Speaking of Endangered Languages

Speaking of Endangered Languages: Issues in Revitalization

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P U B L I S H I N G

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

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This book concerns various approaches to indigenous language revitalization around the world. The contributing authors do not come from a single discipline or background: some are anthropologists and linguists, while others are educators and local people concerned with what they see as problems for the maintenance of indigenous languages in today's world where languages and cultures are in constant contact. What they share is the idea that historical and social factors have to be taken into consideration in any attempt at maintenance or revitalization of local indigenous languages, and that it is important for local communities to have control of these efforts. Most discuss recent programs they and others have been involved in to promote the use of indigenous languages.

The literature on the topic of language revitalization is extensive and falls into various categories from different disciplines, most usually anthropology and linguistics. Some of these broad categories include the history of languages in contact and the effects of this contact, issues of language planning and standardization, metaphors used to discuss changing languages, language ideologies, a rethinking of the "essentialist" and "purist" attitudes towards indigenous languages, and the view that culture can be expressed through any language. Before embarking upon these topics however, I would like to present a view that seems uncharacteristic of most who are involved in language maintenance efforts.

Linguists: The Bad Guys

Most researchers in the area of language maintenance and revitalization are concerned about the current state of endangered languages and feel it is important, for various reasons, for linguists, anthropologists, and local communities to work together in their efforts towards achieving language maintenance. One exception to this is

Newman (2003), who feels that the task of linguists is to document dying languages before they disappear, reminiscent of the "salvage" approach in early twentieth-century anthropology and linguistics, where the aim was to document as much as possible about cultures and languages that were "disappearing." Further, Newman claims that precious research time is wasted by linguists on things such as indigenous language programs and that linguists get involved in them simply to appease the community members they are working with. Under the subheading "We linguists care too much" he writes:

> I am troubled by the notion that researchers have an obligation to spend half of their time doing what I would call linguistic social work. … The primary justification for doing research on an endangered language has to be the scientific value of providing that documentation and in preserving aspects of that language and culture for posterity. The purpose cannot be to make the few remaining speakers feel good. (Newman 2003:6)

This type of "linguistic social work" entails "social and professional responsibilities that will compete for research time" (Newman 2003:6). He also claims that compiling curriculum materials is really a waste of linguists' time that should be spent on research:

> These materials … are truly impressive … The negative side, however, is that manpower that could have been spent working on basic linguistic description of endangered languages has been occupied with what are essentially ethnic awareness, cultural heritage projects. (Newman 2003:6-7)

Under the subheading "Our non-western colleagues don't care and would be unprepared to help out even if they did" (2003:8), he claims that most non-western linguists, including PhD students (he bases his discussion on African students since it seems he is most familiar with them), do not do fieldwork and work only on their own languages. So essentially he is saying that non-western linguists don't care about endangered languages, only their own (presumably they are writing about languages that are not endangered). He concludes his chapter thus:

> Despite the best intentions of many well-meaning and dedicated linguists, the rapid disappearance of languages throughout the world is likely to continue unabated. Those of us who are concerned about the endangered languages question and the problem of language extinction are up against a formidable enemy—and that enemy is our own discipline of linguistics and the individuals who make it up. We can continue to talk about the matter,

> as surely will be done *ad nauseam* at one international meeting or
> workshop after another; but given the odds against us, the chances of
> concrete results are pitifully small. (Newman 2003:11)

He somewhat contradicts himself since on the one hand he states that
documentation and scientific research, not attempts at revitalizing
languages, or "linguistic social work" is really what linguists should be
occupying themselves with, then he blames linguists for not caring about
saving endangered languages when he seems to fall into this category
himself. Languages are not "saved" through documentation alone.

   Contrary to Newman's position, most linguists and anthropologists
writing about endangered languages take historical, social, political, and
ideological contexts of language use into account rather than focusing
purely on language documentation. Many are either members of
indigenous communities themselves or work with local indigenous people
on curriculum materials and programs as part of their research, evidenced
by the authors in this book as well as others who work in the area of
language revitalization.

