universal Grammar paradigm (Chomsky, 1986, p. 17). Simplifying assumptions are of course often helpful and insights about language have been discovered this way. But much else can be missed or misunderstood by relying on such a narrow, static, and idealized conception of language and what it is to be a "representative" language speaker.

As a framework for guiding language study or policy formation in living communities, such simplifications can be deeply misleading and damaging. Cook and Newson (2007) point out for instance that many works in Second Language Acquisition research have continued to implicitly or explicitly adopt this model as the orienting framework in ways that lead to evaluating second language knowledge separately and against that of the adult monolingual native speaker (e.g., Ellis, 1994; Towell and Hawkins, 1994). Bilingualism is generally seen as the sum of two independent monolingual cognitive models, which are interdependent only to the extent that one might interfere with the other and explain a deficit. In this monolingualist view, the two grammars are seen as being in competition with each other in linguistic production and reception. Each language is seen as a complete and independent symbolic system and its central function as that of transparent referentiality. Furthermore, a language is implicitly or explicitly conceived as a naturalized, pre-constructed, bounded and static single language entity, and isomorphically matched with a native speaker identity, community, and situation.[1] The perspective I adopt instead emphasizes a dynamic view of language as comprised of heteroglossic discursive practices and foregrounds the constitutive role that communicative practice plays in reproducing and transforming social reality and relationships.

Linguistic anthropological works on multilingual practices and their sociocultural contexts (e.g., Errington, 1998; Urciuoli, 1996; Kulick, 1992; Jaffe, 1999; Woolard, 1989; Hill and Hill, 1986) have repeatedly demonstrated the wide ranging communicative tasks that speakers accomplish using multilingual resources and how they organize these into communicative style repertoires. Multilingual competence does not necessarily mean equal competence in multiple languages. Unevenness is in fact common and reflects the speakers' and their community's varied histories of experiences with different language practices and ideologies, all of which were shaped by social, political, and economic conditions as well as cognitive and linguistic factors. Imbalance should not be viewed as deficit. A large part of multilingual practices, such as code switching beyond lexical insertion, requires knowledge of not only the grammar of each language but also their structural and cultural congruence and difference, suggesting a certain degree of metalinguistic awareness. Competence ought to therefore include the ability to potentially produce and perceive interlingual phenomena and build communicative styles that crosscut language boundaries. As analyzed in Section 4, speech styles that are characterized by interlingual phenomena constitute an element in the everyday creation of sociolinguistic meaning, particularly in language contact zones such as Rapa Nui.

People's evaluation of competence is subjective. Their attitudes about language and competence may play a significant role in defining them. Multiple notions and models of what comprises language or competence can coexist and compete in a community, and are implicitly debated and socially negotiated through everyday communicative practices. In some communities such as Easter Island, and for some languages such as Rapa Nui more than others, the notion of language is closely associated with a specific people in specific locality. The evaluation of competence interacts with the ideologies of belonging and entitlement and this in turn shapes the linguistic heterogeneity and social distinctions that may emerge. In this increasingly globalized world, language communities continue to exist not so much because of internal homogeneity but because of the conceptual forces that continue to construct boundaries between "languages" in contact zones. These boundaries are constructed through everyday language use and negotiation among speakers who hold diverse resources, characteristics, and outlooks, who may belong to multiple communities, and who may change position within or across the boundaries of those communities. Notions of what belongs to which language or how multilingualism should be practiced differ across societies and at different times. In some communities, members may draw more explicit associations between languages (language varieties) and social groups and social situations and be more disapproving of multilingual mixture (e.g., Kroskrity, 1998, 1993). But these associations change. For example, on Easter Island, what I have called "colonial diglossia" – the earlier diglossic separation of the colonial and local languages according to institutional spheres – has been broken down over time by the increasing normalization and extension of bilingual speech practices by the Rapa Nui from family to public domains, particularly since the 1980s (Makihara, 2004).

Monolingualist language ideologies within a language community can and often do contribute to the normalization and standardization of language practice competence and structure, underlining monolingual closure around an essentialized notion of identity and nation/community with its primordial and exclusive link to language. Such cases, however, have often been associated with political resolutions and state formation in specific historical contexts, such as the cases observed in 19th century Europe. In the 20th century, these cases have had widespread influence on the experience of ethnolinguistic minority groups around the world in colonial and postcolonial nation-states (Bauman and Briggs, 2000; Blommaert and

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[1] For example, Weinreich (1970, p. 73) states that the "ideal bilingual switches from one language to another according to appropriate changes in the speech situation…, but not in an unchanged speech situation, and certainly not within a single sentence."

