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Introduction

> Every language reflects a unique world-view with its own value systems, philosophy and particular cultural features. The extinction of a language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural knowledge embodied in it for centuries . . . (UNESCO 2011)

> Native identities are traces, the *différance* of an unnameable presence, not mere statutes, inheritance, or documentation, however bright the blood and bone in the museums. (Vizenor 1998:35)

I begin with a consideration of the meanings attributed to indigenous languages and cultures by differently placed actors. For example, both quotes that appear as epigraphs for this introduction express affiliation with indigenous peoples, and both imply opposition to forces that would disempower them. Yet the two statements, one from UNESCO and the other from a prominent Anishinaabe author and literary critic, sit uncomfortably next to one another. The first is typical of funded documentation and maintenance projects and presents indigenous languages in relation to concepts like "worldview," "value system," "philosophy," and "cultural knowledge," all of which suggest broad commensurability with mainstream institutions. The quote reflects use of "endangerment" as a resource mobilization tactic for research and education program funding, and for influencing language policies. This is coupled implicitly with the notion of "language rights," which casts indigenous languages within a logic of multicultural inclusion, or fair representation, within participatory democracies. It also places indigenous languages, and by implication all attendant institutions of indigenous knowledge and cultural property, at the brink of extinction and requiring technocratic forms of intervention if they are to be saved.

The second quote takes a different tack. Vizenor casts doubt upon mainstream terms of recognition: "not mere statutes, inheritance, or documentation," and locates Native voices elsewhere, in an "unnameable presence," or in "traces" that require radical acts of reinterpretation in order to be perceived. Importantly for problems of indigenous language advocacy, the two conflict in the role each attributes to documentation, and in the possibilities and limitations for recognition of indigenous voices therein. In the chapters that follow I present an ethnographic account of contrasts and conflicts in claims to Apache language among residents of the Fort Apache reservation in Arizona that reflect this kind of divide. Doing so reveals some of the covert politics of language documentation and maintenance, and provides a basis for bringing additional considerations into efforts to support indigenous languages and communities.

The past twenty years has seen copious scholarship devoted to language endangerment and maintenance: conferences, articles, edited volumes, books on documenting languages and developing language education materials, along with a few ethnographies of language shift and/or maintenance. A portion of this literature also addresses terms of collaboration between scholars of indigenous languages and community members. However, much of this is framed too narrowly, to the question of "how to make language revitalization work," rather than to larger questions of processes of social mediation entailed by language programs, and the often ambivalent uptake of programs within the communities they purport to serve. Many scholars and activists treat community ambivalence as if it can be attributed to an anti–heritage language camp whose members want to assimilate to mainstream norms and shift away from their heritage languages, pitched against a pro–heritage language camp whose members want to hold to tradition and accentuate ways the community is different from the surrounding society. With this book I open up another dimension of the problem: that heritage language programs, utilizing ideologies and textual models from the dominant society, assert notions of language, and authorize ways of knowing language, that compete with other forms of authority and other language practices in many indigenous communities. Therefore, in addition to "language documentation" ethnographic attention to social relations of speaking would be usefully added to efforts to engage with communities on language issues that concern them.

As the title suggests, the book tacks between a firsthand ethnographic account of language dynamics on the Fort Apache reservation, comparable work by other linguistic anthropologists in other indigenous communities, and broader questions about language maintenance as a site of engagement between indigenous communities and the sociopolitical orders that encompass them. While one point of the book is certainly to throw into relief

ways in which language maintenance programs extend the discourses and institutions of encompassing polities, I also want to complicate any account that would reduce language programs to "internal colonialism." Rather, my purpose is to situate language maintenance efforts more accurately within the ongoing dialectics of which they are a part. I demonstrate that many of the empowering effects of indigenous language programs can occur outside the purview of the programs themselves. A signature quality of many, I might add, is that they are rarely described by anyone as truly accomplishing what they set out to do – so as ostensible instruments of power they are full of gaps and interpretive openings. Most importantly, by recontextualizing local speech as cultural heritage, language documentation and maintenance programs cast local languages as carriers of value and as key terms of recognition in national and global arenas. In turn, members of local leadership recontextualize the products of documentation that come to represent a "heritage language" in culture centers and schools to their own dynamic purposes, retaining traces of national and international significance but subsuming these to ongoing local practices and concerns.

