

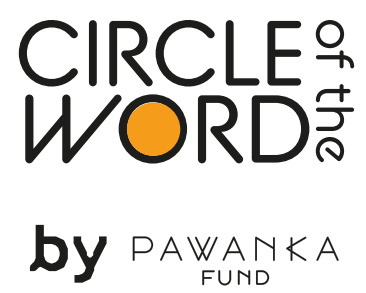
# Introduction

to the **Revitalisation**  
of **Indigenous** Languages



PAWANKA  
FUND





2025



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The methodology for this course and  
the guidelines for the fieldwork are a creation of Feeling.

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## To learn



History and Context

Fundamentals of Linguistic Revitalisation

Resources and Tools for Revitalisation



## To make



We know our community

Complete the traveler's guide

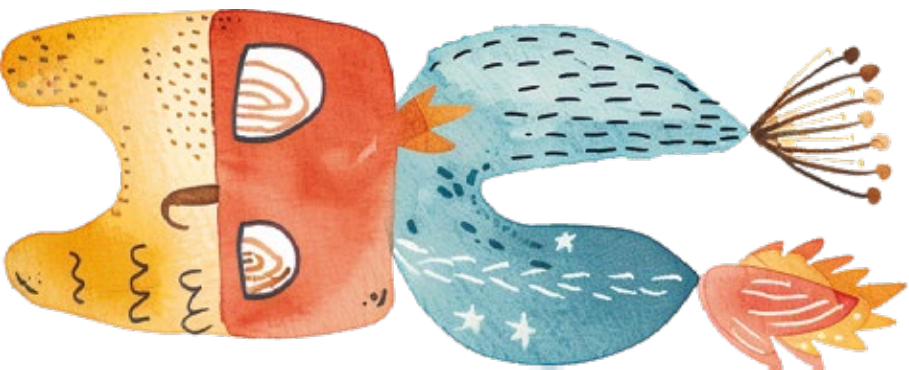




# To learn







In this document you will find these symbols representing:



## ADVICE

Particular advice on the subject under discussion



## REMEMBER

Key issues that need to be remembered



## GET TO KNOW

Extra help to research and learn more about the topic



Introduction to Indigenous Language Revitalisation

# History and Context



Welcome to the course on indigenous language revitalisation, a vital initiative within the knowledge sharing space "Circle of the Word", powered by the Pawanka Fund organisation!

We are excited to have you with us on this journey of learning and discovery. This course is a gateway to the world of indigenous languages, their richness, diversity and global efforts to revitalise them.

Over the course of 3 weeks, we will explore together the importance of indigenous languages not only as means of communication, but also as carriers of cultures, worldviews and ancestral knowledge, and our aim is to provide you with an understanding of the challenges and opportunities in indigenous language revitalisation.

At the end of this course, we hope that you will be equipped with the knowledge, tools and inspiration to contribute to language revitalisation efforts in your own communities or in support of others.

The course will run for 3 weeks. Each week, we will focus on a specific module, starting with an introduction to the historical and cultural context of indigenous languages, followed by revitalisation strategies, case study analysis and, finally, planning and implementing revitalisation projects.





### Practical Component:

We strongly believe in learning by doing. Therefore, this course includes an essential practical component that will allow you to apply what you have learned in real revitalisation projects. You will have the opportunity to design a small language revitalisation project, receive feedback from your peers and experts in the field, and explore ways to take your projects beyond the virtual classroom.

### The Circle of the word

The Circle of the Word: This course is part of the knowledge-sharing exercise "The Circle of the Word", a strategy developed by Pawanka Fund that seeks to create a community of learning and action around indigenous language revitalisation.

Thanks to the support of the Pawanka Fund, we are able to offer this space for people from different parts of the world to share experiences, learnings and dreams related to the preservation of their languages and cultures.

We are excited to begin this journey with you! Revitalising indigenous languages is a crucial step towards preserving our cultural identities and global diversity. Together, we can make a significant difference.

Welcome aboard.



# History and Context of Indigenous Languages by Region



The concept of language revitalisation encompasses a range of tactics and actions aimed at encouraging the use and spread of languages that are at risk of becoming extinct. These tactics can range from educational initiatives and immersion programmes, to harnessing digital tools and social platforms to boost the language. The selection of strategies varies considerably, adapting to the particular demands of each community and the level of danger facing the language. Some methods focus on imparting the language to new speakers, while others aim to increase its visibility and application in both public and private settings.

