In the Last Days of Living Latin: The Dynamic and Realities of Twilight Linguistics

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"Language death" rules out possible continued uses as a heritage language. Language efforts typical of Native American languages (preservation/revival efforts, curriculum, technology use) are hampered not only by English use, but also by no desire for English-like functions in the traditional variety (because of emotional and religious factors). In the 1960s, Monegasque (traditional in Monaco) was in a similar situation; it went through a period of "preservation" to become a heritage language used in important, vital public contexts. The Monegasque model is an alternative to the Hawaiian model of total revival as an educational medium.

Sun Mùnegu suvr'ün schoeyu,
nun semenu, nun rachoeyu;
U vijin nun despoeyu,
E püra, vivè voeyu.

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I am Monaco on a rock,
I neither sow nor reap.
I do not covet my neighbor,
but yet I wish to live.
(Barral and Simone, 1983:302)

Traditional languages of ethnic minorities all over the world tend to share some common characteristics: commitment to oral language (and learning language in a family context); exclusion of the traditional language from school use (and punishment for using it there); and a dwindling population of older, fluent speakers. The sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication of dying languages is an established study (*language death*). This description ("death") fails when the "dying" variety takes on a new life as a heritage language, preserved and treasured after passing from daily use.

A *heritage language* (cf. Hinton, 1994) can be defined as a traditional language with symbolic and emotive value for a community. Heritage languages are important as identity markers to the very people abandoning their use, prompting (1) preservation efforts (dictionaries, grammars, collections of traditional literature); (2) teaching materials, strategies, and programs to revive the language; and (3) political economy (appropriateness of outsiders studying/using the traditional language). The economically motivated intrusion of a *matrix language* (the linguistic variety that is used for most public and many private functions because it is the language of the larger culture or social group in which a numerically smaller community with a traditional language is embedded) into schools, places of work, and eventually homes is not the only major factor eroding the use of traditional languages. Another key factor is emotional ties to the traditional language (in place names, mythology, etc.), personal ties to beloved elders, and religious ties, connections that motivate a community to want to preserve its traditional language, while simultaneously making the traditional language inappropriate to teach to outsiders, odd to use as a formal code, or awkward to use in novel spoken (sermons, answering machine messages, classroom lectures) and written (newspapers, governmental forms, school work, billboard and other ads) contexts.

As the vitality of the traditional language wanes, its cultural capital increases dramatically, while its ethnography of communication

shifts: the traditional language may become the vehicle of belletristic and/or folkloric literature in a standardized form; there may be second language learning by the descendants of the last fluent speakers; and there may be (compulsory) teaching in public schools. Such education may be a "linguistic appreciation" with different dynamics than those of languages spoken as a part of everyday life. In this transitional stage, a sort of "twilight" linguistic situation emerges where both the characteristics of the spoken code obtain along with the effects of canonization, having some dynamics of a living language (speakers using the language as a language of work, for instance, even as they create materials for preservation), and some characteristics of a language that is already an heirloom (for example, children learning respect for the traditional language rather than learning to speak it).

In "heirloom mode," a traditional language has limited daily oral use (i.e. greetings). There is also a public, symbolic use of the language, both written and spoken, and the traditional language curriculum is aimed at selective understanding and use rather than complete fluency. Eventually, however, the need arises for a group of specialists in the traditional language to maintain fluent second language knowledge of it, train teachers in its linguistic appreciation, and translate documents and mottoes for public use.

This paper examines the situations of three traditional languages at the end of the twentieth century. Two (Southern Paiute and Tohono O'odham) may be familiar to students of Native American languages. The third, Monegasque, fits the "twilight linguistics" pattern familiar to scholars of Native American languages.

1. The Dynamics of Late Twentieth Century Native American Languages

A literature survey of Native American language revitalization is beyond the space provided here; what follows is a survey of the types of issues encountered by researchers who study "twilight linguistics." "Of about 6,000 languages still on earth, 90% could be gone by 2001" (*Whole Earth* Spring 2000: 15). Native American languages are part of this projected loss. The legality of Native American languages is guaranteed (Native American Languages Act of 1990). "English Only" laws and initiatives are not valid on tribal lands, as recently ruled in Arizona (*Arizona Daily Star* Feb 25, 2001). Many tribes have

enacted their own manifestos guaranteeing the status of their traditional language(s).

These languages are tied to kin-based societies, and they often invoke the supernatural: “Every time I use our language I feel that all of creation understands me and is rejuvenated” (California language speaker; *Whole Earth* Spring 2000: 5); “[With language loss] land ceases to be sacred” (Arapaho speaker; *Whole Earth* Spring 2000: 9). Language may also have to do with the afterlife. Family, usually identified as the keystone to preservation, may also link one to the afterlife via the traditional language.

