

# Language Revitalization: An Overview

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In a world of around 250 nations, there are over 6,000 languages. This means that there are very few languages with a country of their own. A language that is not a language of government, nor a language of education, nor a language of commerce or of wider communication is a language whose very existence is threatened in the modern world. Michael Krauss (1992) estimates that at the rate things are going, over half of the languages of the world could be extinct within a hundred years. These imperiled tongues have come to be known as “endangered languages.”

## THE PLIGHT OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Indigenous languages—those that can trace a long existence in the locale in which they are used today—are the languages with which this book is concerned. When an indigenous group is a minority in a country governed by speakers of a different language, the language of the indigenous group is potentially in danger of diminishing in use and perhaps eventually becoming extinct. Immigrant minorities are also very likely to undergo language shift, either voluntarily or involuntarily (Hinton, 2000, in press), as part of their assimilation to their new country. It must be noted that in the turmoil of today’s world, some languages may be spoken primarily by immigrants who are refugees from genocide, and their languages may be endangered or even extinct in their original homelands. But there is one important difference between most immigrant languages and indigenous languages: in most cases, the immigrants’ heritage languages are still strong in the old country. In fact, many people of immigrant

descent who do not know their language of heritage manage to learn that language through classes or during visits to the homeland. But as for indigenous minorities, their languages are endemic to small areas and have no national status anywhere, nor is there anywhere to go to learn their ancestral tongue. When an indigenous group stops speaking its language, the language disappears from the face of the earth.

The languages of indigenous groups (and indeed the groups themselves) have usually not fared well under the government of the nation that has enveloped them. In the past, and even today in some nations, repressive measures have been taken against minority languages. Even without overt repression, minorities may shift to the dominant language. This shift is sometimes made through voluntary, conscious decision. A group that does not speak the language of government and commerce is disenfranchised, marginalized with respect to the economic and political mainstream. Furthermore, languages other than the languages chosen for government and education may take on a low status in the eyes of a nation’s citizens and be denigrated as inferior. Prejudice against “foreign” languages is so strong in the United States, for example, that it is very easy to hear negative comments from “the man on the street” when someone is speaking a different language or speaking English with an accent. Lily Wong Fillmore recently related to me that while she was on jury duty, announcements over the loudspeaker by an employee who spoke grammatically flawless English but with a Spanish accent, produced all kinds of grumbling comments from the jury pool in the waiting room such as, “Why don’t they give the job to someone who speaks English!” It takes only one such comment to make someone, especially a child, reject his or her language (Hinton, in press). Because of these

attitudes, bilingual families often choose to teach only the majority language to their children, dooming the minority language to oblivion in the new country.

Often, though, the shift is involuntary. Even when a family continues to use a threatened language in the home, the outside environment may be so steeped in the majority language that the child unconsciously shifts languages around school age and no longer speaks the minority language even at home, to the sorrow of the parents (Hinton, 2000, in press).

Because the loss of indigenous languages is tied closely to the usurpation of indigenous lands, the destruction of indigenous habitats, and the involuntary incorporation of indigenous peoples into the larger society (generally into the lower-class margins of that society), language death has become part of a human rights struggle (Nettle and Romaine, 2000). Language choice is part of the right of indigenous peoples to their own land, to autonomy, and to cultural and economic self-determination. To quote from a recent article:

The decline of linguistic diversity in the world is linked to the world political economy which invades and takes over the territories of indigenous peoples, threatens the ecosystems in which they live, wipes out their traditional means of livelihood, and (at best) turns them into low-caste laborers in the larger society in which they must now live on the margins. (Hinton 1999)

Final extinction of a language may take place **within** a generation of this disruption, or it may take place more slowly, over several generations: but we can virtually always trace it to this pattern of political, military, and economic takeover. In **the 20th** century, language death has been speeded up by seemingly benign developments such as television, **early**-childhood education, and other practices brought to indigenous peoples from the dominant society that increase their level of contact with that society and decrease the domains in which the indigenous language can be used.

This book will discuss languages that are endangered at various levels of severity. The languages we are concerned with all fall into one of the following categories:

- (a) Languages still spoken by all age groups, but with a visible decline in the proportion of children learning it at home, and a decline in the domains in which the language is used for communication.
- (b) Languages that children are no longer learning at home at all. This could mean that the parent generation knows the language but has ceased using it, or perhaps the grandparental generation is the last generation that knows it. Depending on the characteristics of language loss in a given community, there may be a generation of semi-speakers.
- (c) Languages that no one speaks except a few aged individuals.
- (d) Languages that have lost all their speakers, so that

the only record of them (if any) lies in notes and recordings by linguists. These are beyond being “endangered” and are usually called “dead languages,” although L. Frank **Manriquez**, whose ancestral language, Tongva, has no speakers, “**prefer[s]** to think of them as sleeping” (personal communication).

Even in the face of the linguistic catastrophe described here, this is also a time of unprecedented efforts on the part of minority peoples to keep their languages alive and to expand their usage. There is now a worldwide movement of indigenous peoples seeking rights to decision making about their own future and, most relevant to our concern here, seeking to save their languages from oblivion. They are searching for and inventing ways and means to reverse language shift (RLS is the acronym coined by **Fishman** [1991] for the process of reversing language shift). The people in the community and the teachers, linguists, and politicians assisting them are doing pioneering work as they attempt RLS. There are no tried-and-true methods or instructions for RLS that work for all communities. There are no pedagogical materials or trained language teachers to teach most endangered languages, and very few language revitalization programs are old enough to serve as models for RLS. Even some of the most successful programs are able to base much of their success not so much on methodology as on politics, such as the circumstances that allowed Israel to make Hebrew (which was actually long extinct as a language of daily communication) the official language of the country and the language of daily communication. For smaller groups, whose languages will never be able to serve as a language of wider communication outside of the small community of speakers, much inventiveness, energy, and dedication are needed to manage RLS. It is a superhuman task, but one to which an increasing number of people are passionately dedicated.

## WHY CARE?

Why does it matter that the linguistic diversity of the world is diminishing? Why should anyone care if indigenous groups shift from their ancestral tongue to a world language? Is it not communicatively beneficial for people in a nation to speak the same language as each other? Is it not the case that languages have been dying throughout human history? These questions are very frequently asked by the general public, and are ably answered in a number of important publications (Fishman 1991; Hale et al. 1992; Grenoble and Whaley 1998; Nettle and Romaine 2000). I will briefly summarize some of the arguments here.

Starting with arguments of the narrowest applicability, the editors of this book, as linguists, certainly share with their colleagues professional reasons for preferring to see linguistic diversity maintained. Linguistic theory depends on

linguistic diversity. It is one of the charges of linguistics to understand the range of possibilities within human language and the cognitive models that would account for this. The study of historical linguistics, language universals and typology, sociolinguistics, and cognitive linguistics has been driven by the study of the very indigenous languages whose existence is threatened.

More broadly, the loss of language is part of the loss of whole cultures and knowledge systems, including philosophical systems, oral literary and musical traditions, environmental knowledge systems, medical knowledge, and important cultural practices and artistic skills. The world stands to lose an important part of the sum of human knowledge whenever a language stops being used. Just as the human species is putting itself in danger through the destruction of species diversity, so might we be in danger from the destruction of the diversity of knowledge systems.