The Historical Dimension:
Comparing Yesterday to Today

   An issue which concerns those interested in language revitalization has
to do with freezing languages and cultures in time, or at least extending the
"traditional" culture in perpetuity. Any deviation from this, or
incorporation of cultural items from elsewhere (including colonial
languages), has in the past not been looked upon as change but as loss.
Samuels (2004) discusses this in his ethnography about the modern-day
San Carlos Apache in Arizona. He notes that American anthropologists in
the late 1800s and early 1900s, similarly to Newman above, were more
interested in "cultural preservation and reconstruction" than in how
languages and cultures may have changed through contact with colonialist
populations and regimes. A "crossroads" in anthropology between seeing
culture as only being that which was present before European settlement in
North America and recognizing that adapting to new social environments
was also part of cultural maintenance came with Edward Sapir in the
1920s:

> On the one hand, [Sapir] makes an eloquent statement about the role of
> creativity and adaptation as hallmarks of culture. On the other, [he]
> bemoans the loss of genuine culture among Native American communities

in the loss of traditions. That is, Sapir couldn't see creativity in these
changes, only disintegration. (2004:239)

Today most anthropologists and linguists recognize that language and
culture change through adaptation is not only normal but inevitable in
contact situations. Therefore, people who speak indigenous languages (and
their descendents who don't but wish they could) live in a world that is
very different from that of their ancestors several hundreds of years ago
since the context of their language and its societal base has changed.

Working with pidgins and creoles in the Pacific region which are
products of language and culture contact, Mühlhäusler (1996:52) cites
various reasons why existing languages cannot be viewed as they were
prior to European colonialism in the area, including "the imposition of
arbitrary colonial boundaries" and

the reorientation of the communication from a horizontal (inter-
indigenous) to a vertical (master-dominated group) process, thus bringing
groups into contact that had not communicated previously.

These changes in the flow of communication mean

that the social and residential groups encountered in the 1990s are not a
continuation of pre-contact patterns in many cases. … Consequently, the
notion of speech community or communication community has a very
different meaning from that which it had 200 years ago. (1996:52)

Therefore those involved in developing indigenous language programs
should not fall into the trap of teaching "traditional" language and cultural
concepts through typically western educational practices, especially to
young people who are living in a world very different from that of their
grandparents and previous generations.

Hill (1993) makes this point explicit when she discusses problems with
many pedagogical materials and their delivery in indigenous language
programs where the content is not relevant to everyday life anymore and
where the form of the language taught is no longer the one being used in
the community. During fieldwork with Mexicano (Nahuatl) speakers in
central Mexico, she found that young speakers had their own form of the
language which was not the version taught or used in local schools, and
was frowned upon by "traditionalists." In this case (and others that she
reports upon) she believes that since materials used in schools are not
relevant to young people's everyday lives they therefore have no use for
them outside the context of the school. She suggests that in order for

language maintenance programs to be successful attention should be paid to media that these young people are involved in such as rap music and popular magazines (1993:89).

So according to many researchers we should look at indigenous languages as they are spoken today as languages in their own right, or perhaps variations or varieties of the heritage language, rather than dismissing them as some kind of "broken" language simply because they may contain elements from two (or more) languages that have been in contact for a long time. It would certainly be unusual (and perhaps impossible) if this prolonged contact did not have any effect on the languages, particularly in the case of a politically and economically dominant language which would have a greater influence on the indigenous language than the reverse:

> The fact that pidgins have been shaped increasingly by local people in the business of making sense of introduced change and of creating a new modern culture makes them something very different from both their substratum and their superstratum languages. Pidgins and creoles reflect their speakers' construction of new communication systems, not continuity with the past. (Mühlhäusler 1996:102)

We can make an analogy here between pidgins and creoles and the way that indigenous languages are spoken today (Goodfellow 2003) because they have evolved in similar contexts of language and culture contact, and indigenous languages today share many characteristics of these contact languages (see Mühlhäusler 1996:290).

Changes in How a Language is Spoken

When contact occurs between two languages where one influences the other, the dominant colonialist language often affects the indigenous language in its phonology, grammar, and lexicon. According to Hyltenstam and Viberg (1993), lexical borrowing may be viewed as being either beneficial in supplying new vocabulary items that perhaps did not exist in the indigenous language's lexicon previously because those items have been introduced; or harmful since it replaces words for items that did exist, therefore superseding the original terms. Hyltenstam and Viberg differentiate between the two by the type of language contact situation occurring: the former occurs in language maintenance situations and is seen as "borrowing as enrichment," the latter in instances of language shift where one language is being replaced rather than enhanced by another, where the borrowing is viewed as "interference" (1993:29-30). So

borrowing between languages is not necessarily a negative thing and doesn't always lead to language shift.

In terms of grammatical changes induced by language contact, Mühlhäusler, providing examples from Pilling's work on Tiwi of Australia, notes that "languages are becoming morphologically less complex, very complex features such as polysynthesis being the first to disappear" (1996:286). In my own work among the Kwakwaka'wakw I found similar examples of changes in the speech of younger Kwak'wala speakers' phonology as well as grammar and lexicon:

> In grammar, phonology, and lexicon, [younger speakers] speak a very different Kwak'wala from that of the eldest generation. Although they often use Kwak'wala stems, the grammar is characteristically English, and this is what prompts older speakers to claim that "they don't say things right." (Goodfellow 2005:144)

So languages that are becoming less polysynthetic more readily accept vocabulary and grammatical structures of more analytic languages such as English.