The main focus in traditional language studies since 1990 has been on schools and immersion methods. Written language is emphasized. The first and second items of Leanne Hinton’s noted preservation tool kit (*Whole Earth*, Spring 2000: 11) are “Document” (write, tape-record, and videotape) and “Write It Down.” Another scholar advocates “using literacy to further validate the use of [the traditional] language in everyday life” (Stiles 1997: 76). Basic documentation and a “need for teaching materials” cannot be denied, but Stiles’ desiderata eschew orality through her consistent focus on written-language-oriented goals: “printing costs [are] prohibitive”; “textbook companies do not want to publish [books in languages with few speakers]”; “time is required to teach the new written system”; “[the language is perceived as] unsuitable for academics”(page numbers?).

Written language is almost unavoidable in validation and conservation efforts, yet there are ways of more closely capturing and imitating oral language and creating a more kin-like habitus (even in reference works): distance learning and its tie-ins; courseware that encodes the visual as well as the spoken; videotapes, sound recordings, TV, radio; immersion courses. Orality in preservation is important, along with kin-based and community involvement. Teaching methods benefit from this perspective. Indeed, the vanguard of Native American revitalization (the Immersion Teacher Program for the successful Hawaiian effort) conducts summer institutes for multi-media authoring (www.111.hawaii.edu/programs/ITTP).

I will briefly mention two cases in point: the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah (PITU), and the Tohono O’odham Nation of southern Arizona.

PITU has fewer than 80 speakers of Southern Paiute out of more than 800 enrolled members. They have enacted a language policy, and have had several Administration for Native Americans (ANA) language preservation grants (census; implementation). The resulting preschool is not an immersion preschool, but rather one that highlights language-in-culture, such as translated Mother Goose and traditional songs, Indian names, and circle dances through which children learn to value the traditional language. A conversational class for mothers and caregivers has been added (while the children are in preschool); the 20-unit method employed for this conversational class uses multi-media courseware, including a CD ROM with written, audio and video versions of a conversational method.

The Tohono O’odham Nation (TON) has an official spelling system. A language policy mandates O’odham language instruction from kindergarten to the twelfth grade in reservation schools, but funding has not made this a reality. There was a try for an ANA preservation grant in 1995 and 1996 (via Early Childhood programs), but there was no actual application. There is a successful language program at San Simon [Primary] School (in the western, most remote part of the main reserve) and linguistic appreciation in all reservation schools, but education within TON remains assimilationist. There has been a teaching grammar for about 20 years (intended for speakers of the language). There were also conversational classes in the mid 1960s, but no adult conversational method was readily available until very recently (Thomas, 2001).

With both PITU and TON, traditional language is an essential link to identity and metaphysical adaptation to their lands. Both communities want their languages to continue, ideally through a means that is, if not kin-based, at least kin-like, allowing language to be passed down and used in kin networks, in order for the preservation effort to feel more comfortable for the communities. Technology can create orality in classrooms, and thus perhaps even foster a kin-like habitus.

2. Case Study: Monegasque

Monegasque (*u Mùnegu*), the traditional language of Monaco, is an innovative variety of Genoese, transplanted to Monaco in 1215. Most citizens of Monaco spoke it until at least 1860. Its existence is first attested in phrases and sentences in the letters of Antoine I (d. 1731). French became the official language in 1815 (Edwards, 1992:

99), however, and the use of French in government, schools and churches thus disrupted the use of Monegasque.

About 34 percent of Monegasque's lexicon is from contact with Provençal (Arveiller, 1967). It differs from Genoese (also called [modern] Ligurian) grammatically in a number of essential ways. Monegasque SVO word order is more fixed than Genoese word order. Person marking for objects (indirect, direct) is with clitics in Monegasque, while Genoese prefers full pronouns. Monegasque uses the particle *che* when the verb of a subjunctive clause is not initial (see appendix). It also uses two sets of definite articles, and two vowels not present in either Genoese or the surrounding Provençal (/ö/ and /ü/). Monegasque often shortens high frequency lexical items inherited from Genoese (see appendix). Personal clitics and prepositions also differ in the two varieties. In addition, Monegasque differs from Genoese pragmatically (compare the Monegasque use of the familiar *tü* 'you' in the appendix, where Genoese has the polite forms).

Traditionally, the territory of Monaco was considered to begin in the Eze village (outskirts of Nice), running along the Mediterranean coast to Menton, on the present Italian border. Of the five main towns (Eze, La Turbie, Monaco-Ville, Rocquebrun, Menton), only Monaco-Ville traditionally spoke Monegasque. Geographic and social circumscription (the Monegasques were the princely garrison and entourage) maintained a distinct Monegasque ethnicity, which was set off primarily by its distinct language, as Monegasque food and folkways are similar to surrounding areas.. The singular status of the inhabitants of Monaco-Ville, perched on their rock, no doubt contributed to the persistence of the Monegasque language into the present day.