Ultimately, what I hope this book contributes is a precedent and a set of interpretive tools that facilitate recognition of differences in orientation between the ostensibly cooperative, but sometimes clashing, parties to "saving" a language. The ethnographic accounts I present should be viewed with this in mind. They represent my best efforts to engage with residents of the Fort Apache reservation on language issues that concerned them. They bear all the partiality of my conditions of access and theoretical orientation. I do not claim to present in any comprehensive way a portrait of Apache language shift (cf. Adley Santa-Maria 1997, 1998) or how the "White Mountain Apache" interpret language maintenance. What I do claim is to provide an account of *the kinds of* innovation and social complexity at play at the intersection of university-trained language experts (of which I was one, as were some of my consultants who were members of the tribe and who worked as Apache language teachers) and differently positioned actors (for example, elders, parents, and religious leaders) within this indigenous community, and reasons why similar innovative and conflictual dynamics are likely in language efforts elsewhere. My goal is to provide a means by which to listen to diverse community voices by establishing a framework through which to anticipate processes of (creative) misrecognition in indigenous language advocacy.

Throughout the book I refer to the area in which my consultants lived as "the Fort Apache reservation" and I often refer to them as "reservation residents." This is in contrast to recent changes in terms of self-representation adopted by different offices of the tribe, who use the "White Mountain Apache Reservation" or "White Mountain Apache

Lands." I adopt "Fort Apache reservation" here because to do so specifies a history of colonial encounter that otherwise anchors my account. The use of "Fort Apache" also locates the representational claims of the present account in that ambivalent history and positions my voice differently from those of White Mountain Apache persons, who have their own.

Structure of the Book

In the next chapter, entitled "Indigenous Languages and the Mediation of Communities," I attempt to reset the frame from "languages" as objects of documentary knowledge to the symbolic role indigenous languages play in the mediation of communities within encompassing sociopolitical orders. In doing this, I adopt two strategies. First, I offer an ethnographic description of the ambivalent responses that my presence as a language researcher, and the language programs with which I was involved, provoked in persons whom I encountered in the Fort Apache speech community. I show that there is a quality of relativity to terms like "language loss," "heritage," "language maintenance," "cultural survival," such that meanings across different sectors of the Fort Apache community only apparently coincided with those imputed to the terms by researchers and educators.

And, second, I trace a history through which "saving endangered languages" has emerged as a point of global relevance for indigenous communities as well as for the language-oriented disciplines. Language maintenance, as an extension of notions of language rights, is identified as a liberal democratic discourse that bears similarly upon many indigenous communities due to parallels in histories of colonial disruption and engagement. I identify why language endangerment and maintenance represents an improvement over assimilationist policies in negotiated terms of political coordination. I propose reasons why, at the intersection of an encompassing national regime and an indigenous-identified community, there can be *both* political alliance *and* a challenge of fit between academic maintenance discourses and alternatives circulating within local communities. I make the case that ambivalence in community reception should be anticipated and recognized, because it is not at all trivial to the political role of research and maintenance programs. Chapter 2 establishes the broad argument that some ethnographic inquiry into local meanings is therefore necessary in order to attend to alternative community discourses otherwise obscured by the terms and practices of documentation and educational language programs.

In the third chapter, entitled: "Learning to Listen: Coming to Terms with Conflicting Meanings of Language Loss," I tell the story of how I

gradually became aware of different understandings of language loss between home and school environments on the Fort Apache reservation and the role these differences played in controversies surrounding language programs. I elaborate the way different language ideologies found expression in the contrasting pedagogies and socialization practices of extended family homes, on the one hand, and school language programs, on the other. I describe how a language program with which I was involved became embroiled in controversy because it brought these contrasting language ideologies and pedagogies into conflict with one another. I suggest that other language programs described in the broader literature occasion similar controversies and can be understood in relationship to conflicting language ideologies, conflicting pedagogies and socialization practices across extended family-centered and school-centered social contexts.

My fourth chapter: "They Live in Lonesome Dove: English in Indigenous Places" describes the use of English language mass media place names on the Fort Apache reservation in order to illustrate one, often overlooked, dimension of language shift: the use of a colonial language of wider circulation to assert, among other things, the contemporary relevance of indigenous voices (e.g. Dobrin 2012). Just as language maintenance programs subsume indigenous languages within a nationalist framework by posing indigenous grammars and texts as items of cultural property; indigenous communities very often appropriate historically colonizing languages to their own purposes, seizing upon them to pursue their own ends in their own way precisely because they are strange and connote places at a remove from familiar everyday life. I illustrate this with an example from the Fort Apache reservation in which English language mass media discourse is used to coin playful names for newly constructed neighborhoods, which are then officialized on government maps and street signs. By using idioms from English language commercial discourse for official place names, and placing these on road signs and maps, reservation residents subvert dominant expectations as they also project their voices in ways that resonate beyond the local. These are strategic acts of community definition, which draw upon established naming practices to pose shared jokes as terms of community belonging. With these names reservation residents simultaneously communicate their difference from surrounding nonindigenous communities as well as their participation in a global, mass media-infused world.