Finally, as mentioned above, language retention is a human rights issue. The loss of language is part of the oppression and disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples, who are losing their land and traditional livelihood involuntarily as the forces of national or world economy and politics impinge upon them. Indigenous efforts toward language maintenance or revitalization are generally part of a larger effort to retain or regain their political autonomy, their land base, or at least their own sense of identity.

Despite the fact that the general public should feel they have an investment in the survival of indigenous languages and cultures, what is really important is self-determination: the rights of indigenous peoples to determine their own futures, whether or not they see language survival as an important part of that future. It is only if an indigenous speech community itself desires and initiates efforts toward language survival that such programs should exist or would have any chance of success (see Ladefoged 1992).

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#### WHY THIS BOOK?

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This book is about the various ways in which people are working to keep their languages alive or bring them back into use. It is not aimed at any kind of equality of geographic representation; indeed, we focus primarily on North America, with only some of the most important programs elsewhere in the world being brought in. Rather, it is aimed at representing the principles and methods of language revitalization. We would like the general reader to understand the issues of language loss and revitalization, but our main goal is for this book to serve as a reference for individuals and communities who are interested or active in the revitalization of endangered languages.

This volume contains a number of ideas for how people can work to bring their languages back into use. Each chapter concerns some aspect (or aspects) of language revitaliza-

tion as presented by someone directly involved in the program being written about. In addition, each chapter has two main purposes: to display some particular principles and methods of language revitalization and to show an actual program of revitalization in progress. Each section will be introduced with an overview of the particular principles or methods featured in the chapter(s). It is our ultimate hope that this book will provide individuals and communities working on language revitalization with ideas about what works well and how to design programs for their own communities.

In this chapter I will go over some of the important general principles of language revitalization.

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#### THE BIG PICTURE: STEPS TOWARD LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

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I use the term “language revitalization” in a very broad sense. At its most extreme, “language revitalization” refers to the development of programs that result in re-establishing a language which has ceased being the language of communication in the speech community and bringing it back into full use in all walks of life. This is what has happened with Hebrew. “Revitalization” can also begin with a less extreme state of loss, such as that encountered in Irish or Navajo, which are both still the first language of many children and are used in many homes as the language of communication, though both languages are losing ground. For these speech communities, revitalization would mean turning this decline around.

Even when almost all families are still using a language at home, there might be danger signs, such as the loss of domains of vocabulary. The Havasupai bilingual education program that was put into place 25 years ago was designed for children who were native speakers of the language but who were showing signs of language contraction—that is, they tended not to know certain domains of vocabulary or certain aspects of grammar, or to lack formal speaking or storytelling skills. The goal of revitalization in that case was to remedy the children’s incomplete learning.

In many cases, the language is almost or completely extinct, and the community that wants to revive it is so small or the resources so meager that the community may settle for smaller goals—for instance, producing language-learning programs and materials without the goal of complete fluency or re-establishment of the language as the main language of communication. Another alternative for such deeply endangered languages has been simply to assure its continuation through one or two speakers per generation, who learn the language from the last native speakers through **mentored** programs such as California’s Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (Chapter 17).

The goals of a language revitalization program must depend on the situation in which the language finds itself. How

large is **the** speech community? Are the speakers or potential learners geographically together or scattered? What level of political power do they have? Do they have a nation that could come to see this as the national language, or are they a tiny minority in a multilingual nation? What kinds of resources are there? Are there still native speakers? What is the age of the youngest speakers? Is the language well documented? Does it have a long history of writing? Are there colleges or universities where the language can be learned? Are there trained language teachers who can teach **the** language? What kind of monetary resources are there? What is the level of desire on **the** part of the community for language revitalization?

While some of the speech communities in this book have large populations and optimal resources, many more have tiny populations and minimal resources. No matter which end of the scale a language is on, language revitalization is complex and difficult; but it is also always possible, at least to some degree. A small, scattered community with few speakers, no trained personnel, and limited resources may not be able to achieve as much as a large speech community like the Māori of New Zealand, nor to reach its goal so quickly. But some level of revitalization is still possible, and as certain levels are reached, new ones may become reachable. All that is really needed for language revitalization to begin is a minimum of one person who is dedicated to the cause. That one person can do a great deal with no support from the community: find out what documentation exists; get to know living speakers; learn the language, or as much of it as possible from the resources available, if not already a speaker; develop learning materials that others can use (in the researcher's lifetime or later); try to develop community interest through meetings or language gatherings; and incorporate **the** assistance of linguists to document the language or help interpret existing documents. Community support may come later, after the prime mover has accomplished something the community can trust. Even if it does not, that one interested person can produce something of value **that** future generations may appreciate more than that person's peers.

**Fishman** (1991) has designed eight steps toward reversing language shift (RLS). They are based largely on the Hebrew RLS model and other large-scale examples of language expansion and include steps that many indigenous languages can never hope to reach, such as his step 1 (he designed the table to be read from bottom to top), making the language the language of national government. As **Fishman** points out, where a speech community begins depends on how complete language loss is. For example, his step 8 (reconstructing the language and designing programs for adult acquisition) might not be necessary for a language that shows some decline in the number of speakers but is experiencing nothing as drastic as having no children learning at home. For the purposes of this book, we would like to make a modified model of steps toward language revitalization that expands

on earlier steps and focuses less on the steps that can bring a language into national use. (We also number the steps in the opposite direction so that you can read from the top down!) I must emphasize here that the order of many of these steps may differ according to the circumstances, and some steps may be conducted simultaneously. For example, step 1 (language planning) might in fact take place after some of the later steps have already begun. In fact, what often happens in language revitalization is that a few dedicated individuals begin activities at some later step, such as learning the language from elders (step 3) or teaching the language to their children at home (step 7), which **then** provides inspiration to the community as a whole, whereupon language planning might begin to take place. We should also point out that for many small communities, a realistic goal might be no more than to reach step 3 or 4. It may well be that some languages will survive from generation to generation only through one or two individuals in each generation who take the initiative to learn it.

- Step 1. Language assessment and planning: Find out what the linguistic situation is in the community. How many speakers are **there**? What are their ages? What other resources are available on the language? What are the attitudes of speakers and non-speakers toward language revitalization? What are realistic goals for language revitalization in **this** community?
- Step 2. If the language has no speakers: Use available materials to reconstruct the language and develop language pedagogy (see Chapter 32 on the Native California Language Restoration Workshop).
- Step 3. If the language has only elderly speakers: Document the language of the elderly speakers. (This may also take place at the same time as other steps.)
- Step 4. Develop a second-language learning program for adults (see Chapter 17 on the Master-Apprentice Program). These professional-age and parent-age adult second-language learners will be important leaders in later steps.
- Step 5. Redevelop or enhance cultural practices **that** support and encourage use of the endangered language at home and in public by first- and second-language speakers (see Chapter 7 on Cochiti and Chapter 24 on Irish).
- Step 6. Develop intensive second-language programs for children, preferably with a component in the schools. When possible, use the endangered language as the language of instruction (see Chapter 11 on **Māori** and Chapters 12 and 13 on Hawaiian).
- Step 7. Use the language at home as the primary language of communication, so that it becomes the first language of young children. Develop classes and support groups for parents to assist them in the transition (see Chapters 12 and 13 on Hawaiian).
- Step 8. Expand the use of the indigenous language into broader local domains, including community govern-

ment, media, local commerce, and so on (see Chapter 24 on the use of Irish on the radio).

