

**TEACHING NSW'S INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES
LESSONS FROM ELSEWHERE**

March 2002

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This project was commissioned by the Office of the Board of Studies.
The views expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the views
of the Office of the Board of Studies.

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A language cannot be saved by singing a few songs or having a word printed on a postage stamp. It cannot even be saved by getting 'official status' for it, or getting it taught in schools. It is saved by its use (no matter how imperfect) by its introduction into every walk of life and at every conceivable opportunity until it becomes a natural thing, no longer laboured or false. It means in short a period of struggle and hardship. There is no easy route to the restoration of a language.

-Ellis and mac a' Ghobhainn [quoted in Nettle and Romaine 2000: 176]

PREAMBLE

This paper reviews some of the key international literature on the teaching of Indigenous languages in revitalisation contexts. I attempt to relate this literature to my knowledge of NSW Aboriginal languages and consider the potential for similar teaching programs in revitalisation contexts in NSW.

Selectivity

Inevitably a review of this kind must be selective. It is selective in that I do not pretend to have read, assimilated and addressed all the literature that might be relevant. It is also selective in that such literature as exists tends to focus on Indigenous language revitalisation in the Americas, especially northern America. This is not to say that there is neither a need nor a concern for Indigenous language revitalisation elsewhere, for instance in Africa. It seems to me that it is no accident that the major thrust for Indigenous language revitalisation has taken place in countries where the necessary resources are available: a relatively stable political system (and a system that is if not sympathetic to Indigenous language revitalisation then at least not obstructive in a major way); a reasonably high socio-economic level; the technical expertise; and, crucially, the 'right' level of political will in the Indigenous communities trying to undertake Indigenous language revitalisation.

The bias in the literature towards the Americas

Much of the literature reviewed relates to Indigenous language revitalisation situations in the USA and Canada. To a lesser extent there will be references to situations in Mexico, Central and South America. The bias in the literature towards northern America I believe is a reflection of the fact that some Indigenous communities are simply too preoccupied with keeping themselves alive to have much energy left over to keep their languages alive however much they might be concerned about them. Here I am thinking, for instance, of some of the more drought-, poverty-, and sickness-burdened communities in Africa.

What should be compared with NSW?

There is some literature dealing with the Maori of New Zealand but this is not so readily comparable to Indigenous language revitalisation situations in NSW. Essentially there is just one Indigenous language for the whole country of New Zealand while in NSW there is a multiplicity of Indigenous languages with estimates of 60 or more being proposed. Although the use and knowledge of Maori language has decreased in recent decades there is still a relatively large number of people who are either fluent (10,000 to 20,000 according to a National Maori Language Survey carried out in 1995) or who can hold an everyday conversation in Maori (153,669 or 29% of the Maori population according to the New Zealand census of 1996) (King, Jeanette 2001: 121). By contrast the Indigenous language situation in NSW is dire with only tiny communities of active speakers for some languages and for most languages no one who can hold an everyday conversation (Palmer 2000). It is not my intention to minimise the difficulties overcome and the achievements won by the Maori; rather I want to draw parallels from overseas which most closely match the Indigenous language situation in NSW. In New Zealand there is essentially one Indigenous language for the whole country and the NZ government is prepared to direct significant resources to that language. But in NSW there has been relatively little concerted effort from government to date and the language situation is fundamentally different: numerous languages with a small knowledge base for most of them.

NSW and California

However the literature dealing with northern America describes situations and practices that are either similar to those in NSW or could be easily enough applied in NSW. In particular there are a number of similarities between the Indigenous language situation in NSW and that of California. In California there are around fifty Native Californian languages which have a 'continued existence' out of around a hundred spoken in 1800. '... despite their endurance, the California languages are at the brink of extinction. ... it appears there is not a single California Indian language that is being learned by children as the primary language of the household.' (Hinton 1994: 21). In California the estimates for numbers of fluent speakers tend to be very low or even nil in the areas that have borne the brunt of the earliest and most sustained contact from outsiders. Coastal languages from around San Francisco down to Santa Barbara have no fluent speakers whatsoever while the numbers are small but a little healthier in central and western California (Hinton 1994: 27-33). Similarly in NSW estimates for numbers of fluent speakers tend to be very low or even nil around major centres like Sydney and Newcastle but somewhat healthier in the northern and central parts of the state. A summing up the situation in California has many parallels for the NSW situation:

California probably has the dubious distinction of having the most endangered languages of any part of North America. This is of course partly because there are so many Native Californian languages to begin with. Nonetheless, most Native Californian populations are small, and speakers are rarely in daily contact, because their communities seldom have a land base. These facts combine for a deadly situation: in California it is nearly 100% of the Native languages that are no longer learned by children. (Hinton 1994: 221)

Key sources

The relevant literature dealing with northern America is concentrated in a number of key sources. Perhaps the single most wide-ranging source is Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale eds. *The Green Book of Language Revitalisation in Practice*. New York: Academic Press, 2001. This is a recent and authoritative sourcebook which addresses language revitalisation issues around the world with a major focus on the United States. One of its editors is the recently deceased Ken Hale, who had worked on a prodigious number of Australian Indigenous languages from the late 1950s onwards. In the USA he was probably better known for the study of Native American languages especially in the southwest of the US and in Nicaragua. Apart from making major contributions to theoretical linguistics Hale was committed for much of his life to giving due respect to Indigenous languages and taking efforts to see that those languages be maintained and developed by their speakers. His co-editor, Leanne Hinton, has focussed on languages of California and the southwest of the US and like Hale has a tremendous commitment to language revitalisation. Between them they have brought together a very impressive range of contributors who draw on a wealth of experience as linguists, educators and Indigenous people involved in language revitalisation projects.

Another major source in the literature is made up of three volumes of conference proceedings:

Cantoni, Gina ed. 1997 *Stabilising Indigenous Languages*.

