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3. LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Leanne Hinton

This chapter surveys developments in language revitalization, a movement that dates approximately from the 1990s and builds on prior work on language maintenance (see Fishman, 1991; 2001) and language death (Dorian, 1981; 1989). Focusing on indigenous languages, it discusses the role and nature of appropriate linguistic documentation, possibilities for bilingual education, and methods of promoting oral fluency and intergenerational transmission in affected languages. Various avenues for language revitalization, a proactive approach to the continued use of a particular language, are then described (see Hinton & Hale, 2001). In contrast to the smaller minority languages of Europe that have long literary traditions, many indigenous languages in the Americas and elsewhere are solely or primarily oral languages; thus, revitalization efforts aim to promote conversational fluency among speakers in a community. Related literature falls into four main categories: (a) theoretical and empirical works on language revitalization; (b) applied works on revitalization in practice; (c) pedagogical and reference publications; and (d) legal documents that support or impede revitalization of languages. Recent examples of current literature in each category are reviewed.

The processes of empire, industrialization, and globalization have made casualties out of indigenous languages and cultures. The statistics are dire: out of approximately 6,700 known languages in the world (*Ethnologue*, 2002), only about 600 of them are spoken by more than 10,000 people, the minimum figure that Krauss chose, somewhat arbitrarily, to judge a language as "safe" (Krauss, 1992). In fact 90% of the world speaks only 100 languages—the other 6,600 are kept alive by small groups, and for a very large proportion of those languages, the number of speakers is diminishing. In the United States and Canada alone, there are 184 living indigenous languages, but only about 20 of them are still being learned at home by children; even these are in trouble. For example, each year fewer and fewer Navajo children are entering kindergarten as fluent Navajo speakers, even though that language has more speakers than any other indigenous language in the United States (Platero, 2001).

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Language Maintenance vs. Language Revitalization

But to counteract this decline, there is a growing language revitalization movement around the world, accompanied by a growing literature on the topic of language revitalization. Most of this literature has been developed only since 1990, although a few relevant pioneering works occur earlier. The strong impetus toward language revitalization that we see today is not much older that that. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an emphasis instead on language *maintenance*—the attempt to keep the status quo for minority languages. The fact that the languages were actually dying was not the uppermost thought in this movement. It is only in the 1990s that we see communities and linguists in a last-ditch effort to save these disappearing languages—whatever "save" means to the various proponents. For many linguists and funders, to save a language means to document it before the last speakers die—the renewal of a philosophy that was current among linguists for the first half of the twentieth century, but was dormant for several decades. For many native activists in the communities where the language is being lost, to document a language is just to "pickle" it; but to *save* a language is to train new speakers—to find ways of helping people learn the language in situations where normal language transmission across generations no longer exists.

Linguistic Documentation

Linguists have long been aware of the decline of indigenous languages, and have done their part by documenting endangered languages. Sometimes these documents are all that remain of a language, and may play an important part of language revival. Libraries full of dissertations, journals and books, and archives of unpublished materials now exist, giving us a record of thousands of endangered languages and many languages already "extinct." The importance of documentation is underscored by such programs as the Breath of Life language workshop for California Indians without speakers (Hinton, 2001 b, c). Native Californians come to this workshop to find materials on their languages, to learn to read the materials and do fundamental grammatical analysis, and to extract "useful language" from the materials for purposes of language revitalization.

The use of linguistic documentation for language revival brings into question the *adequacy* of documentation. Mary Haas, the founder of the Linguistics Department at the University of California, Berkeley, always said that the minimum documentation that must be obtained for each language is "a grammar, a dictionary, and a body of texts." Sadly, many endangered languages lack even this much documentation. There are a number of references for linguists on how to do adequate documentation. Among the best is Payne's (1997) very well-organized book, which can guide a student of linguistics in the basic documentation of the grammar of a given language. Another aspect of documentation is the development of dictionaries. Frawley, Hill, and Munro's new *Making Dictionaries: Preserving Indigenous Languages of the Americas* (2002) approaches dictionary making from many different angles, including approaches to entry design, technology, and the role of dictionaries in indigenous communities.

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But language revitalization also shows us ways in which documentation has been inadequate in the past. Perhaps the most glaring gap is conversation. Recordings of natural conversation, rules of address, politeness, turn-taking, and other discourse aspects of endangered languages are few and far between. Yet it is conversation, and the ability to converse in the language, that modern language activists seek to re-establish in their communities.

