



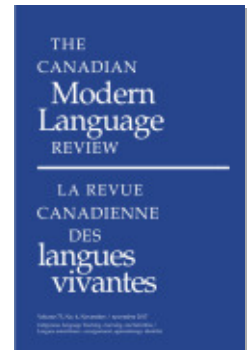
PROJECT MUSE®

---

## The Role of Pronunciation in SENĆOTEN Language Revitalization

Sonya Bird, Sarah Kell

The Canadian Modern Language Review / La revue canadienne des langues  
vivantes, Volume 73, Number 4, November / novembre 2017, pp. 538-569  
(Article)



Published by University of Toronto Press

➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/678839>

# The Role of Pronunciation in SENĆOŦEN Language Revitalization

---

Sonya Bird and Sarah Kell

**Abstract:** Most Indigenous language revitalization programs in Canada currently emphasize spoken language. However, virtually no research has been done on the role of pronunciation in the context of language revitalization. This study set out to gain an understanding of attitudes around pronunciation in the SENĆOŦEN-speaking community, in order to determine what role pronunciation should play in language revitalization and how best to strike a balance between remaining faithful to the Elders' ways of speaking and allowing the language to change as new generations become fluent. The survey clearly showed that pronunciation is very important to the SENĆOŦEN language community, as a means of supporting communication as well as for cultural and social reasons. Several specific areas of concern came up with respect to pronunciation, as did more general challenges to learning SENĆOŦEN. Addressing pronunciation challenges involves two broad strategies: raising awareness about the types of variation considered acceptable in the SENĆOŦEN-speaking community, and addressing the types of variation that can be corrected with appropriate support. These views will lay the foundation for future pronunciation-related work on SENĆOŦEN, facilitating ongoing collaborative projects between community-based teachers and learners and university-based linguists.

**Keywords:** language revitalization, language variation and change, pronunciation attitudes, SENĆOŦEN

**Résumé :** La plupart des programmes de revitalisation des langues autochtones au Canada mettent actuellement l'accent sur la langue parlée. Or, le rôle de la prononciation dans le contexte de cette revitalisation linguistique n'a concrètement fait l'objet de presque aucune étude. Les auteures ont pour but de mieux comprendre les attitudes à l'égard de la prononciation au sein de la communauté des locuteurs du SENĆOŦEN, afin de déterminer quel rôle devrait jouer la prononciation dans la revitalisation linguistique et quelle est la meilleure façon de parvenir à un équilibre entre la fidélité au parler des aînés et l'accueil des transformations que subit le langage à mesure que de nouvelles générations l'acquièrent. L'étude démontre clairement la grande importance de la prononciation pour la communauté linguistique SENĆOŦEN, tant pour le soutien de la communication que pour des raisons culturelles et sociales. Elle met en lumière plusieurs sujets de préoccupation précis relatifs à la prononciation de même que des difficultés plus générales associées à l'apprentissage du SENĆOŦEN. L'analyse des subtilités de la prononciation fait

intervenir deux grandes stratégies : accroître la sensibilisation aux types de variations jugées acceptables dans la communauté des locuteurs du SENĆOŦEN et rectifier les types de variations nécessitant une correction grâce au soutien approprié. Ces perspectives jetteront les bases d'un travail ultérieur relatif à la prononciation du SENĆOŦEN, ce qui favorisera la poursuite de projets de collaboration entre les enseignants et les apprenants de la communauté et les linguistes des universités.

**Mots clés :** attitude quant à la prononciation, revitalisation linguistique, SENĆOŦEN, variations et transformations linguistiques

Most Indigenous language revitalization programs in Canada, including mentor-apprentice programs, language nests,<sup>1</sup> and immersion schools currently emphasize spoken language. However, we still know very little about second language (L2) learning in the context of Indigenous language revitalization (McIvor, 2015), particularly with respect to pronunciation. While a relatively large body of research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) indicates that adult L2 learners cannot normally avoid an accent (Derwing & Munro, 2009), attitudes toward L2 learners' accents can be quite negative (Moyer, 2014; Ryan, 1983). Given these two conflicting facts, it is not clear what role pronunciation should take in language teaching and learning in general. In language revitalization contexts, the situation is particularly complex, since speakers and learners are often especially concerned with speaking in a way that is faithful to their Elders' speech. It is up to individual communities to decide what the role of pronunciation should be in language teaching and learning, as they balance the need to stay true to previous ways of speaking with the need to let the language evolve as the community of speakers and the contexts of language use change.

Research that might provide models for addressing pronunciation in the context of language revitalization is virtually non-existent, at least in Canada.<sup>2</sup> This research needs to be done if we are to better align linguists' research with community needs (cf. Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009). To this end, the aim of this study is to document attitudes toward pronunciation in the SENĆOŦEN-speaking community on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, in order to understand the perceptions of (a) the importance of pronunciation in the context of language revitalization, (b) perceived challenges around teaching and learning pronunciation, and (c) strategies for overcoming these challenges. We hope that the findings of this study, in combination with a series of studies on pronunciation across speakers (e.g., Bird, 2015, 2016a, 2016b), will allow community members to make informed decisions about the role of pronunciation in their language

revitalization efforts. For us, linguists working in partnership with the community, this project will help us clarify our role as allies in the language revitalization movement, specifically regarding what kinds of future research, if any, should be undertaken on the details of SENĆOTEN pronunciation, and how this research might be conducted and then implemented in the form of teaching resources. The ultimate aim is to develop an approach toward pronunciation that other communities can implement, based on community priorities and grounded in findings about speaker-based pronunciation challenges and listener-based pronunciation attitudes.

In this article, we present the context for our study, describe the survey we used to interview L1 and L2 speakers about their attitudes towards pronunciation, summarize the findings that emerged from these interviews, and discuss the implications of these findings in terms of ways to include pronunciation as a component of language revitalization.

## Background

### *SENĆOTEN language context*

SENĆOTEN is the language of the WSÁNEĆ people and is part of the Coast Salish language family. WSÁNEĆ traditional territory includes the Saanich Peninsula on the southern tip of Vancouver Island and parts of the adjacent Gulf (BC) and San Juan (Washington state) islands, as well as land across the Salish Sea in the Point Roberts area (Washington state) (PENÁĆ, 2017). The four WSÁNEĆ communities are BOKEĆEN, STÁUTW, WJOLELP and WSIKEM (WSÁNEĆ School Board [WSB], 2012). Some speakers of Hul'q'umi'num', a related Coast Salish language, also reside in WSÁNEĆ communities. The place names provided above illustrate the SENĆOTEN orthography, created by the late WSÁNEĆ Elder Dave Elliott Sr. in the late 1970s and adopted by the WSÁNEĆ School Board in 1984 (WSB, 2016a).

Although the number of Elders who speak SENĆOTEN as a first language (L1) has decreased substantially in recent years, the number of L2 speakers and learners has increased. The First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC)'s (2014b, p. 49) data on SENĆOTEN and its sister Straits Salish dialects identify 0.2% fluent speakers,<sup>3</sup> 3.4% semi-speakers, and 8.2% learners in a reporting population of 3,064. The WSÁNEĆ community has a vibrant language revitalization program, with approximately 75 children enrolled in language nest and primary immersion programs at ŁÁU,WELNEW Tribal School (T. Swallow, personal communication, January 23, 2017).

**Table 1:** SENĆOŦEN consonants

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Lateral	Post-alveolar	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Stops	p p'		t t'			(k) k <sup>w</sup> k <sup>w'</sup>	q q' q <sup>w</sup> q <sup>w'</sup>	ʔ
Affricates		t <sup>θ</sup>		ɬ <sup>'</sup>	ʃ ʃ'			
Fricatives		θ	s	ɬ	ʃ	x <sup>w</sup>	χ x <sup>w</sup>	h
Nasals	m m'		n n'				ŋŋ <sup>'xiv</sup>	
Resonants				l l'	y y'	w w'		

In terms of sound structure, SENĆOŦEN is typical of Salish languages, with relatively few vowels but a rich consonant inventory, including many sounds and sound combinations not found in English and therefore challenging for learners to produce and perceive. Table 1 lists these consonants, using the North American Phonetic Alphabet.<sup>4</sup>

Two sets of sounds, discussed further below, are worth pointing out here because they were of particular concern to interviewees:

1. the “K sounds” /k k<sup>w</sup> k<sup>w'</sup> q' q<sup>w</sup> q<sup>w'</sup>/, which contrast for airstream mechanism (plain vs. ejective), labialization (labialized vs. non-labialized), and place (velar vs. uvular), and
2. other ejectives/ p' t' t<sup>θ</sup>' ɬ' ʃ' /, which are difficult for learners to produce and, in some cases, to distinguish perceptually from their plain counterparts /p t ʃ/ (Montler, 1986, section 1.1.1).