The history of indigenous languages encompasses the cultural richness, struggles and revitalisation efforts of indigenous peoples in different regions of the world. Below, we take a closer look at the linguistic landscape of seven geographical areas, highlighting specific peoples and languages.

## North America

In North America, languages such as Lakota, spoken by the Sioux people, and Navajo, of the Navajo Nation, have faced significant challenges due to historical policies of assimilation. However, initiatives such as the Lakota Language Consortium and the Navajo Language Academy are working to revive these languages through education and the creation of digital resources such as apps and textbooks.

## Latin America

Latin America is home to an impressive linguistic diversity, with languages such as Quechua and Guaraní. Quechua, used by the Incas and their descendants in countries such as Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, has approximately 8 to 10 million speakers. Guaraní, meanwhile, is co-official with Spanish in Paraguay, and is a successful example of linguistic and cultural integration, being taught in schools and used in the media and public administration.





### Africa

Africa, with its vast linguistic diversity, includes languages such as Swahili in East Africa, spoken by millions as a lingua franca, and Amharic in Ethiopia, an official language and one of the oldest scripts in continuous use in the world. However, lesser-known languages, such as Khoisan, spoken by the San peoples in southern Africa, face serious risks of extinction. Projects such as the Khoisan language documentation aim to preserve these unique languages.

### Pacific

The Pacific region, including Australia and New Zealand, has a rich linguistic history. In Australia, Warlpiri and Yolngu Matha are examples of Aboriginal languages kept alive by community efforts. In New Zealand, Maori, after years of decline, has seen a revival thanks to the implementation of "kōhanga reo" (language nests), language immersion programmes for children.

### Europe

In Europe, Sami, spoken by the Sami people in northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, has been the subject of revitalisation policies, including teaching in schools and use in the media. Another indigenous language, Welsh in the UK, has experienced a significant cultural renaissance, with an increase in the number of speakers thanks to education and legislation promoting its use.

### Asia

In Asia, the Ainu in Japan, officially recognised in 2008, are the subject of efforts to preserve and revitalise their culture and language. In Siberia, languages such as Yakut and Tuvan are central to indigenous communities, with educational programmes seeking to keep these linguistic traditions alive.

### Arctic

In the Arctic, Inuktitut, spoken by the Inuit in Canada, is an example of a language that has adapted to the 21st century, with its inclusion in official signage, media and education. This demonstrates the potential of indigenous languages to persist and evolve in the modern world.



### GET TO KNOW

Learn about the initiatives supported by Pawanka Fund around the world.

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# Risk Factors and Causes of Linguistic Decline

Language decline, a global phenomenon affecting indigenous and minority languages, is due to a combination of social, political and economic factors. These factors threaten not only the survival of languages, but also the cultural richness and biological diversity associated with them. Below, we explore the main causes and risk factors contributing to this decline.

## 1. Globalisation and Cultural Assimilation

Globalisation promotes cultural and linguistic uniformity through the spread of dominant languages such as English, Spanish, Mandarin and others. This process is often accompanied by cultural assimilation in which the practices, values and languages of indigenous and minority peoples are subordinated or ignored, leading to a gradual loss of linguistic diversity.

## 2. Exclusionary Education and Legal Policies

Many governments have historically implemented educational and legal policies that favour the use of official languages to the detriment of indigenous languages. This includes the prohibition of speaking native languages in schools and public spaces, as well as the lack of support for their official teaching and use. These policies not only limit opportunities to learn and use these languages, but also contribute to their stigmatisation.

## 3. Migration and Urbanisation

Forced migration and urbanisation can displace entire communities from their ancestral lands to urban environments where majority languages predominate. This change of environment can result in rapid assimilation into dominant cultures and, consequently, in the loss of traditional language practices.



#### 4. Lack of Intergenerational Transmission

One of the most critical factors for the survival of a language is its transmission from one generation to the next. Factors such as stigmatisation of the language, the perception of greater economic opportunities for dominant language speakers and cultural disruption can lead to parents not teaching their mother tongues to their children.