Step 9. Where possible, expand the language domains outside of the local community and into the broader population to promote the language as one of wider communication, regional or national government, and so on (see section on Hebrew in Chapter 3 1).

To reiterate, some steps (e.g., step 9) may be outside the possible or desired goals of small indigenous communities, and some of the earlier steps (except language planning) may not be needed for communities where language loss is in the early stages. Enterprising individuals and organizations might do work at later steps first, with the community as a whole only later beginning a step-by-step process of revitalization inspired and heartened by the work of the first individuals. Some individuals and communities might have less ambitious goals; they may not even have in mind the goal of developing new fluent speakers. Such communities might wish to have some part of step 2 as the ultimate goal: the gathering of written and taped resources, the development of minor learning materials, and the transmission of a few basic words and phrases to the community.

## APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Looking at language revitalization programs around the world, we find many different approaches. Most of them fall into one of five categories: (1) school-based programs; (2) children's programs outside the school (after-school programs, summer programs); (3) adult language programs; (4) documentation and materials development; and (5) home-based programs.

### School-Based Programs

Many school programs around the country are now involved in the teaching of local endangered languages. There are three main types of school-based language programs: teaching an endangered language as a subject (like a foreign language), bilingual education, and full-scale immersion programs. Different goals, benefits, limitations, and results characterize these three types.

#### **Endangered Language as a Subject**

Probably the most common form of language teaching in the schools is teaching it as a subject for a limited amount of time each day. This is not a good way to create new fluent speakers, but it is often all that is possible in a given situation. Schools have a structure and a required agenda that allows language teaching only a small role compared to those played by the more favored subjects of math, reading, and so on. Programs allowed a time slot in the general school day

range from as little as half an hour a week to as much as an hour a day.

An hour a day of language, if taught with the appropriate methodology, can bring children a long way toward fluency. Even half an hour a week, although it will do little toward the development of fluency, can at least result in the important development in children's minds of a sense of appreciation for the language. Teaching the language as a subject has done a lot in many communities to help erase the shame that generations of people have felt about their language and has created a readiness and eagerness in young people to learn their language and develop more intensive programs for revitalization. An example of a good language-as-subject program can be found in Humboldt County, California, where the public school system has a policy of teaching the local Native American languages in schools with a large native population. Tolowa, Hupa, Karuk, and Yurok are all taught in various of the schools. These languages can now serve to fulfill the high school foreign-language requirement (a bad name, but a good policy) for graduation.

In every type of program, there are advantages and problems. The language-as-subject program has two disadvantages: there is usually not enough exposure time to bring a student to fluency, and the program does not create any real situation for communication. Foreign languages are generally taught with the expectation that the students will someday put the language to practical use through interaction with other speakers, ideally in the country where the language is spoken. In the case of endangered languages, there may be no such place. When there is no speech community using the language, then any program that teaches the language must also concern itself with creating a situation in which the language can actually be used.

However, such problems do not detract from the excellent advantages of a language-as-subject program. The Humboldt County program, for example, has helped a generation of children become proud of their linguistic heritage and develop at least some degree of conversational ability. The children may themselves create the situation in which the language can be used; indeed, even when speaking English, children can be heard inserting certain phrases from their language that they learned in school. Many Native American teenagers—that most critical group—in Humboldt County are extremely proud of their heritage and their language. In contrast to what their parents felt as teenagers, I have heard this generation of teenagers say that the children at school think it is really “cool” to know their language. Children with such positive attitudes will be tomorrow's leaders in language revitalization.

#### **Bilingual Education**

Many Native American language programs got their start under Title VII bilingual education funds. Some of these programs have been in existence since the late 1970s. The

communities served best by bilingual education programs are those where the language is still spoken by children; in fact, if the language is not spoken by children entering school, it is hard to find funding **with** Title VII, since those funds are used primarily for schools in which a portion of the children lack full English skills. Bilingual education in the United States has been plagued by uncertain funding, inadequate opportunities for teacher training, and negative posturing by politicians, and as a result it has not been as effective as it would have been with better support. However, many excellent programs have developed in spite of these problems, and among them are a number of well-conceived and well-executed programs for Native Americans. A major difference between bilingual education and teaching language as a subject is that in bilingual education, a portion of instruction is actually done in the minority language. Bilingual education therefore takes on the role of being a language of instruction, and for a number of programs for endangered languages, this has resulted in **the** development of new domains of use for the language that are brought about by school requirements: a writing system (if one does not already exist) and written materials are developed in order to teach the children to read in their languages, and ways of talking about **math** and science and world affairs are developed. For endangered languages, this often means the development of new vocabulary for topics that were never before discussed in that language. All this means that settings and situations are provided in which actual communication can take place in the language. A good bilingual education program is ideal, for it can result in true balanced bilingualism—generally the main goal for people seeking to revitalize their ancestral language within a dominant culture that speaks another language.

Bilingual education as envisioned by the American government has a number of limitations beyond those placed on it by poor funding and training and the lack of moral support. One is that it is not usually oriented toward teaching the endangered language to those who do not already know it, since the main goal of federally funded bilingual education is for everyone to learn English and then switch to it as the main language of education (the “transition model”). A number of good programs, however, are aimed at *making* children bilingual in both languages, and even teaching the minority language to children who do not know it. Also, successful language learning can take place within a bilingual education program if there are only a few children who do not know the language within a general environment of children who do. The programs aimed at total bilingualism are best funded and best developed when the other language is also a world language, such as Spanish or French—languages for which there are plenty of teaching materials for all school subjects and plenty of teachers fluent in the language, and for which there is plenty of financial support. It is much more of an uphill battle to create a full-scale bilingual

education program if the language has few speakers and few written materials and has not been previously used in the educational domains.

Like other programs, bilingual education for endangered languages also has **the** disadvantage that the language has little reinforcement from the family and community. While bilingual education creates a situation in which the language can actually be used for real communication purposes, those purposes are oriented directly to the classroom; there is little motivation for children to use the endangered language on the playground or at home if it is not being used there already. But certainly, where most children already know and use the minority language, a well-taught bilingual education program can serve to reinforce language learning **that** is already taking place at home. In this sense, bilingual education is a potentially better tool for language maintenance than for language revival. (I have also seen some bilingual education programs—the transition model among them—that actually exacerbate language loss. Language loss can also be the unintended result of a poorly planned program **that** hopes to assist in maintenance.)

These paragraphs about what constitutes “good” bilingual education will be read with ire by opponents of bilingual education in the United States, who believe **that** any program that assists in the maintenance of any language other than English is to be abhorred. Bilingual education is a hot political issue, and even though its opponents do not focus **their** energies against the endangered indigenous languages but are rather arguing against the maintenance of Spanish and immigrant languages, **the** fact is that the politicization of bilingual education makes it difficult to find and retain funding for programs that are focused on language maintenance and revival.

