

Discussion:

REVALUING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE RESOURCES
THROUGH LANGUAGE PLANNING

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Each article in this special issue makes reference to some aspect of language planning, although that particular terminology may not have been used. My comments are presented from this perspective.

Language planning encompasses the various roles language plays in the building of communities and nations (Ruiz, 1994). Zepeda, Holm & Holm, and McLaughlin speak of how O'odham and Navajo, respectively, serve specific purposes in the schools and communities of their speakers. Begay, Dick, Estell, Estell, McCarty and Sells discuss the micro-level processes centered on language education and the revaluing of Navajo in the school at Rough Rock. All involve aspects of language planning.

Ruiz (1990) distinguishes two categories of language planning: corpus planning and status planning. Corpus planning includes the graphic representation, standardization, functions of and attitudes toward the language. Holm & Holm, in their synopsis of the development of Navajo language education, give as examples of corpus planning the spelling of Navajo, standardization of its orthography, and the creation of a written literature. The pride in and attitudes toward Navajo described by Holm & Holm for students at Rock Point and Fort Defiance, Begay et al.'s discussion of similar changes at Rough Rock, the narrative accounts presented

by Freeman, Stairs, Corbière & Lazore, and Zepeda's oral-written literacy continuum represent the processes of corpus planning.

Zepeda speaks of another dimension of corpus planning that is frequently neglected in the literature and the planning process itself. This involves the creative writer and how s/he transforms oral speech from the native language into a graphic representation which, in turn, becomes part of children's *second*-language literacy experiences. By creating their own "throwing words," the children become part of a cycle that uniquely links orality and literacy, thereby uniting the school and community. In this cycle, children also develop pride in, and a positive attitude toward the indigenous language, as well as in their abilities as writers of English. A new function has been created for the native language: It plays a unique role in the community's literature, whether oral or written.

Zepeda's continuum, and the micro-level processes described for Rock Point, Rough Rock and the Fort Defiance Navajo immersion program, all contain elements of corpus planning that enable schools to provide bilingual instruction. But is education that is genuinely bilingual, bicultural and biliterate accessible to a majority of the population in indigenous communities? I would argue that the accessibility of such an education is limited. The reason for this is that the native language is in most cases not the language of wider communication (Ruiz, this volume). On most Indian reservations in the United States, the dominant language is English. English, as Crawford, and Holm & Holm suggest, often is the primary language used daily at home, in the community, in tribal offices and certainly in the schools.

The media can and in some cases does promote indigenous language use; many radio stations, for example, have heritage language broadcast hours—then English takes over. With the exception of a recently instituted Navajo television channel, some stations in Canada and perhaps a few others, television—one of the most powerful forces of language maintenance (and shift)—does not broadcast in indigenous languages. Only a few indigenous language newspapers exist, including one at Rock Point.

Reversing this situation involves what some researchers call macro-level processes (McCarty, 1993)—processes of the type involved in status planning. Status planning includes educational and language policy change efforts such as those suggested here for Navajo, Canadian and other tribal groups. Each article in this volume notes the critical importance of involving indigenous language speakers in decision-making at this level. But beyond the formulation of policies, local action must be taken to implement and enforce such policies. A policy alone is insufficient for *any* tribe, no matter what its size or population.

This is also true for status planning at the federal level. McCarty (1993) points out that it is at this level, especially, that control must be exercised by indigenous people. We now have in place as federal law, the Native American Languages Act (NALA), calling for the preservation and maintenance of indigenous language and cultural resources. To become more than a federal-level "gesture," NALA requires active support by tribes and Indian communities. With comprehensive support for many *tribal*-level education and language policies still lacking, it is unclear how national-level laws like the NALA will have an impact.

The next steps, then, involve determining how NALA will be locally implemented. To be workable, NALA must be made more specific to individual communities and tribes. Unfortunately, fiscal control to facilitate these steps remains in the hands of the federal government. To the extent that this is true, the future of indigenous language education and our destiny as Indian people also remain tied to federal policy. How do we as Indian people respond to this?

I will conclude with a related question, and this concerns the value we place on our native languages. The question itself, and its answer or answers, encompass the concept of language planning. Ruiz, following Kelman (1971), makes a distinction between instrumental and sentimental attachments to language. Sentimental attachments alone block much of the process of language planning. The Rock Point and Fort Defiance programs (Holm & Holm, this

volume) offer examples of the interweaving of instrumental and sentimental values toward the language, in which a positive public-community attitude *and* new native language use contexts are developed. In these communities and others, the dual instrumental-sentimental role has enabled the success of Navajo language education despite the social, economic and political attractions of the dominant language.

The final question, then, is, how far will Indian nations advance if we all begin to work toward this end?

References

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