k:ON – Kölner Online Journal für Lehrer*innenbildung, Sonderheft/Special Issue 6, 2026, 58–73
https://doi.org/10.18716/ojs/kON/2026.s6.3

Stefanie Cajka & Eva Vetter

Linguistic Risk-Taking for Minoritized Languages: A Reflection on Relevant Considerations

Abstract

The Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative is usually employed in contexts of learning majority languages such as English, French, or German (Cajka, 2021; Cajka et al., 2023; Slavkov & Séror, 2019). This paper, however, pursues a different approach and explores the potential and the implementation of linguistic risk-taking for minoritized languages. It draws on the work of the HORIZON EUROPE project 'RISE UP—Revitalising Languages and Safeguarding Cultural Diversity' and reflects on important considerations for adapting the initiative for minoritized language contexts. The theoretical basis for these reflections rests on three main pillars, which are language ecology, new speakers, and a dynamic usage-based approach to language learning. The paper also elaborates on the implementation of linguistic risk-taking in the RISE UP project.

Die *Linguistic Risk-Taking* (*LRT*) Initiative wird in der Regel im Zusammenhang mit dem Erlernen von Mehrheitssprachen wie Englisch, Französisch oder Deutsch eingesetzt (Cajka, 2021; Cajka et al., 2023; Slavkov & Séror, 2019). Dieser Beitrag verfolgt jedoch einen anderen Ansatz und untersucht das Potenzial sowie die Umsetzung von *LRT* für minorisierte Sprachen. Er stützt sich auf die Arbeit des HORIZON EUROPE Projekts „RISE UP–Revitalising Languages and Safeguarding Cultural Diversity" und reflektiert wichtige Überlegungen zur Adaptierung der Initiative für Kontexte minorisierter Sprachen. Die theoretische Grundlage für diese Überlegungen beruht auf drei Säulen: Sprachökologie, neue Sprecher*innen (*New Speakers*) und ein dynamischer, gebrauchsbasierter Ansatz zum Sprachenlernen. Der Beitrag geht zudem auf die Umsetzung von *LRT* im Projekt RISE UP ein.

Keywords

linguistic risk-taking, minoritized languages, language ecology, new speakers, usage-based language learning

Linguistic Risk-Taking (*LRT*), sprachliche Risikobereitschaft, minorisierte Sprachen, Sprachökologie, neue Sprecher*innen (*New Speakers*), gebrauchsbasiertes Sprachenlernen

1. Introduction

The Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative originally emerged in a bilingual university context (Slavkov & Séror, 2019) and aimed to promote widely used languages. Minority languages are, by definition, not widely used and their main context of use is not tertiary education. Although the contexts of language use that we would like to link in this article could not be more different, there is something that connects them: the language

users' pathways towards a particular language or variety. We will argue that the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative offers general strategies and opportunities that support these pathways and can be adapted to minoritized languages if certain considerations are addressed.

This paper is organized as follows: First, a brief overview of the RISE UP project is given, as the reflections in this paper originate from our work and research in this project. We then discuss the main theoretical pillars that underpin our considerations: language ecology, new speakers, and a dynamic usage-based language learning approach. The Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative is presented and related research is briefly discussed. To conclude the background section, we then bring the theoretical concepts and linguistic risk-taking together. The third section is dedicated to linguistic risk-taking for minoritized languages. We elaborate on important considerations that—in our perspective—should be taken into account when adapting the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative to a minoritized language context. The implementation of linguistic risk-taking in the project RISE UP is also discussed. Overall, the objective of this paper is twofold: firstly, to underscore the potential of linguistic risk-taking in the context of language revitalization; and secondly, to reflect on what should be taken into consideration when implementing it in a minoritized language context.

2. Background

2.1 The RISE UP Project

The project 'RISE UP—Revitalising Languages and Safeguarding Cultural Diversity' is a HORIZON EUROPE project of the type 'Coordination & Support Action' with a duration of three years (02/2023–01/2026). Eight partners from six countries are collaborating in the project, namely MINDS & SPARKS GmbH, University of Tartu, University of Vienna, ESPRONCEDA Institute of Art & Culture, Youth of European Nationalities, NUROGAMES GmbH, School of Oriental and African Studies, and University of Roehampton. RISE UP has several project objectives, including the definition of a European Language Promotion Ecosystem, the creation of guidelines and methodologies for the revitalization of minoritized languages, and the development of a RISE UP digital toolkit, among others. Overall, the project aims to empower minoritized language communities. It focuses on five selected ones in Europe, which are Aranese, Aromanian, Burgenland Croatian, Cornish, and Seto.[1]

One aspect of the project is concerned with the examination of already available language revitalization resources and the development of new strategies in this regard.

