

17 Minority and Endangered Languages

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17.1 Introduction

Languages regarded as endangered are in most cases the languages of minority peoples within the state where the population in question lives. While the languages of some minority peoples have official status of some kind in the state or in a particular region of the state, as do French in Canada, Catalan in Spain, and Assamese in India, far more of the world's minority languages have no official standing of any kind. The consequences, for speakers of languages without official status, amount to a sharp power differential, both linguistic and social. Government, the legal system, education, print media and broadcasting are conducted largely or wholly in other languages. Insofar as mother-tongue speakers of a minority language without official status hope to be served by those activities or to participate in them, they must either speak an additional language or have the assistance of bilingual intermediaries.

How a minority population and its language stand in relation to the official language(s) varies greatly from region to region, reflecting a particular local history of contact and of national policy. Many groups become minorities through migration into an area where another group and their language are dominant. If enough people make the migration and they are able to achieve some settlement density, they may be able to maintain their original language in the new location for a shorter or longer time. Some minority peoples represent an established population which was always small and localized, around which a modern nation-state came into being without much direct contact being effected between state institutions and the original inhabitants, as in the Amazon basin, say, or in parts of Papua New Guinea. But a great many present-day minority peoples have had higher populations, a wider territorial base, and/or more autonomy at some previous time and have become minorities through a process of subordination involving conquest or political reorganization. Movement in the opposite direction also occurs, of course, even when, as in the present day, the ideological climate deeply favors the nation-state and

its officially promoted language(s): some peoples long relegated to minority-group status achieve more autonomy or even full independence, with a corresponding rise in the status of their language, as has happened in recent times with the people of Greenland (greater autonomy) and their language and with the people of Slovenia (independence) and their language. With only something over two hundred nations presently in existence, however, and with most of them intent on maintaining the territorial and political status quo, it seems clear that most of the world's 6,000 or so languages, insofar as they survive at all, will remain the languages of peoples who are minorities within a relatively small number of nation-states.

Under conditions of steadily expanding communication and transport networks and of ongoing economic and cultural globalization, genuine geographic and social isolation can only grow rarer in coming decades. The outlook for endangered minority languages is linked to the willingness of minority peoples to sustain the bi- or multilingualism that characterizes many of them now or to cultivate it deliberately in those cases where the ancestral language has become the valued possession only of the elderly. Such willingness is as much a matter of ideology and cultural values as of objective factors like population size, a viable economy, or political autonomy. Because minority peoples are subordinate peoples, furthermore, the ideologies of the dominant group are fully as important to the outcome as those of the minorities themselves.

17.2 Monolingualism vs. Bi- or Multilingualism in the Absence of a Nation-state

Monolingualism, now usually considered the unmarked condition by members of the dominant linguistic group in modern nation-states, was in all likelihood less prevalent before the rise of the nation-state gave special sanction to it (see section 17.3). But it was not unknown in pre-state settings where, for example, geographical isolation and/or a reasonably large population buffered a group from frequent contact with other peoples. Such groups would typically have had some members, even in the most demographically central areas, who became bilingual or multilingual for the purpose of representing the group in contacts with other populations as negotiators of some kind (in trade, in alliance building, in assertion of political claims, and so forth), while other group members residing in demographically central areas might well have remained monolingual. At the borders of a large-group territory, however, where members came into more frequent contact with populations speaking other languages, the number of bilinguals and multilinguals would increase. Population size typically had an effect on which group had the greater number of border-area bilinguals. If one of two neighboring peoples was smaller in size, members of the smaller population were more likely to acquire the large-group language than vice versa, though each group would have included bilingual members. This is the general linguistic situation reconstructed, for

example, for the larger and smaller peoples of the Papua New Guinea Highlands in contact with each other in the period before contact with people of European descent (Sankoff, 1980, pp. 108–9). Where interaction among a variety of peoples was very frequent, bi- or multilingualism was also more widespread. This seems to have been the norm, for example, in much of Aboriginal Australia and in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and it is still the prevailing condition among some groups in both settings.

Where a number of languages coexisted interactively within a particular region, hierarchies of power and prestige often existed among the languages, reflecting hierarchies of power and prestige among the various groups who spoke them. One factor in the establishment of such hierarchies was demography, as the Highland Papua New Guinea instance suggests: larger peoples had an obvious advantage, since they were better able to assert their control via warfare or political domination. Abundance of natural resources could also play a role. In one interconnected island complex in Micronesia, the resource-rich high-volcanic island of Yap constituted the center of a tribute system that involved a great many outlying island groups made up of coral atolls. Distance from Yap corresponded to place in the social and political hierarchy of islands, so that the most outlying atoll groups ranked lowest while those closest to Yap ranked highest. The origins of Yap dominance are not now entirely certain, but access to resources available only on Yap (e.g. timber, certain spices and foods) and fear of Yapese sorcery seem to have sustained the system, remembered and resented even now by islanders from the outlying atoll groups, despite the fact that it ceased to operate more than a hundred years ago (Flinn, 1992, pp. 21–3).

17.3 Bilingualism and Multilingualism Within Nation-state Settings

The establishment of a nation-state typically confers distinct advantages on a select language or set of languages, namely any language(s) adopted as official by the state or acknowledged as the official language(s) of a particular province within the state. Until quite recent years (and indeed in a good many areas still) the best that speakers of other languages could hope for was a benign neglect of their language, while non-benign treatment ran the gamut from denial of the existence of a particular language and its speakers, through the labeling of a particular language as inferior and of its speakers as socially or intellectually limited, to the active suppression – including killing, in the worst cases – of speakers of some minority languages.