When road and rail connections brought rapid development to the barren peninsula renamed Monte Carlo in the early 1860s, the native population increased, but was still outnumbered by many foreign residents. In 1910, the Monegasque-speaking population constituted about 25% of the total population (2000/8000), but since 1960 this percentage has decreased to between 15% and 16%. In 1927, the revivalist Louis Notari stated that there were only a few dozen speakers of authentic Monegasque (Notari, 1927). Arveiller (1967) stated that in the 1940s and 1950s there were only about 20 speakers. The *Ethnologue* (1999) states that Monegasque "was nearly extinct by the 1970s."

While a small literature was produced in the 1930s onward (Hudson, 1991), and portions of the Bible were translated in 1860 (*Ethnologue* 1999), there were enough authoritative speakers to serve as codifiers of Monegasque since the 1950s. Popular concern about language loss in the late 1950s prompted Prince Rainier to have the language codified. The grammar (Frolla, 1960) was "drawn up at the instigation of the government and approved by a special commission of eminent Monegasques" (Hudson, 1991:124). The Monegasque-French dictionary (Frolla, 1963) had the same imprimatur. The companion French-Monegasque volume (Barral and Simone, 1983) "was much needed due to the growth of the speakers of Monegasque in schools" (Hudson, 1991:121).

Language development is presently fostered by the *Comité National des Tradicions Monégasques*, and a small scholarly literature (*Collques de langues dialectales* 1-7 [1974-1986]) currently exists. A *Commission pour la langue Monégasque* of eleven members was founded in 1982 to direct the codification into language policy (Ordonnance no. 7.462 *portant création d'une commission pour la langue Monégasque*).

Children were traditionally punished for speaking their own language at school (a situation familiar to Native Americans), but the language is now a required subject in elementary schools. Pupils take one hour of Monegasque per week in the equivalent of U.S. grades 1-6. There is a specialization in Monegasque language and literature at the high school level. There is an educational team of more than eight Monegasque language teachers, with specialized training. The use of computer technology for language teaching began in 1998 (Healey, 1998), and in 2000 a Web page in Monegasque (www.ac-nice.fr/rectorat/acadmie/lcr/lcr_mon.htm) was developed.

Price (2000: 326) states that "Monégasque has virtually no presence in the principality other than on bilingual street names introduced in the old city of Monaco." He fails to note that the language is a required school subject, used in masses for the significant religious holidays (with new texts for each occasion) and requiems, and broadcast on the radio. One Web source on Monaco quips that "often overlooked . . . are the 6,000 Monegasque citizens themselves" (www.monaco.linghist.htm). Princess Caroline writes of the tourists

and the Monte Carlo crowd: “Where do the Monegasques fit into this social jigsaw? Quite frankly, I don’t think we do” (quoted in Edwards, 1992: 304). A native Monegasque in the U.S. writes “Whenever I write or speak of my heritage and language, people seem puzzled” (p.c.; name withheld for privacy). These observations counter Price’s statement that Monegasque has little public presence (or value).

3. Discussion

There are some common dynamics in the Native American and the Monegasque language revitalization projects. Legal status begets language codification in the forms of grammars, bilingual dictionaries, and teaching materials. While language teaching in the home is ideal, linking families through the centuries, the only viable mechanisms for revitalization when no one in the home comfortably speaks the traditional language are the schools; this puts the traditional language in a public spotlight.

This putting the language “on the spot” increases public awareness of a “language problem,” points up the value of the traditional language as a lingustic variety used for ritual or religious purposes or with strong ties to traditional ritual or religious practice, and bestows cultural capital on existing public uses of the language. The language becomes a “Living Latin,” a tradtional and heritage language in its last stages of being spoken by native speakers, with a minority of native speakers (some of whom may use it at home) and a traditional cultural property to the majority of non-fluents in the community.

Such a linguistic situation is problematic, however, in that the traditional language is no longer used as the primary spoken language. One solution to the problem of “Living Latin” is the Hawaiian revitalization model of immersion training, focused on young children. This requires, however, sustained parental involvement, with the parents taking classes until they can speak the language at home. It also takes investments of time and money, and a willingness to wrangle with school officials. When there is less time and money available, the language situation of most Native American languages will probably have an outcome like Monegasque. The language has some kind of legal status and is taught in schools. Some productive knowledge results (greetings, a prayer, the national anthem, etc.), and ideally an overall passive knowledge is achieved. An appreciation and positive

feeling for the traditional language is developed. Specified public uses of the language are conspicuous for members of the community, who use an economically and numerically superimposed matrix language for most public and private contexts, creating a *semi-diglossia*, or a situation in which the traditional Low variety has become High symbolically,with most users of that code being passive rather than fluent.