[1] If you want to learn more about the project, please visit the project website: www.riseupproject.eu [10.09.2025]

This is the aspect we build on in this paper, reflecting on linguistic risk-taking as a strategy for language revitalization. The theoretical concepts employed are discussed in the following section.

2.2 The Three Main Pillars of the Theoretical Framework

Our investigation of revitalization strategies is embedded in a theoretical framework based on three main pillars: language ecology, new speakers, and a dynamic usage-based approach to language learning (Cajka et al., 2024a). We summarize these pillars under the headings "the danger of a single solution", "the power of new speakers" and "Use it, don't lose it!" (more detailed information can be found in Cajka et al., 2024a).

As far as language ecology is concerned, it is assumed that languages—like the components of an ecosystem—cannot be considered separately (Haugen, 1971). From this perspective, the promotion of languages and varieties requires that the entire language ecology is taken into account. The revitalization of languages must therefore focus on the preservation of linguistic ecologies rather than languages. In the tradition of Mühlhäusler, the main issue is the nature of the ecology "[...] that enables a diversity of languages to be sustained over long periods of time" (Mühlhäusler, 2003, p. 235). Within this framework, the aim is to create the long-term sustainability of languages and varieties, to maintain linguistic diversity, to restore functional links between different languages and varieties, and to embed languages in a meaningful cultural, economic, and ecological context (Mühlhäusler, 2018). Hence, the ecology metaphor highlights "[...] the dynamics, interrelatedness, and situatedness of human communication" (Ludwig et al., 2018, p. 5). It follows that the specific context is key to language ecologies: language ecologies vary from context to context. This is a warning against a single solution when looking at revitalization strategies in the sense of searching for an ecology that enables a diversity of languages to be sustained. "The problem is that there is no single solution, that each ecology requires a different support system" (Mühlhäusler, 2018, p. 337).

With regard to the second pillar, the new speakers, we build on the criticism that the traditional concepts of endangerment and revitalization have significant shortcomings when it comes to capturing the current sociolinguistic state of language ecologies with minoritized languages and varieties. The well-known vitality scales, some of which, like EGIDS (Lewis & Simons, 2010), have emerged directly from Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), still focus on intergenerational transmission. However, the so-called new speakers have become a strong driving force for revitalization. This is particularly true for communities with very small numbers of language users (Jaffe, 2015; O'Rourke & Pujolar, 2013). These new speakers may even dominate in terms of numbers and emerge from situations where no active native language users seem to be left, as was the case for Manx or Cornish. However, the notion of new speaker has been questioned for its dichotomic nature (new versus traditional) and the ideological questions it brings about (Dołowy-Rybińska & Ratajczak, 2023;

Hornsby, 2015; Kircher et al., 2023). Within minoritized community contexts, language experience is highly diversified due to different proficiency levels, acquisition trajectories, policies, and practices around language (Puigdevall et al., 2018; Pujolar & Puigdevall, 2015). This leads to a diversity of ideologies and norms (Avineri & Kroskrity, 2014, p. 2), the ideologically loaded tensions between new and traditional speakers, and the questioning of the legitimacy of new as well as traditional speakers (albeit from different perspectives) (Hornsby, 2022). In order to tackle these issues, we adopt an open and broad definition and understand new speakers "[...] as individuals who put their energy and effort into learning and using a minoritized language, be they originally labelled 'traditional' speakers with partial competence, newcomers, or be they any other member of the communities" (Cajka et al., 2024b, p. 12).

Acknowledging the vagueness of categories for language users brings us to the third pillar of the theoretical framework, namely the theoretical position on language learning. We see learning and using language as closely interwoven and hence adopt a dynamic usage-based approach combining Dynamic Systems Theory (De Bot et al., 2007) and usage-based linguistics (Ghalebi & Sadighi, 2015, p. 191). Within this scope, language learning is less about memorizing grammatical structures or vocabulary, and more about meaningful encounters. Personal engagement with the language and immersion contribute strongly to the learning process. There is first research evidence that connecting using and learning may even be productive in dealing with ideological issues in the context of minorization. Where language use connects learners and so-called traditional speakers, ideological boundaries may become permeable, learning takes place, and awareness of each other's position grows (Hornsby, 2022, p. 396).

The theoretical framework commits us to looking closely at the particular context since ecologies are different, to acknowledging the diversified learning pathways of new speakers, and finally to closely connecting learning and using language. This means to include 'the wilds' (Hutchins, 1995; Thorne & Hellerman, 2022) in the learning endeavor—that occurs beyond institutional language learning settings and is hence open to linguistic risk-taking presented in this paper.

