SCALING FLUENCY[1]

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This paper is about the scaling of fluency as the sociolinguistic enfigurement of difference through variation and pattern in grammar, interaction, and discourse.[2] Fluency, or the lack thereof, has been a concept for evaluating (in)competence (Meek 2011), and virtuosity (Webster 2011, 2013), defining group boundaries and membership (Muehlmann 2008), reflecting a moral stance (Hill 1995), and determining the endangered status of a language (Moore et. al. 2011).   To unpack the social work such evaluations of fluency perform, noting that evaluation itself is an ideologically and power laden task, this paper will focus on the linguistically generic enfigurement of American Indians and how fluency gets scaled. By enfigurement I mean the process of creating a figure in and through its recontextualization (its intertextuality), analogous to the process of entextualization as defined by Briggs, Bauman, Silverstein and others. The ultimate goal is to understand how relationality gets constituted, becomes impactful, and breaks down or fails to create a relation (what I've referred to elsewhere as "sociolingusitic disjuncture;" Meek 2010).

[2] The scaling of fluency is a process of enfigurement where the enfigurement of some character or persona – beyond genre – patterns interdiscursively, linking not only tokens to types (a la Silverstein) but tokens to other tokens and types to other types. Enfigurement, as an interdiscursive process or projection, consolidates features into socially valenced and socially salient patterns, rendering the figure recognizable and interpretable. Building on concepts of genre and intertextuality (as developed by Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs), it is a tacking back and forth between traditional characterization (of figure) and creative modification. This concept is different from Agha's concept of enregisterment (2005) in that the performances do not reflect actual speech registers or real-life styles, except perhaps in events of mockery. For the time being, I am also not concerned with the reflexive dimensions of enfigurement by language users (or audiences), which seem crucial to the process of enregisterment. Enfigurement is however similar to Agha's concept of typifiability of of voices and its conceptual reliance on contrast. Following recent research on awareness and control (Babel and Campbell-Kibler forthcoming), this paper is concerned with how linguistic cues are controlled or managed and the patterns that viewers experience and are socialized into rather than the coming into awareness of these patterns and their use in other interactional, relation-building domains. That is, the focus here is on the relationality created between figures, across iterations of enfigurement and in relation to an audience. Other dimensions for future investigation are the audience's discourse about such enfigurements and the reflexive creation of these enfigurments by filmmakers and other media producers.

One step toward unpacking this process of relationality is to investigate enfigured relationalities that are pervasive, taken-for-granted, and conceptually impactful. The enfigurement of Hollywood Indians provides a robust case.

Previous analyses of Hollywood Injun English (Meek 2006, 2013) have demonstrated the association of a generic linguistic template with an Indian figure, a figure that transcends genres and mediums. In this paper, I expand and complicate this image, showing how the discursive enfigurement of Indian characters has changed – at times complicated and at times flattened -- within and across different genres of film, focusing in this paper on Westerns in particular. Fluency, in these media, gets scaled in relation to tropes of loss and endangerment, modernity and nationalism, and self-discovery and imitation (including mocking). I conclude by considering the implications that such enfigurements and the scaling of fluency have for real-life domains of linguistic practice, such as socialization and revitalization, and the tendency for human beings to extrapolate and align patterns of difference in the recognition and rationalization of what it means to be a member, or for American Indian characterizations, what it means to be an (good) American citizen.

To set the stage, consider the linguistic enfigurements portrayed in the following comedy sketch from an episode of *The Chappelle Show*, which aired in 2003. Set on an airplane, the image of "America" is shaped in relation to ethnic, racial, mammalian, and linguistic differences.

>   Character 1 (speaking Arabic with subtitles): The Americans have picked wrong
>   once again as I knew they would
>   Character 2 (speaking Arabic with subtitles): Justin was the only choicein
>   American idol.
>   Character 3: Man, of all the flights to be on, I gotta ride with them terrorist sons 'a
>   bitches. I got my eye on you al Qaeda.
>   Character 4: What are those negroes doing in first class? Must be rappers. I
>   better keep an eye on Sarah.
>   Character 5: Me no trust 'em whiteman. Me better not go to bathroom,
>   Whiteman will steal my seat and call it Manifest Destiny.
>   Character 6 (snorting and neighing with subtitles): At least you Indians got
>   casinos. You corn eating bastards.
>   Character 7 (asleep holding newspaper with headline, "America United"]

This sketch illustrates and renders salient the one-to-one mapping of language and peoples, or buffalo, where particular racial and ethnic differences are juxtaposed, and in this juxtaposition they emphasize difference, including linguistic difference; Indians with Hollywood Injun English, buffalo with snorts, White and Black characters speaking different styles of English and Arab-American characters speaking Arabic. Each set of characters, with the exception of the first set, expresses different social anxieties, anxieties indexical of a history of discrimination and racism in America. This diversity becomes unified in the final frame by the newspaper heading, "America United." The linguistic performances themselves also provocatively underscore language's function as a sign of difference, where the speech of each character reflects an imagined interpretation of the identities of the characters in the preceding row. The spatio-temporal linear movement of the sketch, from front of the airplane to the back of the plane, also suggests a scaling of citizenship, from most recent immigrant (non-English-speaking Arab-American) to most indigenous (snorting buffalo). The relationality of the characters, and their characterizations, are scaled in relation to each other as the camera pans from first row to last row. The sketch then portrays a scaling of social-linguistic difference that resonates well beyond the television screen on which it's projected.