Verschueren, 1998; Hill, 2008; Hobsbawm, 1990; Irvine and Gal, 2000; Jacquemet, 2005; Jaffe, 1999; Silverstein, 1996; see also Heller, 1999).

More recently, related ideas of native language ideologies have been circulating and developing through discourses of cultural and language rights in a globalizing world, as the Rapa Nui case illustrates. Community members disagree about how the Rapa Nui language should be spoken, written, and taught, but that very debate and the daily explicit or implicit challenges, compromises, and accommodations that surround it have changed the language's structure and use and speakers' acquisition patterns. Some of these changes come about as a result of more or less conscious innovations, while others are unplanned, unintended, or unanticipated outcomes.

3. Bilingualism and language shift on Rapa Nui

Although the modern history of the Rapa Nui language has been a story of endangerment, the survival and adaptability of the language is in many respects remarkable. Rapa Nui's modern history begins with devastating demographic and cultural discontinuity in the 1860s caused by the arrival of slave raiders and new diseases, which reduced the community from an estimated population of over 4000 to barely more than 100 survivors in a matter of years. The subsequent arrival of European missionaries and planters, and Chilean colonial claims further contributed to the loss of cultural and linguistic knowledge. Chile's annexation of the island in 1888 made Spanish the official language, though the influence of Tahitian was much more immediately significant owing to the activities of Catholic missionaries who used Tahitian prayer books, brought Tahitian residents, and had the Rapa Nui catechist named Nikolas Pakarati trained in Tahiti to return to the island and lead the congregation between 1888 and 1927.

When the missionaries left the island in 1871 they also took more than 250 Rapa Nui to work in plantations in Tahiti and Mangareva. One of them was Maria Angata Veri Tahi a Pengo Hare Kohou who trained as a catechist before returning to the island. English had a significant presence during the early years of the privately owned and managed *Easter Island Exploitation Company* to whom Chile rented out the entire island as a sheep ranch. For more than 60 years, until mid-1950s, this Scottish–Chilean company stationed one administrator on the island, who not only oversaw the Company's operations but also served as the representative of the Chilean state. Administrators were either English and/or Spanish speakers. The Rapa Nui had limited rights and were confined to live in the village of Hanga Roa. When Angata led a brief rebellion against the Company in 1914, during the long-term stay on the island of English anthropologist Katherine Routledge, a Chilean navy ship helped to put down the uprising and took declarations in Spanish from Angata's son and ten other men who had been accused on theft by the company.

For many years, the physical and social isolation of the island, the paternalist protection of the resident priest who led mass in Rapa Nui and Tahitian, and the demographic dominance of the surviving Rapa Nui population served to maintain the Rapa Nui language in what would have otherwise been devastating circumstances. Due to its colonial status, Spanish spread gradually as a second language for communications with outsiders during the first few decades of the 20th century. Although a simplified Spanish may have emerged at the beginning, it did not develop into a pidgin, creole, or mixed language.[2] The spread of Spanish was slow at first but it increased as Chile exerted its influence through institutions and as Spanish became politically valuable as a language of litigation for the Rapa Nui, who attempted to appeal the government for better living conditions under "the Company." Regular public school instruction in Spanish began in 1934, the year in which a visiting Swiss anthropologist Métraux (1940) predicted that the Rapa Nui language would disappear. The use of Rapa Nui in the classroom was prohibited and even punished until 1976, when Rapa Nui language instruction was finally incorporated into the curriculum for the first time, albeit only as one subject for 4 h a week and only for 1st through 6th graders.

The community experienced accelerated integration into the national political economy during the 1950s and 1960s after the island was put under the navy's control in 1953 and again after a local political revolt precipitated sudden decolonization in 1964 (Cristino et al., 1984; McCall, [1980] 1994; Porteous, 1981). Bilingualism rapidly matured with the sudden arrival of a large new civil administration and the opening of the first regular air route in the mid-1960s, both of which dramatically increased the number of Continental residents and visitors, as well as the Rapa Nuis' communications with Continental Chile. The return of a dozen Rapa Nui young people who had been taken as the first generation to study on the continent also contributed to the development of bilingualism and acculturation. Spanish had by then become clearly established as the language of the public domain and the main instrument of access to material and political resources, while Rapa Nui became devalued and increasingly confined to the private domain. Chilean Spanish's symbolic domination was established and the sociolinguistic distinctions mirrored and reinforced the social and political hierarchies on the island leading to a diglossia-like functional compartmentalization between the colonial and the dominated indigenous language (Makihara, 2004). The large number of new mixed marriages also played a very important role in bringing Spanish into family domains, contributing to the development of a significant intergenerational gap in language competence and a community-wide language shift to Spanish. Spanish, therefore, began to replace Rapa Nui in the competence of the younger generations, as well as in social functions or domains of use in the community.