Disparities in factors such as population size, access to resources, and control of trade are fully as important in nation-state settings as in non-state settings, since advantages in these spheres are often important to establishing a viable state in the first place. A uniquely significant disparity in the nation-state context, however, is precisely that primary institutional and social status

is reserved exclusively for whatever language(s) the state espouses officially. Where the state promotes a particular language as the sole legitimate linguistic medium of national identity and state authority, that language typically moves to an unchallenged place at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of utility and prestige among all the languages that may be spoken within the state boundaries.

In most cases this concentration on a single favored language works to the disadvantage of all other languages, for which neither comparably high regard nor institutional support will be available. If minority populations in such settings either find by experience or come to believe that the official state language confers major advantages in terms of access to schooling, employment, political participation, and state services, the psychological ground for a language shift may be prepared. Parents who suffered social penalties or educational and occupational disadvantage through limited knowledge of the official language during their own youth may reach a decision not to transmit the ancestral language to their children. Reports of conscious blocking of home-language transmission are commonplace in the literature of language endangerment and shift, e.g. for Scottish Gaelic, for Pennsylvania German, and for Tlingit (Dorian, 1981, pp. 104–5; Huffines, 1989, p. 225; and Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, 1998, pp. 64–66, respectively). Unconscious blocking also occurs. Parents in one Papua New Guinea language community, for example, expressed disappointment that their children were not speaking Taiap, the traditional language. But when the parents' actual speech behavior with their young children was closely observed, they turned out to be switching to Tok Pisin, a creole increasingly used as a *lingua franca* in Papua New Guinea, when they addressed their children, even though they generally used Taiap when speaking to one another (Kulick, 1992). Blocked minority-language transmission can produce majority-language monolingualism within as little as two generations, though three is the commoner pattern. In the latter case, the first of the three generations is either monolingual in the ancestral language or ancestral-language dominant, the second is highly bilingual but more likely to be majority-language dominant, and the third is monolingual in the majority-group language (with or without purely passive bilingualism in the ancestral language).

Because shift away from a limited-currency minority language to a wider-currency state-promoted language occurs with considerable frequency, it is sometimes asserted that bilingualism is essentially a practical matter, governed by social or economic necessity. On a very elemental level there is a good deal of truth to this. Acquisition and maintenance of more than one language arises from a contact between peoples that is frequent enough to make it useful for members of at least one group to speak the language of the other group(s). But stronger positions, such as the assertion that people "will not indefinitely maintain two languages when one will serve across all domains" (Edwards, 1994, p. 110), are too extreme, since this would suggest that bilingualism is not long sustained in settings where a *lingua franca* is in wide use, or in settings where all or very nearly all members of a community are

fully bilingual in the language of some other group. Sustained bilingualism can be found in both types of setting, but – tellingly – relatively seldom among people of European origin.

17.4 The Nation-state and European Language Ideologies

Embrace of the nation-state in the modern era has gone hand-in-hand with embrace of a one-language, one-nation ideology. This ideological construct is generally associated with French and German philosophers of the eighteenth century and linked with policies that took shape in France during the closing decade of the eighteenth century, after the Revolution of 1789 (Grillo, 1989, pp. 22–42; Woolard, 1998, pp. 16–17). At that time the longstanding and previously unremarkable existence within the French polity of substantial subcommunities who neither spoke nor understood French came to be viewed as unacceptable. The unity of the new revolutionary state was henceforth to be expressed via a common language, replacing the linguistic heterogeneity that in the revolutionary view had served the purposes of a discredited monarchy by preventing various segments of the country's population from making common cause with one another. The Alsatians, the Basques, the Bretons, and the Occitanians would come to feel their national unity and would express it, according to revolutionary tenets, by adopting the use of the French language. Certain characteristically European ideological positions were given expression in the implementation of this policy. A single language variety associated with people of high social position (the king and his court, in this case) was accorded fixed form and unique authority through standardization, and a monopoly of legitimacy and prestige was conferred on that single form. In the resultant linguistic hierarchy, the unstandardized language varieties of politically and socially subordinate peoples within the state underwent a parallel attitudinal subordination and were subjected to what has been termed an "ideology of contempt" (Grillo, 1989, pp. 173–4).

A small but highly suggestive study has found an ideological position that similarly favors linguistic homogeneity still prevailing in the expression of European nationalism at the present day (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998). Coverage of the perceived role of language in nationalist ideologies, as reflected in editorials and news stories that appeared in mainstream Western European newspapers and magazines published in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and England (with the *International Herald Tribune* also included, representing the USA) was closely monitored during the first weeks of November 1990, a time when ethnic/nationalist conflicts were particularly prominent and were much discussed, as were associated questions of asylum and immigration. The media data revealed a very considerable degree of popular consensus on the desirability of homogeneity, with the ideal model of society

taken to be not only monolingual but also monoethnic, monoreligious, and monoideological.

This European ideological bias in favor of monolingualism has been detected not only in popular opinion but even within the canonical texts of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language. Sociologist Glyn Williams (himself a Welsh-English bilingual) identifies a none-too-subtle evolutionary viewpoint in these texts, according to which traditional societies are characterized by linguistic diversity and multilingualism, while modern societies move steadily ("progress," in the terms of this viewpoint) toward a single official language and monolingualism. Within this framework, Williams points out, "the elimination of minority languages is a natural, evolutionary process" (1992, p. 100). Williams objects to what he considers an identification of monolingualism with rationality, as in Edwards's notion that it is in effect irrational to maintain two languages when one will serve for all purposes ("across all domains"). Edwards's position represents what has generally been the mainstream European viewpoint,¹ however, and it is useful when assessing accounts of minority peoples' multilingualism to recall that nearly all such accounts have been produced by Europeans (or by their heritors in settings colonized by Europeans), most of them speakers of highly standardized national languages of European origin.