Reyhner, Jon ed. 1997 *Teaching Indigenous Languages*.

Reyhner, Jon, et al. eds. 1999 *Revitalising Indigenous Languages*.

[full references are given in the References section; these proceedings are available on-line at <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL.html>]

I will draw on many of the contributions from these volumes in the discussion below.

Finally I should mention an article that I regard as essential reading for anyone seriously interested in understanding language revitalisation and the problems involved in effectively delivering suitable intervention: Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer 1998 *Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift: examples from Southeast Alaska*. [full reference given in the References section]

The first mentioned writer is a Native speaker of Tlingit, an endangered language of southeast Alaska while the second, her husband, is a non-Indigenous person with academic training in European languages and literature. Together they have collaborated professionally since 1971 and have devoted very considerable energy to documenting and designing programs for the revitalisation of this language, including teacher training and materials development. They have worked in the community and have therefore had first hand experience of the ambivalence that Indigenous people can feel about the revitalisation of their linguistic heritage.

The rise of concern for language revitalisation

Concern for language revitalisation has been there for a long time but it has gained additional prominence in the last ten years or so. There are many examples but I mention just a few: Fishman 1991; Grenoble and Whaley eds. 1998; Hinton and Hale eds. 2001; Hornberger ed. 1997; McCarty and Zepeda eds. 1998; Matsumara 1996; Nettle and Romaine 2000; Ostler and Rudes eds. 2000; Robins and Uhlenbeck eds. 1991. In addition a number of websites have sprung up, among them: <http://www.ogmios.org/> [Foundation for Endangered Languages]; http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~tsunoda/dlg_1st.html [Bibliography on Language Endangerment]; <http://www.yourdictionary.com/elr/> [Endangered Language Repository]; <http://nativelanguages.org/> [Resources for Endangered Languages]; <http://www.ipola.org/> [The Institute for the Preservation of the Original Languages of the Americas]; <http://www.ling.yale.edu/~elf> [The Endangered Language Fund].

In 1992 the previously mentioned Ken Hale and a number of others with long term interests in language revitalisation (including 2 Indigenous contributors, one a linguist and one a specialist in education) produced a major paper addressing the crisis in the state of the world's languages (Hale et al. 1992). This appeared in the journal of the Linguistic Society of America, *Language*, a publication usually associated with academic, theoretical linguistics and almost never addressing applied issues. One of the contributors, Michael Krauss, concluded that the overwhelming majority of the world's languages may be on the path to extinction. This can be regarded as a wake up call for practitioners of linguistics in that around 90% of the world's languages are likely to be gone by the end of the 21st century (Krauss 1992: 7). This means that much of the subject matter of the discipline of linguistics is soon to disappear. Obviously such disappearance is not merely a matter of academic regret as the many statements of Indigenous peoples can testify. Among academic linguists as well there is more than academic regret: compared to 20 years ago there has been an outpouring of documentation and activity in connection with endangered languages that is quite unprecedented. One issue that has engaged some of this activity is to examine degrees of language endangerment.

GETTING STARTED

Profiling language situations

Deciding how to teach an endangered language will depend on the vitality of the language in question. This is one reason why many commentators have made attempts to profile the language situation. This can be done in terms of language vitality. Burnaby has surveyed some of the proposed schemes and mentions one scheme in which languages are classified 'as flourishing, obsolescing, obsolete, or dead. Each level has characteristics relating to whether the children learn the language, what adults speak among themselves in various settings, and how many native speakers there are left.' Another scheme she mentions is 'Bauman (1980) [who] created a five level scale describing languages as flourishing, enduring, declining, obsolescing, and extinct. He added factors such as literacy in the Aboriginal language, and the adaptability of the language to new conditions.' (Burnaby 1997: 25) (see also Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998: 71-73, 76-78).

Other accounts introduce additional variables (Grenoble and Whaley 1998, for instance) but what is of particular importance is the extent to which a different language situation requires different intervention. Looking at the Native American languages Reyhner (1999: vii) sets out Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages along with interventions to strengthen language:

Current Status of Language	Suggested Interventions to Strengthen Language
Stage 8: Only a few elders speak the language.	Implement Hinton's (1994) "Language Apprentice" Model where fluent elders are teamed one-on-one with young adults who want to learn the language. Dispersed, isolated elders can be connected by phone to teach others the language (Taff, 1997).
Stage 7: Only adults beyond child bearing age speak the language.	Establish "Language Nests" after the Maori and Hawaiian, models where fluent older adults provide pre-school child-care where children are immersed in their indigenous language (Anonby, this volume; Fishman, 1991).
Stage 6: Some inter-generational use of language.	Develop places in community where language is encouraged, protected, and used exclusively. Encourage more young parents to speak the indigenous language in home with and around their young children.
Stage 5: Language is still very much alive and used in community.	Offer literacy in minority language. Promote voluntary programs in the schools and other community institutions to improve the prestige and use of the language. Use language in local government functions, especially social services. Give recognition to special local efforts through awards, etc.
Stage 4: Language is required in elementary schools.	Improve instructional methods utilising TPR (Asher, 1996), TPR-Storytelling (Cantoni, this volume) and other immersion teaching techniques. Teach reading and writing and higher level language skills (Heredia & Francis, 1997). Develop two-way bilingual programs where appropriate where non-speaking elementary students learn the indigenous language and speakers learn a national or inter-national language. Need to develop indigenous language text-books to teach literacy and academic subject matter content.
Stage 3: Language is used in places of business and by employees in less specialised work areas.	Promote language by making it the language of work used throughout the community (Palmer, 1997). Develop vocabulary so that workers in an office could do their day-to-day work using their indigenous language (Anonby, this volume)
Stage 2: Language is used by local government and in the mass media in the minority community.	Promote use of written form of language for government and business dealings/records. Promote indigenous language newsletters, newspapers, radio stations, and television stations.