Here again we see some similarities between pidgins and indigenous languages due to the history of contact between the two groups speaking different languages and the new realities for modern-day speakers.

These observations about structural changes to indigenous languages and how they are similar to those in contact languages such as pidgins and creoles may give hope to language planners if the process of language attrition can be arrested at some point and, in the best case scenario, the emergent language takes over as the community vernacular.

Language Planning and Standardization

In today's world in order for indigenous languages to be revitalized and maintained, it seems necessary not only to document a language, but develop ways of disseminating it to a community. This usually involves a process of curriculum development, especially for those languages no longer spoken in the home, so that languages can be taught through the local school system, and from there eventually (and hopefully) come to be spoken in other community contexts. Grenoble and Whaley (2006:10) provide a recent example of a "how-to" manual on developing materials for successful language maintenance programs:

> A critical domain for language usage is education. In regions where a nationally (or regionally) administered education system exists, the

languages of education become a key determinant of language use in other domains.

The education systems in use today in indigenous language programs are based on introduced European pedagogical methods which were, ironically, partially responsible for many of these languages today no longer being learned by children in the home since in the past students were not allowed to speak their ancestral language at school, and were often punished for doing so. Therefore the older generations today are either unable or unwilling to speak it to the younger generations. Consequently most programs today are based on written language materials.

Gregory's chapter on Choctaw in this volume calls for a corpus of existing Choctaw written materials to be compiled since it has a long history of literacy but unfortunately few speakers remain. These materials can be used in language planning efforts to revitalize Choctaw in the future, and also indicate changes that may have taken place in the language over time.

Although it appears to make absolute sense that education materials in the indigenous language are necessary in order for it to be taught to children in schools, there can also be some negative outcomes to this approach to language maintenance, even though in many (if not most) cases this type of language dissemination is the only viable option. One of these issues is that this type of language "learning" is based on colonialist education policies. There are

> two principal approaches to language planning … [:] the "streamlining approach," aiming at maximum uniformity, and the "ecological approach," aiming for functional and structured diversity. When the new nations came into being, only the streamlining approach was on offer and its ideology and practices were eagerly transferred to the new countries of the region. (Mühlhäusler 1996:197)

What this may lead to is a type of "self-colonizing" where the leaders (de-facto or perceived) of a community enforce their views of what the traditional language should be onto the rest of the community, including those involved in language maintenance. In the context of the politics of Native American identity, Churchill (2001:32) writes:

> with the codes of colonial domination embraced by many Native people as comprising their own traditions, … the colonized become for all practical intents and purposes self-colonizing.

This perspective can be applied in the area of indigenous language planning as well since the "correct" form of the language is judged so by those in power. Mühlhäusler (1996:196-7) notes that often today many people within indigenous populations have become "Westernized" through colonialist educational systems that

> perpetuate these practices after the nominal end of colonialism … Planning language meant planning for uniformity, modernization, national identity and the like.

Since a crucial aspect of using a modern education system to maintain indigenous languages is writing this necessitates the development of a "standard" language so that materials will be written in a uniform manner (unless of course communities have enough money to develop materials in the different language varieties that exist, which is unfortunately not usually the case!), which allows educators to teach one form of the language only. Although this is initially seen as a practical issue in terms of curriculum materials development and uniform delivery of a program by different teachers, it can also have some negative outcomes, such as ideas of "purism" (discussed more fully below) related to the status of a variety (and those who speak it) within a community:

> Although standardization has undeniable benefits, it does not come without its social consequences. One of the most apparent is the development of consciousness and belief about "right" and "wrong" forms of language. Prescriptive judgments about linguistic forms are introduced with the written form; native speakers tend to have fewer fixed notions of correctness before a language is written … Standardization can also lead to language loss because of the status it gives to one variety over others. (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:154-155)

Burnaby's chapter in this volume on Inuit and Innu people in northern Canada suggests that there actually may be a negative correlation between literacy through schooling in an indigenous language and its everyday use in a community. Those involved in developing language revitalization materials need to take these factors into consideration in order to avoid, as much as possible, factionalism in a community based on language variety and criticism of language learners who may not necessarily speak the "correct" form of the language. One must also be cautious not to relegate indigenous languages to a standardized written form at the expense of spoken varieties.