While the study of minority peoples and their language choices has made the pattern of shift from a minority language to a majority-group language familiar, this pattern is more likely to occur under some circumstances than others. Paulston notes, for example, that the opposite pattern, sustained group-wide bilingualism, is unusual only under particular conditions, namely when the modern nation-state is the setting and when both socioeconomic incentives and access to the dominant language are present:

Maintained group bilingualism is unusual, *if* opportunity of access to the dominant language is present and incentives, especially socioeconomic, motivate a shift to the dominant language. If not, as with India's former caste system and ascribed status, the result is language maintenance. But given access and incentive, the norm for groups in prolonged contact within a modern nation-state is for the subordinate group to shift to the language of the dominant group, either over several hundred years as with Gaelic in Great Britain or over the span of three generations as has been the case of the European immigrants to Australia and the United States in a very rapid shift. (Paulston, 1994, pp. 12-13; emphasis in original)

1 In the same chapter, expanding on his claim that bilingualism is sustained only so long as it has practical – chiefly economic – value, Edwards quotes directly from my work (Dorian, 1982, p. 47) in a way that makes it appear as though I were in agreement with his position (Edwards, 1994, p. 116). It is the unfortunate omission of a lead-in sentence and a following sentence, both strongly qualifying the quoted material, that gives rise to that misleading impression.

Within nation-states the frequency of shift to an official national language when access and socioeconomic incentives are present is undeniable and underlies what many see as a language-endangerment crisis. Furthermore, this shift pattern appears to be growing in geographical distribution as well as in frequency, lending a sense of urgency to discussions about threats to linguistic diversity world-wide.

In spite of the frequency and seeming ubiquity of shift from a minority-group language to an official majority language, however, it should not be considered an inevitable or "natural" pattern. The conditions and ideologies which give rise to it do not universally hold sway, as recurrent reports by fieldworkers in various parts of the world demonstrate.

17.5 Environments Favorable to Bi- and Multilingualism

Environments that favor the maintenance of multiple languages are not difficult to find, but they are reported largely from non-European cultural contexts where quite different language ideologies prevail. Since as noted the reporters are in most cases members of Western societies, there is sometimes a striking contrast between the expectations of the Western investigator and the linguistic situation encountered and described. This is the case, for example, with a 1998 field report by English researcher Roger Blench on two languages that he searched out during a field trip in Plateau State, northern Nigeria. He found the Niger-Kordofanian language Horom spoken in one main village by a maximum of perhaps 1,500 people, while the inhabitants of nearly all the other villages in the area spoke varieties of a Chadic language called Kulere. He described the Horom people as "extremely multilingual," since they reported themselves to be fluent in Kulere as well as Horom and also in Rindre, another Niger-Kordofanian language, and still more significantly in Hausa, an important and very widely spoken Chadic language of northern Nigeria and the Niger Republic. Kulere and Rindre are both spoken by larger populations than is Horom (Rindre by a considerably larger population), while Hausa has many millions of first-language speakers in Nigeria and the Niger Republic and also increasingly serves as a lingua franca in West Africa. Blench was surprised, by his own account, to find that Horom did not appear to be an endangered language: children present during his language elicitation session "were able to produce the required lexical items simultaneously with the adults" (Blench, 1998, p. 10). He suggested that remoteness might have acted as a buffer in the maintenance of Horom, though he acknowledged that remoteness had not sufficed to keep Chadic languages in the Bauchi area of Nigeria from disappearing. He remarked, too, on the cultural vitality of the Horom people, whose traditional religion, pottery, weaving, and music he found likewise to persist strongly.

The linguistic tenacity of another small and isolated Niger-Kordofanian-speaking people in Plateau State, the residents of Tapshin village, struck Blench still more strongly. He gives the following account of their vigorous Nsur language:

On the face of it, Nsur should be a prime candidate for language loss. All adults appear to be fluent in Ngas and Hausa and Tapshin is an enclave within the Ngas, a numerous population speaking a Chadic language, by whom they are culturally dominated. The number of speakers [of Nsur] cannot be more than 3–4,000. . . . However it was apparent during the interviews that even young children are learning the language and there is no evidence of a decline in competence. Even more surprisingly, but no doubt related, the language is by no means full of loanwords from Hausa and Ngas. (1998, p. 11)

The explicit surprise expressed by Blench on encountering this situation can serve as a reflection of the Western ideological perspective on what might be called “unnecessary” multilingualism, or, following Lewis, “irrational” multilingualism.

The matter-of-factly maintained multilingualism of these two small peoples is not unduly exceptional, however, in that general part of the world. Routine multilingualism is reported also among the peoples of the Mandara Mountains at the border between northeastern Nigeria and Cameroon, for example (MacEachern, forthcoming). Men belonging to one or another montagnard group typically speak three or four different languages, including their own and that of the closest neighboring group, plus at least one language spoken on the plains below the mountains; women usually speak almost as many. MacEachern traces the ethnic and linguistic complexity of the Mandara Mountains peoples to an uncoordinated but steady movement, over the past five centuries, of various smaller peoples from the plains into the mountains as they attempted to avoid conquest by larger peoples and to escape capture by slave-traders. He notes that multilingualism has been a factor in negotiating temporary alliances that made it possible for montagnard communities to take military action against plains-dwelling peoples, and that as recently as the late 1980s fluent bilingualism in a neighboring language made it feasible for one montagnard people to avoid coming under the political control of the Wandala, the locally dominant plains-dwelling people, by claiming close affiliation with another montagnard group that was successfully contesting a Wandala claim to hegemony in a Cameroon court case. MacEachern makes the point that a people's use of a particular language is not necessarily a given – that is, a purely passive matter of the group one is born into. Rather, in areas of ethnic complexity and multilingualism linguistic relationships and the identities that they signal can be consciously manipulated to particular sociopolitical effect. In response to centuries of attempts at controlling them, “montagnards have used their language abilities and the cultural complexity that goes along with those abilities to erect alliances and maintain their own independence in a

dangerous political environment" (MacEachern, 2002). Occasions for deploying multilingualism as a social and political resource have appeared with enough frequency in the Mandara Mountains setting to sustain a pattern of acquisition and maintenance of multiple languages over a period of five hundred years.