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[2] Compare, for example, Bakker (1997) on the development of Michif, a bilingual mixed language, among the descendants of intermarrying French fur traders and Cree women.

4. Rapa Nui and Spanish bilingual competence, and language boundaries and mixing

Rapid sociolinguistic change on Easter Island over the past half-century has led to a situation in which monolingual Rapa Nui speakers no longer exist today and a wide range of levels and kinds of bilingual competence and language loyalty/preference can be observed. Diverse kinds of interactional "bilingual simultaneities" (Woolard, 1998) and code and style choices and mixes take place across different language use situations. This contributes to the fluidity of language boundaries. The common and unmarked conversational styles of informal in-group settings are currently characterized by a high degree of linguistic heterogeneity and bilingual simultaneity – frequent linguistic transfers and code-switches within and across speaker turns. In earlier analyses, I have used the term "syncretism" to characterize both the speech styles and the interactional norms that emerged most clearly in the 1970s and 1980s among bilingual Rapa Nui speakers, underlying emerging modern Rapa Nui identities. I argued that the normalization of bilingual speech styles served to challenge and break down the earlier colonial diglossic functional and ethnolinguistic separation between Spanish and Rapa Nui as well as to bring Rapa Nui back as a public language (Makihara, 2004; cf. Hill and Hill, 1986). These translanguaging practices reflect and form part of a way of living and experience between cultures/languages in a postcolonial and globalizing world. Mignolo talks of "bilanguaging thinking" and practices (Mignolo, 2000; cf. Anzaldúa, 1987) stressing the dialogical and interpersonal location of language and the relevance of history, politics, and culture in matters of language contact.

Strategies of multilingual simultaneity – such as borrowing words spontaneously from another language (nonce borrowing), code switching, or otherwise transferring linguistic features (e.g., phonological ones) – are useful in building communicative styles and managing stances, participant roles, and social identities. Code and style choices depend on immediate linguistic and social (interactional and institutional) contexts. They may be for example triggered by concepts and topics that have different socio-cultural associations in the two languages. They may be based on the more-or-less explicit assessment of the meaning and meaningfulness of the linguistic form or speech style, given the topics under discussion and/or other contextual factors such as the interlocutors (e.g., their degrees of proficiency or bilingual preference). The meaning attached to linguistic choices can be understood as being shaped by the relative markedness of what Silverstein (1976) has called "creative vs. presupposing" indexes. When a particular pattern of linguistic choice is repeated often enough by individuals and others or otherwise proves to have appeal, it leads to the diffusion and conventionalization of the innovative form as an established element (e.g., a loanword or expression), transforming the recipient language system and adding to the community's communicative style repertoire.

By experimenting with new elements and speech styles, individual speakers may contribute to interactional meaning-making in specific language use contexts as well as to changes in language and social organization. The processual nature of such linguistic formation becomes apparent as soon as we pay close attention to how expressions of new linguistic elements and speech styles may have emerged and how they became collectively recognized as socially meaningful. These innovations are evaluated and potentially taken up by other actors, and may generate a sufficient consensus to enter the community habitus, or they may be rejected or reinterpreted. Whether new expressions or communicative styles are introduced intentionally or unintentionally, their social life is never controlled by a single individual.

Heterogeneity in communicative competence and practice has been a leaven for sociolinguistic and linguistic change. The following transcription illustrates the heterogeneity of speech styles and communicative competence across speakers, often within the same family, and the fluid nature of language boundaries. It illustrates how bilingual competence can involve a keen awareness of grammatical differences between languages and how this knowledge can be put to use in bilingual interactions to construct and expand meanings and style repertoires. The transcript is taken from casual conversations at lunch time at Reina's house, where four generations of her extended family and friends frequently gather for lunch. Tiare (Reina's sister) and her friend Mako'i have just entered the house with a box full of vegetables that they are carrying for their friend Juan. Juan, who is not present, is a transgender man, and the conversation indexes his gendering. The conversation starts as Reina inquires about the box in Spanish. Tiare responds, "es de la ella" (it's hers), emphasizing the femininity of her friend Juan, while playfully withholding "her" exact identity (see Besnier, 2009 on information withholding as a micro-organizational strategy in gossip and teasing). The use of the definite article la (or el) with a personal pronoun models Chilean Spanish usage, where it frequently precedes personal names but not pronouns (e.g., "Es del Juan," line 13). Tiare's choice of Spanish together with the marked use of the article and pronoun constitutes a creative/performative bundle of indexes intended for verbal playfulness. Mako'i clarifies in Rapa Nui that Tiare is talking about Juan. Instead of confirming Mako'i's intervention, Tiare goes on to directly quote Juan in Spanish – which may or may not have been the language that Juan used – in a high pitched feminine voice, "take my things please, I am sick," using the feminine form enferma (sick). Reina joins her sister for another round of verbal play by asking why she is sick and jokingly asking if it is because she is having her period. In response, Tiare then switches to the third person although continuing to use a high pitched voice explaining that it is "because she went out last night." I interpret Tiare's switching voice to indicate that she takes on the authorial voice and not Juan's. Mako'i continues to offer repairs in Rapa Nui, this time to state, using a gender neutral construction, that the person caught a cold. The conversation then shifts style and tone due to the arrival of Reina's daughters (line 9).