The chapter by Long and Hollander, which is also about a northern Canadian community, this one Cree, paints a very positive picture of the

language situation there. They attribute this to many factors, one being a notably different history of contact where, other than in one Anglican-run school, early education in the community did not discourage the use of Cree. More modern-day factors that contribute to the continuance of Cree include the isolation of the community from those that are English dominant, few monolingual English residents, and a locally-controlled school program which incorporates the Cree language and cultural activities with strong community support.

Although the language situation for the Lummi in the Pacific Northwest is very different from those of the Inuit, Innu, and Cree in that there are few remaining fluent speakers, Shepard's chapter also highlights the need for local control in the planning and dissemination of language programs. He has been working actively with the Lummi over the past few years to ensure that any programs reflect the needs and desires of the Lummi people, and to this end has used a "participatory action research" (PAR) approach to assess community perceptions of language and its use within the Lummi Nation and strategies for future language programming.

O'Regan's and Tuki's chapters, and the one on Nahuatl by Gregory, are similar in that they focus on language learning efforts outside the school setting. O'Regan, writing about a particular dialect of her ancestral language Käi Tahu Mäori spoken in New Zealand, is working with others in her community to promote other arenas for language learning that are more "leisure-based initiatives that will foster Mäori in daily communication which is more likely to result in intergenerational transmission." Tuki's chapter discusses the current state of Rapa Nui on Easter Island which is administered by Chile, hence Spanish has become the dominant language on the island. Along with a group of like-minded Rapa Nui women on Easter Island, she is trying to promote the use of her language through community activities similar to what some Mäori communities are doing. Unfortunately, she reports that there is little support for their efforts from government officials or even those involved in school language programs. Gregory is involved in a unique form of language learning—through dance. Although the participants in the dance groups mostly come from outside a traditional Nahuatl-speaking community, they are committed to learning not only culturally appropriate dance forms but the language that goes along with them. She also notes that in contrast to most other language programs that take place in local communities these dance groups comprise people from various cultural backgrounds in an urban setting. Why not?

Biological Metaphor of Language as "Dead" or "Healthy"

Until recently, the predominant metaphor for indigenous languages was based upon a biological model of languages as "healthy," "dead," or somewhere in between. Many excellent books have appeared in the past few decades on the subject of "endangered" languages, such as Bright (1976), McCormack and Wurm (1978), Barkin et al.(1982), Dorian (1981, 1989), Hindley (1990), Kroskrity (1993), Jahr and Broch (1996), and Grenoble and Whaley (1998). Some more recent works continue with this metaphor. For example, Janse (2003) is a fairly straightforward treatment of the issue of "language death" using many of the concepts from Krauss's (1992) oft cited report on the crisis for and imminent destruction of many if not most of the world's languages (2003:ix-xvii).

Grenoble and Whaley (2006) also give background information on the state of indigenous languages around the world. They provide a "ten-way distinction" from Krauss (1997) based on which generations speak the language in order to assess what stage a language is at in terms of endangerment, from "the language is spoken by all generations, including all, or nearly all, of the children" to "extinct, no speakers" (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:6). Using terminology common to the literature on "language death," they also note the issue of domains within which a language is used:

> the "stronger" a language, the more domains in which it is found. Thus a healthy, vital language is used in a range of settings with a wide variety of functions, and the most healthy language would accordingly be a language used for all functions and purposes. (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:7)

Although they opt to use the term language "attrition" rather than "death," "which is more current" (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:16), their discussion implies the biological metaphor used in other studies of "language death."

An interesting alternative metaphor for languages in contact is used in the ecological approach which incorporates the context or environment within which this contact takes place and its consequences. Users of this metaphor argue against looking at languages and cultures as bounded wholes distinct from and independent of the social forces at play in language contact situations.

Other Metaphors for Language:
Bounded Wholes vs the Ecological Approach

If one takes an approach to language revitalization that incorporates history and change, a metaphor for languages that reflects their changing nature in sociocultural context is needed. In recent years both anthropologists and linguists have diverged from the idea of languages and cultures as bounded, separate entities that can be studied as wholes in isolation from outside contacts. Kuipers (1998:8) however is of the opinion that anthropology may be slightly in the lead over linguistics in this respect and laments that linguists seem to have not kept up with anthropologists in breaking out of the language-as-a-whole metaphor:

> While much effort has already gone into a critique of the anthropological construction of "tribes" and "peoples" into ethnographic "wholes" …, little comparable critical scrutiny has been devoted to the common assumption that "language" is a neatly integrated totality.