It must be pointed out that for the last several decades, documentation has taken a back seat to linguistic theory. Linguists doing theoretical work have tended either to rely on past documentation rather than doing their own fieldwork, or if they do elicit their own material, they are often focused primarily on their particular question rather than attempting a voluminous or "complete"—though such is not possible—description of the language. It is only at the very end of the twentieth century, with the new emphasis on endangered languages, that linguists are beginning once again to take linguistic documentation as an important goal in itself.

Bilingual Education

For the national bilingual education movement of the 1970s and 1980s, the primary impetus was a civil rights concern that children who don't know English receive their early education in their first language, while at the same time learning English. In the 1970s, many Native Americans developed bilingual education programs for their communities, and saw such programs as a way to combat language loss (Crawford, 1997). During this era, literacy was one of the major foci. Most Native American tribes previously lacked writing systems, and so this was a time when many new tribal writing systems came into being, and many new written materials began to grace the shelves of the schoolroom. New written genres developed—essays, poetry, etc.—rarely published, but written and used school-internally. Training programs developed, such as the American Indian Languages Development Institute (AILDI), an annual institute at the University of Arizona which provides a 6-week course on linguistic analysis, literacy, and lesson and curriculum planning (McCarty, Watahomigie, Yamamoto, & Zepeda, 2001).

For the United States and other nations where bilingual education developed during this time, this era was the beginning of a major change in policy. Language policy before this (whether official or unofficial) had focused on creating monolingual speakers of the socially dominant language, in the belief that other languages were impediments to this goal. Bilingual education seemed to be a recognition of the validity of bilingualism, and for Native Americans, it was an opportunity for their languages to be seen in a new light—not "inferior" as previous generations had been taught in the schools, but capable of full expression of any concept, and valuable in their own right. For many communities, bilingual education finally allowed students to be proud of their languages. Also, for American Indian languages, bilingual education was and is an attempt to keep their languages alive. The U.S. government had different ideas, if not at the time of the founding of the national bilingual education movement, very quickly thereafter. Throughout the

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history of bilingual education in the United States, the effort of Native Americans to use bilingual education programs to help their languages survive, even to teach the language to students that are English-dominant, has put them into conflict with the federal government's conservative attitudes toward bilingual education as being a way of transitioning to English.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many communities did not fully recognize the extreme danger facing their languages. People saw that there were fewer speakers, but believed—or at least hoped—that the problem could be solved through remedies such as the introduction of bilingual education in the schools. Some bilingual education programs were quite successful in bringing the indigenous language into the classroom, and increasing children's respect for their language. But in many cases, bilingual education did nothing to staunch the flow away from speaking the local languages. Due to insufficient training for bilingual teachers and teachers' aides, English was frequently the primary language of the classroom even during those times when the local language was supposed to be used (Platero, 2001). Through insufficient training and insufficient support, bilingual education has failed to create bilingual children in most Native American communities.

Language Death and Avenues to Revitalization

In the last few decades, there has been a deepening awareness of the profundity of the problem of language loss. This change in attitude that I have labeled as a shift from the goal of "maintenance" to that of "revitalization" is perhaps illustrated best by Native American educator and author Richard E. Littlebear, in his Preface to the 1996 book *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages*. He writes:

> Some of us said, "Let's get our languages into written form" and we did and still our Native American languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's make dictionaries for our languages" and we did and still the languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's get linguists trained in our own languages" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's train our own people who speak our languages to become linguists" and we did and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said "Let's apply for a federal bilingual education grant" and we did and got a grant and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's let the schools teach the languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's develop culturally-relevant materials" and we did and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's use language masters to teach our languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's tape-record the elders speaking our languages" and we did and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's videotape our elders speaking and doing cultural activities" and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

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> Then we said, "Let's put our native language speakers on CD-ROM" and we did and still our languages kept on dying.
> (Littlebear, 1996, pp. xiii)

Littlebear goes on to say that families must retrieve their rightful position as the first teachers of our languages, and that we must use that plus everything else in the litany and even more, in order to save the languages:

> Our Native American languages are in the penultimate moment of their existence in this world. It is the last and only time that we will have the opportunity to save them. We must continue to promote the successful programs throughout Alaska and Indian country. . . A great void will be left in the universe that will never be filled when all of our languages die (1996, p. xv).