#### 5. Technological Impact and the Median

Although technology and media have the potential to promote linguistic diversity, they often favour majority languages. The underrepresentation of indigenous languages in digital, educational and entertainment media limits their visibility and accessibility to new generations.

#### 6. Conflict and Natural Disasters

Armed conflicts and natural disasters can also have a devastating impact on language communities, causing massive displacement and disruption of community life. This can accelerate language loss, especially when communities disperse and are forced to adapt to environments where their language is not spoken.



#### REMEMBER

It is not only the survival of languages that is at risk, but also the cultural richness and biological diversity associated with them.







# Current overview of indigenous languages

The current landscape of indigenous languages in the world is both challenging and full of opportunities. Globally, indigenous languages face a number of challenges that threaten their survival. However, there is growing recognition of their intrinsic value and a concerted effort to revitalise and preserve them. Here are some key aspects of the current state of indigenous languages:

## **Decline of speakers:**

Many indigenous languages are in danger of extinction, with ageing speakers and diminished intergenerational transmission. UNESCO estimates that, if no action is taken, between 50% and 90% of indigenous languages could disappear by the end of this century.

## **Globalisation and Cultural Assimilation:**

Globalisation encourages the dominance of a few international languages, which can lead to the marginalisation of indigenous languages. Processes of cultural assimilation have also historically contributed to the suppression of these languages.

## **Lack of Official Recognition:**

In many regions, indigenous languages lack official recognition, which limits their use in education, public administration and the media.





Introduction to Indigenous Language Revitalisation

# Basics of linguistic revitalisation



Language revitalisation is a crucial field of study and action in the preservation of the world's cultural and linguistic diversity. As awareness of endangered languages grows, so does interest in understanding and implementing effective strategies for their revitalisation. This process is not only about reviving the use of a language, but also about reviving its function as a vehicle of culture, identity, and ancestral knowledge.

With the growing recognition of the threats facing many languages, there is a growing interest in understanding and employing effective methods for their revival. This endeavour goes beyond the simple recovery of a language's speech; it goes into the rescue of its role as a conduit for age-old traditions, identities and knowledge.

We will delve into the foundations that underpin linguistic revitalisation, ranging from its conceptualisation and the various strategies implemented, to reviewing successful cases that have achieved significant impact around the globe. We will also highlight the irreplaceable role played by communities in this effort, as they are the living heart of linguistic transmission and evolution, guarding not only a communication system, but a whole universe of meanings and values inherent to their culture. This journey through linguistic revitalisation will allow us to appreciate the depth and urgency of safeguarding languages, not only as expressions of diversity, but as pillars of humanity and its shared history.





# Definition and approaches to revitalisation



Language revitalisation refers to the set of strategies and practices aimed at promoting the use and transmission of languages at risk of disappearing. These strategies can vary widely, from formal educational programmes and language immersion to the use of digital technologies and social networks to promote the language. Approaches may also differ depending on the specific needs of the community and the degree of threat the language faces. While some approaches focus on teaching the language to new generations, others seek to increase its presence and use in the public and domestic sphere.

Linguistic revitalisation involves a reinvention and adaptation of the language within the contemporary context, ensuring that it remains alive, relevant and growing. This active process seeks to reintegrate the language into the social and cultural fabric of its community, transforming it into an integral part of the collective identity and daily life of its speakers. It is a movement that goes beyond mere linguistic recovery; it is a cultural and identity reaffirmation that involves the active participation of the whole community, from the youngest to the oldest, in the revaluation of their linguistic heritage.

Revitalisation involves not only the recovery of what has been lost or is in danger of being lost, but also innovation and the creation of new spaces for language use. This may include adapting the language to new domains and technologies, creating neologisms that reflect the modern reality of its speakers, and fostering an environment where the language can flourish in both formal and informal settings.



### Bilingual Education and Total Immersion

The education system has played a crucial role in the revitalisation of Maori te reo through the creation of "Kōhanga Reo" (language nests), total immersion Maori pre-schools initiated in the 1980s. This movement expanded to higher levels of education, including "Kura Kaupapa Maori" (total immersion primary and secondary schools) and "Wharekura" (secondary schools). These educational establishments not only teach in Te reo Maori, but also integrate Maori culture into the curriculum, strengthening cultural identity and pride.