Patrick and Freeland (2004:8), in their introduction to a volume concerning language rights, particularly those of minority languages, take the same view as many others who tend to see modern-day indigenous societies as products of linguistic and cultural exchanges and dismiss the bounded concept of language. Their approach "blurs the boundaries between languages, and makes it less easy to arrive at simple mappings of language onto ethnic group or territory." In reference to Creoles of Nicaragua, Freeland (2004:103) writes that they "are particularly ill-served by the unitary notions of peoplehood, identity and language that underpin Western state language policies."

Some who study the effects of contact between languages use an ecological approach to attempt to explain the context within which this interaction takes place and the results of it. Mühlhäusler discounts other approaches with origins in Western linguistic training that tend to view languages (and cultures) as bounded entities: they use

> unsuitable metaphors such as the reification metaphor which portrays languages as entities, or the container metaphor which provides places in time and space for them. Common to such visions is that languages are seen to be more or less self-contained and amenable to study in isolation from other languages and other factors. (1996:29)

Rather, he prefers an approach he refers to as "ecological theory" which focuses on the "non-linguistic support system" of a language or language

variety which includes "language ownership, cultural practices, speakers' lifestyles, settlement patterns, [and] speakers' physical and spiritual well-being" (Mühlhäusler 1996:322-3). In his view, although this base of support may change due to items introduced from other cultures, there is a possibility of a type of coexistence of the old and the new, *i.e.*, the original language does not necessarily have to disappear completely. An analogy he uses here, keeping with the ecological approach, is that of permaculture which "suggests that new self-sustaining ecological systems can be created, combining indigenous and introduced species" (1996:322-3).

Although it may be tempting to view an ecological approach as an extension of the biological metaphor, Mühlhäusler successfully uses the former without implying that languages are discrete and bounded objects with a life of their own that may eventually die. Patrick and Freeland (2004:9) believe that a biological metaphor for languages, improperly used, may contribute to the notion of languages and cultures as bounded entities:

> When we think about the preservation of minority languages and cultures, the idea that languages survive or die seems completely natural. But this is only because the metaphor that likens "languages" to "species," endangered languages to endangered species and linguistic diversity to biological diversity, has become completely naturalized, largely due to the dominant ideology that languages can be viewed as discrete objects.

As discussed in the previous section, using a biological metaphor may lead to the use of terms such as language "death" in reference to a language that is no longer spoken, which Kuipers (1998:17) cautions against:

> Many linguists have tended to look on marginal languages as "dying languages" as though this were somehow a natural process in a "life cycle" … All, however, have tended to borrow from models in the natural sciences in ways that do not capture the experience of the people using those languages. Marginal languages are often described as "endangered languages," a phrase which calls to mind the botanical and zoological analogy of "endangered species."

Kuipers (1998:149) later continues to discount the biological metaphor by introducing the concept of agency which takes the motivations of speakers into consideration:

> Languages do not just "up and die." They do not grow old, wear out, get sick, decay, or rot. It is true that we speak of language mixing, borrowing, and code-switching, terms which seem to imply images of purity and

pollution, wholeness and partiality, completeness and fragmentation. However, languages are not organisms with lives of their own, apart from the actors who use them.

Another concern which may arise in relation to an ecological approach has to do with the image of cultures and languages fixed in an isolated space:

> The discourse of locality is usually couched in environmental-ecological metaphors: a particular place is characterized by specific features ranging from climate through biodiversity to people, cultures and languages. … This diversity is invariably seen as something that needs to be preserved, consequently. It literally needs to be "kept in place." …
>
> It is this view of local functionality that underpins the strong claims … that the survival of minority languages is crucial for the survival of the planet, for with every language that disappears a uniquely functional local set of meanings about the environment is lost. … [W]hen another language is introduced into a particular environment, it may as well be dysfunctional for it does not articulate the particular local meanings required for the sustenance of the environment. This idea in turn underpins the idea of linguistic imperialism, invariably conceived as a non-local language (usually the ex-colonial language, and usually English) penetrating or invading local spaces and disturbing the ecological balance that existed between people, their language and culture, and their environment. (Blommaert 2004:57-58)

However, Patrick, in a similar fashion to Mühlhäusler (1996), can accommodate the biological metaphor as long as the context of language use is taken into consideration:

> [W]e need to move away from the view that languages are biological "species" and focus more on the social conditions under which a language is used. Thus, if we are to make use of a biological analogy at all, it would make more sense to focus on the "habitat" in which a language is used rather than on a language "species" *per se*. This is because languages are constrained by the social context in which speakers thrive—economically, culturally, and socially. (Patrick 2004:172)

Although the metaphors used in ecological theory are not specifically used in the chapters of this book, the principle behind it is often reflected in the belief that languages are not bounded wholes, and that language contact does not necessarily mean that one of the languages will cease to exist. Especially in the chapters by Holton and Goodfellow, we see that, in a similar way to pidgin and creole languages, indigenous languages in

contact with a colonial language can continue as indigenous languages although modified and influenced through this contact:

