

## **The Intersection of Music and Language Revitalization - Livonian Musical Performers**

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Historically, the Livonian language was spoken along Latvia's west coast and up into Estonia, but it experienced significant decline due to wars, assimilation, and particularly the Soviet occupation (Ernštreits, 2024). While the language is now classified as endangered, efforts have been made to revitalize it through summer schools and cultural activities, rather than via intergenerational transmission. Latvia boasts a vibrant history of traditional music groups, including ones singing in Livonian. This paper examines the role that members of these Livonian music groups see for themselves in the revitalization process. It explores their language attitudes, their views on the intersection of music and revitalization, and the challenges and future they see for themselves in the revitalization process. To conduct this research, once a theory-driven topic list was established, semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of Livonian music groups. These interviews were thematically analyzed in the style of Braun and Clarke (2006). Findings indicate that the members of Livonian ensembles generally harbor positive attitudes towards the Livonian language, viewing their involvement as a means to promote and revitalize it. They can be seen as language ambassadors, using music to elevate the language's status. However, their appreciation does not always translate into regular use of the language, as external factors like limited language domains and insufficient opportunities for language acquisition pose barriers. The ensembles play a vital role as heritage mediators, using music to express Livonian identity and encourage language vitality. However, addressing the practical barriers to Livonian use remains crucial for an effective revitalization process. This study gives a first glimpse of the role of musical groups and singers in the Livonian revitalization movement and their use of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) to transmit, preserve, and popularize the language. It also constitutes a first step towards conceptualizing Livonian musical performers as language policy actors within the Livonian community in Latvia

Keywords: Livonian, minority language revitalization, language attitudes, language policy

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