To unpack the social work such scalings of difference – and fluency - perform, linking linguistic form and cultural logics (epistemological assumptions, ideological frames), the first section provides background and motivation for the focus on scale and fluency, the case of the American Indian in film, and the role of ideology. The second section presents evidence of initial sociolinguistic scalings of fluency in American Indian performances on screen. I then complicate this scaling in relation to film genres,

individual characterizations (authorial, actorial, directorial), and discursive contexts. The final section concludes by considering some of the implications that this research has beyond the enfigurement (or personification) of American Indians and their speech, how the scaling of fluency might matter in relation to other enfigurements (such Asian-Americans; see chapters in Reyes and Lo 2008) and other enfiguring projects (such as the entextualization of American Indian speech in academic genres and perceptions/assessments of language ability as an indicator of knowledge and cognitive development by non-professionals).

1. Background: And the injun goes how?

1.1 Scale and fluency

"White Thunder, a man around forty, speaks less English than Menomini, and that is a strong indictment, for his Menomini is atrocious. His vocabulary is small; his inflections are often barbarous; he constructs sentences of a few threadbare models. He may be said to speak no language tolerably. His case is not uncommon among younger men, even when they speak but little English." (Bloomfield 1927)

So, how will the scaling of fluency be demonstrated? Scaling is a kind of measurement, a weighing of difference and variation. In much of the recent linguistic anthropological literature, scaling has emerged as a geographic relationship or a ranking of difference hierarchically (Blommaert; Collins; Lempert 2012; Wortham 2012), a recognition and evaluation of variation along some axis of comparison. For enfigurement, the scaling of fluency happens relationally, through contrast and comparison of grammatical variation within a code, interactional variation across characters, and discursively in the narrative framing of the films' characters. Let's begin by assuming a standard-average scale for evaluating performance where the linguistic ground and expectation is some standard-average variety of English, often referred to as SAE (Standard Average English; Lippi-Green 2012). The taken-for-granted grammar would be a conventional structuring that prescriptivistism would predict. Variation from this conventional SAE variety then indicates an opportunity to get scaled; as less fluent, as different, as child-like or immature, or even dim-witted.

The quote from Bloomfield above is an example of this kind of scaling. Statements such as "speaks less English than Menomini" IS a "strong indictment" when the evaluation of White Thunder's Menomini is also equally "atrocious." In particular, this statement emphasizes **grammatical** deviations that Bloomfield takes as indicative of an inability to speak any language well. This quote also exemplifies the enduring frames of barbarism and incompetence, not just in relation to indigenous languages and speakers (though in this case it's not the language that is barbarous, but the speech of the speaker) but also in relation to American Indian speakers' use, or ill-use, of English grammar.

Fluency is also an evaluation of communicative competence arising from contrasts in character performances and statements about ability. In film, the variation appears in relation to the linguistic varieties used, how these varieties pattern across characters, and character commentary. For example, a line from the first Billy Jack movie, *The Born Losers*, goes something like, "Hey kemosabe didn't they teach you to read in squaw school?" suggesting of course that Billy Jack, an Indian character, is illiterate, uneducated, and thus incompetent.

Communicative competence is "knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical but also as appropriate" (Hymes 1972). The scaling of fluency then happens in relation to evaluations of communicative competence, such that variation in knowing when, where, how, and so forth to use language, or not knowing how to talk and speak appropriately, AND knowing how or being able to evaluate others' speech acts (to recognize and gauge variation), INDICATE how fluency is being scaled, and thus provides an opportunity for aligning linguistic difference with social difference in the overall scaling of difference.

In this way, competence is an evaluation of variation of the GAP between EXPECTED FORM OR PRACTICE and ACTUAL FORM practice, where what is expected is evidenced through the discursive gestures of other characters and their

linguistic style(s). In the films, we will see statements about language use, discourse relating certain practices and identity, and tacit evaluations of fluency in relation to particular enfigurements of difference. The concept fluency then provides a way to navigate the weighing of grammatical and communicative variation in and across languages and performers.

The films analyzed demonstrate a range of linguistic variation. As mentioned, this variation appears grammatically, interactionally (in dialogue), and discursively, especially in relation to statements identifying differences and expectations. The grammatical elements vary in terms of morphological, syntactic and lexical structure, and to some extent prosodically. Variation also happens in relation to code choice, in relation to code-switching (and some code-mixing), in relation to style shifts in English, and in relation to "mocking" (parody). At the level of interaction, such code-level variation is often accompanied by metapragmatic commentary, instructions about how one should talk, how to address certain individuals, and how to comport one's self. The use of pauses also indexes interactional difference. Finally, variation in behavior, or how one should behave linguistically or otherwise, gets figured discursively, in statements about how to be X or Y and in comparative remarks. The rest of the paper will address each of these areas of sociolinguistic variation in turn, as we come to understand how they manage the scaling of fluency, and ultimately the scaling of difference.