These sounds are common in SENĆOŦEN; for example, 47% of words in Montler’s new SENĆOŦEN dictionary (in preparation) contain at least one “K sound” (T. Montler, personal communication, April 14, 2016). Therefore, their pronunciation will have a particularly salient effect on perceived accent (Munro and Derwing, 2006).

Other segmental features that interviewees considered challenging include complex consonant clusters and glottal stops. Clusters require moving the tongue very rapidly between different, and sometimes conflicting, positions in the mouth (Gick & Wilson, 2006); they are therefore challenging for articulatory reasons. In contrast, pronouncing a glottal stop poses no particular articulatory difficulty; rather, the challenge lies in where to put it. Glottalization carries morphological meaning in SENĆOŦEN, but it is difficult to pinpoint; as a result, using glottalization appropriately is difficult for learners, not because of the phonetics but because of the morphology.

Although no concrete challenges were identified with regard to suprasegmental features, interviewees were aware that learners' speech did not have the same flow (prosody and intonation) as that of their Elders. Only one pilot study (Benner, 2006) has been conducted to date on SENĆOTEN prosody. We know from the literature on L2 pronunciation, though, that getting prosody right is important for successful communication (Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, & Koehler, 1992); clearly, this is an important area for future research.

*Pronunciation in second language acquisition and minority languages*

What is striking about the SENĆOTEN-speaking community at this time is that the speakers who are responsible for passing on the language to future generations are themselves primarily adult L2 learners. Indeed, across BC, L2 learners of Indigenous languages now far outnumber L1 speakers (FPCC, 2014b). In any context, learning to produce and perceive the sounds and intonation of an L2 is instrumental for successful communication, but it is often challenging (Hayes-Harb, 2014). Generally speaking, speakers' L2 pronunciation is heavily influenced by the sound system of their L1 (Flege, Schirru, & MacKay, 2003). Therefore, we can expect that the next generation or two will be a period of substantial change for SENĆOTEN: The current teachers' L2 pronunciation is likely to affect the development of the language as a whole. In support of this idea, Bird (2015) shows that the pronunciation of SENĆOTEN ejectives has changed substantially in recent years, in particular among teachers and learners of the language.

Independent of L2 learning per se, a major concern among speakers of endangered Indigenous languages is that the sounds of their language will be lost under the influence of the dominant language of the area (e.g., Bird & Kell, 2015). A number of studies support this view (Marti, Adreeva, & Barry, 2009; Nance & Stuart-Smith, 2013; Watson, Maclagan, King, Harlow, & Keegan, 2016), although the precise nature of the influence is not always straightforward (see Babel [2009] for a review). In general, sound change tends to be precipitated in cases where a dominant spoken language exerts particularly strong influences over a less widely spoken language (Dorian, 1994).

In terms of listeners' perceptions, attitudes expressed about accented speech are often negative (Ryan, 1983; Moyer, 2014). Pronunciation change in a speech community is also often perceived negatively, particularly among older generations. In the context of minority languages, fluent-speaking Elders can be particularly uncomfortable with pronunciation that does not match their own, whether it results from L2 speech or from other sources of sound

change (Dorian, 1994; King, Harlow, Watson, Keegan, & Maclagan, 2009). This is partly because sound change is accelerated in endangered language contexts, and partly because sensitivity to this change is heightened in these contexts (e.g. Dorian, 1994).

Taken together, the previous literature summarized above provides us with valuable insights into the types of pronunciation features of L2 speech, and attitudes toward these features, which we might expect to see in language revitalization contexts. The literature shows that pronunciation is a complex topic and that in thinking about the role of pronunciation in language revitalization, speech communities must strike a balance between respecting and honouring Elders' ways of speaking and supporting language learners as they strive to become proficient. The aim of the present study was to determine what this balance might look like in the SENĆOTEN-speaking community, and how linguists might help achieve this balance.

### Methodology

This research project reflects the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (TCPS 2) on research involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014, chapter 9). We obtained support for the project from the Saanich Adult Education Centre at the WSÁNEĆ School Board very early on in the planning phase, and our research design was reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Board (which adheres to the TCPS 2) at our home institution, the University of Victoria. Although we, the researchers, are non-Indigenous linguists, we took care to ensure that the project was conducted in an ethical, respectful manner, following best practices for research with community-based partners (Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009).

We investigated attitudes toward pronunciation by conducting interviews with 13 SENĆOTEN speakers. The interviews were annotated and common themes identified to create a picture of the importance that speakers place on pronunciation, the challenges they see in learning and teaching pronunciation, and the strategies they suggest for overcoming these challenges.

### Interviewees

One of the priorities of the study was to talk to a wide range of speakers of different ages and proficiency levels who have had different experiences acquiring, learning, and/or teaching SENĆOTEN. Interviewees included a balanced selection of Elders (L1 speakers who acquired SENĆOTEN as children), latent speakers (older adults who

**Table 2:** Interview participants

---

The late Anne Jimmy <sup>a</sup>
The late Irvine Jimmy <sup>a</sup>
SELEMTEN Louis Claxton
SELILIYE Belinda Claxton
ĈOSINIYE Linda Elliott
STOLĈEĈ Dr. John Elliott, Sr.
STIWET James Elliott
TELTÁLEMOT Ivy Seward
PENÁĈ G. David Underwood
SĈEDĤELISIYE Renee Sampson
MENEĤIYE Elliott
SI.OLTENOT Madeline Bartleman

---

<sup>a</sup> Mrs. Jimmy passed away in January 2015, and Mr. Jimmy passed away in December 2016. Both were interviewed for this project in the summer and fall of 2014.

heard the language as children and are re-awakening as speakers), senior teachers (who learned SENĈOTEN as young adults), and newer teachers (younger adults who learned SENĈOTEN through mentorship programs).

Indigenous and Indigenist research methodologies call for researchers to honour research relationships by fully acknowledging participants who share their knowledge, and to provide sufficient context in reporting for the research to be interpreted by members of the community (Kovach, 2009; McIvor, as cited in Parker, 2012, p.13; Wilson, 2007, 2008). For this reason, most interviewees are identified by name, with their permission (Table 2), as well as with illustrative citations below. Interviewees who preferred not to be identified are simply referred to by their roles (e.g., “an elder”) when cited.

#### *Interview questions and procedure*

Different methodologies, including oral interviews, surveys or polls, focus groups, written questionnaires, and attitude-rating scales are used to elicit information on language attitudes (Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2003). For this project, interviews were deemed the most appropriate way to offer participants, especially Elders, the space and flexibility to speak freely about their thoughts on pronunciation (Parker, 2012). This approach is also consistent with Indigenous and Indigenist methodologies, which privilege Indigenous voices and experiences (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2007, 2008).

The project interviews were guided by a structured interview schedule<sup>6</sup> (Fowler, 2007) covering a number of topics related to pronunciation. The interview schedule (23 questions in total) was



designed for a broader project; 13 questions were analyzed for this project. These were designed to elicit interviewees' thoughts and observations on variation in SENĆOTEN pronunciation: general opinions on the importance of pronunciation (Section A), observations about pronunciation variation across others' speech (Section B) and interviewees' own speech (Section C), and observations about pronunciation variation among learners, including adults and children (Section D).

All interviews were conducted by Sarah Kell, one of the co-authors of the article. Sarah has a background in Salish linguistics, had worked with the SENĆOTEN-speaking community previously, and had pre-existing collegial relationships with many of the interviewees. As a graduate student in Indigenous language revitalization, taking courses on Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous research methods, and community-based research, she also became aware – midway through this project – of the problems inherent in research models that assume that the researcher is an independent, “objective” observer of the language community (Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2007, 2008). So while the earlier interviews followed the interview schedule in a linear order, and Sarah tried not to engage with the interviewees beyond reading the questions, some of the later interviews were conducted in a more collegial, less structured manner as she embraced her role as an ally of the SENĆOTEN language revitalization community. Data collection and analysis were concurrent, as Sarah began analyzing earlier interviews before completing the final ones (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p.70; Parker, 2012). Although Sonya Bird, the other co-author, was not involved in any of the interviews, she also has an ongoing collegial relationship with the SENĆOTEN-speaking community. Several interviewees noted that their opinions on spoken language had been influenced by what they had learned from linguists, including Sonya. It is important to acknowledge, then, that her engagement in the community over the last decade likely influenced interview responses.

Interviews were conducted in English, in which all participants are fluent. Most interviews were one-on-one, with the exception of three teachers who were interviewed together.<sup>7</sup> Interviews ranged in length from about 40 minutes to nearly two hours and were conducted at the interviewees' workplace, in their homes, or in another convenient location. All interviews except one<sup>8</sup> were audio-recorded for later processing; the interviewer also took notes during the interviews.