Chapter 5, entitled "Stories in the Moment of Encounter: Documentation Boundary Work," examines language documentation as a form of cultural encounter to which linguists and the people they work with bring contrasting purposes and strategies. I trace a history of Apache documentary encounters from mission philology to salvage linguistics to contemporary documentary concerns with saving indigenous languages.

The documentation produced by linguists is often taken by language experts, and by the broader public interested in endangered languages, as the purpose of the interaction. In this chapter I attempt to make other purposes and voices audible. I compare two collected texts, which are also accounts of Apache lives: one spoken by Lawrence Mithlo to Harry Hoijer and published in a 1938 text collection, and another spoken by Rebekah Moody to me in 1996. First, I show that neither is cast by its speaker as neutral information. Rather, both are extensions of an oratorical strategy labeled *bá'hadziih*, through which the speaker presents a group with which s/he identifies to an audience that includes those figured as Other. Through *bá'hadziih* the speaker attempts to transform the relationship between her own group and the addressed Others by first invoking what the speaker anticipates to be the image held of her group from the Other's point of view and then posing terms for its transformation. The difference between the framing purposes of documentation and *bá'hadziih* defines language research as an encounter between persons engaged in contrasting regimes of meaning.

In the sixth chapter: "What No Coyote Story Means: The Borderland Genre of Traditional Storytelling," I treat Coyote stories, not as items of cultural knowledge, but as a voice at the edge of familiarity and otherness. I portray histories of storytelling (Kroskrity 2012) that span the colonial and documentary encounter with focus upon the transformative actions of "Coyote." I attend to the poetic devices of Apache language traditional storytelling and show that the same features that mark them as traditional stories for language and culture documentation serve a different function in family storytelling. In the latter, storytelling orients participants to persons and landscapes as agents whose continuing influences bear upon the lives of listeners. I draw attention to the difference in relations of authority when family storytelling is repackaged as items of cultural knowledge in a school curriculum or culture center. I qualify this, though, by noting that indigenous language and culture instruction in schools is domain-specific and not totalizing, existing alongside other domains of use and other ideological processes.

The seventh chapter, "'Some "No No" and Some "Yes"': Silence, Agency, and Traditionalist Words," addresses the fact that it is not at all uncommon for heritage language program developers in Native American communities to encounter restrictions posed by local religious leaders upon what can and cannot be included in school programs. For different reasons, both Traditionalists and Apache Independent Christians police school programs to insure the exclusion of words and idioms associated with Traditionalist ceremony. Some curriculum developers have lamented the silence of heritage language programs on religious tradition, noting that this excludes entire canons of oral literature and song, and reduces the teaching

of the native language to prosaic matters, less likely to compete with English language use for the attention of young people. I propose an apparent paradox: that the silence of school programs on sacred language in fact indicates the continuing power of such language, and of local leadership who insist on its prohibition from the schools. On the Fort Apache reservation this power, linked to the continuing relevance of Apache language, is evident in the emergence of vibrant Apache language innovations outside of education programs. Two opposed religious identities: Traditionalists and Apache Independent Christians, utilize different elements of a loosely share repertoire of Apache language genres, rhetorical forms, and poetics to appropriate the Christian Bible to their own meanings and purposes. I propose that this and analogous local appropriations of symbolically global texts might be considered alongside language programs as alternate sites of production in which a heritage language is wielded by members of the community as they negotiate relations to one another and to wider exogenous national and global orders.

I conclude with a short chapter suggesting "Possible Socialities of Documentation and Maintenance," where I draw some of the implications of the preceding chapters for more politically symmetrical language documentation and advocacy work.

My Approach

A key argument of the book is that indigenous languages exist at the threshold between indigenous communities and surrounding social orders and figure importantly into community definition at that juncture (Merlan 2009). Therefore, concerns with saving or supporting indigenous languages are articulated at the same threshold, and have a complicated relationship with local communicative practices because they are often dually articulated through historically imposed institutions like schools, on the one hand, and across generations in extended families, on the other. My concern throughout this book is to set this as the frame within which to analyze not only the play of indigenous language issues in institutions (like schools) that clearly articulate with state, federal, and international discourses; but to also recognize how community members employ language in ways relevant to local notions of indigeneity to pose alternate definitions of community, centered in family, place, and often through explicitly religious discourse.