Text:[3] Multigenerational extended family interactions

Reina:	*¿Y ese?*	1	Reina:	And that? [pointing to the box]
Tiare:	Es de la ella.	2	Tiare:	It is hers.
Mako'i:	*A Juan ho'i.*	3	Mako'i:	*It's Juan's, you know.*
Tiare:	Lleva mis cosa por favor, estoy enferma.	4	Tiare:	Take my things please, I am sick (feminine) [in a high pitch voice].
Mako'i:	*Ko māuiui 'ā.*	5	Mako'i:	*(subject) is sick.*
Reina:	¿Por qué está enferma? Está *māuiui vahine?*	6	Reina:	Why is (she) sick (feminine)? Is (she) having *her period?*
Tiare:	Porque salió anoche.	7	Tiare:	Because (subject) went (3rd person) out last night [in a high pitch voice].
Mako'i:	*Ko refriao 'ā.*	8	Mako'i:	*(Subject) caught* a cold. [Angela (Reina's daughter) arrives]
Angela:	¿Dónde están las niñas?	9	Angela:	Where are the girls?
Reina:	*Ta'e 'ō ararua kōrua ko te* niña	10	Reina:	*The* girl *is not with you?*
Tiare:	Está con el tata.	11	Tiare:	(Subject) is with Grandpa. [Ema (Reina's younger daughter) arrives]
Ema:	¿De quién es esa caja?	12	Ema:	Whose box is that [pointing to the box]?
Tiare:	Es del Juan. *Ka kokohu mai koe i te heke e tahi…*	13	Tiare:	It's (masculine) Juan's. *Scoop up an octopus for me…*[continues in Rapa Nui]. …[María (Ema's 3-yrs-old daughter) arrives with her younger sister (age 2) while Reina and Ema are talking in Rapa Nui]
…				
María:	¡Mami!, ¡mami!	14	María:	Mommy, mommy!
Ema:	¡Hola mi amor! *Pē hē kōrua?*	15	Ema:	Hi my love. *How are you (plural)?*
María:	Yo fui a un negocio.	16	María:	I went to a shop.
Ema:	*Pē ira? He aha te me'e o roto?*	17	Ema:	*Is that so? What was there?* …[Ema and her daughters converse in Spanish while Reina continues to speak in Rapa Nui to Ema. Uka (8-year-old daughter of a family friend) arrives and Angela calls her to comb her hair.]…
…				
Angela:	*'Ī ho'i e* auario *mai nei i a au 'o te ha-hari ō'oku i te pū'oko o te vovo nei.*	18	Angela:	*Here (she, referring to María) is being a* guard *for me to comb this girl's hair* [combing Uka's hair].
Reina:	*'Ē-ē.*	19	Reina:	*Yes (that's right).*
Rotia:	Deja que hace *ha-hari* el pū'oko de mi *'ŋa.*	20	Rotia (Reina's sister):	Let (her) do comb the hair of my *godchild* [speaking to María].

Tiare and Mako'i engage in a "nonreciprocal" bilingual conversation (Gal, 1979) with Reina, where each time Tiare speaks in Spanish, Mako'i rephrases her descriptions in Rapa Nui. Their code choice is clearly motivated by their awareness of the differences between the two languages' grammatical gender systems. Unlike Rapa Nui, Spanish has gender distinctions in pronouns, articles, and adjectives. Mako'i's gender neutral utterances (lines 3, 5, and 8) contrast with Tiare's gendered representation of Juan's femininity through the use of Spanish grammatical gender and a high-pitched voice (lines 2, 4, and 7). When her niece Ema arrives to ask about the box, Tiare abandons the verbal play and responds "it is Juan's" in Spanish, this time using the masculine definite article del in accordance with the colloquial Chilean Spanish usage.