*Data processing and analysis*

We experimented with different data analysis procedures in order to find a process that would both honour all contributors' words and keep the data-processing time manageable. Sarah Kell reviewed, typed, and organized all the notes taken during the interviews, and then listened to the interview recordings again and annotated them with descriptive codes in ELAN (version 4.7.3, 2014; see [Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, 2014](#); [Sloetjes & Wittenburg, 2008](#)), a software tool for creating linguistic annotations on audio and video recordings. The descriptive codes included both deductive codes (question numbers from the interview schedule) and inductive codes: common themes identified in the interview notes and recordings, and particular sounds and sound sequences of concern to interviewees ([Miles et al., 2014](#), pp. 74, 81). Sarah then summarized the common responses to each interview question ([Parker, 2012](#)) and selected and transcribed illustrative citations from the annotated recordings.

[Wilson \(2008\)](#) emphasizes that the priorities of Indigenous research are authenticity and credibility in the community. Therefore, a follow-up group meeting was held with all interviewees to present an initial analysis of the interview responses and to invite further comment. Each interviewee was also asked to review their citations selected for this article, in an additional small group meeting, or by telephone, and offered the opportunity to add, remove, or reword cited comments.

**Findings**

Interviewees were well informed on the topic of pronunciation and showed remarkable consistency in their overall views on the topic. Similar ideas and themes came up across speakers of different generations. Sometimes, the same issues were framed in more or less positive ways, and in some cases different generations of speakers focused on different details. Individual respondents also expressed concerns about the pronunciation of different specific sounds. Overall, though, SENĆOŦEN speakers and learners are unified in their attitudes toward pronunciation, in terms of (a) the sense that a balance needs to be found between encouraging the "right" pronunciation and accepting variation and change in pronunciation, and (b) their ideas about what strategies are most beneficial in overcoming these challenges. This unity is very positive in that it shows that speakers and learners have good – and consistent – metalinguistic awareness about pronunciation (see below); it thus lays a reliable, consistent foundation for future work on SENĆOŦEN pronunciation.

Responses of SENĆOTEN speakers are also entirely compatible with what previous studies in a wide range of research areas have reported on, in terms of (a) attitudes toward pronunciation and sound variation/change, (b) the developmental course of pronunciation acquisition (in reference to children's speech in particular), (c) the key phonetic features of L2 speech and the challenges that (adult) L2 learners face, and (d) the teaching and learning strategies that best facilitate learning pronunciation. Since the observations and concerns expressed by the SENĆOTEN-speaking interviewees are in line with previous SLA literature, we can draw on this literature for further ideas about how best to address these.

In the following sections, responses from interviewees are organized by theme: the first section focuses on the importance of pronunciation and on the balance between remaining faithful to Elders' pronunciation and allowing the language to evolve; the next discusses particular features of SENĆOTEN that are of concern among interviewees; the third section lays out the challenges expressed by interviewees to achieving proficient pronunciation; the final section presents ideas for overcoming these challenges.

### *The importance of pronunciation*

All the interviewees agreed that pronunciation is very important in the context of SENĆOTEN language use. The Elders emphasized that good pronunciation is essential to successful communication. In the late elder Anne Jimmy's words, "Pronunciation is very important, because it explains to them what the word means, how you say it. . . . Pronunciation does a lot in a word, and I think it needs to be corrected right away." And as SI,OLTENOT, a newer teacher of SENĆOTEN, pointed out,

we have so many words that are similar. So, the word for 'ear' is KELEN [q'wələn] and the word for 'airplane' is CELEN [k'wələn] . . . so just being able to articulate that difference, or being able to know when to have that <ng> sound at the end of the word. I think it's important for that part of it, for understanding what word you're using, or what context you're using it in.

Pronunciation is also crucial from a cultural perspective. Two Elders made this point in reference to place names, expressing concern around mispronunciations, which lead to "losing the name of your place," as the late Elder Irvine Jimmy put it, and potentially forgetting its meaning. For example, WJOLELP [x'wč'áɬəp] (Montler, 2015, word 1969) means "place of maple leaves" (Elliott, 1990); often, though, it is

spelled and pronounced in an anglicized way, Tsartlip [sártləp], such that the SENĆOŦEN meaning is no longer clear.

Pronunciation also plays an important role in how interlocutors relate to one another; several interviewees described using pronunciation to connect with and show respect for each other (cf. [Pickering & Garrod, 2004](#)). All the newer teachers expressed willingness to adapt their pronunciation to that of the different Elders with whom they speak, as a way of showing respect – for example, matching their pronunciation of *T* [*tʰ* ~ *c'*] to each Elder's preferred pronunciation. STIWET (James Elliott), a newer teacher of SENĆOŦEN, summed up the social role that pronunciation plays, saying, "If people want to be friends, they start to speak like each other. . . . That's the cool thing about language: It draws people together."

These responses on the social role of pronunciation illustrate the fact that SENĆOŦEN varies across speakers. The new generation of SENĆOŦEN teachers, in particular, accept this variation and humbly incorporate it into their own speech, without judging it. PENÁĆ, a newer teacher, noted that "we really don't have enough information yet to say what is and what isn't proper, because we've seen . . . so many examples of those differences." MENETIYE, also a newer teacher, further clarified: "It's up to the fluent speakers to say what's wrong and what's right."

Overall, then, attitudes toward pronunciation *variation* are positive, and variation is seen as playing an important role in SENĆOŦEN language use. Attitudes toward pronunciation *change* are more complex. A major theme that emerged throughout the interviews involved the competing pressures of staying faithful to previous forms of the language versus letting the language evolve. ĆOSINIYE, a long-time teacher of SENĆOŦEN, illustrates the importance placed on children speaking SENĆOŦEN as the Elders did:

The more things we let slide, uncorrected, the further away our language becomes from its original state. Because they're the future of our language. Then if they grow up speaking the language without being able to pronounce it properly, then that's the way the language is going to become. . . .

For the newer teachers, pressure to pronounce SENĆOŦEN correctly also comes from their own love for their language. As SI,OLTENOT explained,

Listening to all of those stories on the recordings makes me understand how little SENĆOŦEN I know . . . I think we really are losing a lot, and it

hurts me to know that I'm not speaking the same way as my Grandpa would. There are so many things that I still need to learn.

Nonetheless, speakers are also keenly aware that SENĆOTEN must be allowed to change, if it is to survive. STOLČEĽ, a long-time teacher, cited his former teacher, the late Dr. Earl Claxton:

He said: "Remember that language is a living thing. It's not something that's dead, it's a living thing." And he said that the language is going to evolve in your generation. He says: "I sound a little bit different than the generation before me . . . because the language adapts to each generation that's coming along."

The newer teachers are very aware of their responsibility to speak as accurately as possible and pass on correct pronunciation and intonation to the children they are raising and teaching. Along with this pressure, though, comes the understanding that supporting and encouraging new speakers are of utmost importance. Again citing the late Dr. Claxton, STOLČEĽ said,

he said to me . . . not to worry about it too much at the beginning, 'cause you don't want to discourage any of the younger people, because our language is critically endangered still. So you want to be as encouraging as possible, not to be hard on them about pronunciation, because . . . when a person starts learning a language, it takes them a little while to hear the sounds.

STOLČEĽ further explained that this is still a critical time for SENĆOTEN: Teachers have to walk carefully, as learners may still be "tender" from having been hurt by experiences at residential schools, or through intergenerational trauma. Experienced teachers can tell if a student is traumatized by language loss, and they must then be particularly careful to correct that student gently. As part of creating a safe learning environment, a positive attitude toward sound change can be very beneficial in terms of developing fluency among learners.

Perhaps the balance between emphasizing correct pronunciation and being supportive of learners was best captured by TELTÁLE-MOT, an experienced teacher, who observed that a lot of people in the community today say "as long as they're trying" with regard to new learners' pronunciation. She continued: "trying is good, but still we need to keep that in mind, that even though they're trying, they have to try their best to grasp on to those sounds. . . . Hopefully soon more people will realize the importance of learning what we can."

*SENĆOFEN features of particular concern*

Two types of challenges to achieving proficiency in pronunciation were identified by interviewees: “micro-level” ones relating to specific features of SENĆOFEN sound structure, and “macro-level” ones relating to learning opportunities in general. This section focuses on the micro-level challenges.

PENÁĆ and MENETIYE shared that while their Elders often praise them for their efforts to revitalize SENĆOFEN, they also remind them of things they need to work on, including pronunciation of particular sounds, use of glottal stops, and intonation. Not surprisingly, the features that came up as being particularly challenging for SENĆOFEN learners have also been documented in the broader literature on SLA: sounds and sound sequences unfamiliar in the L1 (see, e.g., [Werker & Tees \[1984\]](#) on the velar/uvular contrast), as well as overall prosody and intonation.