### Immersion Schools and Classrooms

A model that is being used increasingly in the United States and elsewhere is the full-immersion program, where all instruction in the classroom is carried out in the endangered language (see Chapter 14). There is no doubt that this is the best way to jump-start the production of a new generation of fluent speakers for an endangered language. No other system of language revitalization has such complete access to so many members of the younger generation (who are the best language learners) for so many hours per day. More and more programs worldwide have immersion pre-schools that teach children to communicate in the endangered language, and for a number of programs it has been possible to develop an immersion schooling system all the way through high school and even into college. Hawaiian and **Māori** are two languages discussed in this book (Chapters 11-13) that have developed a whole generation of new speakers through this type of program.

By providing sufficient exposure to the language to **pro-**

duce fluent speakers as well as a venue for using the language in real communication, immersion schools solve many of the problems discussed above with respect to the other types of school programs. In the immersion schools, the presence of the target language is so strong that children tend often to use it with each other outside the classroom as well as in.

The immersion schools and classrooms also must overcome certain limitations and obstacles. Educational laws and regulations make it difficult to found immersion schools: in order to permit Hawaiian language immersion classes, Hawai'i had to change a state law mandating English as the only allowable language of instruction. Any community that has an immersion school in mind must realize that it will entail years of legal wrangling and figuring out ways to comply with all the local and state regulations. But it can be **done**—and a growing number of successful immersion schools attest to that fact.

As indicated earlier, having children who know a language is not enough; they must also use it robustly with others if the language is to continue. Problems develop if the immersion classroom is in a school where other classrooms are in English, for in those cases English is the language of the playground, and children become used to talking to their peers in English. Developing that habit does not bode well for hopes that these children will grow up to use their language in the home, even if they know the target language fluently.

The school is a specialized setting that makes inflexible demands in terms of subject matter and styles of interaction. When a language is chosen as the language of instruction, that language must be developed to accommodate the needs of education. Thus, a language that might never have been used to communicate such things before must develop vocabulary for math and science, as well as discourse styles that fit the situation. (For example, giving oral book reports or writing essays may never have been done in the language before.) Developing new vocabulary and discourse styles is not that hard, but it does change the language. People who wish to revitalize their language because of a desire to return to traditional culture and values must be aware that language revitalization does not automatically bring people back to these traditional modes of thought. If the language is learned solely in school, then it is school culture and school values that are learned along with it. Even when a conscious effort is made to teach traditional culture and values, the school-room agenda imposes its own culture on the students.

Another problem is that for some families and communities, devoting all education to the endangered language may seem like too much; they fear that children will not get sufficient English-language education to keep up in the higher grades or in college. This is a constant debate in communities where immersion schools exist. But this level of intensity in language teaching may be the only thing that works in turning around language decline. Wilson and **Kamanā** put it

very well: “The philosophy that has brought our movement most of its success establishes the priority goal as the continued existence and strengthening of a linguistically and culturally defined community. The ‘Aha Wnana Leo sees academic achievement, especially achievement higher than that of the dominant society, as an important tool in reaching our priority goal. But, high academic achievement is of itself not the goal” (Wilson and **Kamanā**, this volume, page 147).

In fact, even the immersion classroom is not sufficient unto itself to turn around language death: it is essential that the families play an active role as well. Students whose families are unwilling or unable to reinforce the language at home do not fare as well as students whose families actively use their language. Thus, the successful immersion programs also usually have a family component in which parents are asked to learn the language in night classes, to volunteer in the immersion classroom, and to reinforce at home the lessons the students learn in school.

### Language and Culture

Language and culture are closely intertwined. One important reason many people want to learn their ancestral language is that they want to regain access to traditional cultural practices and traditional values. It is often said that language is the key to and the heart of culture.

And yet, one does not automatically gain the culture by learning the language. Language is a very changeable form of behavior, and if language is taught outside of and without reference to the traditional culture, then that language will be devoid of the traditional culture. Let us take as an example the teaching of a language in the classroom using immersion methods. It is normal to talk about the objects and practices in the immediate environment, and so, if the classroom is designed to reflect the mainstream culture, as classrooms usually are, the language will be taught in such a way that children learn how to talk about classroom objects and classroom activities. A language learned outside of its traditional cultural context will lack the ability to reflect traditional culture.

This is an obvious enough point, although sometimes the subtleties of “classroom culture” work against culturally appropriate language learning in unexpected ways. For example, in most indigenous cultures, the art and genres of traditional storytelling are an exceedingly important part of traditional culture. Yet rarely can classroom teaching do an adequate job of helping children learn these oral arts. A number of factors can make it difficult or impossible for a classroom-based language revitalization program to do an adequate job of teaching traditional storytelling. Traditional storytelling may have constraints, such as only being done at night, or only in certain ceremonial contexts. In addition, traditional tales may be very long, precluding their full presentation in the classroom setting, and they may have

scatological or sexual content considered inappropriate to the classroom.

There are at least two lessons to be learned here. One is that if a community engages in classroom-based **indigenous-language** instruction, it must work actively to bring indigenous culture into the classroom and to change the classroom culture to meet indigenous culture halfway. This includes bringing traditional objects into the classroom, teaching traditional subjects, designing the shape of a classroom or school to fit traditional culture and values, leaving the classroom altogether for field trips or instruction in more traditional settings, and arranging hours and holidays around traditional ceremonial structure. The most successful **school-based** language revitalization programs often create separate schools, bypassing the mainstream public school system altogether in order to have sufficient power to do culturally appropriate language teaching.

The other lesson to be learned is that classroom-based language instruction can never be the sole source of serious language revitalization. Schools are limited in what and how much they can teach of the indigenous culture, and they are also constrained by having to fulfill the educational requirements of the dominant society. School personnel may have insufficient knowledge of traditional language and culture and may even be hostile to the presence of the indigenous language and culture in the school. Even if the school is friendly and willing, language revitalization must also have strong components in the broader community and in the home. Much of culture must be learned in the home, in a ceremonial context, or in the field—not in the classroom.

### Children's Programs outside the **School**

Many communities develop programs outside the school either to supplement school programs or to be completely independent from the schools. After-school programs have developed in some cases, although in the United States there are many more after-school programs for immigrant languages than for indigenous languages. While children are often tired and less attentive at this time of day, a well-designed after-school program (especially one that combines language with recreation) can help children develop skills in the target language.

One popular kind of revitalization program that is offered outside the school is summer programs for children. These take the form of summer language schools or language camps. Since they take place while children are on summer break from school, they can last as long as all day and be very intensive. They therefore have advantages over after-school programs, which must fit into a short time frame and have the added disadvantage that the children come to them tired, after long days at school. An excellent summer program for the Cochiti language is described in this volume by Regis Pecos and Rebecca Blum-Martinez (Chapter 7). A great deal of language can be learned in a two- or three-month summer

program; however, what is learned may soon be forgotten if the language is not reinforced during the school year. But an intensive summer program reinforced by a nonintensive school program might **have** quite excellent long-term results. Reinforcement may come as well or instead by the family, keeping the knowledge active and helping the child develop further.

### Adult Language Programs

One common kind of program is evening classes for adults or families. In practice these are usually held once a week, and although they rarely involve immersion, they can of course be taught in that manner. As mentioned before, the best school programs have a family component that is often a weekly evening class.

In Hawai'i, a group on Oahu recently received a grant for a community recreation program to be run in Hawaiian in which regular events such as volleyball and cookouts were held where only Hawaiian was spoken. This kind of program, where immersion-style learning is combined with other activities, is especially promising for endangered languages, since the language has to be brought into real communication situations again if it is to survive. A program such as this takes language learning outside of the classroom situation and puts it into daily life.