1.2 *Film and Indians*

Why film and why focus on American Indian characters in film? Motivating the focus on American Indian figures is the rather extensive literature analyzing representations of American Indians (see Strong 2004, 2012 for an extensive overview and bibliography), and especially their portrayal in film (Bataille and Silet 1980, 1985; Bird 2001; Kilpatrick 1999; Lefkowitz 2000; Meek 2006; Price 1973; Purdy 2001; Rollins and O'Connor 2003; Slotkin, 1992; Strong 1996, 2003). Indian characters are also racialized in ways that differ from other racialized characters, beginning with different narratives of origin and different symbolic (as well as pragmatic) functions in the national imaginary. This scholarship elaborates tropes of miscegenation, extinction, noble savagery, ecological sensitivity, authenticity and/or purity, and mysticism. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, a scholar who focuses on films and representation, has remarked on – though not analyzed -- how language has been used to differentiate Indian and non-Indian characters in cinematic performances. She notes,

> "Since all voices in film come equipped with an accent and an intonation, a voice can make a comment that is very different from the words spoken... For instance, if an Indian says, "White man speaks with forked tongue," he is doing more than simply dropping articles. A command of English has been written out of the script already; in addition, the delivery of such a line was usually either ponderously slow or angry, a translation into voice of… the stereotypes of Native Americans as dimwitted or violent, or possibly both." (Kilpatrick 1999:37)

Because the trajectory of this investigation will involve discovering the impact such films have had on the way people imagine and expect Indians to be, at least to the extent possible through interviews and surveys, the data for this part of the project come from films that meet at least one of three criteria which indicate popularity and a national (even international) presence: critical acclaim, box-office success (high grossing), and award nominations.[3]

Below is a chart of the films that were analyzed overall, arranged by decade and covering the years from 1939 to 2013.

Figure 1: Chart of films analyzed by decade

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[3] Information on films was compiled using Bataille and Silet 1985, Kilpatrick 1999, Sackett 1996, and www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/.
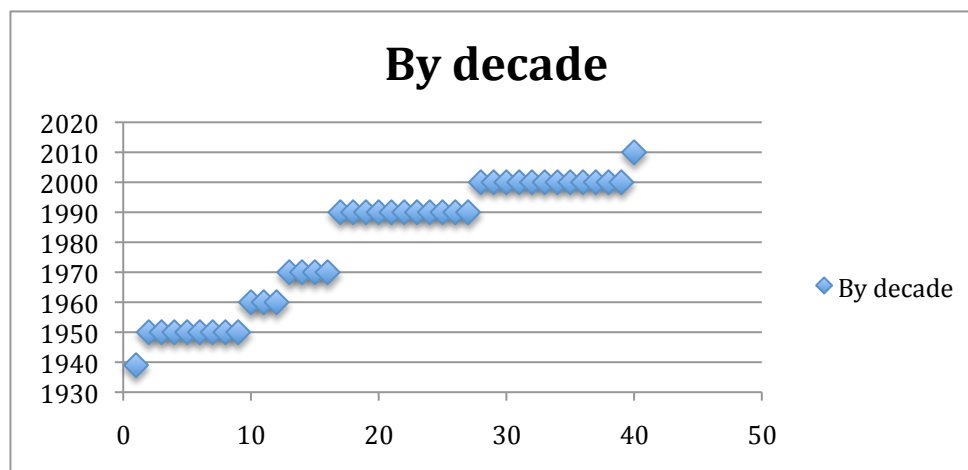
By decade

The early films were primarily Westerns, from 1939-1960. Then in the 1960s and 1970s, films with Indian characters transitioned to dramas and comedies, with the 1980s being a decade of no Indian presence, at least not in terms of the three criteria. One constant genre throughout this entire time period is that of family films. Family films have also been some of the top grossing productions, films like *Peter Pan*, *Pocahontas*, *Ice Age*, and *Night at the Museum*, all of which were among the top 10 of highest grossing films in the years of their release. Given that this project is concerned with the linguistic repertoires of each film, this next figure highlights the range of languages performed across all of the films in this project. It shows that early films incorporated an array of indigenous and Indo-European languages, along with the particular style I've called Hollywood Injun English (Meek 2006).

Figure 2: Hollywood language(s)
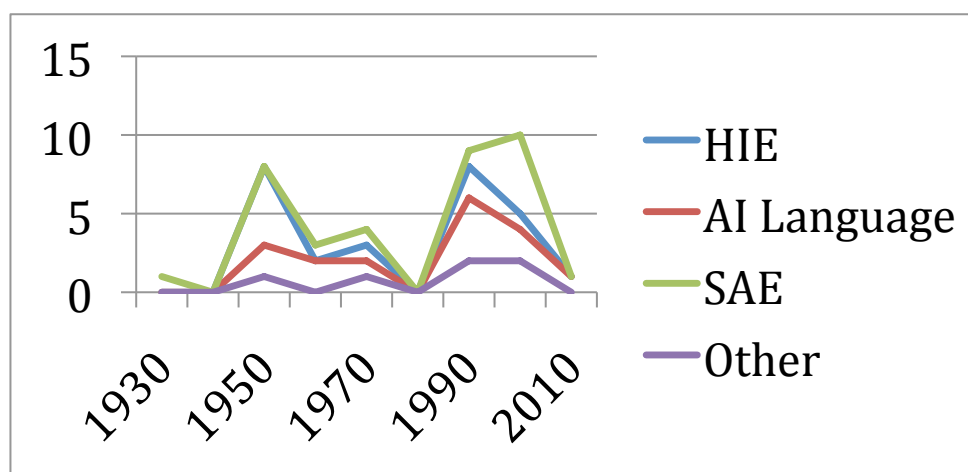
Cinematic portrayals of Indians and their speech drop off in the late 1970's and 1980's. At this point in cinematic history you have the rise of the franchise (Rocky films, Jaws, Star Wars, Indian Jones) and a shift in interest, from Westerns to Science Fiction (though then merged in the 21st century in various guises, but most obviously in the film *Cowboys and Aliens* starring Daniel Craig). Most interesting is the fact that it is the early Western genre - despite its pervasive nationalist and misceganistic message - that provides an

equally, if not more, complicated sociolinguistic representation as those performed in late 20th and early 21st century films.[4]