SENĆOFEN teachers are very conscious of minimal pairs, which require careful pronunciation of individual sounds. The challenge is that minimal pairs often involve sounds – consonants in particular – that are not used (in the same way) in the learners’ L1, English. SXEDTELISIYE, a newer teacher, joked about the potential for confusion of NOS [ŋas] (“four”) and NOS [nas] (“fat”): “If you’re going to go around saying NOS, you’re counting ‘NETE, ĆESE, ĽIW, NOS’ [nətʰə, čəsə, lixʷ, nas] – one, two, three, fat!”

Interviewees mentioned a number of specific sounds that were challenging for child and adult learners. A full discussion of these sounds is beyond the scope of this article, but a comparison chart is provided in the Appendix. As we expected, most of the sounds identified as challenging were those not found in English. All three senior teachers mentioned the seven “K sounds” (/k kʷ kʷ q qʷ qʷ/), which are not all being used because learners have trouble hearing and/or articulating them: TELTÁLEMOT observed that “a lot of the K’s are pronounced like the English <k>.” With their high functional load, these sounds are likely to have a substantial impact on perceived accent among learners ([Munro & Derwing, 2006](#)), as well as on communicative success more generally.

In children, some of the segmental challenges observed by interviewees reflect cross-linguistic acquisition patterns and can be attributed to the sounds in question being particularly difficult to articulate ([Ohala, 2008](#), p. 32). ĆOSINIYE noted that young children have not yet developed the fine motor control necessary to pronounce certain sounds, such as T [ʃ], correctly. She has also observed that children will insert vowels to break up consonant clusters. PENÁĆ has also

found that children have a hard time with clusters at first but get better with practice. In adults, the segmental challenges relate more specifically to learning SENĆOTEN as a *second* language. ĆOSINIYE and PENÁĆ agreed that adult learners also have difficulty with clusters, often inserting vowels to ease articulation – for example, [ə] in KPĀSET [q'(ə)peysət] (“gathering up”). ĆOSINIYE noted that “they can’t even hear the difference.” PENÁĆ explained that this is because adult learners are so accustomed to English syllable structures that they need time and practice to get used to SENĆOTEN consonant clusters. These teachers’ intuitions and insightful words reflect very well the literature on the L2 acquisition of consonant clusters (e.g., Davidson, 2006).

Although speakers have no trouble pronouncing glottal stop (/ʔ/), it is very difficult to pinpoint its function and, as a result, to know where to use it. The newer teachers are very aware that the presence or absence of glottal stops affects the meaning of words, sometimes in subtle ways. For example, compare WĪĪĀEN [xʷiʔikʷən] (“a person with a kind mind”) (FirstVoices, 2013) and WĪĪĀEN [xʷiʔikʷən] (“generous”) (Montler, 2015, word 951).<sup>9</sup> But even the newer teachers are still learning when to use and emphasize glottal stops. As MENĒTIYE shared, “when I go to a *fluent* fluent speaker, it’s harder for them to understand what I’m trying to say, because I don’t use those glottal stops properly.” She stressed the need to hear the word over and over again from a fluent speaker to be able to identify where the glottals are supposed to be, “and what your accent’s supposed to sound like on those words.” Although some linguistic work has been done on the morphological role of glottal stops in SENĆOTEN (e.g., Turner, 2006), further research is needed to understand its precise function so that it can be taught more effectively to learners.

Several interviewees also noted the importance of phrasal intonation in SENĆOTEN. SELILIYE, a SENĆOTEN language activist, shared how emotions are expressed through intonation, and gave examples of rhetorical lengthening: “You could say ‘I saw a big dog yesterday,’ or you saw a small SKAXE, [“dog”]: MEMIIIIIIIM,EN, TTE SKAXE,. The longer you say MEMIIIIIIIM,EN,, the smaller it [the dog] is.” She continued: “pronunciation is very, very important, because not only does it give us the indicators of what the word is, and what it means . . . but it gives a full meaning of your expressions of how you feel.”

SELILIYE also noticed differences in intonation between newer speakers today and the L1 speakers she heard as a child. To her, flatter intonation indicates a lack of feeling in conversational speech. As far as we know, no studies have investigated differences in intonation

across generations of speakers of Salish languages; support for SELI-LIYE's impressions are found in [Fitzsimmons's \(2015\)](#) preliminary acoustic study of intonation across generations of Conamara Irish, also a highly endangered language. The newer SENĆOTEN teachers are also aware that "it's all about intonation," as SXEDFELISIYE put it. They are aware that they are speaking SENĆOTEN with English intonation, having grown up speaking English, and that they have much more to learn. SI,OLTENOT described it as follows: "the flow of the language and how our Elders spoke is a learned thing, that you have to learn."

Finally, speech rate came up as a challenge to learning pronunciation, in terms of both listening to the language and speaking it. Mrs. Jimmy felt that SENĆOTEN pronunciation was changing because some learners speak too fast and "don't check to see if they're saying it right." This observation ties back to pronunciation *change*: speech is generally slower in Elder than in younger speakers, such that Elder speakers of any language tend to perceive that younger people are talking too fast (e.g., [Quené, 2008](#)). Mrs. Jimmy's words nonetheless highlight the particular consequences of speaking rapidly in an L2, in which details of pronunciation may be affected more than they are in an L1.

The SENĆOTEN features of concern – individual sounds, clusters, and intonation – are all attested in the SLA literature: research has shown that sounds (e.g., [Best, 1994](#)), sound combinations (e.g., [Davidson, 2006](#)), and intonation patterns (e.g., [Anderson-Hsieh et al., 1992](#)) not found in speakers' L1 are particularly difficult to acquire in an L2, and all have an impact on how listeners perceive the speech of learners.

### *Challenges to learning pronunciation*

In addition to challenges with specific aspects of SENĆOTEN pronunciation, interviewees also noted more general, "macro-level" challenges, including lack of opportunities to listen to SENĆOTEN, changing contexts of language use, and influences of other languages.

Several interviewees felt that the lack of fluent speakers to listen to and speak with is a major issue for SENĆOTEN, because it makes it difficult for learners to hear and practice pronunciation. Many interviewees mourned the passing of the previous generation of L1 speakers and noted the loss to the language. ĆOSINIYE remembered that

the SENĆOTEN Elders that were here with us in the recent past, they would help us, correct us, and help us learn to pronounce things properly. Their pronunciation was much better, much nicer, more clear and firmer,



in the real SENĆOŦEN speaking people. . . . Certainly the intonation and the flow of the language is much nicer in the generation before us.

In the absence of L1 speakers, historical recordings can provide fluent language input for learners. However, two newer teachers noted the lack of such recordings modelling age-appropriate speech. ME-NEŦIYE explained, “I’ve never heard what a teenager or a woman in her early 20s sounds [like], fluent. I’ve heard old people speak, in their 80s, and so I wonder, do I sound like an 80-year-old when I speak?”

Two interviewees mentioned the effect of changing contexts for language use on listeners’ abilities to hear and pronounce SENĆOŦEN. STOLŦEEL described how environmental and social changes have changed WSAŦEĆ people’s listening habits:

It’s changing with the time we’re living in, because we’re living in a world that’s not so much connected to nature as we used to be. We used to be more . . . with nature. They heard the wind more, they heard the tide, they heard the water more than we do. Everything’s interrupted with unnatural sounds today.

STOLŦEEL explicitly connected the sounds of nature with the sounds of SENĆOŦEN:

It’s like our language sounds like the W [x<sup>w</sup>] from the wind, or from your breath. . . . WILNEW<sup>10</sup> has two of those sounds in there. It’s like the breath of the human, to me. I hear that in there. A lot of those words speaking of people have that in there, and that’s their breath.

STOLŦEEL feels that if people do not have the opportunity to hear these sounds in nature, it affects their ability to hear SENĆOŦEN, “because we don’t listen as acutely as we used to.”

Six interviewees agreed that English plays a role in pronunciation challenges in SENĆOŦEN, particularly for adult learners. Mrs. Jimmy felt that the newer teachers’ pronunciation has “a little bit too much English in it.” STOLŦEEL also observed that some colleagues’ consonants are “a little bit more shallow in their pronunciation . . . more close to the front of their mouths.” These intuitions reflect a substantial body of literature on holistic articulatory settings (Honikman, 1964) which shows that different languages are associated with different overall articulatory configurations that need to be consciously adopted by L2 learners (Gick, Bernhardt, Bacsfalvi, & Wilson, 2008).

Two interviewees commented on the influence of English pronunciation on SENĆOŦEN ejectives. STOLŦEEL explained that the SENĆOŦEN <D> is not a [d], although some people pronounce it that

way: “It’s not a [t], it’s not a [strongly glottalized] [t’], and it’s not a [d], it’s a [glottalized, but only gently] [t’].” Similarly, many learners mix up the SENĆOTEN <P> [p] and <B> [p’] sounds, pronouncing <B> as [b] rather than [p’].