A program in California that has had good results is the California Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program, run by an intertribal organization, the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (Chapter 17). In this program, the last elderly speakers of California Indian languages are paired with young relatives who want to learn the language; they are taught immersion-style techniques of language teaching and learn to speak in their language together one-on-one. It is stressed that rather than doing "lessons" most of the time, the team should do activities **together**—cooking, gathering, housework, taking a walk or a **drive**—and communicate at all times in the language during these activities. In this way, as with the Oahu community recreation program, language learning takes place in the context of real communication, thus performing both functions of a revitalization program—teaching the language and bringing it into use in daily life.

### Documentation and Materials Development

To many communities now, language teaching and **learning** is the essential goal, and documentation is only secondary, or frequently ignored altogether. They reason that a language is dead if it is just recorded, with no living speakers. "Preserving" a language through documentation is seen to be like pickling something, rather than keeping it alive and growing. Nevertheless, for communities whose languages are deeply endangered—that is, there are no children or young adults speaking it—it is essential that a program of

documentation accompany any other measures being taken. For those languages, a day will come, and soon, when there are no native speakers left alive. The people who have devoted themselves to language learning in the last days of the native speakers' presence can never learn everything the native speakers know. Even the biggest and most active revitalization programs, such as those for Hawaiian and Māori, which have large numbers of new speakers, find that the new generation speaks with a different kind of intonation from the old native speakers. In addition, the programs make tremendous use of sound recordings of Hawaiian as spoken by the elders, especially a large set of recordings of radio interviews conducted with older Hawaiians by Larry Kimura over a span of many years. Many of the old genres and old vocabulary may be lost or insufficiently taught. As thorough documentation as possible of the last native speakers will be a critical resource for future language learners. And documentation is even more important in the absence of a revitalization program. Many linguists and anthropologists in the first half of this century worked with the last speakers of dying languages in the United States (and elsewhere) to record all they could of them at a time when communities had little or no interest in maintaining their ancestral languages, and these speakers knew that working with the scientists was their only hope of passing on their knowledge to anyone. The linguists and anthropologists made a great effort to record as much as possible of the vocabulary and grammar of endangered languages and also to record traditional tales and ethnographic texts. In many cases, this documentation is all that is left of the language. The publications, field notes, and recordings made by these speakers and researchers, now being used by new generations avid to learn what they can about their languages, are a rich source of material that can be invaluable to language revitalization programs—indeed, often they form the only basis on which revitalization can begin.

Certainly the beginning stages of any revitalization program must include finding out what kind of documentation of the language exists. There are great archives, such as those of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the American Philosophical Library in Philadelphia, and the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, that have millions of pages of linguistic materials. But smaller local archives such as those at county museums may also have rich holdings. In response to the surging interest in language revitalization, clearinghouses are beginning to develop where teaching materials on various languages and catalogs or references to archival holdings around the world may be found. Two of these are the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics in Washington, D.C., and the recently established International Clearing House for Endangered Languages at the University of Tokyo. More clearinghouses are being planned as of this writing.

Programs to increase accessibility of archival materials to native communities now exist, such as the “Breath of Life,

Silent No More” California Indian Language Restoration Workshop at Berkeley, where California Indians whose ancestral languages are extinct are invited to come for a week-long program to show them how to find materials on their languages and how to work with them for language revitalization purposes (see Chapter 32). Another excellent program, though now dormant owing to loss of funding, is the California Indian Libraries Collection, which copied linguistic and ethnographic materials from the University of California archives and placed them in county libraries in the vicinity of the communities the collections came from. Accessibility is also being increased by the microfilming of unpublished field notes. Many of the linguistic collections at the Bancroft Library are now on microfilm, as are those at the Smithsonian Institution and elsewhere. Another major project in archives around the world has been to transfer old sound recordings to more accessible formats. The wax-cylinder recordings made by anthropologists at the University of California at the turn of the century were transferred to audiotape in the 1980s. The Smithsonian Institution is expected to finish the transfer to audiotape of J. P. Harrington's vast audio collection of Native American languages in 2001. In the future, we will see big projects to digitize recordings and put them on CD. We will also see some of the large printed or audio collections put on the Internet, so that immediate access will be possible to anyone, anywhere, who has a computer. Even now, materials on endangered languages are increasingly common on the Internet (Chapter 26).

Older documentation is invaluable, but more documentation is still needed. Some languages have less documentation than others, and no language has ever been documented in its entirety—an impossible task, given human beings' huge capacity for constant linguistic creation. There are also frustrating gaps in the documentation by social scientists. Missing almost always is material on the rules and patterns of interaction. How people greet each other, how they carry on a conversation, how they joke and tease, how they apologize, or how they express emotions—this information is rarely present in the field notes and recordings. And since video-recording is relatively new, most of the documentation of endangered languages lacks the visual component of communication. At present, visual communication is a growing field of research, so there will someday be important video archives to match the audio and written archives; but as of now, relatively few speech communities have been studied in this way, and for many it will soon be too late.

It can be very beneficial for a language revitalization program to have the help of linguists to document their language. This can be done without any cost to the community by a linguist doing a research project, or, if the community prefers to have complete control over the materials, it can hire a linguist as a consultant. Since a research linguist may have very specific goals which may not be compatible with broad documentation, it is generally preferable to hire one as

a consultant so that the community can determine the agenda of study. It is also possible, where the financial aspect of a revitalization program is not strong, to get a linguist to work for free as a trade: the linguist can do his research project part time and spend the rest of the time doing documentation useful to the community.

But documentation need not be done only by professionals. The community can do its own. Chapter 21 discusses some of the principles and methods of such documentation.

### **Development of Teaching Devices: Books, Audiotapes, Videotapes, CD-ROMS, and the Like**

The development of books and audiotapes that teach the language and of learning aids such as videotapes and CD-ROMs is an important component of language teaching, as an aid to immersion programs, as a way of increasing community interest, and often, as the only alternative available to some people. Many language activists are working alone or in small groups. There may be insufficient community involvement to develop classes, or else the descendants of speakers of the target language may be scattered geographically. Often the development of pedagogical materials is the best language activists can do under the conditions they are working in. The development of language teaching materials for use both by interested people now and by future generations can be a great gift to the community's posterity. Dictionaries are of use even to native speakers, who, because of **nonuse** or the limitations of their background, may be lacking vocabulary in specific domains. Guided lessons that motivated students can use on their own can be a great way to set someone on the track of language learning. Reference grammars are an important resource for teachers planning classroom language lessons. Well-made videos and other visually oriented learning materials can keep a child's interest and attention during lessons.

As with language teaching, the development of such materials generally demands some prior training on the part of the person developing them. Besides the obvious need for technological expertise in making videos and CD-ROMs, linguistic training or consultation with a linguist or **language-teaching** specialist may be necessary in order to produce a good reference grammar, dictionary, or book of language lessons. The language data from which such references are developed must of course come from native speakers or, lacking those, from linguistic documents (publications, tapes, and field notes) found in archives.

