An interdisciplinary research program, examining issues in minoritized language revitalization and maintenance.
Research Questions
- 6 Research Teams
- 18 Months
- 8 Regions in 5 Countries
- 76 Research Questions

SMiLE Research Communities

- Irish (Gaelic)
The Oidhreacht Corca Dhúibhne OrganizationWestern County Kerry

- Occitan (Italic)Toulouse and Environs, Occitania

- Galician (Italic)Semente organizationSantiago de Compostela, Galicia

- Upper & Lower Sorbian (Slavic)Lusatia, Saxony & Brandenburg

- Griko & Greko (Grecian)Grecìa Salentina & Calabria

- North Frisian (Germanic)Islands and Nordfriesland, Schleswig-Holstein
Critical Understanding

Nicole Dolowy-Rybińska and Cordula Ratajczak at the Jolka festival in the Upper Sorbian village of Nuknica, near Budyšin.

Photo by Maćij Bulank
Critical Understanding

- The Oidhreacht Corca Dhuibhne organization in the Irish community identified program strengths and gaps in their use of technology.

- The Occitan community workshop L’éducation, la transmission et l’avenir des langues minoritaires discussed areas for improving the scope of Occitan language education.

- Galician parents at the Semente school reflected on dynamics of family language policy for community members.

- Upper and Lower Sorbians discussed problems and ineffectiveness in their language education.

Assessing existing approaches, identifying needs and new directions.
Critical Understanding

- Include more cultural and historical context in Occitan language learning, need for more social spaces outside of the classrooms to use Occitan
- Lower Sorbian language space is needed, especially for new speakers
- Semente parents invited SMiLE team to hold interactive workshop on dynamics and challenges of minority language displacement during teenage years
- Based on community feedback, Irish researchers plan language initiative focused on teens’ use of Irish
Connecting People & Communities

Children show off artwork created at Casadh na Gráige.

Photo courtesy of OChD
Connecting People & Communities

within, across, beyond

- Two-day workshop for Lower Sorbians
- Support for activities at the Grika Milume association to engage and connect youth in the Grik language
- Semente leaders reflected on their journeys and expertise with the wider Galician society at EDiSO
- North Frisian monster-themed writing workshop and publication for youth
Connecting People & Communities
within, across, beyond

» Greko and Griko language communities met, exchanged opportunities, community video projects, and created a bilingual version of the newspaper Spitta

» Semente instructors and researchers presented their approaches and SMiLE research results for Greko and Sorbian language communities

» Greko presentation of research results for Lower Sorbian learners

» The Irish Oidhreacht Corca Dhuibhne program, Tús Maith, developed own YouTube channel inspired by the Semente language programs’ channel
Connecting People & Communities

within, across, beyond

- Manx, Scottish Gaelic, and Basque organizations interested in the Irish Oidhreacht Corca Dhuibhne family support programs

- Galician and Lower Sorbian community members attended HELISET TŦE SKÁL – 'Let the Languages Live’ international conference in BC, Canada, June 2019

- University of Flensburg North Frisian studied connection with the Sámi language community through SMiLE Advisory Board member

Creating opportunities to use language and learn from one another
Educational Opportunities

Nils Langer speaks with students in Fohr, Germany, about studying North Frisian.

Photo courtesy of Nils Langer
Educational Opportunities

- Occitan community workshop L’éducation, la transmission et l’avenir des langues minoritaires gave Occitan students opportunity to engage their community and academics in discussions of Occitan language education and to present results of their master’s fieldwork.

- Sorbian community members were trained to conduct interviews and do transcription, they gained experience organizing community language events and giving public presentations at conferences.

- Members of the Irish Corca Dhuibhne community received linguistic and ethnographic training, encouraging some community members to consider continued involvement in academic language work.
Educational Opportunities

- North Frisian transcribing and translation training for students and community members. Linguistic data from SMiLE related transcriptions used in master’s thesis

- Ethnographic fieldwork experience, network opportunities, skills and resources gained from working on the SMiLE project used in the completion of Galician student’s PhD
Public Awareness

Greko poetry reading in Bova, Calabria

Photo by Mary Linn
Increasing general awareness and raising interest

4 Public Awareness

- Raised prestige of Occitan through foreign researcher and the Smithsonian’s enhanced media attention
- Inspiration to continue the Griko newspaper Spitta and include articles in Greko as well
- Independent newspaper articles, television and radio programs, interviews and blog posts covering SMiLE projects, events and language learning courses
Public Awareness

- Blogs from each community on Smithsonian Folklife Magazine and shared on social media
- Irish translated version of blog Language as a Story: Learning Irish in Corca Dhuibhne
- International projection of Semente increased attention from public institutions in Galicia
Output in numbers

- 54 Conferences & Invited Talks
- 40 Media Stories
- 28 Collaborations
- 23 Publications
- 17 Community/Collaborations
- 11 Websites/Digital Content
- 6 Case Studies
- 3 Theses/Dissertations
- 3 Smithsonian Internships
Community-engaged research works to level inequalities

- 74% Female Participants
- 67% Female-led Research Teams
- 68% Student Participants
- 45% Community Members
SMiLE Research & Fellowships are sponsored by

Visit the SMiLE website folklife.si.edu/smile or contact Program Director, Mary S. Linn at LinnM@si.edu