2.3 The Linguistic Risk–Taking Initiative

The Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative was initially developed at the University of Ottawa in Canada (e.g., Séror & Slavkov, 2019; Slavkov & Séror, 2019; Slavkov, 2020; Slavkov, 2023). In the context of this English-French bilingual university, the initiative aims to encourage students to make use of their bilingual environment in order to practice their second official language (Slavkov & Séror, 2019, p. 259) and to foster organic socialization into the target community and language (Slavkov, 2023, p. 34). Another main goal is to raise awareness of the importance of linguistic risk-taking in addition to language learning in formal settings like a classroom (Slavkov & Séror, 2019). Linguistic risk-taking may not only lead to a sense of success or achievement of overcoming the challenge, but extending the language practice may also result in a perceived or real increase in

target language competence (Slavkov, 2023, p. 33). Within the initiative, linguistic risks are defined as "[...] authentic everyday communicative acts that take place outside of the language classroom and involve spontaneous and meaningful second language use." (Slavkov & Séror, 2019, p. 259). Therefore, they encompass activities such as writing emails, watching a film, or ordering food in the target language.

The centerpiece of the initiative is a tool called the Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport. It is available in both English and French, corresponding to the language being learnt (i.e., French learners use the French passport). In its current version[2] it offers 89 linguistic risks. Learners can take these risks, check them off, and indicate their perceived risk level (see e.g., Slavkov & Séror, 2019, for a thorough description of the passport). There is also a digitized version called the Linguistic Risk app, with additional features such as user statistics, a search function for risks, or progression through different levels (Roodi & Slavkov, 2022).

Besides its pedagogical approach, the initiative is also related to a broader research agenda and linguistic risk-taking is even described as a research approach and research program (Slavkov, 2023). With regard to the initiative in Canada, publications have covered the investigation of several aspects. Slavkov (2020) examined the impact of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative by analyzing learners' responses to a self-report tool embedded in the Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport. Griffiths and Slavkov (2021) analyzed interviews with participating teachers and self-report data from learners to formulate pedagogical implications with the goal to improve the implementation of the initiative. Another aim was to locate linguistic risk-taking within a broader Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework. Rhéaume et al. (2021) analyzed a teacher's reflections and student survey data and examined "[...] how a Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport is used to support language learners' autonomous language practice in combination with metacognitive awareness activities and goal setting." (Rhéaume et al., 2021, p. 1214). Roodi and Slavkov (2022) approached the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative from the angle of gamification, evaluating the Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport and also the digital app with regards to the presence of game and gamification elements. Slavkov (2023) analyzed data from over 500 completed Linguistic Risk-Taking Passports, highlighting the passport as a tool for data collection and reporting on learner patterns and qualitative data (i.e., participants' reflections and comments).

The Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative, however, did not appear to be fruitful only for the Canadian context, as adaptations and implementations followed in a variety of settings. For instance, MacDonald and Thompson (2019) report on the adaptation of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative for students learning English in a Japanese university context. Cajka (2021; see also Cajka et al., 2023) adapted the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative for learners of German as a second language in an Austrian university context.

---

[2] Available here: https://www.uottawa.ca/about-us/official-languages-bilingualism-institute/ccerbal/research-groups/linguistic-risk/participate [10.09.2025]

The target group were prospective students enrolled in German courses to prepare for a supplementary examination in German ('Ergänzungsprüfung Deutsch'), which serves as a proof of German language proficiency so they can be admitted to a degree program. Using a mixed methods design, Cajka (2021) examined these learners' perspectives on their use of the *'Riskier was!'* booklets (the German counterpart to the Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport) and the relevance of the initiative for their language learning. She also analyzed where the teachers saw potential for improvement with regards to the initiative. There has also been collaborative work bridging the initiatives in Canada and Austria: Cajka et al. (2023) discuss the perspectives of participating learners that were interviewed in both contexts, with a focus on the implementation of the initiative in the digital realm. Windisch (2023a) adapted the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative to the context of a study trip, i.e., for German language learning students in Spain who spent a week in Vienna for cultural purposes. More recently, there is also a larger research focus on linguistic risk-taking at the University of Cologne. The two main sub-projects have the titles "Linguistic risk-taking for younger and vulnerable learner groups in the German school system" and "Linguistic risk-taking for university students studying to be English teachers" (Universität zu Köln, 2024), promising to explore new avenues with regard to the adaptation of linguistic risk-taking. One strand of research concerns linguistic risk-taking in inclusive settings, focusing on the needs of learners with Developmental Language Disorder and developing hypotheses for the implementation of a Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport in this context (Schick & Rohde, 2025).

The concept of linguistic risk-taking has been adapted not only to contexts of majority language learning, but also for minoritized languages. For example, a booklet has been developed for Occitan, called "GAUSAR LA LENGA: Initiative de prise de risques linguistiques" (Institut d'Estudis Occitans, n.d.). Windisch (2023b) adapted the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative for Galego, called "Retos lingüísticos para estudantes de galego en Galicia" (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2023). However, no comprehensive descriptions or publications could be found on adapting the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative for minoritized languages. Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap to a certain extent by elaborating on relevant considerations in this regard.