### **Family-Based Programs at Home**

When a revitalization program results in a large and growing percentage of families using their ancestral language as their home language, so that children are learning it as their first language, then it is time to celebrate and take it off the

"endangered" list. Hebrew is the only language in the world with a revitalization program big enough and advanced enough to have reached that stage. Hawaiian and **Māori** are now at the stage at which Hebrew was about 75 years ago: at this time they are being used in only a few homes in which the parents are second-language learners, most of whom learned Hawaiian or **Māori** as college students. The school immersion programs are less than 15 years old; the "lead groups" who have spoken their languages since preschool are still in high school. It is strongly hoped that a sizable number of these students will make Hawaiian or Māori the first language of their homes, but it is still too early to see whether this will happen;

Beginning to use an endangered language as the first language of home is a big commitment, because it may mean that one's children will be less proficient in the national language. The potential role of the endangered language within the nation can play a large role in a parent's decision whether to commit to using the language exclusively at home. As the national language of Israel, Hebrew is now the language of schools and daily life, so it is now a boon to a child's well-being in the society to teach him Hebrew. If Hawai'i's independence movement were to result in a break from the United States, the importance of English there could conceivably decline, as Hawai'i would look to increase its economic ties with Polynesia and Asia. Hawaiian, though still the language of a small minority, already plays a symbolic role in the independence movement and could be increasingly important. Such considerations no doubt help Hawaiian families make their decision when they contemplate using Hawaiian in the home with their children.

But for small minority languages in localities where political and economic independence from the larger nation seems impossible, parents may have a harder time deciding to bring back the endangered language as the sole language of the home, because of their fear of potentially handicapping a child in his or her fluency in the nation's mainstream language.

### **Raising Bilingual Children**

In most contexts in which endangered languages exist, parents with an interest in bringing their ancestral language into the home might be more comfortable with the goal of raising a fully bilingual child than with raising the child to be dominant in the endangered language. It is especially comforting to be reminded that recent research shows that bilingual children may have certain cognitive advantages over monolingual children, so bilingualism may be beneficial to a child's development.'

Although there are billions of bilingual people in the world-it has been suggested that over half the population of the world is bilingual-deliberately raising a child bilingually turns out not to be an easy thing to do. Most people

who grow up bilingual either do so because of excellent language teaching in the schools (as in much of Europe) or, more commonly, because they simply are reared in a situation where one language is used in the home and another in some other major language-learning situation (such as in the school or on the streets). Having the home be responsible for the development of both languages is more difficult.

In fact, in most situations where a language is truly endangered, meaning that it is not spoken as the main language of the community anymore, if parents focus on using the endangered language in the home, the child will “automatically” learn the main language of the general environment anyway. Certainly this is the case for Hawaiian. Even when families use Hawaiian in the home and send their children to a Hawaiian immersion school, there is enough English all around them—in the marketplace, at the playground, among family friends, and so on—that the children learn English simultaneously. If parents try to do something like spend “equal time” on the two languages, it is the endangered language that will suffer, for unlike the mainstream language, the endangered language receives little or no reinforcement outside the home. Since children do a great deal of language learning outside the home, the parents, if their goal is bilingualism for their children, should spend relatively little time on the language that is dominant in the general environment and concentrate instead on speaking in the endangered language.

The most common mistake that parents make who are trying to raise bilingual children is to use the dominant language for the main language of communication and then try to consciously “teach” the other language, which ends up with children learning the same thing they learn in American elementary schools: numbers, colors, and a few animal names. If a parent is not fluent in the endangered language, then perhaps this is all he or she can hope to do. But if the parent is fluent, then that must be the language of communication between the parent and child, either at all times or during a significant amount of time. Some parents designate certain times for certain languages—for instance, “Today is Thursday, so we speak Gaelic. But Friday we’ll speak English.” Again, the endangered language should get more time than the majority language.

### One Parent, One Language

A fairly common method of attempting to raise bilingual children is for one parent always to speak to the children in one language and the other parent always to speak in the other. A recent study on this method (Dopke 1992) documented a number of families in Australia and found that few of them were successful. The children always learned English—that was not a problem—but many of the children stopped speaking the other language at some point in the learning and became at best “passive speakers”—understanding in part but not producing the language. The families that were success-

ful in raising fully bilingual children had at least three things in common: the minority-language parent spent at least as much time with the child as did the majority-language parent; the parent using the minority language refused to accept a response from the child in English (there was nothing punitive about this; the parent would just say something like “What?” until the child responded in the other language); and there was at least some reinforcement from outside the home, such as relatives or friends who spoke the language.

If a community is active in language revitalization, the one parent-one language approach might work out well. So placing the child in a school program that teaches the endangered language or giving him or her ample opportunity to speak the language with elders might provide sufficient reinforcement to allow continuing bilingual development. Often, of course, the one parent-one language approach is the best that a household can do, if only one parent knows the language in the first place.

### WAYS TO ENCOURAGE AND DEVELOP THE USE OF AN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE

The heart of a language is its native speakers. In general, the main direct cause of language death (which is itself the result of other factors) is that at some point the native speakers stop using it as their means of communication. Most of the time the cessation of use of a language is not owing to a conscious decision. It is more like the cessation of a heartbeat: when trauma or disease or deterioration stresses the body beyond that which life can tolerate, the heart stops beating, and death ensues. In the same way, the stresses and demands of the dominant society and language eventually lead to the cessation of use of the endangered language.

For a person in danger of dying, the first job of medics is to get the heart beating again. For an endangered language, the first job is to get the native speakers speaking it again.

There are a number of reasons why it is difficult for native speakers to speak their language, and the difficulty becomes greater the longer the language is silent. The factors that silenced the language in the first place are still in operation. Most problematic is the absence of communicative situations in which the language can be used meaningfully. In particular, when most people in the community do not know the language, no one in a speaker’s circle of daily contacts is able to understand the speaker or respond. Another major problem is that as the length of time that its speakers have not spoken it increases, they begin to lose their competency; they start feeling self-conscious and are afraid to make an error, especially in front of other speakers. Alternatively, the last speakers may not have learned the language **fluently** in the first place and may have stopped speaking because of criticism or ridicule from other speakers. I have been to meetings

of Native American tribal language committees whose goal is to save the language and where the committee consists primarily of elderly native speakers—yet through all the talk about how to save their language, no word of the language is uttered. On discussing this with them, they generally say that they feel shy about speaking the language around each other because they have not spoken it for so long that they feel they have forgotten a lot, and they might make a mistake.

How, then, can the heart of the language begin to beat again, however tentatively? How can the speakers be encouraged to use the language again?

A person who knows a language will use it if he or she is spoken to in that language. It is the learners who must bring the native speakers back into language **use**. In a language revitalization program, perhaps the most important first step of second-language learning is to teach the learners things they can say to speakers. Simple greetings and conversational openers are important. This creates a tiny place where the language can be spoken again. This is just a first step, though; a native speaker cannot continue the conversation beyond the greeting if that is all the learner knows. It is very important for learners to practice everything they learn on speakers, both for the sake of learning and for the sake of encouraging the speakers to use the language. The fear of error is somewhat lessened when a native speaker talks with a learner, for the speaker surely knows more than the conversation partner, and the learner would not dare to **criticize**—nor, indeed, would most learners even recognize an error from the speaker. (It is the learner's own fears of error and of ridicule that are strongest in this situation.)

A part of this encouragement from learners can come from learning and using certain phrases, such as "Speak to me in our language" or "Say that in our language." In **Cochiti**, children in a summer immersion program have learned how to remind people to speak Cochiti by saying so whenever they hear a Cochiti speak English. They say in Cochiti, "I'm not white, I'm Cochiti. Please talk to me in Cochiti" (Chapter 7).