Africa, of course, is a part of the world where the territories which later became nations were brought into being by European colonial powers concerned with establishing the geographical bounds of their own control. No consideration was given to ethnolinguistic distributions within or across the boundaries created, and in consequence most African states south of the Sahara were multilingual and multicultural at their creation. In the absence of any single language community with numerical or social dominance great enough to support a claim to official-language status, many remain so today. Continuing use of the former colonial language, often as a *lingua franca* for urban populations or the educated elite, then adds another layer to the multilingualism.

17.6 Obligatory Exogamy and Multilingualism

Extreme multilingualism is a well-recognized phenomenon where obligatory exogamous marriage practices prevail: members of any one of a number of language communities in a particular region can contract marriages only with members of a different language community. Among the Hua, a people of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, Haiman reported for example that the immemorial practice of women going to live in the village of a husband who must come from a group speaking a different language

has made the community phenomenally multilingual. In a survey of 359 adult speakers in 1974, it was found that [in addition to speaking Hua] 305 were fluent in Gimi, 287 in Siane, and 103 in Chimbu. A smaller number of people spoke at least half a dozen other languages. Only two respondents claimed to be totally monolingual, and only eleven knew only one other language besides Hua. All the others spoke at least two, and many were fluent and at ease in four or five. (Haiman, 1987, p. 36)

The differences among the languages in question are not by any means minor dialectal features. According to Haiman, Gimi, Siane, and Chimbu are impressionistically as different from Hua as French, German, and Russian are from English.

Similar patterns of exogamous marriage and resultant multilingualism among all or nearly all group members have been reported from the Vaupés region of the Amazon basin and from Burma. A linguist working in Burma tells of meeting exogamous Kachin in Burma "who can converse happily in at least half a dozen languages, with native knowledge of three or more," though he relates their profound multilingualism more particularly to a low place in the

regional linguistic hierarchy, noting that speakers of another low-position language (Lisu) can be equally multilingual (Bradley, 2001, p. 155).

17.7 Profound Multilingualism and the Native-Speaker Concept

Among males in the Mandara Mountains, MacEachern speaks of "variable command" of three or four languages. But another account of routine multilingualism from West Africa indicates that the multilingualism in question can be profound indeed, even to the point of making the concept "native language" moot. In an unusual dual presentation of the fieldwork experience, linguist Fiona Mc Laughlin offers her own account of work on noun classes in three Niger-Congo languages of Senegal – Wolof, Pulaar, and Seereer – side by side with a parallel account from her principal Pulaar teacher, Thierno Seydou Sall (Mc Laughlin and Sall, 2001). At one point Mc Laughlin declined an offer from Sall, whom she had found to be a natural linguist with remarkable ability to analyze the structure of Pulaar, to work on the noun classes of Wolof with her, in addition to their work on the Pulaar noun classes, because she categorized him as a native speaker of Pulaar. Sall gives this account of the interaction:

I grew up in a Seereer village in a Haalpulaar family, so when I was a small child I spoke Pulaar and Seereer better than Wolof, but even then I cannot remember ever not having known Wolof. When I was fourteen I went to Dakar where my Wolof improved, and then I spent five years in Kayor, the heart of Wolof country, where pure Wolof is spoken. By pure Wolof I mean Wolof with very little French in it. Fiona thought that I could not give her the noun classes in Wolof, but for me, it would be the same thing as giving them to her in Pulaar. (2001, p. 207)

Sall notes that because he speaks the "deep Wolof" of the heartland he knows the noun classes of Wolof better than a good many Wolofs who live in towns and cities, where they mix with non-Wolofs a great deal, and that he therefore sometimes corrects Wolof people's Wolof, including their noun classes.

Mc Laughlin, reflecting on her experience with multilingual Senegalese like Sall in the Sahelian town of Fatick, where she lived and worked for a year and where Sall lived as part of a large traditional family, revised her notion of what it meant to be a native speaker of a language:

[G]iven my experience with native Pulaar and Seereer speakers who spoke fluent Wolof, and learning that many of them could not remember a time when they did not speak Wolof, the very notion of a 'native speaker of Wolof' was thrown into question. I had rejected grammatical judgments on Wolof from Thierno because he was a native Pulaar speaker, but could not he, or others like him, also

be native speakers of Wolof? In this context, could it not be possible to have more than one native language? Although at the time I did not hold these views, I now think that the urban-rural distinction in Wolof is a much more salient variable in distinguishing between varieties of the language than whether the Wolof speaker has another mother tongue, such as Seereer or Pulaar. (2001, p. 202)

Mc Laughlin is not the only linguist of European descent to have allowed fieldwork practices to be constrained by the notion that an individual has one, and only one, native language. A similar case is reported from Australia, where a researcher realized belatedly that he had probably let precious chances to gather data on an endangered Aboriginal language slip away because he did not take the opportunity to work with profoundly fluent speakers who were officially native speakers of some other Aboriginal language (cited in Evans, 2001, pp. 255–6). The passage from Bradley quoted above is notable in attributing “native knowledge” of three or more languages to multilingual Kachin speakers. Bradley does not say whether he did or would accept such speakers as full-fledged data sources for more than one language, but just such work needs to be done by way of plumbing the full capacities of profoundly multilingual individuals.