### Media and Technology

The presence of Te Reo Maori in the media and on digital platforms has been critical. The creation of Māori Television in 2004 and radio in Te Reo Maori have provided channels for the language to be used and heard on a daily basis, reaching a wider audience. In addition, the use of digital technologies, including apps and social media, has facilitated access to language learning, especially among young people.

### Policies and Official Recognition

The recognition of Te Reo Maori as one of New Zealand's official languages in 1987 was a significant milestone. This was complemented by the establishment of the Maori Language Commission (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Maori) to promote the use of Te Reo Maori in all areas of New Zealand society. Government policies have encouraged the use of the language in public administration and ensured its presence in the public space.



## ADVICE

Actively involve the community at every stage of the revitalisation process. The success of any language revitalisation effort depends profoundly on the participation and commitment of the language-speaking community.



# Successful Models Worldwide



An emblematic example of language revitalisation is the revival of Te Reo Maori. Through initiatives such as the "Kohanga Reo" (language nests), Maori immersion preschools, and the integration of the language into the education system and media, Te Reo Maori has seen a remarkable resurgence.

Another example is Guaraní in Paraguay: With various initiatives it seeks to promote and revitalise Guaraní, a co-official language in Paraguay. It includes educational programmes, the creation of multimedia content in Guaraní and the promotion of the use of the language in public and private spaces. The contribution of various governmental sectors and the indigenous peoples of Paraguay has strengthened the use of Guaraní in education and in everyday life, contributing to the preservation of Guaraní culture.

We can also talk about Ainu in Japan: Although facing great challenges, the Ainu language has seen revitalisation efforts through educational programmes and the recognition of the Ainu as an indigenous people by the Japanese government, which has contributed to increased visibility and interest in their language and culture.





# Example of success



## Revitalization of the Kukama language

### Context and overview

The Kukama language, a cross-border language belonging to the Tupi-Guarani family, is critically endangered. It is barely spoken in Brazil, there are few semi-discourses left in Colombia and only 1,185 people speak it as their mother tongue in Peru. Despite these difficulties, the Kukama are actively working to revitalize their language and culture through intergenerational activities. In Peru, music and media produced by Radio Ucarama play a crucial role, while in Brazil, indigenous schools are central to these efforts. In Colombia, however, these activities have declined due to a shortage of funds.



Te Reo Maori language revitalization strategies.

To respond to the Kukama's need to reconnect with their cultural and linguistic identity and ensure the preservation, revitalization and transmission of their language to younger generations, a cross-border initiative has been launched in Brazil, Colombia and Peru. The project was designed to strengthen language revitalization initiatives within Kukama communities by fostering intergenerational transmission through various programs that empower elders and youth. Community leaders led the workshops and provided extensive support in reviewing the materials.

With support from the Pawanka Fund, the project was implemented by Radio Ucamara and the Kukama Women's Association "Waynakana Kamatawara Kana" in Peru, the Organização Geral dos Caciques das Comunidades Indígenas do Povo Cocama (OGCCIPC) and the Associação Indígena dos Povos Kokama in Brazil; as well as the Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Trapecio Amazónico (ACITAM) and the Authorities of the Resguardo La Guarda in Colombia.

|        |                                                                              |        |          |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| A<br>a | CH<br>ch                                                                     | Ė<br>ė | I<br>i   |
| J<br>j | K<br>k                                                                       | M<br>m | N<br>n   |
| †<br>† | P<br>p                                                                       | R<br>r | SH<br>sh |
| T<br>t | TS<br>ts                                                                     | U<br>u | W<br>w   |
| Ÿ<br>ÿ | A-CH-Ė-I-J-K-M-N-†-P-R-SH-T-TS-U-W-Ÿ<br>a-ch-ė-i-j-k-m-n-i-p-r-sh-t-ts-u-w-ÿ |        |          |

The indigenous Kukama alphabet proposed by FORMIDIAP, which recognizes the linguistic variations in Brazil, Colombia and Peru.





### Strengthening Local Initiatives for Linguistic Revitalization

To strengthen local efforts towards linguistic revitalization, comprehensive work plans were developed jointly with local organizations in Tabatinga, La Ronda, and Nauta.