1.3 Ideology

Finally, the linguistic variation found in these films (and elsewhere) gets scaled in relation to three ideological domains: linguistic relativity, authenticity, and temporality. Each domain, though intersecting and mutually constitutive, highlights particular linguistic elements or variations. For example, linguistic relativity emphasizes an incommensurability of meaning between languages, such that certain words will be untranslatable, such as "Destarde," John Wayne's character's wife's name in *Hondo*. Similarly, in *Hombre*, a minor character instructs Paul Newman's character to "cut his hair and act like a white man, no matter what language you think in." Authenticity is the ideological tenet guiding the earliest portrayals of American Indian speech as different. In film, it is intended to reflect difference, linguistic and cultural, between Indians and non-Indians, consider the first encounter between the cowboy and the Indian (Little Foot?) in *The Indian in the Cupboard*.   And finally, different temporalities are at play throughout these films, framed as historical, or mythical, or contemporary. Historical time predominates in films with Indians, placing them most frequently in the Old West, when Indians still spoke their Native languages and had yet to learn English fluently (such films also underscore the expectation that all American citizens know and speak English competently). Negotiations and first encounters highlight these temporalities, as illustrated by the conversation between Magua and 'White Hair' in *Last of the Mohicans* or the first encounter between Pocahontas and John Smith in either *The New World* or Disney's *Pocahontas*. Fluency and non-fluency, and degrees therein, serve as indexes of assimilation, civilization, and modernity.

2. Representin' language in the old west: enfiguring the nation & vanishing Indians

> "Genuine Native languages were rarely used, and when a white hero learned to speak an Indian language, the script conveniently reproduced it in English." (Kilpatrick 1999:38)[5]

Westerns were -- and are -- the dominant cinematic genre portraying Native Americans up until the 1960s (Slotkin 1992). Preceded by some early versions in silent film (by D.W. Griffith), *Stagecoach* marked the emergence of Western "talkies" on the American screen. Film scholars note that linguistically the majority of the Indian characters remain stoic and silent in the background of these films. They often literally framed the non-Indian actor performing an Indian character, grouped around him on foot or flanking him on horseback. (Kilpatrick 1999, Slotkin 1992). The tropes of the day emphasized nationalism and the defeat of the Other, in this case, through the image and voice of the vanquished and vanishing Indian.

In these films, we hear the first articulations of Hollywood Injun English, or HIE, a slow cadence and a not-quite fluent variety of English. According to film scholars, the goal was to differentiate the Indian characters, indexing their Indianness, by having them speak in a way that sounded more "authentic", like something you might hear in real life. So, along with playing English dialogue in reverse in order to create an "Indian-sounding" style of speech (Kilpatrick on *Scouts to the Rescue* (1939)), Hollywood introduced a version of HIE to mark the difference between an Indian character and everyone else.

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[4] While the focus of this analysis is primarily on the film genre, Westerns, and because categorical boundaries are seldom, if ever, impermeable, I will include those films that portray Indians as being in the West, exclusively or at some point in the film's narrative.

[5] Hollywood also used alien-sounding language "that was rarely a genuine native language" to index and "other" Native Americans for mainstream audiences (Kilpatrick 1999:37). To create an "authentic" sounding Indian, Kilpatrick notes that in *Scouts to the Rescue* (1939), Indian characters' English dialogue was run backwards/in reverse to mark linguistic difference (ibidem).

However, the most widely circulating and highest grossing film of the time was not a Western. It was Disney's *Peter Pan*. The speech of the Indian Chief in this animated film spoke HIE. There are deletions or omissions of certain elements, replacement of subject pronouns with object pronouns, the use of specialized morphemes, "heap" and "um," and the avoidance of contractions. As I've argued elsewhere (Meek 2006), these marked linguistic performances pattern fairly systematically across genres and medium. In Westerns, though, these non-standard English portrayals were used to mark a character as being a "real" or "authentic" Indian because real Indians were imagined as speaking a "broken," "less grammatical" and "less fluent" style in real life.

The film *Hondo* nicely illustrates the use of HIE while at the same time highlighting a sociological difference between characters. Here John Wayne's character, Hondo, is half-Apache and half-White. He speaks English in his typical John Wayne-style. Vittorio, an Apache character, speaks English in the HIE style. In the scene transcribed below, Vittorio (played by Australian actor Michael Pate) tests Hondo. (HIE style is bolded.)

Vittorio: Don't shoot, White Man. Small Warrior has knife. He sleeps with it.
Angie: You were in the house?
Vittorio**: In house. Wickiup empty place without sons. Mine empty wickiup**.
Hondo: You better tell that brave back at the creek bank not to walk in the water.
I almost killed him a few minutes ago.
Vittorio: (shouts in Apache and shadowy figure moves away.)
Hondo: Almost threw a shot at him.
Vittorio**: He very young. Will learn**.
Hondo: If he lives.
Vittorio**: You are Apache. Now, hear me, pony-soldiers are near. Soon will be fought remembered fight. They will come here first. You will not go with them, White Man.**

Not only is there a contrast in speech styles here, there is a contrast in social type. The linguistic contrast marks a difference between those characters that are "pure" Indians and those that are not, being depicted as either "half" or as "adopted." In this case, the "pure" Indian characters are enfigured as less fluent than John Wayne's Hondo character, which suggests that they are less adaptable to modern, English-speaking society while a "halfbreed" like Hondo finds membership easily in either group.