Stage 1: Some language use by higher levels of government and in higher education.	Teach tribal college subject matter classes in the language. Develop an indigenous language oral and written literature through dramatic presentations and publications. Give tribal/national awards for indigenous language publications and other notable efforts to promote indigenous languages.
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In the context of New South Wales I would say that it is mostly stages 8, 7, and 6 which are applicable. Looking at Australia as a whole through the Australian Indigenous Languages Framework Mercurio and Amery (1996) propose six program-types for teaching which depend on the learner’s background.

In NSW many Indigenous languages have a fairly substantial knowledge base but some, particularly those along the NSW-Victorian border and in the southwest corner of NSW, are either known to have a rather meagre knowledge base or are so poorly documented that one cannot be sure how viable the language is at present. Although a start has been made by the recent survey of NSW languages if more detail is felt necessary then more work will need to be done and some overseas experience warns that:

In order to apply such scales, one needs not only numbers of speakers, but also the age of speakers, functions of Aboriginal languages and English in the community, indicators of adaptability of the Aboriginal language to changing contexts, and the role of Aboriginal literacy in the community. Conducting a survey to include all these factors adds considerably to the complexity and expense of the data collection and analysis. (Burnaby 1997: 25-26).

Technical Expertise

Why do we have to listen to a non-Indian talk about linguistics? We are trying to teach our students orally. Why do we need him to tell us how to teach the language? He never lived like an Indian, so why does he think his way of teaching will be effective? He never walked in my moccasins and never will. (Mellow 2000: 102)

Indigenous people often express some ambivalence over the value of linguistics in the language revitalisation process. Hinton (1994: 249) observes that there can be conflicts between the goals of linguists and the goals of communities. Specifically,

Linguistic field work and publication is usually done for the sake of an audience of linguists rather than an audience of tribal members. The primary interests of the linguistic audience are in such matters as linguistic theory and language comparison, while the community audience is interested in language learning and preservation (Hinton 1994: 249-250).

When a linguist focuses more on language preservation than on scholarship the academy is likely to marginalise or even condemn such a person. One such was J.P. Harrington, an indefatigable field worker, who amassed around a million pages of notes on over 90 Native American languages.

The people he worked with and those who worked for him sometimes railed at his fanaticism and laughed at his eccentricities, and yet they could share his vision, and saw that his goals were in large part selfless, so they accepted the tasks he put them to. He was better liked and better respected by the Indians than by academics. Academics noted that he was too obsessed with recording languages to ever publish much or make contributions to linguistic theory (Hinton 1994: 199).

Harrington's methods for extracting information were sometimes quite reprehensible and would never get past an ethics clearance process today however one Native American, whose great-grandmother, grandmother and mother all worked with Harrington, records:

If it were not for him, all of you would not have your publications, and your stories, and your dictionaries or lexicons, and your theses, and whatever else you've done out there, were it not for this crazy man. Crazy like a fox. (Ernestine McGovran, at the California Indian Conference, October 1992) (Hinton 1994: 209).

In New South Wales it has been reported to me that some of the Gumbaynggirr were suspicious of a young linguist, Diana Eades, who worked with the late Mr. Tiger Buchanan, in the early 1970s. It has turned out that the recordings made by Eades have been invaluable for the language revitalisation program now in progress (Walsh to appear). One person remarked: "We're really glad she did that now". What is instructive about this example is that there can be good outcomes from the process of linguistic research. If the reluctance from some parts of the Gumbaynggirr community thirty years had held sway the revitalisation process today would be much the poorer. I should emphasise here that I am not suggesting that Diana Eades was behaving inappropriately in the early 1970s, indeed she was one of the few to reflect on the ambivalence some linguists have felt about so-called salvage work in linguistics (Eades pers. comm.) (see also Sutton 1992).

Regardless of how the material was collected it will nearly always need technical expertise to process this raw material to a state whence it can be useful for teaching Indigenous languages. The literature reveals that most Indigenous communities accept the need for technical expertise even though they may harbour suspicions and express concern over the ownership and control of material relating to their cultural heritage.

Copyright, Ownership & IP

Referring specifically to the Tlingit of southeast Alaska, the Dauenhauers (1998: 91) observe:

There is a real and legitimate fear of traditional ethnic materials being appropriated, exploited, trivialised and desecrated by outsiders, and this fear has led many elders in the direction of secrecy. We respect the right of elders not to transmit oral materials. If tradition bearers decline to work with us, we comply with their wishes. But ownership is only half of the traditional equation; the other half is stewardship and transmission to the next generation and to the grandchildren.

However they warn that:

We appreciate the fear of desecration, but we believe that *the risks of sharing information are less dangerous at the present time than the risk that it may otherwise be lost forever*. [my emphasis] Part of the emotional confusion that individuals and communities must resolve is the increasing sense of personal possession now combined with the rising awareness of loss, not from theft from without, but through lack of transmission within. (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998: 92)

These remarks have a clear application to New South Wales. Obviously any intervention program for language revitalisation must take into account concerns over copyright, ownership and intellectual property within the Indigenous community. However my own experience of attempting to grapple with these issues spans nearly thirty years and in that time it does not seem to me that the issues have been finally resolved. Nor am I confident that another thirty years will see a satisfactory resolution for all the parties concerned. The answer then is not to wait until these issues are resolved, important though they may be, because in the intervening time more generations of Indigenous people will miss out on the opportunity to regain their language.

Avoidance strategies

The Dauenhauers (1998: 68ff) describe ‘avoidance strategies’ employed by Tlingit people in which the problem of saving or regaining the language is passed on to others. This can be through a ‘bureaucratic fix’ or a ‘scientific or technical fix’. On the one hand organisations like schools or language preservation bodies are seen as the way to transfer the problem away from oneself.