17.8 Ideological Aspects of Sustained Bi- and Multilingualism

Apart from the considerable practical benefits bi- or multilingualism may confer (with exogamous marriages and manipulable identities included among such practical benefits), additional benefits that qualify at least in part as ideological are recognized among peoples who have traditionally cultivated knowledge of more than one language. Among some such peoples, multilingual skills are regarded as a sign of intellectual or cultural superiority. In the same general area of the New Guinea Highlands where Hua is spoken, a variety of Siane known as Komunku was spoken by people whose neighbors spoke a variety of Dene. While members of the Emenyo tribe spoke Komunku and often spoke Dene as well, Dene speakers less frequently spoke Komunku. An anthropologist who worked with Emenyo in the 1950s and 1960s summed up Emenyo attitudes as follows (Salisbury, 1972 [1962], p. 56):

The fact that there are more Emenyo bilingual in Dene, than Dene-speakers who are bilingual in Komunku is not associated with any feeling among the Emenyo that they are politically less important or that their language is inferior to Dene. Bilingualism is treated as a desirable accomplishment and their command of Dene makes them, if anything, superior to the Dene.

Salisbury reported that Emenyo “actively cultivate bilingualism,” noting that when a group of laborers who had acquired pidgin during indentured service

at the coast returned to Emenyo village, they immediately began giving the rest of the village males pidgin lessons. Pidgin was of course already a language of potentially unique utility, in the 1960s, because of its role as a *lingua franca*; but Salisbury reported further that two Emenyo youths took advantage of the availability of a Gahuku speaker who had come to the village in Salisbury's employ to set about learning some of this more easterly language from the same family as Komunku. The presence of a catechist who came from a different language group was similarly used as an occasion for acquiring knowledge of religious materials in the catechist's language, and songs seemed almost universally to be learned and publicly sung in a variety of foreign languages (1972, pp. 56-7). Prestige attached to knowledge of other languages generally.

A well-informed account of Arizona Tewa attitudes toward the acquisition of other languages indicates that they held views similar to those of the Emenyo. The small Arizona Tewa population "enjoyed a reputation for commanding multiple languages" and attained fluency in English earlier than did the Hopi, among whom the Arizona Tewa have been enclaved since finding refuge there following their flight from the Pueblo area of present-day New Mexico after the second Pueblo revolt against the Spanish in 1696 (Kroskrity, 1993, pp. 23, 8-9). Kroskrity's extensive ethnographic work persuaded him that the Arizona Tewa viewed a knowledge of Hopi and Navajo as instrumentally valuable (Hopi as the language of the society within which they were enclaved, and Navajo as a trade language), and of course knowledge of English (and formerly Spanish) had obvious instrumental value as well. But he noted that there was in addition a notion of cultural superiority involved, especially with regard to the Hopi, most of whom did not acquire Arizona Tewa despite several centuries of immediate proximity: "In the Arizona Tewa case . . . the Tewa view the fact that they speak Hopi but few Hopi speak Tewa as a cultural victory on their part" (Kroskrity, 1993, p. 218).

The conservative and puristic model of speech associated with religious practice in Arizona Tewa life also acts to support language maintenance and supports linguistic compartmentalization as well. Ceremonial "kiva talk" is a variety strictly reserved for religious practice. Its norms are zealously upheld, with any introduction of foreign terms during ceremonies physically punished. Kroskrity sees in the near-total absence, even in ordinary non-ceremonial Arizona Tewa, of lexical borrowings from Spanish, English, and especially Hopi the effect of a general linguistic conservatism rooted in native cultural ideals (1993, pp. 38, 220).

Where the exogamous multilingual Indians of the Vaupés region are concerned, one observer (Sorensen, 1972) described them as having an "instrumental and practical" orientation to multilingualism. But he noted at the same time that multilingualism was actively cultivated, as with the Emenyo, and cultivated furthermore across an entire lifetime despite universal command of a regional *lingua franca*. Children, typically fluent speakers from their early years of both their mothers' and their fathers' languages and also of Tukano,

the regional lingua franca, not only acquired during their adolescence several other languages spoken in the community's longhouse, but might go on to acquire still more in adulthood. Nor did the learning process stop there: "as he [a longhouse resident] approaches old age, field observation indicates, he will go on to perfect his knowledge of all the languages at his disposal" (Sorensen, 1972, p. 86). The degree to which expert knowledge of additional languages was actively pursued indicates an ideological orientation to multilingualism that ultimately transcends the strictly practical level of which Sorensen spoke.