This concept of semi-diglossia is a reversal of the parent idea (*diglossia*). First of all, the traditional variety is no longer the Low variety, the variety for familiar and casual use. Second, fluency is graded; not all of the population are fluents. Third, the linguistic economy of the community is more genre-based; instead of many possible contexts for traditional language use, the traditional variety lives through a repertory of specific texts and context-specific genres realized in public life.

A situation of semi-diglossia implies several things. Firstly, the need for novel texts and active language teaching requires a minority of *fluents* (from whom come language specialists), and assumes a majority of comprehending *passives*. Secondly, instances of the language’s use exceed set pieces (greetings, traditional formulas, frozen texts like the Lord’s Prayer) and include settings for novel uses of the language (new prayers, new hymns, new slogans for advertising) produced by fluents. Thirdly, the traditional language becomes the required code of symbolic public discourse, and therefore the High linguistic code in (all) public contexts, even as the traditional language retreats in the home and the workplace.

Technological tie-ins can expand the gamut of the traditional variety by creating additional discourses and ubiquitous appropriate contexts of the traditional language, particularly for younger community members. Technology is attractive to children and young people, and at the same time simulates oral language and imparts a feeling of connection to a kin network, because the language speakers are familiar in voice and appearance to the younger users. Indeed, a semi-diglossia can benefit from technology by its adding modernity and popularity to the vitality of the traditional language.

In a diglossia, the Low variety is the language of the home, friends, and informality; it is prototypically oral, and it is the expect-

ed role of local, traditional languages. The High variety is typically the matrix language), and it is the accepted medium of writing and prototypically public, used in schools, churchs, the news media, legal proceedings, and so on. When a fragile, local diglossia is upset by pervasive mass market economy (and further eroded by television emissions dominated in the matrix language), use of the traditional language (the Low variety) will disappear from informal talk in public places (school, workplace, stores).

The traditional language, never habituated to public (High variety) functions, is left without its own niche. The direct outcome of a disrupted diglossia is a "twilight" period when the traditional language retains some aspects of a living language, yet takes on the aspects of a heritage language (along with a lot of cultural capital). Barring the unlikelihood of revitalization, there are two possible outcomes. Becoming a "Living Latin" like Monegasque, with its own novel and special functions (some created by technology on par with television), is more positive than language death. Current technology incorporates orality, favoring it over written language, and may approximate the habitus of familiarity and informality of a traditional variety, giving each Living Latin additional unique and vitalizing roles and functions.

4. Appendix: The *Pater Noster* in Monegasque and Genoese

The Monegasque text is given first; it is in bold and italic. The Genoese follows; it is in italic. Glosses in English are given under each word in a smaller type.

Paire	***nostru***	***che***	***si'***	***ünt'u***	***celu***
Father	our	that	be	in-the	heaven
Poœ nostro	*che*	*sei*	*nei*	*çe*	
Father-our	that	be	in-the	heaven	

sice	***santificàu***	***u***	***to'***	***nume***
may.be	sanctified	the	thy	name
seja	*santificao*	*o*	*vostro*	*nomme*
may.be	sanctified	the	your	name

che	***u***	***to' regnu***	***arrive***	***sciü***	***de***	***nui***
that	the	thy reign	come	now	to	us
	o	*vostro*	*regno*	*vegna*		
	the	your	reign	may.come		

che	***ün***	***celu***	***cume***	***ün***	***terra***
that	in	heaven	as	in	earth
comme	*in*	*çe*	*cosi*	*in*	*tæra*
as	in	heaven	so.then	in	earth

sice	***fà***	***a***	***to'***	***voruntà.***
may.be	done	at	thy	will
si	*faza*	*a*	*vostra*	*voentæ.*
may.be	done	at	your	will

Da=ne	***anchœi***	***cuma***	***tüti i giurni***	***u***	***nostru pan,***
give=us	today	as	all the days	the	our bread
Deeme	*ancheu*	*quotidiano*	*o*	*pane nostro,*	
give	today	daily		the	bread our

Perduna		***i***	***nostri pecài,***		
forgive		the	our sins		
e perdonè	*a noiâtri*	*i*	*nostri debiti,*		
and forgive	at us	the	our debts		

cuma	***perdunamu***	***ün acheli***	***che n'an fàu;***		
as	we.forgive	to those	that us have done		
comme	*noiâtri*	*erdonemo*	*i*	*nostri debitoi*	
as	we	we.forgive	the	our debtors	

nun	***ne***	***lascià***	***piyà***	***d'a***	***tentaçiun,***
not	us	let	enter	of.the	temptation
no	*ci*	*lasciè*	*cadè*	*ne*	*tentazione*
not	to.us	let	fall	to	temptation

e	***libèra=ne***	***d'u***	***mà.***	
and	save=us	from.the	evil	
ma	*liberate=ci*	*da*	*mä.*	
but	save=us	from.the	evil	

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