Such organisations are too easily perceived as a place to transfer personal responsibility and to target for blame when things go wrong. At their worst, they become arenas for political grandstanding where personal rivalries, insecurities, and frustrations are acted out in thinly veiled expressions of cultural concern. ... It is false to assume that by passing a resolution or assigning a task to a certain position on a flow chart, the desired activity or goal will become a reality without the active, continuing support of others (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998: 70)

On the other hand there is the technical fix which again transfers personal responsibility for language maintenance somewhere else. This can involve waiting for the development of an interactive CD-ROM or the preparation of more teaching materials. Both are worthy aims but they should not be used as an excuse to further delay the process of regaining the language.

Dealing with intra-community criticism

A common refrain in the literature is the difficulty of handling obstruction to language revitalisation from within the community. For example,

It is interesting how some of our strongest efforts can at times bring about opposition from our own people. As our language efforts intensified so did the criticism. I frequently heard comments about the sacredness of the language and that it should not be in cartoons, in books, or on computers. Comments like this made me wonder what benefit could come by keeping language locked away as though it was in a closet ... We have been given something sacred, and we recognise its sacredness. However, instead of blessing our children with this Sacred gift, a vast majority of speakers seemed to have buried their language out of reach from our children and out of reach from our future. (Greymorning 1999: 10-11)

In surveying four successful programs (Cree, Hualapai, Maori, and Hawaiian) Stiles (1997: 257) emphasises the need for links to the community and then observes:

But the close community ties have often presented difficulties in initiating indigenous language programs. All of the communities in these four programs experienced community objections to a program that taught the native tongue so seriously. Elders objected to the writing of the language (Cree and Hualapai); elders and parents feared teaching the children a language other than English because of past oppression for use of their native language (all programs); parents as non-speakers doubted the ability of their children to achieve fluency; and teachers were convinced the languages were unsuitable for academic endeavors.

Handling this kind of negativity can be particularly stressful for an Indigenous worker - in effect, under attack from their own community. It would be useful to devise some kind of strategy to assist such people with intra-community criticism as it arises in language revitalisation efforts in New South Wales - as is sure to happen.

The role of the schools

Regarding the role of schools in language revitalisation the literature presents a spectrum from total rejection to total reliance.

Anonby (1999: 49) recounts his experience in helping to revive Kwak'wala, an endangered language of British Columbia:

The opposition encountered in implementing the ideas of in my master's thesis [promoting a community focus for language revival] clearly show how deep-rooted is the sentiment that the salvation of Kwak'wala is in the hands of the schools. Any initiative I planned that was not entirely academic was considered suspect by many and fought by some. Even though I frequently stated that the emphasis should be on families and community, most of my efforts at language revitalisation were channeled away from the community and into the school.

This over-reliance on schools can be contrasted with a more balanced approach from McCarty (1998: 28):

... while school-based action alone will not 'save' threatened indigenous languages, schools and their personnel must be prominent in efforts to maintain and revitalise those languages

In New South Wales one need a balanced approach in which schools play a significant role integrated with the Indigenous community. One way to integrate the school with the community is through the training of adults.

Training

The literature reveals a number of programs targeted specifically at Indigenous people.

- Master-Apprentice Program

One of the most relevant for the situation in New South Wales is the Master-Apprentice Program which was originally developed to assist with the endangered languages of California but has since been successfully applied in other contexts. In brief:

This program emphasises teaching the languages to highly motivated young adults The idea is to fund the living expenses of teams of elders and young people with grants, so that they do not have to work for several months, and can thus isolate themselves from English-speaking society and become immersed in traditional culture and language. It was estimated that three to four months in an immersion situation would go a long way toward the development of proficiency, especially for people who already have some passive knowledge. (Hinton 1994: 231)

Nearly ten years after the program was started (Hinton 2001b: 218) reports that 65 master-apprentice language program teams have gone through the program for one or more years or were enrolled. A total of 20 languages are involved, all with relatively tiny communities of speakers. The basic implementation of the scheme is fairly simple:

Each member of each team is given a stipend of \$3,000 for 360 hours of language immersion work. The apprentice is asked to keep a log of their work that describes their activities and what sorts of language learning took place. After each 40 hours of work, the log is sent in to the master-apprentice coordinator ... and checks are then sent to the team for those 40 hours. (Hinton 2001b: 219)

However a good deal of effort has been invested to accommodate different language learning styles, to avoid apprentices becoming isolated or discouraged, and to ensure that the language teachers are properly trained. Indicative of the attention given to language learning are these (Reyhner 1999: ix):

Figure 2. Eight Points of Language Learning (From Leanne Hinton, *Flutes of Fire*. Berkeley CA: Heyday Books, 1994, pp. 243-244, Used by Permission)