17.9 Receding Multilingualism

Bi- and multilingualism are familiar phenomena in a number of settings around the world. Attitudes toward bi- and multilingual peoples have been various, but they have often been considerably more favorable than has been typical in Western Europe since the eighteenth century (and since then also in parts of the world heavily settled by people of European descent). Over the course of the twentieth century, however, conditions conducive to language shift on the part of minority peoples became more widespread. Many features associated with modernization and national development contributed to this process, such as the improvements in transport and communications that reduced isolation. With reduced isolation came stronger links between a central government and outlying regions. Schools that used a colonial language or an official national language could be more widely introduced; police and army presences could be established in far-flung areas, reducing local autonomy. Traditional lifeways followed by minority peoples were often disrupted, not only by these developments but also by the movement (sometimes government-sponsored) of expanding populations from more developed regions into less crowded rural areas, in a search for new agricultural land or pasturage. Food resources essential to minority peoples' traditional subsistence modes were often reduced or lost by such intrusions, and this was even more true wherever major extractive industries moved into previously isolated regions to exploit such resources as timber, ores, gemstones, or oil. Involuntary relocations of minority peoples (already widely perpetrated in earlier centuries) became easier than ever to carry out. Under all these pressures the ancestral languages of many small peoples either passed out of use altogether or came to be spoken by so few people that they appear likely to pass out of use in the near future.

In some cases linguists or anthropologists working with a people living in one of the multilingual settings described above can shed light on the process by which traditional multilingualism has receded or been lost. In the Vaupés region of Brazil, where multilingualism was associated with exogamous marriage practices, Aikhenvald worked with the last generation to be fluent in Tariana, an Arawakan language spoken where most of the many other languages in use belong to the Tukano language family. She links the beginnings

of a breakdown in traditional cultural and linguistic patterns to the coming of Salesian missionaries to the area in the early 1920s. The Salesians considered the traditional multilingualism of the region a pagan practice, according to Aikhenvald, and in their effort to make the local Indians monolingual "(like other civilized people in the world)"² they chose to employ only Tukano, the language spoken by the largest number of people. They also relocated Indian settlements closer to mission centers and substituted structures housing nuclear-family units for the traditional longhouses. Participation in the routine multilingualism of the longhouses was eliminated by these changes, and because able-bodied Indian men also began to go off to take up paid employment in Brazilian rubber plantations or mining operations, children's exposure to their father's language in particular was reduced. The children of absent fathers might speak other languages more often than Tariana, especially Tukano; furthermore, some Portuguese began to enter the mix via men returning from jobs. Within a few generations Tukano and a regional form of Portuguese predominated, with only some elderly people retaining a good knowledge of Tariana (Aikhenvald, 2002).

Among the Arizona Tewa, too, Kroskrity found that the way in which education was being delivered favored the official language and disfavored the minority language. Many of the young people got their secondary education at boarding schools in which English was not only the sole medium of instruction but also the only common language among Native American young people who came from a variety of southwestern tribes. Socialization of young people by older kinsfolk and other community members was curtailed by this educational experience, and in addition an influential new reference group was formed for the young people, one that consisted of English-speaking agemates with off-reservation experience. Kroskrity found young people signaling their allegiance to this new reference group by replying in English when their elders spoke to them in Arizona Tewa. The young people had become aware of the economic disadvantages of reservation life and of the possibilities of material advantage elsewhere, through exposure to mass media and also through their time in urban boarding schools. In Kroskrity's view socioeconomic factors were primary in motivating young people's increased use of English, but because the actual economic possibilities for young Arizona Tewa in off-reservation settings are extremely limited, he considered it possible that an unrewarding venture into off-reservation employment might ultimately provide an incentive for return to a more traditional reservation life. The future for Arizona Tewa – maintenance or loss – could depend, consequently, on whether the preference for English among young people proved to be a life-cycle phase, with a later reaffirmation of Arizona Tewa traditional values

2 Aikhenvald (personal communication, 7 February 2002) heard older Salesian missionaries make remarks to this effect in conversation. She notes that a younger generation of Salesians is now active in promoting indigenous languages, but for small language groups such as the Tariana the change in attitude and policy most likely comes too late.

(including the language), or whether it proved to be permanent (Kroskrity, 1993, pp. 103–5).

Post-adolescent decisions to stay in the home area after all, and therefore also to maintain the ancestral language, have in fact been known to change the apparent outlook for a small group and their language. In the 1970s a linguist working in an enclaved village in southern Italy, where a Francoprovençal language had been spoken for more than 500 years, predicted on the basis of his census of bilingual speakers of various ages and also by his observations of language use that Faetar, the local Francoprovençal language, would be dead by the year 2000. The villagers themselves expressed the same opinion. Another linguist, arriving to work in the same village in the 1990s, found the Faeto villagers as bilingual as ever, but she heard them give much the same prediction: Faetar would be dead in twenty years. Because the earlier linguist had done his census by age groups, the second linguist was able to establish that adolescents who were using Italian almost to the exclusion of Faetar in the 1970s were adults using Faetar among themselves and with their children in the 1990s. The adolescents of the 1990s, however, were again using mostly Italian by preference, and their language preference was again giving rise to fears that the language would soon cease to be spoken (Nagy, 2000, pp. 128–9). The most serious threat to Faetar appeared to lie in a gradual shrinkage of village population as more people left in pursuit of greater economic opportunity, a depopulation common to agricultural regions of Italy. Lack of sufficient population to keep the village viable remains a future possibility, therefore, but lack of adolescent speakers as such is to some extent an age-graded phenomenon in Faeto. Awareness of such temporary age-related shift patterns explains Kroskrity's reluctance to predict the future for Arizona Tewa.

17.10 Shift as the Norm, Maintenance as the Exception

In cases such as those of Tariana and Arizona Tewa, in competition with Tukano and Portuguese and with English respectively, major disparities in the currency of competing languages are evident. Tariana had currency only in the traditional longhouses of Indians in the Vaupés area where some individuals had fathers with a Tariana identity; both Tukano and Portuguese by contrast are used by larger numbers of people and across a wider range of geographical and social settings. Arizona Tewa, too, has obviously limited currency by comparison with English. Yet previous generations of Indians in the Vaupés region spoke the lingua franca Tukano without relinquishing their local-currency languages, and the Arizona Tewa were competent speakers of Spanish and of English relatively early, without the much wider currency of those languages estranging them from Arizona Tewa. The new and unfavorable development in such settings is not the acquisition of other languages, including

languages of wider currency, but the abandonment of an ancestral language in the process. That is, at the present day extended encounters between minority peoples and dominant-group members are more likely than not to produce subtractive bilingualism, whereas in the past there was more chance that additive bilingualism would be the result.