We might divide the literature on language revitalization into four functional categories:

1. Theoretical and empirical works about language revitalization
   Language revitalization as object of study—case studies; development of models of language revitalization, study of failed and successful programs, and searching for the key elements that determine the outcome. In this category could also be included works for broad public consumption about language endangerment and revitalization.

2. Applied works on language revitalization in practice;
   how-to manuals, books and articles on best practices.

3. Pedagogical and reference publications for use in language revitalization--reference grammars, storybooks, dictionaries, and other documents for direct use in language learning situations.

4. Legal documents—written "speech acts" that create possibilities or impediments for language revitalization.

It is not always the case that a given work falls into only one of these categories. In particular, categories 1 and 2 overlap, and frequently a publication has both functions.

Theoretical and Empirical Works

Works on language death preceded books on revitalization. Dorian's seminal monograph *Language Death* (1981) created a whole new field of study for linguists, of the grammar of the "terminal generation" of semi-speakers. Her excellent edited book *Investigating Obsolescence* (1989) carried the field of language death studies further. A "wake-up" call to linguists about language death is the now-classic set of articles by Hale and others in the journal *Language* (Hale et al., 1992).

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The publication of this warning and call to action in such a prestigious journal galvanized linguists into increased documentation of endangered languages and increased involvement in the language revitalization movement. Further important works on language loss includes Grenoble and Whaley's *Endangered Languages* (1998), which includes a section of articles on language-community responses to language endangerment. More recent is Nettle and Romaine's *Vanishing Voices* (2000) which ends with a good chapter on language revitalization. Skutnabb-Kangas's hard-hitting article "Linguicide" (2001) is also a must-read. A layman's short summary book on the whole subject of language death and language revitalization is Crystal's *Language Death* (2000). Another book partly on language death was Hinton's 1994 *Flutes of Fire: Essays on California Indian Languages*, describing language loss and beginning efforts on language revitalization for California languages. This book describes some of the interesting features and genres of California Indian languages, discusses the impending death of these languages, and describes the early phases of some intertribal revitalization programs, especially the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program of California. A later article updating this successful program is found in Hinton (1997).

The first and continuing leader in research on language revitalization is Joshua A. Fishman, who studies it from the point of view of sociological theory. His writings have documented, informed, and inspired the language revitalization process. Beyond this, he participates in it directly, contributing both to the revitalization of Hebrew and of Yiddish. Fishman recognized and named the phenomenon of "language loyalty," which is the tendency of people to maintain their languages far beyond what might be predicted, not necessarily because the language is serving any practical purpose in their lives but instead because it carries important meaning as a badge of identity and key to their continuity as a people. As the focus of scholars and language communities began to turn to revitalization, Fishman developed much of the terminology used to talk about it. His term "RLS," or "Reversing Language Shift," is used widely in the literature on language revitalization today (Fishman, 1991). He also developed "GIDS," the "Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale." This is a rule of thumb measure of the severity of stages of language loss and what the remedies are for each stage. He likens it to the Richter Scale for the severity of earthquakes, where the numbers stand for increasing devastation. The scale consists of these stages (Fishman, 1991, pp. 87ff):

> Stage 8: most vestigial users of Xish are socially isolated old folks and Xish needs to be reassembled from their mouths and memories and taught to demographically unconcentrated adults
>
> Stage 7: most users of Xish are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age
>
> Stage 6: the attainment of intergenerational informal oralcy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement

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Stage 5: Xish literacy in home, school, and community, but without taking on extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy

Stage 4: Xish in lower education (types a and b) that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws
Type a: private schools, alternative schools
Type b: within public school system

Stage 3: use of Xish in the lower work sphere (outside of the Xish neighborhood/community) involving interaction between Xmen and Ymen

Stage 2: Xish in lower governmental services and mass media but not in the higher spheres of either

Stage 1: some use of Xish in a higher level educational, occupational, governmental, and media efforts (but without the additional safety provided by political independence)

Fishman does not posit a stage "9" or "10." Because on the Richter scale, a "10" stands for total devastation, we might think of "9" as complete extinction of the language, and perhaps "10" for total genocide—the destruction of the people themselves, so that there are not even any descendents who could say that this is their language of heritage. In the havoc wreaked by European incursion into the Americas, "9" and "10" levels of language devastation are unfortunately easily exemplified. As Fishman pointed out from the beginning, this set of stages may not fit the situation of every language.