Teachers	Apprentices
<p>1. Be an active teacher. Find things to talk about. Create situations or find something in any situation to talk about. Tell stories. Use the language to tell the apprentice to do things. Encourage conversation.</p>	<p>1. Be an active learner. Ask about things. Create situations, bring things to ask your teacher to tell you about; find things in the environment to ask about; ask him/her to tell you stories.</p>
<p>2. Don't use English, not even to translate.</p>	<p>2. Don't use English, not even when you can't say it in the language. Find other ways to communicate what you want to say.</p>
<p>3. Use gestures, context, objects, actions to help the apprentice understand what you are saying.</p>	<p>3. Use gestures, context, objects, actions to help in your communication when you don't know the words.</p>
<p>4. Rephrase for successful communication. Rephrase things the apprentice doesn't understand, using simpler ways to say them.</p>	<p>4. Practice. Use new words and new sentences and grammar as much as possible, to yourself, to your teacher, to other people.</p>
<p>5. Rephrase for added learning. Rephrase things the apprentice says to show him correct forms or extend his knowledge to more complex forms. Encourage communication in the language, even with errors.</p>	<p>5. Don't be afraid of mistakes. If you don't know how to say some thing right, say it wrong. Use whatever words you know; use gestures, etc. for the rest.</p>
<p>6. Be willing to play with language. Fantasize together; make up plays, poems, and word games together.</p>	<p>6. Be willing to play with language like children do. Name things you see, count them, talk about what color they are. Make up stories.</p>
<p>7. Understanding precedes speaking. Use various ways to increase and test understanding. Give the apprentice commands to follow. Ask him/her questions. It is not necessary to focus on speaking each new word right away; that will come naturally.</p>	<p>7. Understanding precedes speaking. You may recognise and understand many things you cannot say. Focus on understanding: that is the most important step toward language learning. After you understand an utterance fully, learning to speak it will not take long.</p>
<p>8. Be patient. An apprentice won't learn something in one lesson. Repeat words and phrases often, in as many different situations and conversations as possible.</p>	<p>8. Be patient with yourself. It takes a long time to learn a language well. You are doing a heroic task; forgive mistakes.</p>

The Master-Apprentice Program is readily applicable to the situation in New South Wales. The language situation of California, for which the program was originally developed, is rather similar to New South Wales. To apply it successfully however the same combination of factors is necessary: training the teams; support from the Indigenous community; regular monitoring of the teams; an appropriate level of funding. The training in California was carried out by a team of six professional staff

which included an Indigenous administrator of the program, and, a specialist in second language learning and teaching.

Another important program which has assisted the process of language revitalisation projects is the American Indian Language Development Institute [AILDI]. Founded in 1978 the Institute has become a 'model for connecting school, community, and university resources to strengthen indigenous languages' and in so doing has:

- 1) raised consciousness about the linguistic and cultural stakes at risk; 2) facilitated the development of indigenous literatures and a cadre of native-speaking teachers; and 3) influenced federal policy through a grassroots network of indigenous language advocates. (McCarty et al. 1997: 85)

Now with over 100 participants AILDI runs for four weeks each year and many of the participants attend AILDI again and again. This is because the Institute is valuable not only through the formal instruction and curriculum materials that are developed as part of the program: they also value the interaction and sharing of experiences with other Indigenous educators. In the AILDI system students gain credit at the University of Arizona for courses they have undertaken and are able to work at a pace that suits their (formal) educational background.

Such a program might well be adapted to Australia but in doing so it would be appropriate to build on the thoughtful, considered pedagogical approach developed by AILDI (see, for instance, McCarty et al. 2001).

While AILDI has a broad catchment of students and does not even restrict itself to American Indian languages other university-school-community interactions are more localised. For example, Parks et al. (1999) focus on languages traditionally spoken in North Dakota and Montana. In New South Wales it may be appropriate to encourage collaborations at a more local level as well as state-wide initiatives.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR DELIVERY

Methods for Teaching Endangered Languages

Not surprisingly the majority of the literature favours communicative-based approaches for the teaching of endangered languages. However some commentators stress the need for explicit grammatical instruction - reminiscent of the grammar-translation method. For example, Ken Hale (2001: 227) defines five degrees of language immersion which vary according to the 'various monolingual situations in which a person may acquire a language'; the first degree of immersion corresponds to the normal acquisition of a mother tongue by the child while the fifth is the monolingual language class. According to Hale (2001: 325):

Fundamentally, training for teachers at the fourth and fifth degrees of immersion must include a program in linguistics, leading to a good understanding of the basic elements of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. In many cases, the teacher will have to do what amounts to field work on the language concerned in order to plan organised and fully comprehensible lessons around its grammar. This is true not only for teachers

who have acquired the language as adults but also for native-speaking teachers, who must bring these aspects of grammar to consciousness-using themselves and other speakers as consultants. Training in linguistics is necessary for this, whether this is acquired in coursework or through self-directed study. ... it must be said that the immersion setting is not always adequate, especially where the time available for study is limited - for instance, as little as three or four hours per week. Direct, explicit grammatical instruction is necessary in this circumstance.

It should be noted that Hale speaks from a wealth of experience and this kind of explicit instruction is not his own preferred method of learning a language in the context of fieldwork. 'Each fieldworker has a personal style, I imagine, and, in my case, I find it exhausting to try to fill in gaps, to complete paradigms, and the like, when I first encounter them. I get impatient and irritable when I try to do it.' (Hale 2001c: 94). In fact, Hale, unlike many researchers whose primary aim is to document the language, approaches the task as though his primary aim is to *learn* the language.

So why does Hale favour an approach to language learning which involves 'explicit grammatical instruction' when it is unlikely to be his own preferred learning style? In part it is because he is acutely aware of how languages can be more or less 'learner friendly':

At the level of second-language learning, which is my primary concern here, languages are notoriously unequal in the matter of difficulty. While Miskitu [an Indigenous language of Nicaragua] is relatively "learner friendly", many other languages erect impressive, though ultimately surmountable, barriers for the second-language learner. Navajo is such a language ... The Navajo verb word is not like that of French, say, or even that of Russian. While these also take time to learn and are to some extent challenging, the process consists essentially in learning regular inflections, an inventory of irregular forms, and, in the case of Russian, the aspectual pairs and the rather daunting system of accent placement. By contrast, the Navajo verb word is a "compressed phrase", containing within it not only the verb system and a rich system of inflectional morphology, but also adverbial, aspectual, and relational elements which, in languages like English, are expressed by means of separate words and phrases (including adverbs, aspectual verbs, particles, and prepositional phrases). (Hale 2001: 232)

Hale then goes on to describe some of the details of the Navajo verbal system. It should also be noted here that Hale was a fluent speaker of the four languages he refers to here as well numerous others.