Although the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative is a relatively recent approach in relation to minoritized languages, there are initiatives in minoritized language contexts that are based on a similar idea or could easily be combined with linguistic risk-taking. "Ya d'ar brezhoneg" (in English 'Yes to Breton'), for instance, is an initiative launched in 2001 by l'Office Public de la Langue Bretonne. Its goal is to foster the development and use of the Breton language in public life, as well as in the social and economic sphere (Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg, n.d.). For Aranese, the Conselh Generau d'Aran launched the campaign "L'as ena punta dera lengua, trè er aranés" in 2023, targeting especially the younger generation and raising awareness of the importance of using Aranese (Conselh

Generau d'Aran, 2023). It includes online videos[3], posters in the public spaces (e.g., at bus stops), merchandise, and flyers. A third example is "Repte 21 dies", an initiative to promote the use of Catalan in the province of Girona (CNL de Girona, 2025). The goal is to speak Catalan to everyone, everywhere, for 21 days.

2.4 Bringing the Concepts Together

In our understanding, linguistic risk-taking is a concept that ties in well with the three main pillars of our theoretical framework. With its focus on engaging in authentic and meaningful situations in the target language, it encourages language learners to tap into the ecology of the language they are learning and to develop individual pathways. As mentioned above, Slavkov (2023, p. 34) considers one main goal of the initiative "[...] to get socialized in organic ways into the target language and community." Through their (communicative or receptive) presence, the learners themselves will also contribute to shaping the language ecology. According to our definition (see section 2.2), linguistic risk-takers can be considered as new speakers, as they actively engage in using a minoritized language. Or, vice versa, the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative could be a way of encouraging people to use a minoritized language (more) and, in this sense, become new speakers. Moreover, the rationale of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative clearly follows a usage-based approach to language learning. This is illustrated by the following quote, highlighting the connection of target language use with an increase in language proficiency:

> In addition to feelings of achievement and success, linguistic risk-taking may result in perceived or real proficiency increases because of the extended language practice that comes with actively seeking opportunities to use the target language. That is, linguistic risk-taking may not only be useful from a socio-psychological point of view, but also from the point of view of increasing one's language competence. (Slavkov, 2023, p. 33)

The interwovenness of using and learning a language constitutes an essential principle in the conceptualization of linguistic risk-taking that we are adopting.

3. Linguistic Risk–Taking for Minoritized Languages

This section first addresses what needs to be considered when adapting the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative to a minoritized language context. It then elaborates on the implementation of linguistic risk-taking in the RISE UP project.

[3] Available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4auf2Goz0E&list=PLqFXgQYMVi1VagvujuY-yIXkmNY57nhLBi&index=2 [10.09.2025]

3.1 Important Considerations

The considerations discussed here are based on reflections by the authors. These reflections are rooted in a review of literature on linguistic risk-taking, engagement in linguistic risk-taking research as well as language revitalization research, and fieldwork conducted with different minoritized language communities within the RISE UP project. The considerations presented here are the result of an interplay between these sources and are intended for discussion.

Implementing the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative in a new context usually requires some form of adaptation. This may concern the selection and compilation of appropriate risks, as well as the choice and design of the tool (paper booklet or app) used to foster linguistic risk-taking (see Cajka, 2021, who describes the adaptation process of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative for German language learners in Vienna, Austria). However, adapting the initiative for a minoritized language should go beyond these aspects because of the situation of minorization.

One main point of consideration is the language ecology of the respective minoritized language. Most implementations of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative aim at strengthening majority languages such as English, French, or German as their target languages. They are also located in environments where these languages are available; either because they are the languages of the immediate spatial environment, or because they are otherwise easily accessible (online, through shows or media, etc.). This is not necessarily the case for minoritized languages, which often have very small numbers of speakers and few resources (see Cajka et al., 2024a).

It is therefore important to consider whether there are proficient speakers of the language when adapting the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative to a minoritized language context. While some minoritized languages, such as Catalan, have a comparatively large number of proficient speakers across all age groups, there are also other languages, such as Guernésiais, where there are very few proficient speakers.

This leads to the next consideration, which is whether there are situations in everyday life where interactions in the minoritized language can take place. Are there events, places, etc. where a learner can encounter more proficient speakers of the language and start a conversation? Are there opportunities for spoken interaction in the minoritized language? These questions concern not only the availability of (more) proficient speakers, but also the spatial circumstances. Are the learners in an area where the language is used to a certain extent? Or is it more of a diaspora situation?

In addition to these reflections of spatial factors and aspects of language accessibility, the prevailing attitudes and ideologies towards the respective minoritized language also need to be taken into account. A minoritized language is, by definition, not the most prestigious language in a given pre-defined area (i.e., a country, a city, etc.). Therefore, it is important to consider whether there are actual disadvantages and social barriers for people using the minoritized language.