Three interviewees also pointed out the influence of Hul’q’umi’num’, a neighbouring Coast Salish language, on SENĆOTEN. SXED-TELISIYE shared that adult learners of SENĆOTEN (including those older than the newer teachers interviewed) may have difficulty learning to pronounce the SENĆOTEN phoneme N [ŋ] if they grew up in Hul’q’umi’num’ families. Hul’q’umi’num’ does not have the [ŋ] sound: in cognate words, Hul’q’umi’num’ has [m] where SENĆOTEN has [ŋ]. WSANEC and Hul’q’umi’num’ people often use the SENĆOTEN or Hul’q’umi’num’ word for “son or daughter,” NENE, ~ *mun’u*, even when speaking English. Thus, even in English-speaking families, children with SENĆOTEN heritage might have been exposed to the word-initial [ŋ] sound at an early age, while children with Hul’q’umi’num’ heritage were not.

The challenges of a complex sound system, lack of speakers to interact with, changing contexts for language use, and influence from other languages are not unique to SENĆOTEN; the question is how best to manage them in the context of language revitalization.

#### *Strategies for teaching pronunciation*

Two broad strategies emerged for moving forward with pronunciation teaching and learning: raising awareness about the types of variation considered acceptable in the SENĆOTEN-speaking community (e.g., *c’ ~ i<sup>h</sup>* for *T*), and addressing the types of variation that can be corrected with appropriate support (e.g., articulating meaningful distinctions among the “K sounds”).

#### *Raising awareness about variations considered acceptable*

Many of the specific pronunciation concerns discussed above can be described, in a more general sense, as *variations* in pronunciation. Variation is a natural, unavoidable reflection of the diversity of speakers currently using SENĆOTEN. One of the common themes in the earlier discussion is the focus among interviewees on accepting and embracing variation as a natural feature of a living language.

SENĆOTEN speakers vary in their pronunciation depending on their family and community background. STOLCEL observed differences in pronunciation even among the previous generation of Elders, along with differences in specialized vocabulary and storytelling styles: “Maybe it could go back a long ways, to an origin where they came from . . .” An Elder also discussed how STAUTW people, as

members of a fishing community, had particular pronunciations for names of sea life. These examples point to the importance of raising awareness about variation as a necessary step toward accepting and embracing it.

Some of the familial variation observed by interviewees might be described as dialectal by linguists. One respondent, for example, mentioned STÁUTW (Tsawout) and WJOĒĒLP (Tsartlip) dialects. However, other interviewees questioned the usefulness of labelling this variation as dialectal. As TELTÁLEMOT put it, “we were all once one. We were one a long time ago.” She feels that simply describing the variation as “family accents” is more appropriate.

Older interviewees also noted the mixing of SENĆOŦEN and Hul’q’umi’num’ (also known as Cowichan) in the WSÁNEĆ community:

We have people coming from Cowichan who get married into our communities, and they have a little bit of Cowichan and SENĆOŦEN together. That makes it a little difficult. . . . There’s no right or wrong . . . when it comes to language. We always encourage them. Some of them will learn Cowichan, some will learn SENĆOŦEN . . . or they mix the language. . . . we try to encourage them – okay, well, you keep the Cowichan as fluent as possible, and the SENĆOŦEN as fluent as possible. (SELILIYE)

The influence of adjacent languages on one another is to some extent unavoidable, but it is not always viewed in positive light. As one Elder shared,

A bunch of us used to speak the [SENĆOŦEN] language; there’s a lot of people that knew it very well here. But then they’re always mixing in the Cowichan language too ... people think it’s right, but I’d rather see them speaking their own language.

Another Elder pointed out the need for a basic awareness that two Indigenous languages coexist in the community, and a keen ear to hear the distinctive sounds of SENĆOŦEN and Hul’q’umi’num’, in order to reproduce them accurately. She felt that it is especially important for teachers to have a good ear, in order to pass the languages on accurately. This advice also suggests it is important for learners to practise listening to the distinctive sounds of SENĆOŦEN. Raising awareness about which features of Hul’q’umi’num’ might be unconsciously adopted into SENĆOŦEN (e.g., [m] instead of [ŋ]) may help speakers decide whether to try to minimize them in their own speech.

Three interviewees observed that there is more concern about pronunciation now that SENĆOŦEN is endangered. PENÁĆ explained that differences of opinion about pronunciation only became an issue

when the Elders began to document the language and teach L2 learners. Fluent Elders can “understand one another perfectly, regardless of slight variations of pronunciation.” STOLØEL explained that when there were hundreds of speakers, nobody worried about pronunciation; they didn’t question one another. But now that it’s down to a few people, they’re starting to worry: “How does it exactly sound?” STOLØEL also described criticism of pronunciation and language work within the community as an after-effect of colonization:

That’s part of . . . what the white people caused us to be like. They caused us to be very critical of one another in language. . . . There are things that we’re going through that are direct effects of . . . what I call cultural genocide. That’s what I call Canada’s legacy amongst our people.

SXEDFELISIYE noted that (more recent) discussion of familial dialects has been partly prompted by Dr. Timothy Montler’s research and recordings. She described two pronunciations for TITETEM (“small bird”) (Montler, 2015, word 272):

Some people would say . . . the [cʰ] and the [tʰ]. So those are big ones . . . lot of people, they’ll say [tʰitʰətʰəm] . . . and then, all of us generation have learned [cʰicʰəcʰəm] . . . so when you listen to older recordings, he was discussing with us . . . that a lot of the older people, it was in between a [cʰ] and a [tʰ].

These words are a good reminder that linguists’ contributions can influence how community members think about their language.

Although speaker/family-based variation has been a topic of discussion in recent years, the newer teachers have made a conscious decision to accept variation as they move forward with language revitalization. With reference to the increased attention paid to variation, discussed above, PENÁĆ explained that “we’ve tried not to inherit that feuding that sort of occurred.” The newer teachers are also happy to embrace variation, rather than trying to standardize SENCØFEN in some way. As MENETIYE noted, “Families say it differently and there was no problem with that. So we add all those different ways to the dictionary, without excluding one.” In fact, variation can prove a beneficial learning tool: PENÁĆ shared that “one of the great things about finding somebody else who speaks too, is because they’re giving us another variation.” The usefulness of hearing different speakers is supported by the SLA literature (Lively, Logan, & Pisoni, 1993; Trofimovich, 2016), which shows that hearing variable speech helps learners to abstract away from individual speakers and learn the defining features of the language as a whole (e.g., phoneme categories).

Although attitudes toward familial variation are generally positive, variation related to other factors is less favourably viewed. Two challenges to pronunciation mentioned above were speech rate and the development of muscle control. Both of these challenges come down to effects of speaker age. Building awareness of normal generational differences in speech rate could help assuage Elders' concerns about younger learners speaking too fast. Similarly, children's pronunciations are subject to physiological constraints related to their developing vocal tracts and muscle control. A better understanding of the developmental course of speech production would likely help to alleviate teachers' and Elders' stated concerns specific to younger speakers.

Finally, some variation has arisen because, today, most SENĆOTEN speakers have learned the language as (young) adults (see above). The challenges experienced by these L2 learners are to some extent unavoidable: a wide range of studies in SLA have shown that it is extremely difficult – often impossible – for adult L2 learners to entirely lose their L1 accent (Flege, Yeni-Komshian, & Liu, 1999). This aspect of sound variation is likely the most difficult to accept, especially in the current context, because these L2 speakers are responsible for transmitting SENĆOTEN to future generations. Raising awareness about what reasonable expectations are for L2 learners of SENĆOTEN, based on the broader SLA literature, will help relieve the pressure on the newer teachers to achieve the same pronunciations as their Elders. It will be interesting to see which L2 pronunciation features that are currently of concern become part of the language through sound change and which ones turn out to be temporary, disappearing as a new generation of young children learns the language.<sup>11</sup>

As a response to pronunciation variation as a whole, teachers pointed out the importance of embracing this change. STOLČEL noted,

In every place where language is being revitalized, there's always people that are critical. . . . But if we throw up our hands and give up, then the language will die. Or if we squabble over what's right and what's wrong for too long, it's going to die. And so we don't have time for that. All we have time to do is speak it, keep it alive. It will evolve, and it'll grow.

PENÁĆ agreed: "It is changing, and it's going to change. . . . If it's going to live, it's going to change."

## Addressing variation that can be corrected with support

Against the general backdrop of embracing variation, some concrete strategies were nonetheless identified to facilitate learning pronunciation features that are crucial to clear communication, such as glottalization, ejectives vs. plain stops, and velars vs. uvulars.