Along with the use of HIE, another sociolinguistic dimension present in these early, popular westerns also valences Indian characters' speech as dysfluent – in comparison with the speech of "real" English-speaking (American) characters, and audiences. This contrast appears between characters that are bilingual. In a later scene from *Hondo*, English varieties and an "indigenous" variety (intended to be Apache) are performed. Note, however, that Hondo is attributed with fluency in both English and Apache while Silva (played by Rodolfo Acosta, a Mexcian actor) commands only one language fluently, "Apache."

Silva mocks Hondo, captured, in Apache.
Hondo: [to dog] Beat it, Sam! [dog runs away]
Silva: White man understand Apache.
Hondo: A little.
Silva: He know now how he die.
Hondo: Your coup stick shows many scalps.
Silva: Yes, many. Soon, you.
Hondo: A man's scalp would look outta place there. You took all yours from squaws, papoose, and dogs.
[Silva kicks Hondo in the face.]
Hondo: Your lodge should be real proud of you. (switches to "Apache" to address group)
[Apche group laughs]
Silva: (Yells in "Apache" then switches to English) You will take long time die.

In this scene, Silva speaks HIE and "Apache" while Hondo switches between "Apache" and English. Indirectly this reinforces two dominant tropes of difference: blood and modernity. Being a "halfbreed," Hondo's bloodedness anchors him in "both worlds" as it were with a capacity for both existences. Silva, as a 'full-blood,' can only truly function in his "Apache" world, only partially able to communicate with modern citizens.

Kilpatrick claims that "genuine" Native languages were seldom used in Westerns. This isn't quite true (see Peterson 2011, 2013 on Navajo in film). For the Westerns analyzed here, Native languages were present along with other Indo-European languages, such as Spanish and French. In fact, these films often reflected the multilingual realities of their eras much more genuinely than later films and other genres. One exception, of course, is the 1990's film *Dances With Wolves*, which included lengthy exchanges in Lakota. The erasure of such linguistic diversity doesn't begin to fade from westerns until the 1970s, along with the genre itself.

Western-style dramas, such as *Hidalgo* and *Dances with Wolves*, also reflect a multilingual atmosphere, with actors speaking varieties of Sioux and English. However, in such cases, subtitles take up the burden of marking difference and scaling fluency. In *Hidalgo*, for example, an early scene on board a train taking Frank Hopkins (played by Viggo Mortensen), an Indian character, Chief Eagle Horn, and Buffalo Bill Cody eastward portrays them having a conversation about land and horses. Initiated by Chief Eagle Horn, Frank Hopkins translates his request for Buffalo Bill. The subtitles, necessary for translating non-English utterances, are carried through the interaction, marking a difference among Chief Eagle Horn, Frank Hopkins and Buffalo Bill Cody. (Periods indicate pauses, and caps indicate stress.)

Chief (Sioux, subtitled): Far Rider, I must speak to Long Hair. Please speak United States for me.

Frank (English, subtitled): Chief says. his people are vanishing. faster than he can earn silver with you.

Nate (English, subtitled): Can't this wait?

Buffalo Bill (English, subtitled): Curb your tongue, Nate! Let the chief speak.
[Nate leaves]
Chief: (speaking Sioux)

Frank (translating, with subtitles): Chief Eagle Horn says that our nation, HIS nation's hoop is broken and scattered, the buffalo herds have been destroyed, elk and deer are gone, and now the government is. rounding up our wild horses. they plan to . shoot them too . before the first snows . they put a price on the native horses . too great for a poor Indian to meet . Chief says that . perhaps his people have lost their lands not their spirit and he asks you for your help.

Chief Eagle Horn's speech is represented in a HIE style even though he is performing a Native American language, referring to Frank as "Far Rider" when his Indian name is Blue Child and to English as "United States." Mortensen's performance of his translation suggests an oratorical style with conspicuous pausing. Mortensen's character also speaks/translates for 37 seconds while Chief Eagle Horn speaks for only 7 seconds; Mortensen speaks 5 times longer, suggesting that Siouan languages are radically more efficient languages than English and that English predominates in conversation. This scene also allows us to imagine a degree of translatability and commensurability between English and Native languages.

Commensurability, however, remains a marginal trope in most of these films. In this next excerpt from *Hondo*, it is the incommensurability of languages (and interlocutors) that is foregrounded. In an attempt to discourage the female character from remaining on her ranch, and remaining vulnerable to attack from the Apaches, Hondo remarks on how the Apaches have no word for "lie."

Hondo: We broke that treaty, us whites. There's no word in the Apache language
for lie and they've been lied to. And if they rise there won't be a white left in the
territory.

Woman: They won't bother me.

This theme of incommensurability appears frequently in these older Westerns along with
other ideas about Indianness such as a sensitivity to nature unknown to the White Man.
This "incommensurability" however is also juxtaposed with the ability of other characters
to render commensurable certain transactions. In this excerpt from *Winchester '73*, we see
(and hear) Jimmy Stewart's character, Mr. Lin McAdam, trading with an Indian character.
As McAdam negotiates the exchange, he shifts his style of speech from a standard variety
to HIE. We assume this is in order to accommodate the Indian character's lack of fluency
in English and to facilitate the exchange.

McAdam: Say, uh, **you want sell**?
Indian: [**Grunts**]
McAdam: **How much?**
Indian: **One dollar**.
McAdam: **One dollar**. [Man takes off his necklace, and Earp hands the Indian
man a one dollar coin]. One dollar.
[Indian character bites the coin; the crowd laughs]
Indian: One dollar.
[Everyone laughs]
McAdam: For a minute I thought I had him beat!