An element of risk is inherent in any act of linguistic risk-taking. As described in relation to the original Canadian initiative, the risk of using a majority language typically encompasses aspects such as making mistakes, being misunderstood, changing existing language habits, etc. (Slavkov & Séror, 2019). What constitutes a risk is individual and this should not be contested here. However, it can be assumed that using a majority language is socially perceived as desirable because it is a (more) prestigious variety. In a minoritized language context, the potential risk of being othered and discriminated against due to the language used comes more strongly into play. This is not to trivialize the experiences of discrimination that language learners may make when using a majority language, which certainly also occur. Rather, this aims at highlighting an additional layer of discrimination and minorization that these minoritized languages and their users may be confronted with.

No one should ever experience any harm through linguistic risk-taking. Therefore, a sensitive approach is required. As a researcher or educational practitioner who aims to implement linguistic risk-taking for a minoritized language, one should assess these dangers very carefully. If an implication of linguistic risk-taking is deemed as fruitful and relevant, the linguistic risks should be carefully selected. Depending on the language ecology of the minoritized language, the chosen risks may be similar to the ones for majority languages or very different from them. It may be a good idea to examine whether there are any safe spaces for the language and its use. Moreover, the interaction with available resources such as media (newspapers, social media, websites, podcasts, radio, etc.) or linguistic risk-taking in the digital sphere may be more fruitful and relevant.

However, linguistic risk-taking could also serve as an activity to reclaim a minoritized language. It may empower learners and also more proficient speakers to make use of the language in spaces where it has not been used before. The initiative could be a starting point for raising awareness of the risks that are connected to using minoritized languages. Ideally, it empowers learners and speakers to push the prevailing boundaries and reclaim the use of their language in different spaces and spheres. Again, profound knowledge of the respective context and the community involved is crucial in this regard.

These considerations go hand in hand with knowledge of the resources available for the respective minoritized language. We have a very broad understanding of what counts as a resource, defining it as "[...] something that requires the active or passive use of the minoritized language. I.e., people have to use the minoritized language to interact with the respective resource or engage in the respective activity." (Cajka et al., 2024a, p. 15). As mentioned above, opportunities for personal interactions may be scarce in minoritized language contexts. Hence, the interaction with other resources is even more important. This can include activities such as reading a newspaper, posting on social media, listening to a radio program, watching TV, attending an event where

the language is used, etc. Linking linguistic risk-taking to the available resources is beneficial in several ways. It raises users' awareness of existing resources and familiarizes them with content of the community. It may also be of interest to proficient speakers of the minoritized language who want to find more opportunities to actually use the language.

Another decision to be made is which tool to use for linguistic risk-taking. Should it be a paper booklet or a digital solution, such as an app? What design choices are made—are they carried over from previous linguistic risk-taking tools (i.e., should the passport design be maintained)? Which other elements of existing implementations of the initiative are used (e.g., rating the risk-level, rating the fun-level, other gamification elements, comments sections, self-report survey, linguistic risk-taker profile) and do they need to be adapted in any way?

Once these decisions are made, it is important to think about the distribution of the tool. Are there any language courses in the respective minoritized language context where the initiative could be presented (or even integrated)? Are there teachers who would be interested in working with linguistic risk-taking? Are there other institutions like cultural or community centers that would be interested to advertise the initiative or even distribute the developed tool? Would it make sense to organize events to present the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative? Is there any media that would be interested in reporting about the initiative?

3.2 The Implementation of Linguistic Risk-Taking in the RISE UP Project

As described in section 2.2, we follow a usage-based approach to language learning and strongly link language use to language revitalization. This emphasizes the importance of meaningful social interaction and also the relevance of engaging with resources in the minoritized languages, which ties in well with the rationale of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative. In our efforts to develop new strategies for language revitalization, we therefore considered linguistic risk-taking as a valuable approach. In order to implement it for the five selected language communities (Aranese, Aromanian, Burgenland Croatian, Cornish and Seto), two major achievements serve as our foundation for the reflection on the above-mentioned considerations.

The first important step towards the implementation of linguistic risk-taking was the collection of resources available for the five case study communities which can be accessed (and expanded by adding new resources) on the project website.[4] As mentioned in the previous section, our understanding of resources is very broad. They can cover anything involving the active or passive use of the minoritized language. However, this does not imply that all resources are exclusively in the minoritized language. Considering how languages constantly interact and influence each other, it is questionable if entirely monolingual resources do even exist. The aim was to identify resources

[4] The collection of resources can be found here: https://www.riseupproject.eu/resources/ [10.09.2025]

that make substantial use of the minoritized language or require its use to a meaningful extent (Cajka et al., 2024a).