Another way to encourage the speakers to use their language is, of course, to get them to teach it. Whether or not a speaker actually knows anything about how to teach, the speaker is the one who has the real information that must be taught and certainly should be a part of any teaching situation. (See below for teaching methodologies that involve native speakers.) Even if the speaker is not part of any formal teaching situation, a learner can simply ask the speaker to teach him. The learner can elicit words and phrases, ask the speaker to tell a story, or simply ask speakers to teach something of their own choice.

There are also more formal ways to get speakers to use their language. Traditional ceremonies, led by speakers, are often a natural place to use the language. In less traditional situations such as community meetings, speakers can be

asked to begin the meeting with a prayer or a few words in the language.

Some communities encourage speakers to use their language through community events such as potluck dinners honoring the speakers at which the speaker is asked in advance to give a speech in the language, and by encouraging or even insisting on no English from speakers and learners alike. In the California Master-Apprentice Program, one activity that is suggested for teams is to hold a dinner for the elders who speak the language and have the apprentices go to all the homes of the elders to be invited and invite them to the dinner (speaking only the target language during the visit).

Sadly, most communities begin to attempt to revitalize their language only when no one speaks it anymore except the oldest generation. Obviously, the best time to start is before the language has ceased being spoken in the home. But failing that, if the parent generation still knows the language, then one important challenge is to help interested families get the language back in their home again. Family education is vital in this case; teaching families how to bring their native language into the home in such a way as to produce bilingual children would be of great benefit.

In sum, this must be one of the key goals in a language revitalization program in communities that still have native speakers: to get the speakers using their language again.

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## LANGUAGE CHANGE

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One inevitable fact about language is that it is always changing, whether we want it to or not. Even a conservative speaker who thinks he or she is speaking just like the previous generation still has some observable differences from his or her elders. Many studies of English and other languages have been done showing the small variations from generation to generation that result over the centuries in considerable change. Change may also be very great from one generation to the next, such as when massive borrowing from one language takes place. Over half of the vocabulary of English, for example, comes from other languages—one of the main characteristics of modern English that makes it exceedingly different from the Old English of a thousand years ago. There are also major changes over the centuries in pronunciation and grammar.

As for endangered languages, young speakers often exhibit many differences from older speakers, owing in part to their bilingualism and possibly to their dominance in the mainstream language, which means that, because of insufficient exposure, they may have learned the endangered language only partially. The grammar and pronunciation might be simplified in younger speakers, and many domains of vocabulary may be replaced in their speech by English. Fre-

quently the discouragement they feel over criticism or ridicule by older speakers makes them give up on speaking the language altogether.

### Varieties of Language

Language revitalization programs may involve many varieties of the language. First of all, a decision must be made as to which variety (or varieties) of a language will be taught in second-language programs. A more conservative version than that spoken by the generations described above who have been so influenced by the dominant language of the society may be preferred. A thriving language usually has many dialectal and even ideolectal variations, but in a classroom it would be deeply confusing to try to teach all these variations, even if the staff knew them. On the other hand, settling on one variety could have the unwanted result of disenfranchising some of the native speakers. If there are speakers who speak differently than each other, it is important for everyone in the community to understand that there is not just one “right” way to speak and that the variations that occur among the speakers are the vestiges of healthy language variation. Often an endangered language has a social past where different villages spoke different dialects, or different clans had different ways of saying things. As in the case of the languages of Native Americans of the United States, whose original geographic and social systems have been destroyed and whose survivors all live on a single reservation, the social underpinning of the language differences has disappeared, but the language differences themselves still survive. As one talented learner of Hupa (a Native American language of northern California), Gordon Bussell, once told me, “Every elder I speak to has a different way of saying some things, and they all tell me the other ways are wrong. I’ve just learned to try to talk the same way as whomever I’m speaking to.” Such compromises may be the best solution in this situation. In any case, disagreements over which variety is the “correct” form of a language are worse than **useless**—they can destroy morale and short-circuit a revitalization program. Tolerance of variation is essential.

“Dialect merging” is the natural linguistic result of the social merging of previously separate speech communities. We have seen such mergers in American English as people from different dialect areas moved west and came together in new communities. Language revitalization can also result in a dialect merger. A frequent historic event for Native Americans has been for separate communities to be joined together on a single reservation. Often the last speakers of languages come from different dialect backgrounds and have differences in their speech, as illustrated above in the case of Hupa. It will not be long before Gordon Bussell and the other Hupas who have been learning with him will be the ones who carry on the language to the next generation—in fact, they are al-

ready running immersion summer programs for Hupa children. Gordon’s own speech will be an amalgam of what he has learned from the different native speakers, and the dialect merger will be complete.

### Vocabulary Development

In general, an endangered language which is not used as the main language of communication will be behind the times in its ability to express modern culture. Even someone who knows a language fluently might go into a department store and find that there is no name for most of the objects for sale there. Immersion and bilingual education programs that take place in the schools may find that there are no words for many of the topics being taught there; higher math, chemistry, and physics may be subjects never before discussed in that language. This is a problem not just for revitalization, but for any language that is expanding into new domains. The developing countries of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific have taken on this problem and created a whole field, often called “language engineering,” to discuss vocabulary development and other issues in language expansion. Of course, even the international languages, such as English, are constantly developing new vocabulary for new concepts.

Thus one of the most controversial (but at the same time one of the most fun) challenges of language revitalization may be vocabulary development. In many situations, the development of new vocabulary is rather incidental and can be done informally or individually. For example, in the California Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program, where a single learner works with a single speaker, as they bring the language into new communication situations, they can decide themselves how to approach new concepts. But for more major programs, the vocabulary needs may be great enough and the program large enough to demand setting up a committee to make these decisions. The Hawaiian immersion schools have a Lexicon Committee that determines new words, which are needed in large numbers as advanced school curricula are developed. They put out a Dictionary *of New Words* in a new edition each year that is sent out to all the classrooms and used religiously by the teachers.

Development of new words can be controversial because the language being developed might express certain values or traditions that could be lost if the language is changed. The revitalization of Hebrew was controversial from the beginning because of its long role as the sacred language of Jewish religion. To some, the expansion of Hebrew into secular life was blasphemy, and the development of vocabulary for mundane and morally impure ideas was shocking. Those Native American languages that survive only in ceremonial contexts have taken on the same sacred connotations that Hebrew did, so their use in non-sacred contexts is similarly debated. Even if the language is not seen as carrying only

sacred connotations, it is very often seen as the carrier of traditional culture and values. If the language is used to express mainstream culture and ideas, then perhaps it has lost the traditional values that it was thought to contain. Some members of the community will argue that the endangered language should be used to express traditional ideas and **the** mainstream language to express mainstream ideas. Some older Hawaiians argue this when they see the *Dictionary of New Words*, with thousands of vocabulary items not present in the language as they know it. It is reported that some **Māori** native speakers say **the** same thing of **Māori** children being educated in immersion programs: “They speak **Māori**, but they just spout English concepts!”

