

Article Summary: Hinton 2001

Title: Language Revitalization: An Overview

Author: Leanne Hinton

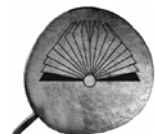
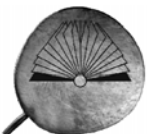
Source: Chapter 1, The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice, pages 3 to 18. Academic Press 2001

Main questions:

- What are indigenous languages?
- Why are indigenous languages endangered?
- Why does it matter if indigenous languages die out?
- What is language revitalization?
- What principles are important for successful language revitalization?
- What approaches do indigenous people use for language revitalization – to keep their languages alive or bring them back into use?

Some background ideas:

- Indigenous languages are those that people have used for a long, long time in the same place that people use them today.
- Indigenous languages and people are often a minority in a country where most other people and the government speak a different language. The dominant, majority language and culture oppress the indigenous. For various reasons indigenous people use their language less and less, and it may die out.
- Endangered languages usually fall into one of four categories:
 - 1) Languages still spoken by all age groups. Fewer children learn the language at home; people use the language in fewer areas of life.
 - 2) Languages that children no longer learn at home. Communities have a generation of people that partly speak the language. Parents may know the language but not use it; or grandparents may be the last generation to know the language.



Article Summary: Hinton 2001

- ✓ **Bilingual education:** use the endangered language for part of the instruction. Advantages: develop writing system if needed and new written materials; new vocabulary, new areas of life to use the language; can result in bilingual students. Disadvantages: program not usually oriented towards teaching the endangered language to people who do not already know it; lack of written materials can be challenging; may have little reinforcement from family and community, and children may not use the language outside school.
- ✓ **Immersion:** use the endangered language for all instruction. Advantages: best way to jump start new generation of fluent speakers; children tend to use the language outside school. Disadvantages: parents may worry that children don't get enough English to do well in higher grades or college.

2) After school and summer children's programs

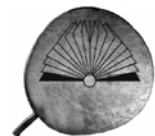
May supplement school programs or be completely independent. After-school programs may find children tired and less attentive at that time of day. Children that attend summer programs need opportunities to reinforce their skills during the school year, or they may just forget.

3) Adult programs

One common program is an evening class once a week for adults or families. Another type of program involves immersion-style learning combined with other activities such as sports or cooking or crafts. The California Master-Apprentice program is one example of this type. An Elder and a young person do activities together and speak only the language.

4) Programs to document language and develop materials

Documenting language, including sound recordings, is essential for communities with deeply endangered languages. Any language revitalization program may benefit from discovering



Article Summary: Hinton 2001

- Successful immersion programs usually have a family component. Parents learn the language in night classes, volunteer in the immersion classroom, and reinforce at home the lessons students learn at school.
- Language revitalization does not automatically bring people back to traditional modes of thought; they do not automatically gain or regain the culture. If people learn the language outside of and without reference to the traditional culture, the language will be empty of it.
- Successful language revitalization must have strong components in the community and the home. It can never depend entirely on school-based programs or it will include only school culture and values.
- Successful language revitalization needs to encourage and develop language use, and create meaningful situations to communicate with the indigenous language. Many factors that silenced the language in the first place are still in place. Traditional ceremonies and other community events provide good opportunities to use the language.
- Learners can help bring the native speakers back; people that know a language use it if someone speaks it with them. Speakers can become informal or formal teachers.
- Language always changes. Young people often speak differently than elders. Language revitalization can encourage speakers to understand there is not just one right way to speak - to tolerate variation. If people disagree too much about the 'correct' form they may destroy morale and damage or end a program.
- Successful language revitalization programs have some key characteristics:
 - ✓ **Persistence:** Do not take 'no' for an answer. The community often offers the greatest resistance with factionalism, jealousy, negative