In Tabatinga, a city in the state of Amazonas, Brazil, the work plan was presented to SEDUC (Secretaria de Estado de Educação do Amazonas) and Coordenação de Povos Indígenas de Manaus e Entornos (COPIME), who provided office materials and logistical support. Kukama-speaking chiefs supervised schools and community workshops, training language revitalizers, promoting multilingual literacy practices and strengthening indigenous education. This initiative trained 247 individuals from various communities in Brazil and resulted in the development and production of educational resources including a Kukama dictionary. Additionally, it extended revitalization efforts to new communities and increased community engagement in cultural preservation activities, fostering intergenerational transmission of the Kukama language.

Radio Ucamara, based in Nauta, Loreto province, Peru, has played an important role in coordinating with Formación de Maestros Bilingües de la Amazonía (Formabiap, an indigenous-led teacher training program) and the Kukama women's association - Huaynakana. Their joint efforts have resulted in a detailed work plan and have been extended to other Kukama communities along the Nanay River, such as Padre Cocha, and the Napo River. This collaboration has strengthened the partnership with the Kukama Women's Federation, resulting in the production of cultural videos and facilitated storytelling workshops along with music creation sessions in the Kukama language. In addition, the production of books and the creation of rap videos prioritized the participation of children and youth, fostering connection between different age groups in the community.





# Kui

## indigenous language

Initiative supported by Pawanka Fund

Enhance the verbal speaking of Kui indigenous language with traditional economic activities through solidarity for community empowerment (EVSKITEASCP) was the project implemented by the Organization for the Promotion of Kui Culture (OPKC) in Cambodia in 2022. With the initiative supported by Pawanka Fund, ten Kui indigenous communities were empowered with the development of their members' capacity to preserve the Kui indigenous language. The people in the communities were inspired to speak again their own language and this paved the way to the strengthening of their traditional and cultural practices. Their Kui identity was reclaimed through the customary systematization of the Kui language.

The strategic plans of both the Kui network and OPKC were drawn up and applied on the ten communities which were mapped out to identify fluent speakers of Kui and Khmer languages. During this process, they identified the eight (8) KIPs who were qualified to become teachers.



The latter were then trained to teach multi-languages to children and youth who were organized into groups of 15 students per village. Involving the community leaders was crucial and they were likewise trained on multi-lingual language education/curriculum. Kui indigenous language trainers in 10 communities, with at least three focal persons per village were organized and eventually, 70 % of the Kui indigenous language was reinvigorated and is now well-spoken by native speakers. Eight child centers for multi-language were established and many children learned from this approach. Parents, guardians, and adults were capacitated to encourage children to value the speaking of Kui language. Six communities organized cultural programs where Kui youth and elders gathered to dance, sing, and play solidarity games. Kui singers were organized and joined the Human Rights Day commemoration. OPKC has developed their monitoring and evaluation framework on their language initiative.







# Teaching Materials and Educational Resources for Linguistic revitalización







Teaching materials and educational resources play a crucial role in language revitalisation efforts, providing the means to learn and teach endangered languages. These resources can range from printed books and manuals to interactive digital resources. Below, we explore some notable examples and provide addresses where these materials can be consulted or purchased.

The diversity of these materials reflects the plurality of contexts and learning needs of communities. From grammar and vocabulary books that lay the foundations of linguistic knowledge, to narratives and literature that enrich cultural understanding, to apps and software that incorporate interactivity and modern technology to capture the attention of new generations. Each of these resources plays a specific role in the learning ecosystem, adapting to different learning styles and paces, as well as to evolving technologies and media.

Moreover, in today's digital age, digital educational resources and multimedia offer unprecedented opportunities for the teaching and practice of indigenous and minority languages. Online platforms, mobile apps, and other digital media allow native speakers and learners to interact in innovative ways, overcoming geographical barriers and creating global learning communities. This digital environment not only facilitates access to resources but also enables collaboration and knowledge sharing between language communities around the world.



# Books and Printed Publications



## Textbooks and Grammars:

Specialised publications that provide a structure for learning the language, from basic grammar to more advanced concepts.

For example, for learning Nahuatl, an indigenous language of Mexico, see "Introduction to Nahuatl Language and Culture" available in bookstores specialising in indigenous literature.