How does Hale's advice relate to the Indigenous language situation in Australia and NSW, in particular? In broad terms Navajo can be likened to some of the morphologically complex languages found in parts of the far north of Australia, like Murrinhpatha in the Northern Territory, a language I first began studying about 30 years ago. On the other hand Indigenous languages of NSW can be likened to French and Russian in that they have some complexity but not of the order of Murrinhpatha and Navajo. To put this in concrete terms, verbs in NSW languages tend to fall into a small number of regular classes perhaps with a small number of irregular verbs. For

example. Ngiyambaa has three regular classes of verbs; Yuwaaliyaay has four regular classes; Gumbaynggirr has a single regular class along with seven irregular verbs; Banjalang has one regular class but also about a dozen irregular verbs (Dixon 1980: 423-5). By contrast verbs in Murrinhpatha use 35 classes and have something like the “compressed phrases” of Navajo in which a single, complex, verbal word translates into one or two sentences in English. I believe a language like Murrinhpatha would need explicit grammatical/linguistic instruction if it were being taught at the fourth or fifth degrees of immersion.

The situation for NSW is less obvious to me. From my own observation of the language learning program for Gumbaynggirr (north coast of NSW) I have seen explicit grammatical/linguistic instruction in use and there has been a measure of success for language learning among the Gumbaynggirr. However the question remains whether there was actually a need for such explicit grammatical/linguistic instruction in this case. Hale is quite unequivocal about the need for *teachers* to have this kind of background (2001: 235) but it is not so clear to me that it should be a requirement for learners in the NSW situation. Ultimately this is a matter for specialists in teaching methods and curriculum design (which I am not) to decide in consultation with the community.

One case study of Western Apache considers the range of textbooks used in language revitalisation contexts. De Reuse (1997) discusses the important issue of how much explicit discussion of grammar there should be in language learning textbooks and advocates

a judicious combination of the two approaches [essentially, explicit grammatical instruction, and, a communicative approach like Total Physical Response [TPR]]. For example, the classificatory handling verbs are best taught by a grammar-translation method, supplemented by TPR style exercises; straightforward syntactic structures (at least in Apache), such as negation, and yes-no questions, can be taught through TPR exercises and supplemented by grammatical explanations.’ (1997: 105)

Another useful case study is provided by Supahan and Supahan (2001). This involves two dedicated education professionals working in a program on Karuk, an endangered language of northwest California - a language situation in many respects like NSW. They adopt a method called Communication-Based Instruction in which the emphasis is on the use of language important to Karuk life. While relying on resources from within their own community like a fluent elder (who is also their great-aunt), they drew on expertise from professionals in linguistics and in language teaching.

Native speakers as language teachers

Again the Dauenhauers’ experience with the Tlingit of southeast Alaska is of particular relevance:

Unfortunately, there has always been a common assumption that training in second language teaching methods is unnecessary for native speakers, and there has been an accompanying general attitude of resistance to such training. The confusion here is between (acknowledged) competence in oral fluency

and (as yet undetermined) professional competence in ways of transmitting those skills to others in a variety of appropriate situations. (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998: 82)

They go on to say:

It is a general rule that without special training, people have little or no appreciation for the complexity of their own language. One's first language is learned very early in life and through hearing and use, not conceptualisation. Therefore, none of us can recall the process by which we acquired that which we understand most deeply and intuitively, and we have difficulty explaining conceptually how and why we say things. Our conscious attitudes are usually confused, inaccurate, and incomplete. This is why it is very hard for a native speaker of any language to teach it without special training. (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998: 83)

Regardless of how much Indigenous groups in New South Wales may object to such views it cannot be over-emphasised how important appropriate training in the teaching of languages is to a successful language revitalisation program.

Teaching endangered languages vs teaching foreign languages

Hinton (1999) emphasises that there are significant differences between teaching endangered languages and teaching foreign languages. These differences can be grouped under three headings: available resources; goals; consequences of language teaching.

Obviously the resources available for language teaching for an endangered language will either be slim or non-existent whereas the resources for Arabic or French will be quite extensive. In addition it will be either difficult or impossible to find teachers who are also speakers. 'Thus, any language revitalisation program must have a strong training program and must spend a good deal energy on the development of materials and curriculum, or else on developing a teaching methodology that is not strongly dependent on materials and fixed curriculum' (Hinton 1999: 75).

Teaching foreign languages have relatively limited goals: learning to speak the language with some degree of fluency or reading literature in the language. By contrast the goals for an endangered language are much more ambitious. Because the language has ceased being a medium for communication in day-to-day interaction people must not only learn how to speak the language but also must recreate communicative functions so that the language can once again be used in day-to-day interaction. Part of this process of recreation requires that the language learning cannot be confined to the classroom: the language must be brought back as part of day-to-day interaction within the community. In addition language revitalisation must become one 'part of a more general cultural revitalisation'.

The people who acquire this language as second language learners today will become the teachers and carriers of the language into the next generation. 'This means that any incomplete learning (accent, grammatical, or lexical deficiencies, etc.) will become part of the future of the language itself.' (Hinton 1999: 75). So one result of teaching an endangered language is that the language will undergo major changes. In turn this can create tension in an Indigenous community over which is the 'correct' form of the language.

How long does it take to learn an endangered language?

It is worth giving some consideration to the question of how long, on average, it might take to learn an endangered language. It is also worth remembering that endangered languages are typically acquired as second languages. First we should consider how much language exposure there is in first language acquisition: 'Before children produce simple words in their *first* language, at between 12 and 18 months ... , they have been exposed to an average of five hours a day of language, together some 2700 hours of language' (King, Kendall 2001: 216; see also Brandt and Youngman 1989). In ensuing years children are constantly surrounded by their first language in use and it is this that ensures they acquire fluency - much more than formal instruction. Little wonder that programs involving one or two hours' exposure to language instruction per week over a few years do not achieve significant results for students learning a foreign language - let alone an endangered language.