Another challenge and constant debate in revitalization programs is what the technical principles of vocabulary development ought to be. Should words be borrowed, or should they be created through indigenous processes such as compounding or descriptive phrases? Since endangered languages are fighting for survival against the mainstream language of their country, borrowing from the mainstream language is not normally desired. In fact, the development of new vocabulary by indigenous processes can be an answer to the problem of maintaining traditional values. New terms can be developed that evoke native traditions—for example, the Karuk word for “wristwatch” is a phrase that translates “little sun worn on wrist,” thus reminding us that the traditional way to tell time is by the sun (Hinton and Ahlers 1999). On the other hand, it has been argued by the Lexicon Committee for Hawaiian that technical scientific terms are international terms, not specifically English; they are mostly developed out of Latin and Greek roots in any case. So a good deal of the Hawaiian technical vocabulary consists of “Hawaiianized” borrowings, the international technical terms being adapted to the Hawaiian sound system.

### New Genres

Developing languages add more than just new vocabulary: they also add whole new genres of speech. A language that had previously not been written will, if used in the schools, develop such genres as readers, essays, poems, or short stories. Oral book reports, plays, and formal debates may enter the language. Outside of school contexts, the language may be used for court proceedings or the writing of tribal or even national constitutions.

### Pidginization

I mentioned above that in contracting languages, there may be generations with partial knowledge of the language, that lack some domains of vocabulary, and that use nontraditional grammatical constructions influenced by the dominant language. This can also be true of people learning the endangered language as a second language. Second-language

learners are likely to have an accent and at various stages in their learning will put together sentences with all kinds of grammatical errors. Foreign-language teaching theory has developed the term “interlanguage” for the kind of mixed grammar language learners create when they use their new language, which may contain elements of their native language or perhaps just very simplified structures that lack the grammatical elements of either language. This is just as true of learners of endangered languages. One of the main differences between foreign-language learning and the learning of endangered languages is that there may come a time—or it may already be the case—when the endangered language has no native speakers at all, and whatever the learners know and use will be what the language *is* from then on. This kind of language change is akin to pidginization. In intense language-contact situations, often an entire speech community begins using a language that is everyone’s imperfectly learned second language (a pidgin), and the children born to that community grow up speaking this very changed form of speech (at which point it is technically a creole). Sometimes such **creoles** develop into languages of nations. For example, Tok **Pisin** (from “talk Pidgin”), a creole that arose out of a pidginization of English, is now an official language of Papua New Guinea and has been so thoroughly developed **that** it is used in all levels of government, education, and the language arts.

It may seem that language revitalization resulting in a greatly changed language is undesirable. Certainly native speakers would think so. However, if a language is close to extinction, many people are willing to settle for what **they** can get. I am fond of a statement made by Terry Supahan, a language learner and teacher of Karuk (northern California). He says, “I’m interested in communication, not in preservation,” meaning that he is willing to make all kinds of errors so long as he can just get his point across. He wants to use the language and hear it used by others, even if it is butchered. He sees perfectionism as a bar to language use, a deterrent to revitalization. In a similar vein, Cody **Pata**, a Nomlaki language learner (central California), has no native speakers to work with at all and is depending on linguistic documentation to learn his language. In a recent workshop, he wrote out and recited a “Pidgin Nomlaki” prayer (his term), consciously using English wherever he did not know the Nomlaki word or structure. His goal is to insert more and more Nomlaki as he learns more, but in the meantime he would rather use “Pidgin Nomlaki” than simply not be able to communicate in Nomlaki at all.

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### SOME FINAL POINTS

Successful language revitalization programs have a number of key characteristics, among them *persistence*, *sustainability*, and *honesty with oneself*.

*Persistence* means not taking no for an answer. Steven Greymorning (see Chapter 23 on Arapaho) wanted to make an Arapaho version of Disney's movie *Bambi*, but Disney Studios repeatedly refused until Greymorning finally won them over. Hawaiians were told they could not have immersion schools because it was illegal to educate children in any language but English, so the Hawaiians lobbied until they got the law changed. Communities are told over and over again that native speakers cannot teach the language in the schools because they do not have the credentials; the persistent communities have usually found a way to get around these rules. Often the greatest resistance to language revitalization comes from within the community itself, where factionalism, jealousy, negative attitudes toward the endangered language, and a propensity to constant criticism are frequently a threat to progress of any effort. As the language learner and educator Terry Supahan says, "You have to develop a thick skin." Going on with the program in the face of barriers and negativity is an essential prerequisite to its success.

*Sustainability* is the setting up of a program so that it can keep on going. It is common for language revitalization efforts to make a small contribution and then run out of energy or money and disappear. Burnout of key personnel is an ever-present danger. It is important for the program's prime movers to discover ways to keep it growing, keep new people coming in, and make it not completely dependent on its founders' continued involvement. The program needs to evolve to meet new conditions. If a second-language learning program is successful in getting people to know the language, what can be done to create conditions in which they can continue to actually use the language? Can the learners be trained to become teachers? Can the program expand to other communities? How can it continue to be funded? All these are questions that a program's personnel must ask themselves constantly.

But it must also be pointed out that if a program does end, due to loss of funding, personnel, or energy, it has not by any means been a wasted effort. It has surely been a positive experience for all involved and has left a legacy that can be used in future revitalization efforts.

*Honesty* is crucial, because we want so badly for our efforts to succeed that it is not always easy to stand back and see if what we are doing is really working. It is important to look critically at the program and see what it is actually accomplishing and what problems it has. Are the learners really learning the language as well as they could? Are the materials that are being developed really useful? How can the program improve? Should some directions be abandoned? Should new directions be taken? What is the next goal? Good ongoing programs, no matter how successful they are, never stop asking these questions.

## Notes

1. We asked the educational linguist Brian Bielenberg to assist us with the literature on the cognitive advantages to bilingualism. He summarized it so well that I would like to quote him at length here:

A good list of the early work on the benefits of bilingualism is given in Hamers and Blanc 2000. A lot of the findings discuss how bilinguals are able to analyze language as an abstract system earlier than monolinguals. Others claim that bilingualism promotes creative thinking. For studies which attempt to demonstrate a stronger link between bilingualism and cognitive abilities, one must turn to the work of psychologists like Ellen Bialystok. Bialystok's main claim is that bilinguals have greater metalinguistic skills that allow them to talk about or reflect on language. Such skills, she argues, are useful for learning how to read and to use more academic oral language in schools (Bialystok 1991).

Another good source of review on this topic is Diaz and Klinger 1991. They present a series of studies that demonstrate that children's bilingualism is positively related to concept formation, classification, creativity, analogical reasoning, and visual-spatial skills. Following their presentation of studies showing cognitive advantages, Diaz and Klinger propose a model to explain the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. The studies they cite which focus on cognitive abilities include Hakuta and Diaz 1985, Diaz 1985, and Diaz and Padilla 1985. These studies make use of a number of widely accepted nonverbal tests of cognitive ability such as the Raven Progressive Matrices. The authors also cite Bialystok and others whose work has demonstrated increased metalinguistic knowledge. The positive effects of bilingualism on metalinguistic abilities include early word-referent distinction, sensitivity to language structure and detail, detection of ambiguities, syntactic orientation in sentence processing, and control of language processing.

Overall, I think that these studies, combined with the results of late-exit bilingual programs, make a convincing argument for verifiable cognitive advantages of bilingualism. I certainly would not be raising my son bilingually if I did not believe them.

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