It is not difficult to understand why members of groups speaking smaller local-currency languages would wish to acquire the wider-currency language of a larger, more prosperous, and relatively dominant people. But a fundamental question that is frequently left unasked is this: why, in view of both the contemporary frequency and the historical frequency of bi- and multilingualism, should speakers of smaller local-currency languages stop speaking their own ancestral languages when they acquire a wider-currency language?

Giving up a limited-currency minority language altogether when taking up a wider-currency language may seem so ordinary a phenomenon as to be unremarkable, but this is in all likelihood an ahistorical notion. Even in Europe it was not expected before the end of the eighteenth century, and outside the European sphere of influence dominant groups were known to tolerate the maintenance of subordinate peoples' languages readily. The Ottoman Turks made no attempt to turn the diverse peoples whom they ruled into Ottoman Turkish speakers, and the Thai kingdom is said to have been equally tolerant of nearly all the many minority languages spoken under its rule (Smalley, 1999, pp. 341-9).

Acquisition of a second (or third or fourth) language need not imply loss of a first language. The ideologies and behaviors of *two* populations are relevant in this matter. Not only do the villagers of Tapshin continue to speak Nsur, even though they also speak Ngas and Hausa, but the numerically and culturally dominant Ngas speakers who surround them apparently have no objection to the continuing use of Nsur in their midst. The relevance of dominant-group attitudes becomes more obvious, perhaps, when the Arizona Tewa case is considered. The Hopi, a somewhat larger population and a well-established one by comparison with the Tewa who took refuge among them, found it acceptable for the Tewa not only to learn Hopi but also to continue to use their original language during the roughly 300 years of their residence on the Hopis' First Mesa. Paradoxically, anglophone America, with an overwhelming numerical dominance and a uniquely secure majority language, exerts serious pressure on the Arizona Tewa (as on all other minority groups) for an assimilation that includes abandonment of the ancestral language as well as adoption of the majority language. Hundreds of years of enclavement among a numerically superior group, and even a degree of Tewa-Hopi intermarriage, did not threaten the survival of the Tewa language during its earlier history in Arizona; yet it is possible that boarding-school education in English is now doing just that.

Greatly increased pressure for a shift to dominant-language monolingualism in many parts of the contemporary world seems likely to rest in part on continuing dissemination, despite the decline of colonialism, of European

language ideologies: above all the one-language, one-nation ideology associated with nationalism and the "ideology of contempt" for subordinate peoples, but also European notions that the languages of peoples who exhibit low technological development must necessarily be equally limited, while the languages of peoples who have achieved politically and technologically dominant positions must necessarily be superior linguistic instruments (Dorian, 1998). This self-serving view justifies the established ascendancy of a few "superior" European languages in a post-colonial world still linguistically shaped by European colonialism, while simultaneously rendering the displacement of innumerable "lesser" languages unimportant. Still other elements of European linguistic ideology have been identified in the pressure for monolingualism, for example the notion that acquisition and use of an ancestral minority language early in life is deleterious to full competence in the state-promoted language. As one researcher memorably put it, in connection with the pressure exerted on children from minority groups in far northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland to make as rapid a shift to the national language as possible, "it was believed that a child's head (especially a minority child's head) would not have space for two languages" (Huss, 1999, p. 129). Huss follows other scholars in tracing such attitudes to the influence of seriously flawed bilingualism research that supposedly detected lower intelligence and inferior linguistic and cognitive development among bilingual children, especially the children of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century immigrants to the US.³ Certainly such notions have been communicated to minority-group parents, both among immigrant populations and among indigenous peoples, with some of those who have gone over to raising their children with the majority language explaining their decision in such terms. (For more on the issue of bilingualism and intelligence, see chapters 1, 5, 15, 22, and 23.)

17.11 Ethnolinguistic Vitality Assessment

Since the 1970s ethnolinguistic vitality studies have attempted to account for observed cases of shift or maintenance and to predict how likely a minority population will be to maintain its language or to give it up. Three sets of objective factors were originally the chief focus of evaluative efforts: status factors (economic, social, and sociohistorical factors, and status within and without the group), demographic factors (proportion of the overall population, concentration of the minority population, birthrate, etc.), and institutional support and control factors (use in mass media, education, government services, industry, religion, culture, politics (Allard and Landry, 1994)). If the "surprisingly" vigorous Nsur language is taken as a test case, these factors are clearly

³ Huss (1999, p. 129) cites Peal and Lambert, 1962, pp. 1-2 and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981, p. 222 in this connection.

inadequate for predictive purposes. The Ngas language was said to be spoken by many more people than Nsur and the Ngas were also described as culturally dominant. Whether Ngas had any institutional support is not evident in Blench's report, but Nsur almost certainly did not. By these measures Nsur speakers ought to be in the process of shift to Ngas, just as Blench expected them to be.

Among the various efforts to refine ethnolinguistic vitality assessment, the approach with perhaps the greatest potential for uncovering the roots of maintenance or shift in a non-Western setting like Tapshin village is the development of a Beliefs on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (Allard and Landry, 1986). This is not to say that an oral version of the questionnaire as such would be a suitable instrument for research in Tapshin and its neighboring villages (an unlikely prospect, since questionnairing is a research procedure that does not always travel well, culturally speaking), but rather that examination of beliefs as a fundamental part of the environment that produces language behaviors might best be able to tap into the underpinnings of Nsur linguistic persistence and of Ngas linguistic tolerance.