Hebrew, of course, is the most obvious case of successful language revitalization, but fitting it into GIDS is problematic. For close to two thousand years, Hebrew had no native speakers whatsoever, putting it beyond Stage 8. However, it was an active scholarly and religious language all that time, being passed along through literacy from generation to generation—an aspect of its history that makes stage 8 or 9 seem to be somewhat of an overstatement. Another problem is that on Fishman's scale, Stage 1 has a parenthetical addendum, "without the additional safety provided by political independence;" thus we might have to call Hebrew a case of "0," because it has its own country. In any case, starting with a few people in the late 1800s who began the process of reviving Hebrew as a secular language and the language of home, the result we see today is an entire Hebrew-speaking nation (Spolsky & Shohamy, 2001).

An example of a highly successful language revitalization program is Hawaiian. Hawaiian was a thriving language until the late 1890s. It had a tradition of literacy that had been developed in the early 1800s while Hawai'i was an independent nation under the rule of a native monarch. When a coup d'etat by American businessmen ended the independence of this small nation, the United States annexed it, and English became the language of power and the only language allowed in government and in the education system. The Hawaiian language

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overnight became a powerless language with few functions left to serve in the new social order. The language was no longer supported in the schools or in the workplace, and soon stopped being spoken in the home. By 1990, there were no native speakers of Hawaiian under the age of 50 except for the families on the tiny privately-owned island of Ni'ihau (Warner, 2001; Wilson, 1998; Wilson & Kamanā, 2001). At this point, Hawaiian would perhaps have been classified as being at Stage 7. A strong university program allowed motivated college students to develop a high degree of conversational proficiency, and some of these went on to make Hawaiian the language of their home. "Pūnana Leo," or "Language Nests," designed after the preschools of the Māoris in New Zealand (see King, 2001), were established to provide early-childhood language support by having Hawaiian as the language of instruction. These excellent and effective preschools created a generation of 3- and 4-year-olds bilingual in Hawaiian and English. Parents were also given opportunities to learn Hawaiian through night classes, and motivated by the fact that if they wanted to volunteer in the preschools (which would allow them a discounted tuition fee), they had to learn Hawaiian, for English was not allowed in the Pūnana Leo classroom.

In order to continue supporting the Hawaiian language, the Pūnana Leo foundation began the development of Hawaiian language schools that eventually reached all the way through senior high school. They also negotiated Hawaiian language tracks in some of the public schools. Thus a sizable segment of the Hawaiian population has successfully reached GIDS level 4 both a and b. It has been a major undertaking to come this far in language revitalization, and it would be yet a more difficult task to reach Stage 3, much less 2 or 1, but it would not be impossible to contemplate such an eventuality. After all, Hawaiian is the only indigenous language of the state, and it is a state that is far enough removed from the mainland that people who have been born and raised there could well think of themselves as Hawiian first and American second. Even nonindigenous Hawaiians often wish to learn the Hawaiian language. Through the efforts of the leadership of the language movement, Hawaiian and English are now co-official languages of the state. Leaders in the movement have a goal to see Stage 3 reached—of being able to go into stores or doctors' offices and speak Hawaiian to future storekeepers and doctors who were first educated in the Language Nests.

Fishman's work is primarily focused on threatened languages in Europe, and European languages in the Americas. Thus his 1991 book has chapters or parts of chapters on Basque, Frisian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Irish, Quebec French, and Catalan. He pays less attention in that book to indigenous languages of Australia or the New world, although he does have one chapter on Māori, one on threatened Aboriginal and immigrant languages in Australia, and part of a chapter on Navajo. Languages such as Irish, Maori, Welsh, Hebrew, and Hawaiian have very different remedies and prognoses for long-term survival or revival than the small indigenous languages of the United States, much of South America, and Australia. The afore-named languages have the advantage of being the *only* indigenous language of their state or country. Because of this, there are many resources that can be devoted to these languages, whereas in a state like California, with 50 different indigneous languages

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that still have speakers, any possible resources are spread very thin. Furthermore, in a state or country with one indigenous language, that language has the potential of becoming a national language that everyone speaks, or at least identifies with (Hinton, 2001a). However, the indigenous languages of more diverse locales are unable to play that unifying role in a state or country. Thus Stages 3, 2, and 1 were never relevant to small indigenous societies, and are unlikely ever to come to pass or even be a serious goal for the small indigenous languages of linguistically diverse localities.