Transcript illustrates the fluidity with which speakers deploy bilingual resources in conversation and the sophisticated degree of bilingual competence required in some verbal strategies. Speakers must manage multilingual resources within their verbal repertoires to participate in daily encounters and interactions with others with diverse kinds of competences and language preferences. In this transcript, adults in their 20s (Ema and Angela), 30s (Rotia), and 40s (Tiare, Mako'i, and Reina) speak to each other and to young children (María, age 3, her 2-year-old sister, and 8-year-old Uka) in bilingual mixture – employing different speech styles as well as code-switching within and across speaker turns. Shortly after the transcribed conversations took place, great-grandparents in their 70s arrived and participated in bilingual and Rapa Nui

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[3] Rapa Nui elements are transcribed phonemically using a single closing quote ['] to represent the glottal stop and a macron for a long vowel. Punctuation marks and capitalization have been added to make for easier reading. For elements in Spanish, a close-to-standard Spanish orthography is used except when pronunciation significantly diverges from standard Spanish. In addition, elements in Rapa Nui are italicized and those in Spanish are underlined. Translations are also italicized or underlined to reflect the original code choice at the morpheme level. Names are pseudonyms.

conversations. As often is the case in this community, the adults are highly competent bilingual speakers who are able to manage multiple speech styles – Rapa Nui, Spanish, bilingual style, and Tahitian in some cases as well. Many children, on the other hand, do not possess active competence in Rapa Nui but have varying degrees of passive competence from being immersed in Rapa Nui and bilingual interactions within extended family environments, as is the case of the situation in which the transcribed interaction took place. They are able to produce Rapa Nui words and expressions within their Spanish speech but at their age are not always sufficiently confident or motivated to try to speak more Rapa Nui.

The transcript also illustrates how linguistic heterogeneity in communicative competence and practice may not only reflect and but also shape the processes of sociolinguistic change – including processes of language shift as well as maintenance – through the use of multiple communicative styles in intergenerational interactions. One set of speech styles that are part of the community's communicative style repertoire is what I call "Rapa Nui ways of speaking Spanish". Originally created by native Rapa Nui speakers learning Spanish as a second language during the development of bilingualism on the island, Rapa Nui Spanish is characterized by Rapa Nui prosodic, phonological, and grammatical transfers, and was associated with low levels of Spanish competence. Interestingly, this speech style has been maintained in the verbal repertoire of many speakers who have long since acquired enough competence in Spanish to replace it. This has contributed to stylistic differentiation in the community's communicative repertoire. Its use is observed in both in- and out-group interactions and can serve to index ethnolinguistic solidarity and authentication (Makihara, 2005). More recently, young people and children who are dominant Spanish speakers have started to employ a new variety of Rapa Nui Spanish, mainly characterized by the insertion of Rapa Nui words and expressions in Spanish. The two Rapa Nui ways of speaking Spanish are structurally different and these differences stem from the asymmetrical levels of bilingual competence. In both cases though, their usage serves to index Rapa Nui ethnolinguistic solidarity not only within but also across subgroups with different bilingual competence, underscoring inclusive notion of the Rapa Nui community.

The last utterance of the transcript (line 20) illustrates this newer Rapa Nui Spanish speech style, but interestingly the speaker, Rotia, in her 30s, is a competent speaker of both Rapa Nui and Spanish. The great-aunt asks the 3-year-old María for cooperation. This speech act serves both pedagogical and conative functions. She seems to be teaching the children some Rapa Nui vocabulary items, being aware of the children's limited Rapa Nui competence. But she does this by adopting the Rapa Nui Spanish speech style that the children can (or can be expected to) produce, thus positively evaluating this variety's linguistic meaningfulness and characteristics, and building solidarity with them. Her positive evaluation is underscored by the fact that she holds a very high level of competence in Rapa Nui, so her use of this speech style is clearly not based on a lack of Rapa Nui competence.

Native speakers with ethnic and kin group membership are entitled to claim such unquestioned competence. Even though Rotia is only in her 30s, she is a great-aunt to the child and she is able to claim an authoritative or respected position in the kin group. It is interesting to note that there are not only different degrees but also different kinds of competence that community members are aware of. This is one of the places where evaluations of competence and language ideologies of belonging, authenticity, and entitlement closely intersect and have consequence in shaping verbal practices and the definition of language and community.

Rotia's speech act is not a "language crossing" of the sort that involves ethnic boundary crossing as theorized by Rampton (1995), but rather a crossing of boundaries based on generation, language, communicative styles, and competence within an ethnolinguistic group. More accurately, it is a stretching of language boundaries in order to include marginal members of the ethnolinguistic group. Speech acts such as this serve to extend the heritage language to a younger generation and suggest tolerance for an inclusive notion of ethnolinguistic identity, one that in effect signals acceptance of the new subvariety of the others' language (Spanish) as a legitimate speech style in an expanding Rapa Nui repertoire.