Referring to the Master-Apprentice program Hinton (1994: 228) notes that one needs ‘about 500 hours of regular and well-structured instruction to reach basic proficiency’. She adds:

We mention the rule of thumb that a new vocabulary item must be heard and practiced 20 different times in each of 20 different situations (for a total of 400) before a learner will master it. (Hinton 2001b: 219)

Referring to teaching Arapaho Greymorning (1997: 24-6) wanted 600-700 hours with as much 6 hours a day of instruction but was concerned by the costs!!

Of particular importance is the expected outcomes of language instruction. Rubin (1999: 20) proposes five levels of fluency:

- passive: able to understand common words or phrases, with or without deeper comprehension of their meaning
- symbolic: able to use common phrases and sentences in formal settings, as symbols of language participation and cultural ownership
- functional: able to speak the language, with basic understanding of its syntax, grammar, and rules of usage and a minimal vocabulary
- fluent: able to understand and speak the language with confidence and skill, with understanding of normal syntax, grammar and rules of form, and an extensive and growing vocabulary
- creative: able to understand and speak the language fluently in ways that create new word usage and structures, showing a deeper understanding of the language and its potential new uses

Clearly different levels of fluency will require different investments of time. A language revitalisation effort will have to reconcile what is preferred with what is feasible. The important thing is to be explicit about the goals and how to get there.

Finally, Hinton (1994:228) advises that enough time with regular and well-structured instruction is more important than the method of language teaching. However – first you need the language teachers and in communities where there are very few fluent speakers this is a hurdle that must be overcome and will take a good deal of time:

The desired result of the [Master-Apprentice] program is that by the end of three years, the apprentices will be at least conversationally proficient in their language and ready to be language teachers to other people. (Hinton 2001b: 223).

Literacy - is it necessary?

Before a survey of the literature frankly I would have regarded this as a question scarcely worth bothering with. It is by and large accepted that literacy is not merely desirable but essential for a successful language revitalisation effort. Anonby (1999: 38) summarises this view as: ‘All the successful efforts at language revitalisation I reviewed placed a high premium on literacy. ... Most language efforts almost instinctively emphasise literacy.’ However Littlebear (1999) does not use any reading or writing in his classes in the Cheyenne language.

Bielenberg believes that this literacy question should be given serious consideration and concludes that:

both indigenous people who are for indigenous literacy and those who are against it have the same goals in mind, they all want to revitalise a language and culture, a revitalisation that they see as necessary to the very continuation of a group of people. Both types of programs have been successful (1999: 108).

The question is also carefully considered by Watahomigie & McCarty (1996), two researchers of tremendous experience in the field of endangered languages and education (see also Hornberger ed. 1996).

Using technology

It is clear from the literature that there is quite a range of views on the value of technology for revitalising Indigenous languages. On the negative side Reyhner (1999: xv-xvi) reports on the role of technology in revitalising indigenous languages noting that

There has been telling criticism of "technofixes" for endangered languages. Hilaire Paul Valiquette writes that,

Computers are the most questionable of language teaching tools. They are not cost-effective; they bypass intergenerational teaching; they often involve handing over control to technical experts. They are very often connected with bad L[anguage] teaching (word lists, clicking on the face to hear the word 'nose,' etc.). Their use makes a patronizing statement: "the superiority of technology of the dominant culture is saving you." (1998, p. 111)

However given that, he goes on to write, "Computers do have a use in long-range language preservation" (1998, p. 111).

On the other hand Hinton (2001a), after describing the problems and pitfalls of the uses of computer technology, shows that at least some Indigenous people would feel deprived if their ancestral languages were not embracing the new technology:

An added bonus to the use of computers is its inclusion of Hualapai language. Students don't have to limit their computer proficiency to using English language only. The [program] includes activities that would allow students to input information acquired through interviews into the computer. This information can be in Hualapai language. The use of this further reinforces the idea that tribal values and language are compatible to high technology. An individual does not need to give up either for the other. (Hinton 2001a: 271)

One approach employing technology involves the use of the telephone to learn ancestral languages. Taff (1997) concedes that learning an ancestral language by telephone is not an ideal method but reports that it is certainly better than very little or nothing at all for people in widely dispersed communities. Clearly there could be

occasions where the use of telephones could alleviate the problem of dispersed communities in New South Wales.

Other uses of technology include Media and Multimedia. Hale (2001b) provides one example of the use of TV and radio in Central Australia and presents a very telling counterexample to the claim that media controls Indigenous people. Kroskirty and Reynolds (2001) describe their efforts in producing a CD as part of a language revitalisation project and present some very useful advice on the process and planning that should be carried out. Greymorning (2001) evocatively captures an unusual feature of language revitalisation in part of his paper's title; *When Bambi Spoke Arapaho*. This concerns his attempt and eventual success in getting the Disney film, *Bambi*, translated into Arapaho. Despite the difficulties in carrying out this project it has had very positive outcomes.

In summarising the uses of technology in language revitalisation efforts Hinton (2001a) presents some of the problems and pitfalls. Although there can be advantages to using technology it should not, as the Dauenhauers have warned, become an avoidance strategy in which the essential task of day-to-day communication is diminished or neglected altogether. Nevertheless there are now more resources available 'out there' than there were only a few years ago. To the question: *Can the Web Save My Language?* Buszard-Welcher (2001: 343) judiciously responds: '... we are only beginning to realize the potential of the Web for language maintenance and revitalisation'.