Literacy

Another way in which the GIDS scale is tangential to most small indigenous languages is its emphasis on literacy. Since most indigenous languages do not have a literary history, the emphasis on literacy in revitalization is of questionable value for these small face-to-face indigenous communities. For European languages, however, literacy plays a key role in language maintenance and revitalization. Frisian, Irish, Welsh, Breton, Catalan and other minority languages have long literary traditions, which helps their standing in the eyes of the world and provides avenues for artistic expression, education, and research. Schools play a big role in language maintenance and revitalization, and languages such as these have a history of education in those languages that can be drawn on during revitalization movements.

Most indigenous languages, on the other hand, either have no strong literary tradition at all or else have one of recent standing only. Instead, there may be important traditions of formal oratory and oral story telling, along with ritual and ceremony that have oral components. Oral literature has as much artistic value as written literature, and carries the added impact of immediacy to its audience and the embellishment of nonverbal components. The retention or revitalization of oral literature is a key part of cultural survival, and may be an important focus for language revitalization, in place of literacy in the narrow sense. (In the broad sense, retention and revitalization have sometimes been labelled as forms of literacy in themselves.) The Karuks, Hupa, and Yuroks of Northern California, and the Samis of Finland, are among the cultures where song has reburgeoned as a part of language and cultural reclamation.

Indigenous peoples are usually defined (or self-defined) as indigenous on the basis of their different cultural traditions as well as their language. In the process of language revitalization, communities must keep in mind to what extent the maintenance or revitalization of cultural practices must play a role in the process. In some cases, cultural practices and traditional value systems will constrain the direction of the revitalization plan. For example, the Cochiti have decided that writing the language is forbidden (Pecos & Blum-Martinez, 2001). Thus Cochiti cannot be the language of instruction in a school that "meets the requirements of compulsory education laws" (GIDS 4), where literacy is central to the system. Indeed, the Cochiti community sees the language as deeply tied to religious and cultural practices that are also endangered and in need of new support. They are trying to renew the cycle of planting and harvest that was disrupted 30 years ago by

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the building of a dam that ruined their land downstream by seepage and has only recently begun to be reclaimed. They want children's language learning to be connected to this harvest cycle and to the ceremonial cycle. This all means that the school will play only a minor role in language revitalization. Instead, the Cochiti have settled on intensive summer programs, an immersion preschool, and only a little daily instruction in the school system to provide a modicum of language maintenance between summer programs (Pecos & Blum-Martinez, 2001).

The most important work on literacy in the revitalization literature is Hornberger's edited work *Indigenous Literacies in the Americas: Language Planning from the Bottom Up* (1997). The development of native literacy has been blossoming in parts of Latin America, especially among languages with large numbers of speakers, many of which had literary traditions in the precontact era. Literacy can play a strong role in language maintenance and revitalization, as was noted above for Hebrew, and has been shown in the Mayan languages and Quechua, among others.

On the other hand, writing systems in some of the smaller language groups of North America often play a marginal role. In Native American communities where writing systems have been developed during the nineteenth or twentieth century, they are poorly supported by the school system and also tend to play a relatively small role compared to the English writing system, which is the dominating literary force in these bilingual communities. And in some cases writing of the indigenous language is actually prohibited by the tribe (as indicated above for Cochiti). Literacy is clearly an important part of school-based language education, but in community-based efforts to develop new speakers, literacy takes a back seat to orally-based language teaching and learning efforts (Hinton, 2001b). Given that conversational fluency is the goal of many language revitalization programs, the most effective teaching methods involve oral immersion, where language is learned by hearing and speaking, not through reading.

Applied Works on Language Revitalization

Language revitalization is not an easy task, and many programs—perhaps most of them—fail to achieve their original goals. As Fishman says, "the sociolinguistic landscape is littered with the relatively lifeless remains of societally marginalized and exhausted RLS movements that have engaged in struggles on the wrong front . . .without real awareness of what they were doing or of the problems that faced them." (Fishman, 1991, p. 113). Thus studies of revitalization programs that work well and the methods they use are very important, and several monographs in the recent literature focus on this matter.