Elinor Ochs (1992) has discussed how linguistic acts of accommodation signal status
differences. In this case, Mr. McAdam's linguistic shift can be interpreted as an act of
accommodation toward the Indian character; though is it because Mr. Lin considers the
Indian to be of higher status than himself? Probably not. If anything, the accommodation
indicates a lack of competence in English on the part of the Indian character, paralleling
acts of accommodation practiced by (middle-class) U.S. mothers in relation to their
children. This sequence contrasts with the earlier clip from *Hondo* where Vittorio and
Silva both speak HIE to John Wayne's character who maintains his John Wayne-style of
speech even though he can apparently speak and understand Apache. Again, this case
illustrates a scaling of fluency related to a scaling of difference by status and ethnicity-race.
Both Vittorio and Silva are leaders and elders, and thus of higher status than Hondo who is
a "halfbreed" character. However, rather than respecting their status as elders and leaders
by switching to Apache, Hondo's character remains English-speaking. On the other hand,
the fact that he does not switch to HIE could suggest an element of respect, though more
clearly marks the historical (temporal) nature of the exchange, and perhaps even the
language his character thinks in (a nod to *Hombre* and Paul Newman's mixed race
character).
    These Westerns build relationalities through linguistic performances. Yet the
sociolinguistic relation is not constituted by simply contrasting some Standard Average
English with a non-standard variety, whether it be "broken" English as with HIE or a non-
English variety as with Lakota or Navajo or "Apache." Differences in style, multilingual
performances, code-switching, and narratives about (linguistic) knowledge all complicate
the sociolinguistic representation and provide dimensions for evaluating fluency and
scaling differences. The scaling of difference happens indirectly through the
relationalities built in the performance and their juxtaposition with other performances.
These relationalities can then be scaled across a range of other types of differences, such
as "blood," "heritage," and "knowledge."

3.   Mocking NDNs: imitation & parody from the 1970s onward

Throughout Western films, the characterization of American Indians is fairly consistent, representing Indians as defeated, socially marginal, less fluent and incompetent. Such portrayals when contextualized cinematically and historically may come across as more "accurate" and "authentic" instead of demeaning and pejorative even though he linguistic enfigurements of these characterizations maintain attributions of dysfluency and incompetence as a primordial dimension of Indianness. In more contemporary films and genres, the social work that the scaling of fluency achieved in these older films takes on new life, both reifying and subverting these traditional tropes.

In the 1990's film, Con Air, the deadliest convicts are being moved by plane to some secret location to carry out the rest of their sentences. They are a rather heterogeneous bunch, though depicting fairly typified representational categories – a hispanic character convicted of rape, a generic white, "silence of the lambs" type serial killer character who has masterminded their escape, a couple of African-American characters, including Pinball Parker played by Dave Chappelle, convicted of a range of violent crimes and finally a more-or-less silent American Indian character. In the scene with the American Indian character, Pinball Parker sets the American Indian character on fire as a distraction so that the other convicts can initiate their hostile take-over of the jet. The enfigurement of the American Indian character happens largely through the linguistic performance of Pinball Parker who switches between styles, including a pseudo-mock HIE.

Pinball Parker (looking at unnamed man):
      (average pitch) What's up Cochise?
      (lowers pitch) How! (raises hand)
      (average pitch) Hey there man, I'ze just fuckin' with you man,
    don't get all [1 second pause]
      (lowers pitch) Wounded Knee on me and shit [one grunt]

Unnamed man (stares straight ahead): (silent)

Conversely the film Maverick, based on the 1970's television series, parodies HIE and the Western view of the American Indian. In a brilliant performance by Graham Greene, his Indian character not only subverts the traditional enfigurement of Indians in film, as dysfluent and incompetent, but redirects this projection onto the unsuspecting persona of the main character, Maverick, played by Mel Gibson. In this scene, the "noble savage" Chief Joseph is negotiating a transaction with a Russian aristocrat where he, the aristocrat, will have the opportunity to enjoy the "greatest Western thrill of all," that is, "kill Injun."

Aristocrat: What is greatest Western thrill?
Indian: Kill injun.
Aristrocrat: Kill Injun?!
Indian: Shh, shh.
Aristrocrat: Is it legal here?
Indian: White man been doing it for years. But much wampum needed.
Aristocrat: How much?
Indian: Uh, 1,000
Aristocrat: 1,000. You would not have to tie him? It does not seem sporting.
Indian: Oh nonono, him loose but easy hit. Dying anyway. Smoke too much tobacco. (coughs) Very sick. Put out of misery. Deal?
Aristocrat: Deal.

In this film, Graham Greene's character switches between a number of linguistic varieties, from French and a standard English to HIE and a Native American language. His virtuosity goes undetected by most of the other characters, with the exception of Mel Gibson's Maverick who relies on Greene's character's ability to perform different personae when needed. When playing Indian, Greene's character – and perhaps Greene himself – mocks the non-Indian characters who expect such a performance. Though intertextually aligned with previous Indian characters in Westerns, Greene's performance

transforms the dysfluent "Injun" into a successful and fluent businessman. His fluency subverts the scaling of fluencies and persons evidenced in other Westerns (and beyond), flipping the scale by performing fluently multiple varieties and, within and across contexts, contrasting his repertoire with both Mel Gibson's performance and the Russian Aristocrats, and presumably the North American audience generally.