17.12 Reactive Language Maintenance and Assertive Language Maintenance

Despite the weight of the many factors that favor language shift, some countercurrents are observable. One pattern of maintenance involves early shift with later reversion to traditional cultural and linguistic behaviors, in the reactive pattern that Kroskrity considered a possibility for Arizona Tewa young people. Initially, contact with the dominant society, especially educational contact, appears to open a route to economic advance. But where minority peoples are visibly distinguishable from members of the dominant group (and have often acquired a distinctive local version of the dominant language besides), job scarcity combined with a lingering racism can limit advancement and assimilation. This is said to have happened already among the Kwak'wala Indians of Vancouver Island: the Kwak'wala young people have shifted entirely to English, but without reaping the material benefits that the shift seemed to promise (Anonby, 1999, p. 35). In a study of the outlook for the survival of New Caledonian vernaculars, Schooling found that Melanesian New Caledonians educated in French with an expectation of job opportunities that did not materialize settled back into traditional life patterns in their villages of origin, where kin networks remained strong and they had kin-based claims on land. Schooling reported disillusionment among young New Caledonians whose parents had emphasized the acquisition of French more than that of the local vernacular, to the point where some young adults were reversing the pattern and consciously speaking the vernacular with their own children even though husband and wife might frequently use French between themselves (Schooling, 1990, pp. 51-2).

Another pattern favoring maintenance can appear when a group succeeds in achieving some measure of hoped-for economic advance, whether through education or through development of resources (e.g. scenic resources for tourism or sport), before shift to a dominant language is complete. Economic success can produce enough psychosocial confidence among still-bilingual speakers to encourage assertion of their ethnolinguistic identity and of the right to use their heritage language more widely, including in education, as has happened in Wales, for example.

Also favorable to ethnic self-assertion are wider recognition of linguistic human rights in some parts of the world and increased communication (especially electronic communication) among widely separated small peoples. Local, regional, or national governments inclined to ignore or mistreat an indigenous group find themselves in the glare of unwelcome publicity when small and seemingly isolated indigenous peoples succeed in attracting support from human rights observers or from a vocal coalition of indigenous peoples.

17.13 Revitalization Efforts on Behalf of Endangered Languages

Languages are sometimes viewed as endangered even when nearly all group members are still speakers. If dominant-group assimilative pressures are seen to be rising while resistance on the part of a minority group would seem to require resources that are not in evidence (such as a large population, a strong ethnolinguistic identity, a viable and locally based means of subsistence), long-term survival of the minority-group language cannot be taken for granted. If a shift has already begun – if young children prefer to use a school-acquired dominant language with one another, for example – the future of the language begins to look questionable. If lack of ancestral-language knowledge reaches into the ranks of young parents who are raising children, the outlook becomes a little darker still.

In a number of shift-prone settings some young parents can be found going against the tide and taking pains to raise their children in and with the minority-group language, as has occurred for example in Scotland and Nova Scotia (Scottish Gaelic), in Finland (Sami), and in Hawaii (Hawaiian). Among these parents accomplished learners are often to be found, either individuals of the relevant ethnic group who were not raised with the ancestral language themselves or outsiders who have married into the ethnic group and learned the traditional ethnic language. Speakers of both sorts value the ethnic language the more for having had to acquire it effortfully, and with infants of their own they progress from being dedicated learners to being dedicated transmitters.

It would take a good many fluent parents deeply devoted to home transmission to produce a numerically significant number of fluent new minority-language speakers, however, and many endangered-language communities turn to schooling, in particular to immersion schooling, for the relatively rapid

multiplicative effect it can produce: a handful of dedicated and well-trained teachers, using only the minority-group language in the classroom, can produce scores of new minority-language speakers over a period of several years. Such immersion programs have by now amply demonstrated their success, especially in the cases where primary immersion schooling is followed by secondary immersion schooling.

There are nonetheless limitations to the effectiveness of immersion schooling. Unless there is a good sprinkling of native-speaking home-transmission children in the immersion classroom, the pupils have only one fluent-speaker model available, namely the teacher. They must begin to use the target language themselves before they have had enough exposure to it to acquire its grammatical and phonological structure fully, and before very long their teacher's well-formed utterances make up only a small part of the classroom language model, since they are providing many imperfect models for each other. The resulting school-based version of the minority-group language often differs quite noticeably from the original native-speaker model, partly by showing a good deal of influence from the majority-group language that most of the children speak at home and partly also by the introduction of many newly coined school-register words. Communities differ about the acceptability of this outcome. For some, a reconfigured version of the group's language is preferable to no version at all. For others, a version of the language that the children's grandparents can barely recognize as their own tongue is a very dubious "success."

Few minority-language groups expect or even wish to replace the majority language with their ancestral language. Their goal is rather well-developed dual or multiple language capacities which in the one case offer access to the heritage that is available in and through the ancestral language and in the other case offer participation in at least one broader language community besides. Clearly there is nothing inherent in bi- or multilingualism as cognitive or social phenomena that poses an obstacle to such an outcome. The ideological and political obstacles can be considerable, however, as the issues discussed here indicate. (For more discussion of language maintenance and shift, see chapters 14–16, 18, 25, 26, and 28; for more on reversing language shift, see chapter 16; for more on language endangerment, see chapters 15, 16, 18, 25, 27, and 28.)

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