The major strategy identified by interviewees is learning SENĆOŦEN at an early age, with lots of language input. ĆOSINIYE, discussing L1 speakers of her parents' generation, observed that "it definitely makes a difference if you learn to speak a language at a very young age. Then you don't have difficulty with the pronunciation, or hearing it." Six interviewees observed that very young children master the "difficult" sounds more easily than high school students and adult learners. SXEDFELISIYE was initially surprised at how well her primary students pronounced the sounds of SENĆOŦEN. She expected X [x], X [xʷ], and Ł [ɬ] to be particularly difficult for children but found in fact that they are not; X in particular is easier for children than for adult learners. Children's relative ease with "back of the mouth" sounds is likely partly a function of their developing vocal tract<sup>12</sup> (Benner, 2009) and their early age of acquisition (Flege et al., 1999).

STOLŦEŁ also noted that young children's language-learning abilities are enhanced "because they don't have that many hang ups about things . . . as adults do." STIWET (James Elliott) described pre-schoolers in the language nest who are eager to stand up and speak: "Little kids don't worry about making a mistake, or what they sound like." In contrast, concern about what others will think can be a barrier for adult and high school learners. STIWET (James Elliott) continued: "The young learners that have become more adept at using our language are the ones that didn't care if they made mistakes or not. And the ones that became conscious of mistakes have a harder time." These thoughts echo Hinton, who notes that (in contrast to small children) "as older children, or adults we . . . get self-conscious and fearful about making errors . . . we fear mistakes and make all kinds of efforts to avoid them" (2002, p. 8, as cited in PENÁĆ, 2017, p. 32). The WŚÁ-NEĆ community's language nest and growing elementary immersion program take advantage of young children's innate language-learning capacity, as well as their lack of shyness. Their focus on this particular age group bodes very well for the future of the language as a whole.

Interviewees also shared several strategies to support adult learners to develop accurate pronunciation. In particular, SELILIYE suggested that newer speakers should take the time to listen to recordings of earlier speakers in order to pick up their intonation. ĆOSINIYE pointed out that listening helps with learning to recognize the distinctive

sounds of SENĆOTEN, and that this goes hand in hand with working on pronunciation: “The hearing is connected to the ability to be able to say it, and vice versa.” Four newer teachers observed the value of mimicking the ways Elders speak, as they worked to internalize SENĆOTEN. STIWET (James Elliott) discussed the importance of trying to remember or learn how previous generations spoke:

My mom, she’s mentioned some of our late cousins. She said, you know, this one and that one, they had a *really* good way of speaking. And she said, if you can remember the way they speak, you try and speak that way, you’ll be easy to understand and you’ll come across nice and clear.

The focus on listening mentioned by interviewees highlights the importance of input for learning pronunciation. Rothman & Guijarro-Fuentes (2010) suggest that naturalistic language learning contexts (e. g., immersion) facilitate learning to a greater degree than traditional classroom contexts. The lack of L1 SENĆOTEN speakers means that opportunities to learn in a naturalistic context are very limited, so listening to legacy recordings is a way of recreating at least some of this context, albeit in a limited way.

The other main strategy for improving pronunciation, suggested by six interviewees, was daily practice. ĆOSINIYE noted that “the more they try to speak the language, the easier and better it will become . . . it only comes with practice and learning and conversing.” STOLĀEL agreed that pronunciation becomes more fluid and natural when you’re speaking with others more regularly. SXEDFELISIYE noted that developing accurate pronunciation takes time, and learners must simply “keep working at it until it becomes a part of you.” ĆOSINIYE felt that everyone can make the effort to pronounce SENĆOTEN sounds; with practice, their articulatory muscles will develop so that they can do it properly. Research in SLA has shown that pronunciation practice in the form of purely mechanical drills is not as effective as pronunciation practice that is contextualized in meaningful activities (Saito, 2012). Nonetheless, strong support for the benefits of practice is clear from the literature on automaticity in language learning/acquisition (Segalowitz & Hulstijn, 2005) as well as on motor skill learning more generally. As Guadagnoli & Lee (2004, p. 212) note, “[t]he generalizability of the relationship between practice and skill is so profound that it is sometimes modelled mathematically and referred to as a law.” The benefit of drill-style practice, specifically as it relates to becoming a proficient SENĆOTEN speaker, is highlighted by PENÁC (2017, p. 42) in his Master’s project. Indeed, one of the mottos that guides SENĆOTEN language programming, according to

PENÁĆ, is “QOM,QEMT TFEN SENĆOTEN TOTEN”, which translates as “strengthen your SENĆOTEN tongue”<sup>13</sup> (p. 42).

The strategies that interviewees discussed – start young and interact with the language as much as possible – are valuable in any language-learning context. Documenting them here, in relation to SENĆOTEN language revitalization, is valuable for two reasons. First, it privileges the voices of Indigenous experts rather than those of outside academics (Parker, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Our hope is that directly documenting the observations and insights of SENĆOTEN learners and teachers creates a sense of authenticity from the perspective of the community with which we work. Second, and relatedly, the broad strategies identified here by SENĆOTEN learners and teachers, presented in their words, can provide a good starting point for delving into related SLA literature, which is currently inaccessible to many community-based language activists. This can in turn facilitate the implementation of more detailed strategies documented in this literature, for example those compared and contrasted in Saito (2012).

## Discussion

### *Contributions*

We hope that this project has contributed to the SENĆOTEN language community by raising awareness among language teachers, learners, and Elders about the communicative, social, and cultural dimensions of pronunciation. It gave respondents an opportunity to reflect on which SENĆOTEN sounds are difficult for child and adult learners to pronounce, and to begin to think about strategies for improving pronunciation. The overall unity of responses among speakers of different generations shows that SENĆOTEN speakers have good metalinguistic awareness, consistent across the speech community, as well as awareness of the general attitudes about pronunciation in the community. Although only 13 participants were interviewed, the process provided both the researchers and the participants with a broad perspective on SENĆOTEN pronunciation.

The interviews also helped lay the foundation for collaborative work between community members and us linguists. When we were conducting the interviews, we also recorded a word list with the interviewees, made up of common SENĆOTEN words that contained a range of SENĆOTEN sounds across positions. Since then, Sonya Bird has been conducting detailed phonetic analysis on those words from the elicitation list that contain sounds specifically identified as challenging by interviewees, with the aim of determining how these sounds are being articulated by speakers of different generations and fluency



levels (e.g., [Bird, 2016a](#)). This linguistic research has led to one community-based workshop on pronunciation, with another one in the works. Thus the interviews described here have already guided further linguistic research in a very concrete way and have also shaped how this research is given back to community members. Another project requested by teachers at ŁÁU,WELNEW School as a result of this study was recording primary immersion students' pronunciation of key classroom vocabulary. This work is currently under way; it will provide more concrete data on children's SENĆOTEN pronunciation and will also inform the development of SENĆOTEN-specific speech pathology in the future.

A similar interview methodology could be applied in other communities working on revitalizing their languages. While every language community would identify different sounds (or, indeed, other linguistic features) of concern, which could then be targeted with focused research, sociolinguistic themes could be compared across different communities to create a picture of the role of pronunciation and other linguistic features in language revitalization more broadly.

### *Recommendations*

The findings outlined above suggest several ways in which linguists and teachers can work together to dispel misconceptions about pronunciation and support learning to pronounce the challenging sounds and sequences that interviewees identified.

With the support of linguists, language teachers can educate learners and community members about normal sources of variation in pronunciation, including generational differences and familial ways of speaking. In the classroom, rather than promoting standardized pronunciation, teachers can point out that these variations are helpful to learners ([Lively et al., 1993](#); [Trofimovich, 2016](#)). Teachers and community members can share the history of SENĆOTEN language loss and revitalization, reminding others that individual Elders spoke differently, even generations ago, and that pronunciation became a concern only as SENĆOTEN began to be documented and taught as an L2. They can also raise awareness that SENĆOTEN and Hul'q'umi-num' co-exist in WSÁNEĆ, by pointing out similarities and differences between the languages as well as the influences they may have on each other.

Language teachers can also provide opportunities in the classroom for students to listen to and mimic recordings of earlier generations, and they can bring students outside to reconnect with the sounds of nature, as in the Nature Kindergarten program at ŁÁU,WELNEW School ([WSB, 2016b](#)). Another possible strategy for teachers is to use

SENĆOTEN rather than English names for letters such as <B D> when teaching the SENĆOTEN alphabet to young children. And of course, SENCOTEN teachers can keep doing everything they are already doing so well, especially with the children (van Reeuwijk, 2012; WSB, 2016b).