Promoting advanced Indigenous language scholarship

Certainly in the longer term the promotion of advanced Indigenous language scholarship should be considered in New South Wales. At this stage there are very few Indigenous people from New South Wales or working in New South Wales who are trained in linguistics. Partly this is a matter of sheer scale. For example, Slate (2001) gives a Navajo perspective on the difficulties of giving Navajo a voice in more settings, like the 240 schools which have a large number of Navajo students! Navajo is spoken by about 80,000 people and has a long tradition of scholarship. By contrast there is no Indigenous language in New South Wales that is even spoken by anything like a thousand people. Nevertheless the gaining of Indigenous expertise should be encouraged and as Slate admits:

Even when there are Navajos with specialized expertise, often they are spread too thin. If, for example, it is important to provide instruction or research in articulatory phonetics for teachers of English as a second language (ESL) or Navajo as a second language (NSL), the key issues are of quality work and accessible results, whoever does it (Slate 2001: 391).

More generally, Slate (2001) presents a detailed and useful account of how language scholarship can be shaped by Indigenous scholars and tailored for Indigenous purposes.

Success or failure in language revitalisation?

Success in language revitalisation can be assessed in many ways. In examining some of the diversity in language revitalisation efforts, Ash, Fermino and Hale (2001: 20) present 'five factors: (1) the present condition of the language; (2) projects initiated: their history, results, and prospects; (3) resources available to the community; (4) sociopolitical and economic factors bearing on the effectiveness of the projects; and (5) decisions and agreements which require discussion in the community.' Within this framework they present four case studies of which perhaps the most comparable to New South Wales is the situation of the Wampanoag language (of the Mashpee people) of the southern New England region of the USA. Although the language is no longer spoken it has extensive records from as early as the 17th century. The language reclamation committee has decided that a community member (Jessie Little Doe Fermino) should be trained as a linguist. Fermino first began her studies in 1997 and is now enrolled in the graduate program in linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In this instance the community as a whole and this community member in particular are taking a long term approach in which 'the study of the Wampanoag language' is to be taken 'as a serious responsibility, one to be approached systematically, not haphazardly' (Ash, Fermino and Hale 2001: 30).

Regardless of the precise goals for language revitalisation efforts, Reyhner (1999: xviii) focusses on what is needed to achieve those goals:

The Three "M's" of Indigenous Language Education

Methods deal with what teaching techniques will be used at what age levels and stages of language loss.

Materials deal with what things will be available for teachers and learners to use, including audiotapes, videotapes, storybooks, dictionaries, grammars, textbooks, and computer software.

Motivation deals with increasing the prestige (including giving recognition and awards to individuals and groups who make special efforts) and usefulness of the indigenous language in the community and using teaching methods that learners enjoy so they will come back for more indigenous language instruction.

More detailed advice on a suitable course of action for communities faced with the potential loss of a language is set out in 7 stages by King, Kendall (2001: 219 drawing on Brandt and Ayoungman 1989): introduction; preplanning and research; needs assessment; policy formulation and goal-setting; implementation; evaluation, and, re-planning.

Based on wide experience of language revitalisation efforts we are given this advice:

1. Talking about "what to do" to rescue endangered languages is important, but will not in itself reverse the shift toward English. Begin using the language now--at home, in the community, and everywhere.
2. Don't criticize or ridicule errors.
3. Be a risk-taker; look at your children and learn from them.
4. Learning is fun; don't stifle it by making it overly difficult or boring.
5. Through children, involve the parents; through parents, involve the grandparents. Start small and expand the circle.
6. Internal politics are best set aside for the benefit of the language restoration work at hand.
7. Believe that your language is a gift, as many tribal language policies openly state. If the language is not used and given life by its speakers, they are not fulfilling their responsibility. "Our Creator has created the world for us through language," 1996 AILDI participants and faculty observed; "If we don't speak it, there is no world."
8. This is the time for each person to do her or his part. We, not others, must assume responsibility. The stakes are high--don't wait for someone else to begin.
9. Finally, understand that others share your mission. Together, you can become a powerful team for positive change. (McCarty et al. 1997: 101)

The very first of these suggestions echoes the quotation at the very beginning of this paper. To put it bluntly, *if you want to save your language, get on with it!*

Perhaps one should conclude this section with a cautionary note: some of the advice is conflicting. For example, literacy is essential for language revitalisation (Anonby 1999: 38) and it might not be necessary (Watahomigie & McCarty 1996). Crawford (1997: 53) warns:

At the outset it should be noted that, so far, no one has developed a comprehensive theory of language shift -- what causes it under widely varying conditions, what prevents it from happening, what can help to reverse it ...

A lot more research, documentation of case studies and refining of technique still need to be done. Each situation has a unique set of problems and will have appropriate solutions to address those problems.

Even 'failure' in language revitalisation is worthwhile!

One commentator observes that 'language revitalisation efforts which are not deemed successful in that they do not reinstate mother-tongue transmission of the threatened language are far from worthless' (King, Kendall 2001: 212 drawing on Dorian 1987). Indeed Dorian argues that there are at least four 'possible reasons for undertaking efforts of this kind, sometimes in the face of almost certain failure' (Dorian 1987: 63). In brief the first of these is that the very act of promoting the language assists potential speakers to confront some of the negative attitudes towards the language that they have acquired after a long period of discrimination. For example, consider the Tlingit people of southeast Alaska:

In reality, many people are afraid of the traditional language. It is alien, unknown, and difficult to learn. It can be a constant reminder of a deficiency and a nagging threat to one's image of cultural competence.

...

It is not easy to overcome this pain. Many potential language teachers have commented with bitterness, 'They beat the languages out of us in school, and now the schools want to teach it.' (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998: 65)

A second reason for attempting language revitalisation is that the effort usually includes 'some emphasis on traditional lifeways and some transmission of ethnic history' (Dorian 1987: 64). A third possible benefit is economic, for instance, through employment of Indigenous teachers, teacher's aides or administrators. A fourth and final benefit of attempting language revitalisation concerns the overall 'cultural climate' of the community. (Dorian 1987: 63-65).

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