> [W]hen a language falls into disuse, it is not obvious at all that this change impacts negatively upon other languages in speakers' linguistic repertoires, as the extinction of a species might do in an "ecosystem." Rather, the other languages that speakers take up simply continue to change and develop. (Patrick 2004:172)

Language Ideologies

Studies of languages in contact have changed over the past few decades since contact languages are no longer regarded in the same way. Languages and language varieties that develop out of contact situations were, until recently (and still are by some), seen as, at best, imperfect systems of communication, or at worst, debased corruptions. An earlier view of these languages assumed that

> pidgins are languages supplementary to existing languages. Their main function is seen as being to enable communication between insiders and outsiders … or between indigenous groups brought into closer contact by a colonial administration. (Mühlhäusler 1996:74)

Mühlhäusler gives several examples of negative terms which have been applied to pidgins, such as

> "argot," "primitive," "bastard jargon," "compromise," "contact," makeshift," or "hybrid" language, "broken English," "mongrel lingo," "grammarless," "gibberish" to name a few. (Kale 1990:110 in Mühlhäusler 1996:86)

In discussing the ideology surrounding Pidgin English in the Solomon Islands, Mühlhäusler quotes Jourdan (1990:167):

> 1. they considered it as a debased and bastardized English language that had no structure;
> 2. they never thought it necessary to learn it in a serious way, as they would have with other foreign languages, in order to speak it properly; and
> 3. they never considered it as a real language but rather as a bad variety of English that was in competition with standard English, and thus had to disappear. (Mühlhäusler 1996:90)

One could replace "English" in this quote with an indigenous language for our purposes since in the purists' stance English is the language that is "invading" the indigenous languages.

Mühlhäusler (1996:102) however discounts the negative images that have been given to pidgins and other contact languages by noting some positive aspects to the development of new languages through mixing, two of which are relevant here: 1) "helping their users adapt to externally introduced culture and change"; and 2) "becoming languages of solidarity and self-identification."

Kuipers highlights some of the pitfalls of not taking the ideological dimension of language use embedded in the sociocultural context into consideration when discussing language change:

> languages differentiate, change, grow, decline, and expand not because of "natural" life cycles but because of the way that linguistic ideologies, held by interested actors and speakers and those who hold power over them, mediate between features of linguistic structure and socioeconomic relations. (Kuipers 1998:149).

The importance of establishing and promoting one's identity, and even "new identites by means of lectal variation" is a major consideration of speakers in their choice of language (Hyltenstam and Viberg 1993:9).

What is probably most important concerning the ideological dimensions of language use, rather than outsiders' perceptions, is how the local people themselves not only view the continued use of the indigenous language but how it has been shaped by them in a modern world (Kuipers 1998:xii). An insider's view of and attitudes towards an indigenous language however may have been influenced by outside forces, and some attitudes, for example, may be a reflection of a European perception which has been introduced through educational policies of standardization. For successful language revitalization and maintenance, community members must have a positive attitude towards that language. Unfortunately, attitudes will often vary and this may cause friction between people who hold opposing views (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:12). Some of the issues revolving around local perceptions of indigenous languages and how they may unintentionally impact their continuation have to do with attitudes towards and ideas about the relationship between language and culture and what constitutes a language.

Essentialism and Purism

Essentialism and purism are different but related concepts in the literature on language contact and revitalization. The first refers to the notion that there is an inherent link between language and culture, and if language is lost then the culture will be too.

> An essentialist, homogenous, and simplistic understanding of identity and culture prevails, meaning that the incorporation of new cultural traits (for instance, a second language) seems to be considered as not compatible with the maintenance of previous cultural traits (or languages). (Martín Rojo 2004:266)

While this image of the relationship between language and culture fails to explain the myriad ways that cultures and cultural practices are maintained even when the people are speaking a different language (see section below on English), this idea is often used rhetorically by indigenous people to promote language revitalization efforts:

> Whether or not it is inevitably true, Kwakw<u>a</u>ka'wakw feel strongly that if they lose their language, they will lose their culture. The use of Kwak'wala, whether in connected everyday discourse, a ceremonial speech, or a word or two in English conversation, not only establishes identity; it also symbolically indicates to Kwakwaka'wakw as well as non-Kwakw<u>a</u>ka'wakw that indeed the culture continues. (Goodfellow 2005:177)

This perception of the importance of language to cultural identity is highlighted particularly in this volume by Abreo's chapter on Mayan immigrants to San Cristóbal de las Casas in Mexico. She demonstrates how people living away from their home communities feel the need to maintain their language and culture so that they will not be assimilated into their adopted community. To these Mayan immigrants, language is an important indicator of culture.