Linguists can research different ways of pronouncing the challenging sounds, sequences, and words identified by interviewees (Bird, 2016a) and develop specific strategies and resources for teaching these articulations to new learners, especially adults (Bird, 2016b). One method for teaching and learning pronunciation that has received a lot of support recently is speech visualization. Several recent studies have found that learners benefit from being able to see speech, either using acoustically based tools like spectrograms (Olson, 2014) or articulatorily based tools like ultrasound videos (Gick et al., 2008). The University of British Columbia's eNunciate project<sup>14</sup> is currently partnering with several First Nations communities in BC to develop visualization tools to aid in the pronunciation of Indigenous languages, including SENĆOTEN. Finally, linguists can also make academic literature accessible to community members, to help raise awareness about reasonable expectations around pronunciation and best practices for teaching and learning pronunciation effectively.

### Conclusion

This study set out to gain an understanding of attitudes toward pronunciation in the SENĆOTEN-speaking community in order to determine what role pronunciation should play in language revitalization and how best to strike a balance between remaining faithful to the Elders' ways of speaking and allowing the language to change as new generations become proficient. The interviews clearly showed that pronunciation is very important to the SENĆOTEN language community, both to support communication and for cultural and social reasons. Several specific areas of concern came up with respect to pronunciation, as did more general ones. Addressing pronunciation challenges involves two broad strategies. The first is simply raising awareness about pronunciation features that need not be changed: Speakers should embrace and accept generational and familial variation rather than aim for a single "correct" pronunciation. Second, for those features of pronunciation that are clearly an effect of L2 learning, particular strategies can be adopted to improve pronunciation, including learning the language early in life, listening to and mimicking Elders, and making speaking SENĆOTEN part of one's daily life. Interviewees' views will continue to form the basis of pronunciation-

related work with SENĆOTEN, facilitating ongoing collaborative projects between community-based teachers and learners and university-based linguists.

Correspondence should be addressed to **Sonya Bird**, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria, PO Box 1700 STN CSC, Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2; e-mail: [sbird@uvic.ca](mailto:sbird@uvic.ca).

## Acknowledgements

This work was conducted on the traditional territories of the WSÁNEĆ Nation. We would like to thank all of the project interviewees for taking the time to share their thoughts with us, as well as Tye Swallow, Janet Leonard, Timothy Montler, Trish Rosborough, and the 2014 Indigenous Education 531 class at the University of Victoria, audience members at the Fourth International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation, and three anonymous reviewers for their invaluable help.

## Notes

- 1 A language nest program immerses infants and pre-schoolers in a language through interaction with fluent speakers in a home-like environment designed to encourage natural language acquisition (First Peoples' Cultural Council [FPCC], 2014a, p. 5).
- 2 See the Maonze project on Māori in New Zealand: <http://homepages.engineering.auckland.ac.nz/~cwat057/MAONZE/MAONZE.html>.
- 3 There were approximately 20 speakers in 2008 (FPCC, 2008); there were fewer than six in 2016 (FPCC, 2016; PENÁĆ, personal communication, June 29, 2016).
- 4 Throughout this article, North American Phonetic alphabet (NAPA) symbols are used rather than IPA symbols, as is standard in the Salish literature. The NAPA diverges from the IPA as follows: [x]=IPA [χ]; [χ']=IPA [tʰ]; [y]=IPA [j], [c']=IPA [ts']; [š č]=IPA [ʃ ʧ].
- 5 SENĆOTEN <N> is a post-velar segment (Montler, 1986); we follow Montler in using the symbol for the velar nasal [ŋ] but listing it with the uvular segments in the consonant inventory.
- 6 Thanks to Drs. Alexandra D'Arcy, Peter Jacobs, and Lorna Williams, and to Kevin Paul, all of whom reviewed drafts of the interview schedule and helped refine it.
- 7 These three interviews overlapped due to scheduling conflicts.
- 8 One interviewee preferred not to be recorded.
- 9 The commas in W,Ī,ĪĒN, and W,Ī,ĪĒN, indicate glottal stops in SENĆOTEN.
- 10 WĪLNEW means "First Nations person" (Montler, 2015, word 686).

- 11 In their work on revitalizing Miami, the Indigenous language of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Daryl Baldwin and David Costa have observed that “children fluently use sounds and grammar that their parents, who learned the language as adults, still struggle with” (as cited in Bowern, 2014).
- 12 The uvular sounds <X X> [x xʷ]) are relatively natural for young children because their larynxes have not yet dropped (see Benner, 2009).
- 13 PENÁĆ noted that this expression came from his mother ĆOSINIYE, in the context of SENĆOFEN evening classes offered in 2007.
- 14 See <http://enunciate.arts.ubc.ca/>.

## References

- Anderson-Hsieh, J., Johnson, R., & Koehler, K. (1992). The relationship between native speaker judgments of nonnative pronunciation and deviance in segmental, prosody, and syllable structure. *Language Learning*, 42(4), 529–555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1992.tb01043.x>
- Babel, M. (2009). The phonetic and phonological effects of obsolescence in Northern Paiute. In J. Stanford & R. Preston (Eds.), *Variation in indigenous minority languages* (pp. 23–46). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/impact.25.03bab>.
- Benner, A. (2006). The prosody of SENĆOFEN, a pilot study. Paper presented at the 41st International Conference on Salish and Neighbouring Languages. University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- Benner, A. (2009). *Production and perception of laryngeal constriction in the early vocalizations of Bai and English infants* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- Best, C. (1994). The emergence of native-language phonological influences in infants: A perceptual assimilation model. In J. Goodman & H. Nusbaum (Eds.), *The development of speech perception: The transition from speech sounds to spoken words* (pp. 167–224). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bird, S. (2015). *Pronunciation change in the context of language revitalization: Ejectives across four generations of SENĆOFEN speakers*. Paper presented at the 50th International Conference on Salish and Neighbouring Languages. University of British Columbia, Vancouver.
- Bird, S. (2016a). A phonetic study of the “K sounds” across generations of SENĆOFEN speakers. Proceedings of the 51st International Conference on Salish and Neighbouring Languages, 19–36. Sliammon, BC.
- Bird, S. (2016b). *Articulatory conflict resolution strategies in L1 and L2 SENĆOFEN speakers*. Paper presented at Acoustics Week in Canada. Vancouver.
- Bird, S., & Kell, S. (2015). *Pronunciation in the context of language revitalization*. Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation. Honolulu.
- Bowern, C. (2014). Should you talk to your child in a different language? [Blog post]. *Lexicon Valley*. Retrieved from <http://www.slate.com/blogs/>

- lexicon\_valley/2014/10/08/raising\_bilingual\_kids\_should\_you\_speak\_to\_children\_in\_your\_second\_language.html
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2014). *Tri-council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans*. [http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS\\_2\\_FINAL\\_Web.pdf](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf)
- Czaykowska-Higgins, E. (2009). Research models, community engagement, and linguistic fieldwork: Reflections on working within Canadian Indigenous communities. *Language Documentation and Conservation*, 3(1), 15–50.
- Davidson, L. (2006). Phonology, phonetics, or frequency: Influences on the production of non- native sequences. *Journal of Phonetics*, 34(1), 104–137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wocn.2005.03.004>
- Derwing, T.M., & Munro, M.J. (2009). Putting accent in its place: Rethinking obstacles to communication. *Language Teaching*, 42(4), 476–490. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480800551X>
- Dorian, N.C. (1994). Purism vs. compromise in language revitalization and language revival. *Language in Society*, 23(04), 479–494. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500018169>
- Elliott, D., Sr., (1990). *Saltwater people*. Saanich, BC: School District 63.
- First Peoples' Cultural Council [FPCC]. (2008). *SENĆOTEN / Malchosen / Lkwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke*. Retrieved from <http://maps.fpcc.ca/sencoten>
- First Peoples' Cultural Council [FPCC]. (2014a). *Language nest handbook for B.C. First Nations communities*. Brentwood Bay, BC: First Peoples' Cultural Council.
- First Peoples' Cultural Council [FPCC]. (2014b). *Report on the status of B.C. First Nations languages*. Brentwood Bay, BC: First Peoples' Cultural Council.
- First Peoples' Cultural Council (2016). *SENĆOTEN / Malchosen / Lkwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke*. Retrieved from: <http://maps.fpcc.ca/sencoten>
- FirstVoices (2013). *SENĆOTEN words*. Retrieved from <http://www.firstvoices.com/en/SENCOTEN/word-query-form>
- Fitzsimmons, M. (2015). Two dimensions of prosodic change in Conamara Irish (Unpublished honours thesis). University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- Flege, J., Yeni-Komshian, G., & Liu, S. (1999). Age constraints on second-language acquisition. *Journal of Phonetics*, 25, 169–186. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jpho.1996.0040>
- Flege, J.E., Schirru, C., & MacKay, I.R.A. (2003). Interaction between the native and second language phonetic subsystems. *Speech Communication*, 40(4), 467–491. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-6393\(02\)00128-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-6393(02)00128-0)
- Fowler, F.J. (2007). Interview schedule. In M.S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T.F. Liao (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.4135/9781412950589.n451>
- Garrett, P., Coupland, N., & Williams, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Investigating language attitudes: Social meanings of dialect, ethnicity and performance*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