In order to classify the identified resources, they were assigned to different categories. The category system that was developed for this purpose comprises seven main categories and five subcategories (Cajka et al., 2024a, pp. 18–19):

- Media
  - Print Media
  - Websites
  - Social Media
  - Auditory Media
  - Audiovisual Media
- Events
- Associations
- Facilities and Services (institutional offers that are not related to schools)
- Competitions and Awards
- Digital Apps and Services
- Further Resources (including anything not covered by the other categories)

  +
- Books
- Music

The two additional categories, 'Books' and 'Music', do not have listed specific resources, as identifying all available resources in these categories would have been beyond the scope of our work. However, there are reflections on the availability and role of books and music in the five selected communities outlined in Cajka et al. (2024a).

Another major step towards the implementation of linguistic risk-taking was to gain an understanding of the language ecologies of the minoritized communities in focus. As elaborated in the previous section, many relevant considerations regarding linguistic risk-taking for minoritized languages are related to knowing the respective communities and their language ecologies. In the RISE UP project, research on this has been conducted in multiple ways, such as ethnographic fieldwork and through the RISE UP survey. This survey has a total of 68 questions and was set up in a joint effort of the partners in RISE UP (Cajka et al., 2024a). It was slightly adapted for each of the five case study communities and translated into more than 15 language varieties.

As part of the project, a report has been written on the description of a European language preservation ecosystem (Sallabank & Ugwuanyi, 2025), highlighting the ecological conditions that affect the vitality of the five communities RISE UP focuses on.

Having acquired knowledge about the available resources as well as the ecological conditions of the minoritized language communities serves as a solid foundation for the implementation of linguistic risk-taking. It allows for an informed reflection on the rel-

evant considerations discussed in the previous section. The process of the actual implementation of linguistic risk-taking in the RISE UP project is, however, still ongoing at the time of writing (September 2025).

Incorporating linguistic risk-taking into the RISE UP digital toolkit emerged as the ideal approach for implementation within the scope of the RISE UP project. The RISE UP digital toolkit, which is currently still in development (fall 2025), is designed as a comprehensive platform to support minoritized language learning, practice, and revitalization. This is achieved through a combination of advanced technologies, gamification elements, and community-driven features. As outlined by Cajka and Shekhawat (2024), the planned key features of the RISE UP digital toolkit are:

- Language learning games
- Digital resources
- Linguistic Risk-Taking Tracker
- Community forum

We elaborate here especially on the Linguistic Risk-Taking Tracker. We believe that linguistic risk-taking has the potential to benefit both learners and (more) proficient users of minoritized languages. Less proficient language users could benefit from linguistic risk-taking as it provides inspiration for where to use their target language, in which activities to engage in, and where to interact with the language. This is particularly relevant for individuals who are not active in the respective community and are not familiar with the available resources. Following a dynamic usage-based approach to language learning (and also the remarks of Slavkov (2023) that linguistic risk-taking may lead to improved language proficiency), this would ideally lead to an increase in their minoritized language skills.

More proficient language users could benefit from linguistic risk-taking, as it could raise their awareness of available resources that require or allow the use of their minoritized language. Our research has shown that members of minoritized language communities are often unaware of potentially available resources (Cajka et al., 2024b).

In addition, embedding the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative in a digital toolkit seems promising. Linguistic risks can be used, for example, as fun and engaging side quests alongside the language learning games. The community section could be a place to suggest and discuss new risks. This would also allow moderators/researchers/educators to see how suggested risks are perceived by other app users, before they are added to the linguistic risk content in the digital toolkit.

4. Conclusion and Outlook

In this paper, we draw on the work conducted in the RISE UP project and elaborate on relevant considerations and also the implementation of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative for minoritized languages. Building on three main theoretical pillars—language

ecology, new speakers, and a dynamic usage-based approach to language learning—we have sought to demonstrate the compatibility of linguistic risk-taking with language revitalization efforts and its potential in this regard. However, the implementation of linguistic risk-taking in new contexts always requires adaptations; in the case of minoritized languages, these adaptation processes require careful reflection, consideration and a further refinement of the risk-taking framework. The main aim of this paper has been to elaborate on these adjustment processes in order to facilitate the efforts of researchers, educators, activists, etc. who wish to adapt the initiative to minoritized language contexts in the future.

Acknowledgements

RISE UP receives funding by the European Union (Grant ID 101095048). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

We thank the RISE UP consortium members from MINDS & SPARKS GmbH, University of Tartu, University of Vienna, ESPRONCEDA Institute of Art & Culture, Youth of European Nationalities, NUROGAMES GmbH, School of Oriental and African Studies, and University of Roehampton, for their contributions.