May (2004) does not support "an essentialized and reified view of the language-identity link"; however, this does not reduce the importance of language, especially for speakers of endangered languages, as indicators of ethnic identities (May 2004:43-44). And although importance is often placed on the relationship between language and culture by indigenous people themselves, in modern societies that contain and blend elements of both indigenous and colonialist cultures, an indigenous identity can still persist in changed ways (this is discussed in more depth in the next

section). Samuels (2004:179) provides many examples in his ethnography of the San Carlos Apache in Arizona that counter the essentialist notion of the link between language and identity:

> [O]ne Miss San Carlos Pageant was won by a woman who sang the American national anthem in Apache. The status of the Apache language in various "Miss XYZ Apache" pageants reveals part of the massive problem of language shift, loss, and efforts at revitalization in the communities of San Carlos. The mixed messages of contestants talking about traditional practices in English or singing nontraditional songs in Apache alert us to admit that there is no simple link between language and identity.

Purism on the other hand is the idea that indigenous languages must be maintained in their "pure" (*i.e.*, precolonial) forms. Otherwise, they are no longer representative of the essentialist culture-identity link. However, in practice, all languages change over time and indigenous languages in particular are influenced by dominant colonialist languages that have been imposed upon them. Although this may seem to be another form of colonialism, in this case at the linguistic level, there is no denying that these influences have occurred, and to reject alternate language varieties that blend elements of both languages is what may ultimately lead to an indigenous language not being spoken at all, in any form, since in such cases the only alternative speakers will have is to adopt the colonial language exclusively at the expense of their ancestral language. So in this way, contrary to what the purists are ostensibly trying to accomplish (*i.e.*, maintain the pure form of the language with no outside influences), this position actually may lead more quickly to the loss of the indigenous language since learners will be unable to adopt the "proper" form of the language. Therefore, Hill suggests that we accept "heteroglossia" or different forms of a language "(that may or may not correspond well with a linguist's definition)" of language (Hill 1993:69). In a discussion of language mixing in Mexico, she writes:

> *Legítimo mexicano*, a Mexicano [Nahuatl] without Spanish influence that community members don't believe exists in their area, is idealized. All speakers believe that their own Mexicano speech is imperfect, that it is "mixed" because of Spanish loans. This view is shared by local Spanish speakers, who believe that Malinche Mexicano is an uncivilized jargon. (Hill 1993:74)

Further, "purist" speakers of Mexicano, whom she refers to as "the talk police" (1993:84) not only make negative remarks about and correct those

who may not speak the indigenous language according to their standards, but give "'vocabulary tests' on shibboleth items to innocent victims," usually younger speakers (Hill 1993:75).

Kuipers (1998:6-7) notes that when different varieties of a language exist within a community, community members are judged and categorized according to how they speak the language which can cause internal friction:

> It is assumed that speakers wish to use [the language] in appropriate, orderly, and traditional ways. In fact, such stylistic registers … can also be seen as internal fault lines that, particularly in situations of rapid social change, can be and are used as tools of exclusion and critique that fracture, divide, and rearrange groups and sub-groups in new ways.

So those involved in language revitalization and maintenance efforts need to understand the significance placed upon the language-culture-identity relationship assumed by many indigenous language speakers and learners, while at the same time not be party to "policing" to ensure a "pure" form of the language. Stroud and Heugh (2004:212) provide the following useful advice:

> An important role of experts would be to authenticate different narratives or versions of language and culture, by crafting novel resources and new social meanings into legitimate and authoritative repertoires. One way in which this may be accomplished is through a "broadening of the standard" so as to encompass forms of speech previously excluded as being substandard and impure.

Challenging the notion of an intrinsic link between language and culture is the growing literature on cultures that are maintained almost exclusively through a colonial language, especially in cases where the indigenous language is rarely used, if at all. This of course does not negate the value of attempting to maintain indigenous languages, but rather demonstrates that if a culture can continue to be expressed through English, for example, then surely it will be able to persist through English-influenced varieties of indigenous languages.