Boundaries between languages and language varieties are constructed and, over time, may be significantly redefined by language users as they *activate* meanings such as social stances, acts, roles, identities and institutions through everyday language. The history of the Rapa Nui community illustrates the fluidity of language boundaries and how language ideologies often shape local language practices, as well as the incentives and opportunities people have to learn and practice, which shapes the evolution of the distribution of competences over time. In fact, acknowledging that language boundaries are constructed by speakers and communities of speakers through their daily discursive practices in deploying features of multiple languages and language varieties underlines the translingual and transcultural nature of Rapa Nui communicative competence.

5. Language transmission, documentation, and revitalization

The last 50 years have seen the rapid advance of language shift and a steep decline in the number of Rapa Nui children speakers. Indeed, if we were to benchmark this change only by observed declines in conventionally measured language competence across cohorts of the younger school-age children, then the collapse would appear dramatic and now near final, suggesting little to no hope for language revitalization.

Statistical evidence of the decline in Rapa Nui competence among children is unmistakable. Repeated studies conducted at the local public elementary school by Weber and Thiesen de Weber (1990), two resident linguists from SIL International, revealed that the fraction of children who were Rapa Nui dominant or are at least bilingual in Rapa Nui decreased sharply from 77% in 1977 to only 25% in 1989. By 1997, among 652 students who were enrolled in Kindergarten through 7th grade in

1997, not even one could be considered Rapa Nui dominant, and only 49 students (7.5%) were considered balanced bilingual (Thiesen de Weber and Weber, 1998).

A report that I co-authored provides a more in-depth portrait of the present situation (Calderón et al., 2012). It analyzes 2011 data from the first ever sociolinguistic census and diagnosis of the island's entire student population as well as from a longitudinal study of young adults who as children had participated in the earlier 1997 study. The study was carried out by the Rapa Nui Language Academy ('Ūmaŋa Hatu Re'o Rapa Nui), a local community group dedicated to foment, protect, diffuse and study the Rapa Nui language (more on its history below). Nearly one thousand students from the four local elementary and high schools were interviewed and assessed by trained interviewers to diagnose their "receptive" and "productive" competence in Rapa Nui. Each child was assigned an index score along each of these dimensions using a 0–7 scale. Similar methods and, where possible, the same interviewers as in the earlier SIL study were employed to allow comparability. The interview teams also gathered information on the respondent's family background, sociolinguistic environments, and language attitudes.

The 1997 study had found that only 20% students in Kindergarten through 7th grade students (129 out of 652) could speak and understand Rapa Nui well (scores ranging from 4 to 7) and of these only 49 (7.5%) could be considered balanced bilinguals. By 2011 only 11% of Kindergarten through 7th grade students was considered competent in speaking and understanding Rapa Nui well, and only 4% balanced bilinguals. Naturally, part or all of this decline in average figures might be explained by the considerable increase in the number of non–Rapa Nui children from continental Chilean families over this period. But even if one limits attention to children with one or more Rapa Nui parent (indexed imperfectly by family name),[4] the decline is dramatic and points to the breakdown in intergenerational language transmission.

The language situation appears considerably less pessimistic, however, once one attempts to follow how individuals within a particular cohort adapt and adopt language skills over time, and the stage of language consciousness and language revitalization efforts on the island. Longitudinal analysis of the youth and young adults of Rapa Nui descent that had been interviewed as schoolchildren in the earlier 1997 found that average measured competence (which are designed to be age appropriate) rose for the same group of individuals from 1997 to 2011 and held very positive associations with the Rapa Nui language (see Calderón et al., 2012).[5] The finding is consistent with my ethnographic observations that many older children and teenagers make efforts to activate their passive knowledge in Rapa Nui to expand their communicative style repertoires at this later stage, and this helps explain their rising Rapa Nui diagnostic scores.

This suggests that young children such as Uka and María in the above transcript may very well obtain low scores on comprehension and productive ability when spoken to by an interviewer speaking to them exclusively in Rapa Nui. The passive knowledge that they might develop will indeed be insufficient for them to speak in Rapa Nui in their early years. The language they hear on the playground and on TV will be mostly Spanish and, even though some or many in their extended family can speak Rapa Nui, they will be frequently addressed in Spanish or Rapa Nui Spanish and they will overhear a lot of bilingual speech. They will often feel too insecure to speak in Rapa Nui. At later ages, however, many will be drawn into the significant number of vibrant Rapa Nui arts and cultural revival groups that form an important part of the culture and are stimulated by the tourist economy. These venues offer youth and young adults incentive and opportunity to expand their verbal repertoires as they join networks and subcultures where Rapa Nui speech is valued and encouraged.