Throughout most of these films, Hollywood Indian English can be heard. In some cases it is used for comedic effect (as with Graham Greene's character in *Maverick*), and in others for authentic coloring (as in dramas like Wes Studi's portrayal of Magua in *Last of the Mohicans* or Little Foot/Bear in *The Indian in the Cupboard*; see Meek 2006 for examples). In some cases, especially children's films, the use of HIE indicates fantasy and magic, as with Disney's *Peter Pan*. And in other cases, especially Westerns, HIE indicates non-fluency. In all of these cinematic representations the linguistic differences – despite varying within and across characters, genres, and films – indicate significant social and cultural differences. These alignments of linguistic form with Indian and non-Indian figures then directly and indirectly coordinate a sociological ranking of speakers and languages, a scaling of fluency that translates into a scaling of difference.

4. The countdown: ideals and everyday implications

Where else might one find fluency scaled, what other kinds of projects revolve around the scaling of fluency? One of my favorite diagrams for illustrating language shift in the Yukon Territory (Canada) is a black and white image; a pie chart and two bar charts depicting degrees of fluency and speaker status (from speaker to non-speaker) by categories of age (see Meek 2011:52). It is not a detailed enumeration of speaker bodies, languages, and use practices like the tables and charts that the Canadian government has produced through the use of a national census. It is a visual portrait of loss with imaginable, but not real, numbers. It is a representation of speaker ability and a scaling of fluency. Such images are a crucial part of endangered language projects. They indicate the severity of loss, the degree of need for funding, and the overall "plight" of an indigenous language. Funding agencies rely on such demonstrations in order to prioritize language endangerment projects; the fewer the speakers, the better the chances for funding (Moore 2006; Jaffe 2007).

Muehlmann in her work with a Cucapá community pointed out the paradox of such discursive "countdown" logics, where the counting of "speakers" defines the trajectory of endangerment and establishes the recognition of the community itself by the Mexican government. Cucapá youth themselves creatively play with perceptions of fluency by using Cucapá groserias (swearwords) to demonstrate fluency, to mark their identity as Cucapá , and to authoritatively perform and establish this membership for non-Cucapá audiences (NGO workers and government officials). In the Yukon, where I've done research on language revitalization and socialization, the attention to indigenous languages is less provocative, but equally earnest. That is, elders, "stakeholders", government workers and politicians have an investment in the preservation and revitalization of the indigenous languages still spoken. They are committed to increasing speaker fluency and increasing numbers of speakers. However, these goals and accompanying ideals enfigure participants in particular ways, scaling competence and aboriginal language fluency in ways that could potentially undermine the ultimate goals (Meek forthcoming; see also Orcutt-Gachiri 2013). Briefly, learners, and speakers get enfigured and scaled – intentionally or not – through the process of entextualization.

Initial steps toward recruitment and retention of speakers for aboriginal languages in the Yukon focused more on documenting the grammars of these indigenous languages and creating texts rather than developing a rich curriculum and committed staff. Through these grammars and texts, the configuration of an ideal-speaker-hearer began to emerge. In this case, the grammar was "pure" and morphologically complex, as were the texts. They adhered to a style of representation institutionalized in the Americanist tradition, a tradition originating with Boas and modeled after his collaborations with First Nations citizens like George Hunt (Carr and Meek 2013; Briggs and Bauman 1999). The texts were uncomplicated in that code-switches were erased, English words were often replaced

with indigenous words, and linguistic theories of sound mediated orthographic conventions (Choksi and Meek forthcoming).

Texts for language learners, however, relied on English in order to facilitate understanding. Simple indigenous language phrases were represented on the left side of the page with English equivalents on the right. As I've noted elsewhere (Meek 2010), there was an emphasis on nouns and phrases, with minimal elaboration of verb forms or conjugations or morphological variation. One exception is the lesson devoted to possession. The conventions informing these texts derive from collaborations between the director of the Yukon Native Language Centre and indigenous women who were (and are) training to become certified aboriginal language teachers. The director provides the format (and phrases and topics) and the teacher trainees translate the words into their indigenous language. These texts entail assumptions about aboriginal language teachers and assumptions about aboriginal language learners. There is an assumption that the language learner will be able to read English, though only simple forms, and there's an overt assumption that language instruction should emphasize orality over literacy.

The idealization of an aboriginal speaker, however, plays out in many other ways as well. In the government diagrams and charts, the ideal speaker is depicted as elderly. Though not all elderly speakers are imagined as ideal. Elsewhere I've analyzed an interaction at a Kaska House of Language workshop where all elders are positioned as experts (Feliciano-Santos and Meek 2012; see also Meek forthcoming). Just because they are all equally positioned does not mean they are equally attended to. In this situation, the expertise of one elder was challenged indirectly by the inattentive elders in the audience. The valorization, or lack thereof, of children's school-style of Kaska also indicates a ranking and idealization of speakers in a way that conforms to certain standards and understandings of fluency, competence, and expectation that enfigure Kaska as an aboriginal language (Meek 2010). Relatedly, we might consider whether or not the enfiguring dimensions of language revitalization projects and discourses are mediated by other institutional scalings of fluency and competence, like cinema, and if so, how?

5. Conclusion: the "plight" of the Navi

In an article by Norman K. Denzin, he reflected on the meaningfulness of cowboys and Indians, recognizing that "Tonto emerged from [his] childhood memories as a stand-in for all Native Americans" (Denzin 2002). This raises again the question of how; how do these images impact our childhoods, socialize us into certain expectations and interpretations, and how is it they grab us in the first place and stay with us until the end? Something meaningful and enduring is happening in and through these mediated experiences.