## Compilations of Legends and Mythology

"Mitos y Leyendas de los Aztecas, Incas, Mayas y Muiscas" (Myths and Legends of the Aztecs, Incas, Mayas and Muiscas): Collects fundamental stories of these cultures, offering a window into their worldview. Such publications, when available in the original languages, not only preserve cultural heritage, but also motivate linguistic learning by immersing readers in the collective imagination of their people.

## Conversation Guides for Beginners

"Quechua Conversation Guide for Beginners": This guide provides new learners with a practical approach to real-life communicative situations, using everyday phrases and expressions. These types of guides are valuable tools for those seeking to apply their language skills in practical contexts.

## Collections of Poetry and Contemporary Literature

"Poems in Yucatec Maya" by Briceida Cuevas Cob: This collection of poetry written directly in Yucatec Maya by a contemporary author contributes to the literary enrichment of the language, showing its vitality and capacity to express the complexity of modern human thought and feeling.

History & Culture Books.



### History and Culture Books

"Old Time Stories in Hopi": Written in the Hopi language with English translation, this book presents historical and cultural accounts narrated by tribal elders, an invaluable source of cultural and linguistic knowledge for present and future generations. Cultural and Academic Journals in Indigenous Languages.

### Cultural and Academic Journals in indigenous languages

"Yukay": A journal in Quechua that publishes articles on culture, history, and linguistics, contributing to academic debate and cultural dissemination in the language. These types of academic and cultural publications encourage the use of the language in prestigious domains and promote its social status; each of these types of publications contributes uniquely to the process of linguistic revitalisation.

By providing access to a wide range of genres and subject matter, they enrich the linguistic ecosystem and motivate speakers of all ages to explore and use their mother tongue in a variety of contexts. The availability of these resources in specialised bookshops, libraries and, increasingly, in digital formats, is key to their dissemination and access by the interested language community.

### Bilingual Dictionaries

Essential tools for learners and speakers of indigenous languages. One example is the "Diccionario Zapoteco" that can be found on sites such as INALI, which offers language resources for several indigenous languages of Mexico.



**GET TO KNOW**

Learn more about the initiatives supported by Pawanka Fund worldwide.

[www.pawankafund.org](http://www.pawankafund.org)





# To make





# Guide Travellers

**Guide Traveler**

| Word | Meaning |
|------|---------|
| 1    |         |
| 2    |         |
| 3    |         |
| 4    |         |
| 5    |         |

**1 My name is**

**2 My community**  
Describe your community or the context in which you live.

**3 My dreams**  
Write down your dreams or wishes

**4 Words in my favorite language**

**5 My symbol**  
Draw a symbol that represents you.

1

My name is

Write your name or what you like to be called, draw yourself in the white circle.

2

My community

Describe your community or the context in which you live.

3

My dreams

Write down your dreams or wishes

4

Words in my language referred

Write down 5 words and their meaning from a native language you prefer.

5

Mi símbolo

Draw a symbol that represents you.



# Example



**Guide Traveler**

**1** My name is  
Amaia Lemtouni

| Word      | Meaning    |
|-----------|------------|
| 1 Tamlalt | • Mountain |
| 2 Abrid   | • Path     |
| 3 Aman    | • Water    |
| 4 Tifawin | • Stars    |
| 5 Tilelli | • Freedom  |

**2** My community  
Imilchil,  
High Atlas  
Morocco

**3** My dreams  
I dream that our Amazigh weaving tradition continues to grow stronger, carried by the younger women of our community. I hope our patterns and colors remain a living memory. I also dream of colder winters returning so our grazing lands can thrive again.

**4** Words in my favorite language

**5** My symbol  
A circular woven pattern.



# Guide Traveler

4



Word

Meaning

1

2

3

4

5

•

•

•

•

•

4

Words in my favorite language

3

My dreams



5

My symbol

2

My community

1

My name is

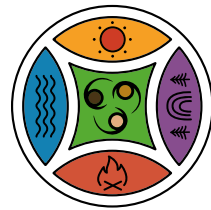




Thank you for completing Module 1!

Don't forget to upload your completed guide to our Facebook group: "Circle of the Word - Círculo de la Palabra".

Look out for Module 2 next week.



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