More research is still needed to understand what is happening, but from what we already know from ethnographic and sociolinguistic observation suggests the advantage of broadening how we conceive Rapa Nui language competence. Expanding our notions of competence to include such factors as the ability to produce Rapa Nui Spanish and to follow along with and participate (to varying degrees) in the linguistically heterogeneous conversations typical of daily encounters will allow us understand the dynamics of the situation better and suggests that the situation is considerably more hopeful.

In the context of indigenous political and cultural revival movements, the Rapa Nui are increasingly revaluing their ancestral language. Rapa Nui community members now recognize Rapa Nui's status as a legitimate language with equal standing to Spanish. Many now publicly argue that the use of their language is a right and lament that their language is disappearing. Raised community awareness of the role of language as an important symbol of their ethnic identity has led to a number of initiatives toward language documentation/preservation and revitalization.

In the 1990s, in the context of the return to democracy in Chile, new government decentralization initiatives, and indigenous political activism, the Council of Elders and other representatives of the Rapa Nui ethnic community participated in national projects such as the drafting and revisions of the 1993 Indigenous Law.[6] The Council also initiated a Rapa Nui language codification project that it called "language structuration". With funding from the National Indigenous Development Cooperation (CONADI) and the assistance of a Spanish philologist, a dictionary and a reference grammar were produced and distributed (Comisión para la Estructuración de la Lengua Rapanui, 1996, 2000), building on earlier works by missionaries, linguists, and others.[7] While a dictionary can be a relatively accessible document compared to a reference grammar, by focusing on

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[4] Since the early 1880s, under the influence of European missionaries and Chilean law, residents have two family names: a child receives his or her father's main family name as his or her main family name and his or her mother's as second family name.

[5] As emphasized in the report, comparisons between studies must be done with care. For example, not all 1997 respondents were on the island in 2011 and individuals could only be imperfectly matched.

[6] This law (Ley 19.253) recognized indigenous persons and groups (which by one estimate numbered 1.3 million or about 10% of the total population of Chile) for the first time in the country's history. It conferred new land rights, and also allocated funding for improving the living conditions of these communities and created new formal channels for these communities to be represented politically.

[7] (Englert, 1938, 1978; Fuentes, 1960; Martínez, 1913; Du Feu, 1985, 1996; Mulloy and Rapu, 1977; Schuhmacher, 1978; Chapin, 1978; Roussel, 1908; Weber, N. 1988; Weber, R. 1988).

abstract language systems language codification, efforts such as these have remain largely inaccessible to most community members. These efforts are also often guided by linguistic and philological notions of language of the sort discussed in Section 2, which, can be criticized for essentializing, reifying, objectifying, and standardizing "the" Rapa Nui language. Local critics of the codification project also complained that the published bilingual or multilingual dictionaries might fix the meanings of Rapa Nui words in brief decontextualized glosses in ways that might give the wrong impression that the language was "poor" in expressive ability.

The two resident SIL linguists have made important contributions to community literacy development, school teacher training, and textbook development in Rapa Nui over these last four decades (Programa Lengua Rapa Nui, 1990). A more concerted recent effort to foment Rapa Nui language began in 2000 with the introduction of a (voluntary enrollment) language immersion program in the local public school. Although the program has grown over time and has been by some measures (described below) successful, as with other language this too has evoked criticisms about what the Rapa Nui language is and how it should be taught. Some Rapa Nui speakers have for example expressed concern over the inclusion of Spanish loanwords in the textbooks. Interestingly, the issue was not raised while the texts were being compiled throughout the 1980s and in the public community discussions that were held prior to their publication. It seems probable that the new critical reception now partly reflect the raised consciousness of language issues and boundaries, as well as the rise in the early 1990s of a vocal (but also fragmented) local indigenous movement in the new struggles for land and political representation.

In 2000, Rapa Nui school teachers obtained authorization from the Chilean Ministry of Education to run the first Rapa Nui language immersion program in the local public elementary school modeled after the Māori experience with *Kōhanga Reo* programs in New Zealand (Reedy, 2000). The program began with 27 first graders and by 2004 had expanded to 133 students in 5 levels of instructions from Kindergarten through Fourth grade. Despite periodic staffing and funding challenges, the program continues to date. Some of the criticisms of the teaching of Rapa Nui in school were based on particular conceptions of competence that privilege monolingual native speakers. To many Rapa Nui, the link between Rapa Nui culture and beliefs and the Rapa Nui language is unquestionable and therefore some expressed the concern that the teachers' higher education training in mainland Chile would alienate them from the Rapa Nui language in culture. This contrasts with other areas of knowledge and skills such as business, politics, arts and music, for which overseas experience and training, as well as creativity and syncretism, are highly regarded. Other concerns expressed by community members involved the use of loanwords (Spanish terms in particular), neologism, and the orthography in teaching. They reflect the difficulties commonly encountered in indigenous language revitalization efforts in post-colonial conditions.