Gaining mass through the speaking bodies of individuals or the animated tongues of cartoon characterizations, difference becomes personified in and through their voices. But what is difference? For now, let's say it's a be(com)ing-in-contrast, a salience emerging from a situation/context-of-use that makes re-cognizing possible. In this case, difference works in unison with similarity; it is an intertextual, poetic project where the dynamics of individual creativity and the conservancy of conventional practice are an ensemble, a balancing act, mutually entangled in or constituting a single word, a unique utterance or an oral narrative. To deviate too far from the conventions of practice would render the articulation inarticulate, unparseable, unrecognizable, and thus uninterpretable (at least to some degree). However, to not deviate at all would result in a doll-like, Susie-talks-a lot version of communication, where the variability of our linguistic repertoire – like a Chrissy doll's hair -- would be entirely pre-determined. Difference then becomes scaled (measured, balanced) in relation to these twin projects of creativity and normativity; some differences becoming a sign of virtuosity while other differences an indication of aberrancy, of non-fluency. Furthermore, paralleling analyses of modernity in relation to primitivity (e.g. Latour, Derrida, deCerteau), we can begin to conceptualize "fluency" as the backdrop or ground that provides contrast for definitions/assessments (evaluations) of competence, standards and norms of linguistic practice, and (sociolinguistic) expectation.

Fluency is the scale by which speaker-hood is measured, language use is weighed, and language futures predicted. It is the sociolinguistic enfigurement of difference.

In 2009, a film was released that set a box-office record, replacing "Titanic" as the highest grossing movie ever made. The movie was *Avatar*, where white people speak English and blue aliens speak a language fabricated uniquely for their own personification.[6] While *The Chappelle Show* clip that began this paper illustrates the sociolinguistic complexity and ideological salience of the language-difference nexus, *Avatar* seems to unreflexively take the equation for granted, reifying the old tropes of the Western genre yet avoiding this genre's stereotypic and obviously racializing aspects by creating its own indigenous other. An "honest trailer" parody renders most keenly the tropic parallelisms between the Navi and the vanishing American Indian. Apparently some storylines, like some linguistic representations and styles of voice, are too good to let die. On the other hand, Indian characters, unlike Navi characters, have real-life corresondences. Relationalities can be established between the imagined and the actual for Indianness (or Blackness or Asianness) in ways that can't materialize for the Navi.

In Meek 2011, I argued that the framing of (imagined) American Indian linguistic practices within a logic of failure established a set of expectations for real American Indian practices that normalized failure. That is, any endeavor that a person or persons of American Indian descent might pursue would be expected at the outset to fail: Failure to acquire English, failure to be independent or sovereign, failure to financially succeed, failure to revitalize their heritage languages. Such expectations, as Phil Deloria provocatively illustrated, limit American Indian participation in "non-Indian" domains. This limiting of participation has a long and fraught history, which I won't go into here, but the point is that these expectations, like the quote from Bloomfield regarding a Menomini young man earlier, set the stage.

Jane Hill's work on "mock Spanish" makes a similar point (cf. Hill 2008). She ultimately argues that academics like Bloomfield or Margaret Mead, writers like James Fenimore Cooper, and screenwriters like John Fusco (*Spirit*, *Hidalgo*, *Young Guns*), whether directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, through their work, their texts, their public, shared and often institutionally sanctioned actions conventionalize, reproduce, and empower the standards, norms and values that institutionally scale actions and assessments of actions. Their institutionally-mediated enfigurements of Indianness contribute to a logic that ultimately renders Indians so lacking in fluency that the stage goes silent.[7]

Rather than silence, contemporary projects of language revitalization and recreation, indigenous and minority media projects are attempting to breathe life back into aboriginal languages worldwide. These projects also participate in the scaling of fluency in a variety of ways. The previous section has focused on some of these dimensions and the complex ideological relationships that arise as a result of the social and cultural vagaries of human life, vagaries that make life meaningful and figures interpretable. As linguists, anthropologists and scholars who are concerned with both linguistic form and language ideologies in socio-political context, I expect our work to carefully and systematically investigate the relationship among these elements, among the salience of such linguistic gesturing, the enfigurement of widely circulating tropes of difference, and the real-life effects that these enfigured logics accent and accentuate, including our own expectations.

Filmography

1. **Con Air** (1997)
Director: Simon West
Writer: Scott Rosenberg

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[6] YouTube link, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUTtt14G31c

[7] This is an allusion to the disappearing Indian trope and the silent, stoic Indian trope and the pre-historic/pre-contact, non-SAE-speaking Indian image, captured most efficiently, uncritically, and poignantly in the 1970's environmental ad featuring Iron Eyes Cody.

2. ***Hidalgo*** (2005)
Director: Joe Johnston
Writer: John Fusco
3. ***Hondo*** (1953)
Director: John Farrow
Writer: James Edward Grant, based on book by Louis L'Amour
4. ***Maverick*** (1994)
Director: Richard Donner
Writer: William Goldman
5. ***Peter Pan*** (1953)
Directors: Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, and Wilfred Jackson
Writers: Ted Sears, Bill Peet, Joe Rinaldi, Erdman Penner, Winston Hibler, Milt Banta, and Ralph Wright, based on play by J.M. Barrie
6. ***Smoke Signals*** (1998)
Director: Chris Eyre
Writer: Sherman Alexie
7. ***Winchester '73*** (1950)
Director: Anthony Mann
Writers: Borden Chase and Robert L. Richards
 Television:
1.***Chappelle's Show*** episode (first aired February 19, 2003)

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