Expressing Indigenous Culture through English

Many researchers in the area of culture and language change note that, contrary to the essentialist idea that if you lose your language you lose your culture, indigenous cultures can continue to be played out through

colonial languages such as English. In my own experience among the Kwakwaka'wakw, this is certainly the case with many individuals, especially those under the age of 60 (and even some monolingual English speakers over 60). These people consider themselves "traditional" in that they perform tasks associated with their culture such as carving masks, canoes, and other items made of wood; basketmaking using local tree roots or cedar bark; telling traditional stories (in English); attending and participating in potlatches along with learning appropriate dances and songs; preparing traditional foods such as barbequed salmon, oolichan oil, or fish roe; and generally having knowledge about important aspects of their culture. These monolingual English-speaking "traditionalists" are very careful to uphold what they view as being appropriate for a Kwakwaka'wakw person to do. For example, carvers I know criticize other carvers if they create items that are not part of their particular culture, particularly non-Native carvers, but even say a Salish person who might carve in a Haida style, when both styles are from the Northwest Coast. They also feel family ownership over their dances and songs. I once attended a potlatch where there was a public argument (in English) between two families over which one had the rights to perform a song and dance. So the idea that the people involved in these activities are somehow less "Kwakwaka'wakw" than others really wouldn't pass muster in the communities I have worked in. Samuels (2004:5) cites many similar examples from his fieldwork among the San Carlos Apache and states:

> The produced nature of culture—the creative negotiation of personal and social identities within shifting fields of social power, history, and imagination—has led to the envisioning of cultures as open-ended, constantly being made and remade, worked and reworked. Within that context, the relationships between cultures and identities are not fixed. Rather, identities are emergent, produced out of the practices and expressive forms of everyday life. Traditions are not simply handed along from one generation to the next. Part of their enduring power comes from the possibility for their strategic reinvention in order to speak strongly in new social and political contexts.

According to Samuels (2004:97), even though "[f]rom grandparents to grandchildren, a sickeningly precipitous drop has occurred in the ability to speak Apache," for younger people Apache culture may be maintained exclusively through the use of English. In spite of this, interestingly English is still viewed as being an outsider's language: "High school students who don't speak a word of Apache nevertheless think of Apache as their language and consider English, the language they use every day, to be in truth someone else's" (Samuels 2004:8). One of Samuels' Apache

acquaintances who speaks Apache and English fluently sometimes jokes about the younger English-only speakers as being "white": "When he hears Apache children speaking English, he sometimes says, loud enough for them to hear him, 'Who are those white people talking over there?'" (2004:38).

Darnell (2004:93) reports on several stages of a research project she conducted with others on reserves in the southeastern Ontario region in Canada and found that local First Nations culture and identity are often expressed through the use of English. One stage of the project

> focused not so much on the indigenous languages as on performing First Nations identity in English, in an effort to demonstrate the pervasiveness of traditional culture even when expressed in English. We found that English was creatively adapted to traditional purposes … [A subsequent stage] turned to the larger context of ethnicity, power and identity. Mainstream Canada has failed to incorporate the richness and sophistication of First Nations cultures, especially as expressed in English, into the national imaginary.

Patrick (2004:172) writing about her fieldwork in Alaska notes the same phenomenon of indigenous cultures expressed and maintained through the use of English, especially local varieties of English:

> Alaska provides some examples in which Native languages have fallen into disuse, but a strong ethnic identity is maintained through the use of particular forms of English. In these contexts, speakers of Native languages … have shifted towards English, and have formed and maintained new Native identity markers through discourse … there continues to be a vibrant Native cultural life and ways of expressing cultural beliefs, values, and practices by using distinctive varieties of English, and sometimes by using certain "Native" terms and phrases.

Morgan's chapter in this volume notes that within the historical context of multilingualism on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana, varieties of Nakoda and Gros Ventre used in certain domains such as "school programs, radio programs, and cultural events" can coexist with English. Similarly, Parsons-Yazzie and Reyhner's chapter on Navajo demonstrates that while since the 1980s English has become more and more pervasive on the reservation, taking an all-or-nothing attitude towards use of Navajo can only contribute to a reduction in its use since fewer children are now learning it in the home. There as well, Navajo can continue side by side with English.

In fact, much of the literature on the state of indigenous languages is written in English (or another colonial language such as Spanish) rather than in a local language, partly because this is the language the researchers work in and other academics read. But even works destined for a larger audience (*e.g.*, Hinton 2002, Grenoble and Whaley 2006, and this volume) are in English because in most cases this is now the dominant language of the local indigenous people who are attempting to revitalize their ancestral language.

Conclusion

There are several issues that must be considered in efforts to revitalize and maintain indigenous languages, some of which have been briefly introduced here, and are further highlighted and discussed from various perspectives in this volume. Contributors come from very different backgrounds as noted at the beginning of this introduction. Some are "outside" experts while others are "insiders" actively engaged in language maintenance with a personal interest in their particular linguistic situation. What they all share is a commitment to indigenous communities in their efforts to have local languages and cultures continue in whatever form they may take.

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