References

Avineri, Netta, & Kroskrity, Paul V. (2014). On the (re-)production and representation of endangered language communities: Social boundaries and temporal borders. *Language & Communication, 38*, pp. 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2014.05.003

Cajka, Stefanie (2021). *Die Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative für Deutschlernende in einem österreichischen Universitätskontext* [Master's thesis, University of Vienna]. University of Vienna. https://utheses.univie.ac.at/detail/59293

Cajka, Stefanie, Griffiths, Ed, Slavkov, Nikolay, & Vetter, Eva (2023). Linguistic risk-taking and informal language learning in Canada and Austria. In Denyze Toffoli, Geoffrey Sockett & Meryl Kusyk (Eds.), *Language learning and leisure: Informal language learning in the digital age*. De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 207–237. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110752441-010

Cajka, Stefanie, & Shekhawat, Yash (2024). Digital tools and gamification in minoritized language contexts: (Un)availability, needs, and future perspectives. In Yazdan Choubsaz, Paz Díez-Arcón, Ana Gimeno-Sanz, Jakub Hriňák, Xénia Liashuk, Silvia Pokrivčáková, & Hana Vančová (Eds.), *CALL for Humanity - EUROCALL 2024 Short Papers*. https://doi.org/10.4995/EuroCALL2024.2024.19068

Cajka, Stefanie, Vetter, Eva, & Wagner, Paulina (2024a). *D4.1 Collection of practices, activities and tools that promote minority languages*. RISE UP Consortium.

https://www.riseupproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RISE-UP_D4.1_Collection-of-resources.pdf

Cajka, Stefanie, Vetter, Eva, & Wagner, Paulina (2024b). *D4.2 Definition of quality criteria for practices, activities and tools*. RISE UP Consortium. https://www.riseupproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/RISE-UP-D4.2-Definition-of-quality-criteria-for-practices-activities-and-tools-UNIVIE.pdf

CNL de Girona (2025). *21 dies per parlar en català amb tothom, a tot arreu*. https://www.cpnl.cat/xarxa/cnlgirona/21dies/

Conselh Generau d'Aran (2023). *Eth govèrn d'Aran presente era campanha de sensibilizacion der aranés: "L'as ena punta dera lengua"*. https://www.conselharan.org/es/el-gobierno-de-aran-presenta-la-campana-de-sensibilizacion-del-aranes-lo-tienes-en-la-punta-de-la-lengua/

De Bot, Kees, Lowie, Wander, & Verspoor, Marjolijn (2007). A dynamic systems theory approach to second language acquisition. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, 10*(1), pp. 7–21. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728906002732

Dołowy-Rybińska, Nicole, & Ratajczak, Cordula (2023). Upper Sorbian "native speakers" and "new speakers": Power relations and language ideologies in minority language education'. *Die Welt der Slaven: Internationale Halbjahresschrift für Slavistik, 68*(1), pp. 1–23. https://doi.org/10.13173/WS.68.1.001

Fishman, Joshua A. (1991). *Reversing language shift*. Multilingual Matters.

Ghalebi, Rezvaan, & Sadighi, Firooz (2015). The usage-based theory of language acquisition: a review of major issues. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 2*(6), pp. 190–195. http://www.jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/view/138/pdf138

Griffiths, Ed, & Slavkov, Nikolay (2021). Linguistic risk-taking: A bridge between the classroom and the outside world. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 24*(2), pp. 127–158. https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2021.31308

Haugen, Einar (1971). The Ecology of Language. *Linguistic Reporter, 13*(1), pp. 19–26.

Hornsby, Michael (2015). The "new" and "traditional" speaker dichotomy: bridging the gap. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 231*, pp. 107–125. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0034

Hornsby, Michael (2022). "Authentic" Language as a Contested Concept in Brittany. *Adeptus, 19*. https://doi.org/10.11649/a.2743

Hutchins, Edwin (1995). *Cognition in the wild*. MIT Press.

Institut d'Estudis Occitans (n. d.). GAUSAR LA LENGA: Initiative de prise de risques linguistiques.

Jaffe, Alexandra (2015). Defining the new speaker: theoretical perspectives and learner trajectories. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 231*, pp. 21–44. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0030

Kircher, Ruth, Kutlu, Ethan, & Vellinga, Mirjam (2023). Evaluative reactions to minority languages and their varieties: Evidence from new speakers of West Frisian. *Language in Society*, pp. 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404523000805

Lewis, Melvyn Paul, & Simons, Gary F. (2010). Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique, 55*(2), pp. 103–120. https://www.lingv.ro/RRL-2010.html

Ludwig, Ralph, Mühlhäusler, Peter, & Pagel, Steve (2018). Linguistic Ecology and Language Contact: Conceptual Evolution, Interrelatedness, and Parameters. In Peter Mühlhäusler, Ralph Ludwig, & Steve Pagel (Eds.), *Linguistic Ecology and Language Contact*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–42.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139649568.003

MacDonald, Ewen, & Thompson, Nicholas (2019). The adaptation of a linguistic risk-taking passport initiative: A summary of a research project in progress. *Relay Journal, 2*(2), pp. 415–436. https://doi.org/10.37237/relay/020216

Mühlhäusler, Peter (2003). Language of Environment, Environment of Language: A Course in Ecolinguistics. Battlebridge.