A seminal work on language retention that has long been an important guide to Native communities trying to retain or regain their languages is Bauman's 1980 monograph, *A Guide to Issues in Indian Language Retention.* But from the time that revitalization rather than maintenance became the stated goal, during the first half of the 1990s, people were so busy *doing* language revitalization that they were too busy

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to write about it! An exception to this was an early and excellent work was Brandt and Ayoungman's 1989 *Practical Guide to Language Renewal*, aimed at language actionists in American Indian communities. Brandt and Ayoungman's guide details language planning and implementation of plans for language revitalization, and is a fine book for people just starting out on that major journey.

Beyond that, among the first collections of works on language revitalization were those that came out of the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conferences, starting in 1996 (Cantoni, 1996). These very important works are primarily web publications (only a few hundred paper copies were made). So far there are four such web-published collected works on language revitalization, with the majority of the authors being indigenous people working to save their languages.

Pedagogical and Reference Publications

Documentation is not the same as revitalization. Linguistic documentation that assists revitalization must be user-friendly for the community and oriented toward language education. A pioneering example is Couro and Langdon's *Let's Talk Iipay 'Aa* (1975), a grammar of Diegueño (a Yuman language of Southern California) for Diegueños, and a bilingual dictionary to go with it. A host of community-based language materials now exists, many of them published locally for the consumption of the community only. Many publications of this sort were developed for Native American languages during the heyday of bilingual education in the United States. Watahomigie, Bender, and Yamamoto's (1982) *Hualapai Reference Grammar* is one such publication that has served as an excellent resource for Hualapai language teaching and as a fine model of a usable, reader-friendly grammatical treatise. Most such publications are locally produced and not widely distributed outside the tribe, and so will not necessarily survive in the annals of academic literature. Their primary usage is within the speech community, and as such, they serve their purpose best by being published locally in relatively small numbers. A delightful series of this sort is the set of language booklets produced by the Hupa, Tolowa, and Karuk tribes and published by Humboldt State University — the "Now I'm speaking—" series (Hupa Indian Language Classes & Golla, 1994, Richardson & Brucell, 1993). These attractive pocket books feature useful phrases and words in the featured language, accompanied by good illustrations and maps.

In 2001, two new books appeared: Fishman's *Can Threatened Languages be Saved?* and Hinton and Hale's *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* (2001). Fishman's book is a revisitation of RLS and the GIDS model that he had developed 10 years before. It therefore focuses on many of the same languages as his 1991 book, but this time has a full chapter on Navajo, one each on Otomí (a language of Mexico) and Quechua (South America), and also a whole section on Africa and Asia and one on the Pacific. In the 2001 book, each chapter discusses its given language or language within the framework of the GIDS model with many challenging it. Fishman's book is a report on various attempts at RLS and a testing of the GIDS model, and is organized by geographical area. *The Green Book*, on the other hand, is intended as a practical work to assist communities in their

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language revitalization efforts. The volume is organized by topic, beginning with language policy and language planning, some special studies of language revitalization of national languages, and then on to specific issues in language revitalization: immersion teaching, literacy, media and technology, training, and the special case of revitalizing languages without speakers. Even more recent is Hinton's manual on one-on-one language learning programs for endangered and moribund languages (2002).

Legal Documents

Besides books and articles, it should be noted that language policy plays an important role in language death and language revitalization. I must therefore mention a few key policy documents: the *Native American Languages Act* of 1990 (Public Law 101-477), which effectively reverses a hundred years of oppressive language policy by stating that "It is the policy of the United States to. . . preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages" and to "fully recognize the right of Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies, States, territories, and possessions of the United States to take action on, and give official status to, their Native American languages for the purpose of conducting their own business." The Native American Languages Act of 1992 (S. 2044) clarifed the 1990 act further and appropriated funding for its implementation. Finally, there is the international *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights*, a document that is still in draft form, in preparation for approval by UNESCO. Still unofficial, the most recent version that has been made available to the public can be found at www.unesco.org/most /lnngo11.htm. However, work is still ongoing on that document. Through implementation of policy directions included in these two documents, endangered languages could receive the support and resources necessary to begin the critically important steps of language revitalization.

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