- Gick, B., Bernhardt, B.M., Bacsfalvi, P., & Wilson, I. (2008). Ultrasound imaging applications in second language acquisition. In J. Hansen & M. Zampini (Eds.), *Phonology and second language acquisition* (pp. 309–322). Amsterdam: John Benjamins; . <https://doi.org/10.1075/sibil.36.15gic>.
- Gick, B., & Wilson, I. (2006). Excrescent schwa and vowel laxing: Cross-linguistic responses to conflicting articulatory targets. In L. Goldstein, D.H. Whalen, & C.T. Best (Eds.), *Laboratory Phonology VIII* (pp. 635–659). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Guadagnoli, M.A., & Lee, T.D. (2004). Challenge point: A framework for conceptualizing the effects of various practice conditions in motor learning. *Journal of Motor Behavior*, 36(2), 212–224. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JMBR.36.2.212-224>
- Hayes-Harb, R. (2014). Acoustic phonetic parameters in the perception of accent. In J.M. Levis & A. Moyer (Eds.), *Social dynamics in second language acquisition* (pp. 31–51). Boston: De Gruyter; . <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614511762.31>.
- Hinton, L. (2002). *How to keep your language alive: A commonsense approach to one-on-one language learning*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books. (Original work published 1959).
- Honikman, B. (1964). Articulatory settings. In D. Abercrombie, D.B. Fry, P.A.D. MacCarthy, N.C. Scott, & J.L.M. Trim (Eds.), *In honour of Daniel Jones* (pp. 73–84). London: Longman.
- King, J., Harlow, R., Watson, C., Keegan, P., & Maclagan, M. (2009). Changing pronunciation of the Maori language: Implications for revitalization. In J. Reyhner & L. Lockard (Eds.), *Indigenous language revitalization: Encouragement, guidance & lessons learned* (pp. 85–96). Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Lively, S.E., Logan, J.S., & Pisoni, D.B. (1993). Training Japanese listeners to identify English /r/ and /l/. II: The role of phonetic environment and talker variability in learning new perceptual categories. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 94(3), 1242–1255. <https://doi.org/10.1121/1.408177>
- Marti, R., Adreeva, B., & Barry, W. (2009). Korpora bedrohter Sprachen asl eierlegende Wollmilchsau? Bas Beispiel GENIE. *Linguistik online* 39(3/09), 137–148.
- Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (2014). ELAN Linguistic Annotator [Computer software]. Retrieved from [tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/](http://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/)
- McIvor, O. (2015). Chapter 4: Adult Indigenous language learning in Western Canada: What is holding us back? In K. Michel, P. Walton, E. Bourassa & J. Miller (Eds.), *Living Our Languages: Papers from the 19<sup>th</sup> Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium* (pp. 37–49). Ronkonkoma, NY: Linus Learning.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Montler, T. (1986). *An outline of the morphology and phonology of Saanich, North Straits Salish*. Missoula: University of Montana Working Papers in Linguistics 4.

- Montler, T. (2015). *SENĆOŦEN classified wordlist*. Retrieved from <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~montler/saanich/wordlist/>
- Montler, T. (in preparation). *Saanich Dictionary*. Ms., University of North Texas, Denton.
- Moyer, A. (2014). The social nature of second language pronunciation. In J.M. Levis & A. Moyer (Eds.), *Social dynamics in second language acquisition* (pp. 11–29). Boston: De Gruyter.
- Munro, M., & Derwing, T. (2006). The functional load principle in ESL pronunciation instruction: An exploratory study. *System*, 34(4), 520–531. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.09.004>
- Nance, C., & Stuart-Smith, J. (2013). Pre-aspiration and post-aspiration in Scottish Gaelic stop consonants. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 43(2), 129–152. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100313000042>
- Ohala, D.K. (2008). Phonological acquisition in a first language. In J.G. Hansen Edwards & M.L. Zampini (Eds.), *Studies in bilingualism: Phonology of second language acquisition* (pp. 19–39). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sibil.36.03oha>.
- Olson, D. (2014). Benefits of visual feedback on segmental production in the L2 classroom. *Language Teaching & Technology*, 18(3), 173–192.
- Parker, A.V. (2012). *Learning the language of the land* (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- PENÁĆ [G.D. Underwood]. (2017). *SXENIEN YEW CNEs I, TWE SENĆOŦEN? – How is it that I have come to speak SENĆOŦEN?: My Reflections on Learning and Speaking SENĆOŦEN* (Unpublished Master's project.) University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- Pickering, M.J., & Garrod, S. (2004). Toward a mechanistic psychology of dialogue. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 27(2), 1–57. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X04000056>
- Quené, H. (2008). Multilevel modeling of between-speaker and within-speaker variation in spontaneous speech tempo. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 123(2), 1104–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1121/1.2821762>
- Rothman, J., & Guijarro-Fuentes, P. (2010). Input quality matters: Some comments on input type and age-effects in adult SLA. *Applied Linguistics*, 31(2), 301–306. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amq004>
- Ryan, E.B. (1983). Social psychological mechanisms underlying native speaker reactions to nonnative speech. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 5(2), 148–159. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100004824>
- Saito, K. (2012). Effects of instruction on L2 pronunciation development: A synthesis of 15 quasi-experimental intervention studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(4), 842–854. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.67>
- Segalowitz, N., & Hulstijn, J. (2005). Automaticity in bilingualism and second language learning. In J. Kroll & A. de Groot (Eds.), *Handbook of bilingualism: Psycholinguistic approaches* (pp. 371–388). Oxford: Oxford University Press.



- Sloetjes, H., & Wittenburg, P. (2008). Annotation by category – ELAN and ISO DCR. Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Language Resource and Evaluation.
- Smith, L.T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Trofimovich, P. (2016). Interactive alignment: A teaching-friendly view of second language pronunciation learning. *Language Teaching*, 49(3), 411–422. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444813000360>
- Turner, C. (2006). *The SENĆOEN resultative construction* (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- van Reeuyk, C. (2012, February 2). SENĆOEN language nest strives to revive traditional tongue. *Peninsula News Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.bclocalnews.com/community/138589954.html>
- Watson, C., Maclagan, M., King, J., Harlow, R., & Keegan, P. (2016). Sound change in Maori and the influence of New Zealand English. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 46(2), 185–218. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100316000025>
- Werker, J.F., & Tees, R.C. (1984). Cross-language speech perception: Evidence for perceptual reorganization during the first year of life. *Infant Behavior and Development*, 7(1), 49–63. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0163-6383\(84\)80022-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0163-6383(84)80022-3)
- Wilson, S. (2007). Guest editorial: What is an Indigenist research paradigm? *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 30(2), 193–195.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- WSÁNEĆ School Board [WSB]. (2012). *SENĆOEN 5 to 12 Integrated Resource Package 2012*. Brentwood Bay, BC: WSÁNEĆ School Board.
- WSÁNEĆ School Board [WSB]. (2016a). *History of the SENĆOEN language*. Retrieved from <http://wsanecschoolboard.ca/about-the-school/history-of-the-sencoten-language>
- WSÁNEĆ School Board [WSB]. (2016b). *SENĆOEN Survival School*. Retrieved from <http://wsanecschoolboard.ca/sencoten-survival-school>



### Appendix: Sounds of concern for children and adult second language learners

SENĆOTEN	NAPA	Responses re: child learners	Responses re: adult learners
T	ł' (→ kl in adult learners)	3	3
Ł ~ Ƨ	ł~θ	2	3
C, Ɔ, Q, K, Ƒ, K, Ƒ	k, k <sup>w</sup> , k' <sup>w</sup> , q, q <sup>w</sup> , q', q' <sup>w</sup> (→ k in adult learners)	3	1
X ~ Ƨ ~ W	χ ~ χ <sup>w</sup> ~ χ <sup>w</sup>	1	3
D	t' → d	1	2
B ~ P	p' → b ~ p	1	2
N ~ N (~ NK for child learners)	ŋ ~ n (~ nk for child learners)	1	1
T	c' ~ t <sup>0</sup>	1	1
Vowel insertion to break up consonant clusters		0	2
Ƨ ~ Ɔ	χ <sup>w</sup> ~ k <sup>w</sup>	1	0
Ɔ ~ J	č ~ č'	1	0
S	s	1	0
Vowel sounds		1	0
Sound combinations (e.g., WKEKET 'shadow')	(e.g., x <sup>w</sup> q'əq'əł')	1	0