Mühlhäusler, Peter (2018). Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Ecological Language Planning. In Peter Mühlhäusler, Ralph Ludwig, & Steve Pagel (Eds.), *Linguistic Ecology and Language Contact.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 323–341. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139649568.018

Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg (n.d.). *Ya d'ar brezhoneg: Présentation*. https://www.fr.brezhoneg.bzh/32-presentation.htm

O'Rourke, Bernadette, & Pujolar, Joan (2013). From native speakers to "new speakers"-Problematizing nativeness in language revitalization contexts. *Histoire Epistemologie Langage, 35*, pp. 47–67.

Puigdevall, Maite, Walsh, John, Amorrortu, Estebaliz, & Ortega, Ane (2018). "I'll be one of them": linguistic mudes and new speakers in three minority language contexts. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 39*(5), pp. 445–457. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2018.1429453

Pujolar, Joan, & Puigdevall, Maite (2015). Linguistic mudes: how to become a new speaker in Catalonia. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 231*, pp. 167–187. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0037

Rhéaume, Martine, Slavkov, Nikolay, & Séror, Jérémie (2021). Linguistic risk-taking in second language learning: The case of French at a Canadian bilingual institution. *Foreign Language Annals, 54*, pp. 1214–1237. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12561

Roodi, Farhad, & Slavkov, Nikolay (2022). Gamification in L2 teaching and learning: Linguistic risk-taking at play. *OLBI Journal, 12*(1), pp. 185–205. https://doi.org/10.18192/olbij.v12i1.6000

Sallabank, Julia, & Ugwuanyi, Kingsley (2025). *D3.1 Description of a European language preservation Ecosystem*. RISE UP Consortium. https://www.riseupproject.eu/about/

Schick, Kim-Sarah, & Rohde, Andreas (2025). Linguistic risk-taking in inclusive contexts: The case of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). *Cahiers de l'ILOB/ OLBI Journal, 14*, pp. 251–275. https://doi.org/10.18192/olbij.v14i1.6938

Séror, Jérémie, & Slavkov, Nikolay (2019). Soutenir la prise de risques linguistiques chez l'apprenant langagier. *Journal de l'immersion / Immersion Journal, 41*(1), pp. 9–13.

Slavkov, Nikolay (2020). Where the magic happens: Fostering language learning, bilingualism and multilingualism through linguistic risk-taking. In Thomas Tinnefeld (Ed.), *The magic of language: Productivity in linguistics and language teaching*. htw saar, pp. 47–69.

Slavkov, Nikolay (2023). Linguistic risk-taking: A new pedagogical approach and a research program. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 26*(2), pp. 32–59. https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2023.33038

Slavkov, Nikolay, & Séror, Jérémie (2019). The development of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative at the University of Ottawa. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 75*(3), pp. 254–271. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.2018-0202

Thorne, Steven L., & Hellermann, John (2022). Interfacing formal education and language learning beyond the classroom. In Hayo Reinders, Chun Lai, & Pia Sundqvist (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Teaching and Learning Beyond the Classroom*. Routledge, pp. 36–51. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003048169-5

Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (2023). *Presentación da iniciativa 'Retos lingüísticos para estudantes de galego en Galicia'*. https://www.usc.gal/gl/xornal/eventos/dia-europeo-linguas

Universität zu Köln (2024). *Linguistic Risk-Taking (LRT)*. https://anglistik2.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/forschung/forschungsprojekte/linguistic-risk-taking

Windisch, Sebastian (2023a). *Studienreisepass*. Universität Wien und Universität Santiago de Compostela, in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Österreichischen Austauschdienst.

Windisch, Sebastian (2023b). *Galego: Pasaporte. Arrisca e gaña! Nivel A2/A2+*. USC. https://www.usc.gal/gl/xornal/eventos/dia-europeo-linguas

About the Authors

Stefanie Cajka works as a predoctoral university assistant at the Centre for Teacher Education of the University of Vienna, Austria. She pursues a doctoral degree in Linguistics. Her research interests span language teaching and learning, minoritised languages, and multilingualism, with a focus on informal language learning, linguistic risk-taking, and language learning environments.
Email: stefanie.cajka@univie.ac.at

Eva Vetter is Professor of Language Teaching and Learning Research at the University of Vienna (since 2011). Her research explores multilingualism, including language (education) policy, minoritisation, historical multilingualism, and plurilingual pedagogies. She (co-)directs the Research Unit on Language Teaching and Learning since 2013 (sllf.univie.ac.at).