I focus my investigation upon sites of engagement with encompassing social orders such as schools, reception of mass media, and Christianity. I show how the imputed authentic indigeneity of one's speech is often

at stake in self and community definitions, but figured differently across different social contexts. At all three "sites" it is plausible to trace extensions and transplants of institutions and discourses from outside the reservation. Within these transplanted institutions there are strong interpretive pressures to draw contrasts and comparisons between Apache and English languages through terms established in the institutions of the encompassing society. However, educational, mass media, and Christian discursive materials are also met with and recontextualized (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996; Spitulnik 1997) within the discursive practices of extended families and clans, and are often transformed in their reception and use within the terms of precedents established therein (see Nevins 2008, 2010b). In this way, I elaborate a complex local–global social field in which indigenous languages and acts of language use have meaning.

Another aspect of this book that distinguishes it from other ethnographic treatments of indigenous language issues is the use of the notion (adapted from Hanks 1986; Hymes 1966; Keane 2007; Wagner 1981) that there are multiple modes of discursive action, or discursive regimes (also Gal 1998; Kroskrity 2000), at play in many communities, with different entailments for reflecting upon "language" and what it might mean to save or lose such a thing. Minimally, we can identify one pole of contrast with a discursive regime (premised on the a priori alienability of individual persons, languages, and goods) centered in historically imposed institutions like schools, missions, and businesses; and another (premised on temporally deep flows involving persons, language, and land) centered in extended family and quasi-familial contexts, including feasts, harvests, ceremonies, and religious revivalism (Nevins and Nevins forthcoming). To approach language and the ways people reflect upon it, I focus upon texts, and ideological processes of contextualization and recontextualization (following Hanks 1986; Keane 2007; Kroskrity 2004; Silverstein 1996), for the window these provide upon ways that members of indigenous communities orient to one another and to more extended global orders (also Nevins 2010a). The sorts of texts (following Hanks 1989) I discuss range from individual Apache words to place names, stories, songs, personal names, speeches/oratory, names of cosmological figures, but also English language phrases from church, school, and media discourse. Such items are circulated across multiple sites and their meaning and evaluation transformed through recontextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996).

To sum up for now, as the dueling statements with which I began this chapter illustrate, there is gap between indigeneity as a term in ethnonational discourses and the place that it holds as a link in a historical chain of events between a colonizing national entity and indigenous sociocultural practices based on other terms. Some kind of alterity, that "unnameable presence"

described by Vizenor (1998), looms in the very premise of indigeneity, but, as he indicates, has a complicated relationship to documentation efforts. Therefore, the nature of my comment upon language endangerment and maintenance rhetoric is to place qualifications and limits upon it, limits drawn from recognizing alternate voices, pedagogies, and claims upon language in indigenous communities. For many language programs that have stood the test of time, this process of attending to community critique and accommodating community intervention is already familiar in practice, but not built into the explicit theories informing programs and planning. By defining indigenous languages as a "matter of concern" (Latour 2004), the rhetoric of endangerment directly supports linguistic documentation and school maintenance programs; but it also set new conditions for innovation that extend beyond the purview of linguistic experts.

Community critiques, controversies, and interventions into indigenous language programs tend to be both underreported and poorly understood in the indigenous language endangerment literature. In many accounts of language programs, such things are treated obliquely, as obstacles to be avoided to clear the way for the "real work" of documentation and maintenance. Given the embattled placement of most indigenous languages relative to majority languages, some linguists advocate avoiding community controversies on the rationale that one should not "air dirty laundry," or that muddying the advocacy narrative with social complications would only hamper public support for those fragile efforts that are underway. My intention is to open up the discussion of language maintenance to allow for the fact that language programs figure importantly in community empowerment, but not always in ways their designers anticipate or intend. The present effort is an attempt to enable recognition of community criticisms and interventions into maintenance programs, not as noise or obstacles to progress, but as relevant to indigenous community empowerment more broadly conceived.

Ethnography can help reframe the "noise" of community critique of language programs into alternate claims to authority and into alternate definitions of community that are themselves germane to the ongoing relevance of indigenous languages. On the Fort Apache reservation, as elsewhere, language programs are politically necessary and desired by many, but they do not exist in a vacuum. I will show how multiple ways of "doing language" coexist, interpenetrate, and sometimes conflict with one another in community language efforts. These alternatives have relevance to the political status of language programs, particularly in whether they are perceived as empowering or alienating. I elaborate an account of these processes on the Fort Apache reservation in order to make the broader suggestion that for indigenous communities in parallel historical

circumstances elsewhere we can expect that diverse ways of objectifying and reflecting upon language are also to be found, and that they inflect the meaning and functioning of language efforts in parallel ways.

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