Despite difficulties – such as lack of teacher training, teaching materials, and other institutional support – the 2011 study found that participation in the immersion program raises Rapa Nui competence scores amongst students even after controlling for possible self-selection effects, and students with higher competence scores exert positive peer effects on classmates. Rapa Nui teachers are working hard to convince the community that the development of Rapa Nui competence in children cannot be expected to take place naturally given the sociolinguistic situation, and that family efforts and immersion programs at school are necessary. Since students are enrolled in the program on a voluntary basis, the continued demand for the program reflects raised awareness amongst parents. Some parents have started to make the difficult efforts to consciously increase their use of Rapa Nui in family contexts, and similar efforts are taking place within the island's many groups devoted to music, dance, and other cultural activities.

Institutional support for language revitalization and maintenance has been slow in coming, but the community and family and friend networks provide significant support for the development of Rapa Nui competence and positive attitudes toward Rapa Nui. In 2004, the Rapa Nui Language Academy (*'Ūmaŋa Hatu Re'o Rapa Nui*) was founded by 40 Rapa Nui language activists and supporters from the local community and has since worked closely with the Department of Rapa Nui Language and Culture in the local public school to support initiatives in Rapa Nui language documentation and maintenance with funding from CONADI. Other efforts which have had positive effects on language maintenance have been the use of Rapa Nui in events such as the annual cultural festival *Tapati Rapa Nui* ("the Rapa Nui Week"), the community-based TV and radio programs, celebrations of the Rapa Nui language day (*Mahana o te Re'o Rapa Nui*), and the Rapa Nui poem day literary competition in the local school. The local musical and dance troupes, as well as other cultural organizations and activities, are also providing expanded educational and recreational environments where Rapa Nui language learning and use takes place, especially in family and extended family contexts.

Many of the political pre-conditions for language protection and revitalization – which have been difficult to achieve in other minority language contexts – have been falling into place. The Rapa Nui are vocally proud of their culture and language and the island has been living through a notable period of cultural revival in music, dance, and art. This has been spurred in part by the success of indigenous politics, new funding from a more supportive State, and the rewards to be found in the growth of cultural heritage tourism. But, most of all, it has been driven by the enthusiasm, creativity, and pride of people of all ages, particularly the young and young adults who have participated enthusiastically in the expression of their cultural identity. Evidence suggests that, for many, this is the opportunity to enter into new networks where they work to improve their language skills in adolescence and early adulthood.

While this provides a hopeful background for language maintenance and revitalization, it is not nearly enough. The much harder part will involve motivating large segments of the community to alter many behaviors and make a more sustained conscious effort to speak to their children in Rapa Nui. This will require a significant effort particularly by parents who may feel insecure about their Rapa Nui language competence or live with monolingual Spanish-speaking partners. They may be

helped by participating in Rapa Nui language and other related cultural classes and activities and by sending children to the immersion programs and other Rapa Nui language medium activities.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have analyzed a brief transcript to draw attention to the heterogeneous and shifting ways of speaking in a bilingual community and to emphasize how ordinary interpersonal interactions serve as sites where communicative competence is socially generated. By describing how such interactions might be understood as embedded within a large recent history of sociolinguistic change, the discussion underlines how language ideologies, practices, competence, and community are intertwined. I have argued that diversity in competence, use, and consciousness greatly stimulates linguistic and sociolinguistic change.

There are reasons to suggest that members of the Rapa Nui community, and not just language activists, have become more engaged in sociolinguistic "reflexivization" (Whiteley, 2003), which is to say that they have become more explicitly conscious about the connections between daily micro-level language use and longer-term macro-sociolinguistic change. Reflexivization brings together individual acts and community tradition, short- and long-term processes, and past, present, and future, making the causal relationships among ingredients, effects, unintended consequences, and residues in language making apparent in ways that can stir community desire, participation, and agency in leading sociolinguistic and linguistic change. Recent struggles for land rights and increased political autonomy, as well as political campaigns to regulate development and limit immigration on this small island (to mention just a few recent largely successful political movements) have already led the community to reevaluate inter- and intra-ethnic relations in the increasingly globalized context in which they live. Rising concern over the process of language shift has led increasingly numerous community members to think in more explicit metapragmatic and metasociolinguistic terms about the history of their ancestral language and community and their own role in the process of language maintenance and transmission. They have become increasingly aware of inter-ethnic, generational, and other differences in language use and preference, of changing ways of speaking, and of the boundaries between languages. Language revitalization is an enormously difficult project to increase use and competence of a dominated language and any such project needs to be sensitive to the interactional micro-process through which the community's communicative style repertoire is built, maintained, and changed.

Acknowledgements

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