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AUTHOR Reyhner, Jon, Ed.; Martin, Joseph, Ed.; Lockard, Louise, Ed.; Gilbert, W. Sakiestewa, Ed.

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## ABSTRACT

This volume compiles 11 papers indicative of the new directions that indigenous education is taking in North America. Three sections focus on language, culture, and teaching; indigenous perspectives on indigenous education; and issues surrounding teaching methods. The papers are: (1) "Teaching Dine Language and Culture in Navajo Schools: Voices from the Community" (Ann Batchelder); (2) "Language Revitalization in Navajo/English Dual Language Classrooms" (Mary Ann Goodluck, Louise Lockard, Darlene Yazzie); (3) "Racing against Time: A Report on the Leupp Navajo Immersion Project" (Michael Fillerup); (4) "Community-Based Native Teacher Education Programs" (Connie Heimbecker, Sam Minner, Greg Prater); (5) "Measuring Language Dominance and Bilingual Proficiency Development of Tarahumara Children" (Carla Paciotto); (6) "Post-Colonial Recovering and Healing" (Angelina Weenie); (7) "Observations on Response towards Indigenous Cultural Perspectives as Paradigms in the Classroom" (Stephen Greymorning); (8) "Visual Metaphor, Cultural Knowledge, and the New Rhetoric" (Robert N. St. Clair); (9) "An Examination of Western Influences on Indigenous Language Teaching" (J. Dean Mellow); (10) "Teaching English to American Indians" (Jon Reyhner); and (11) "Charter Schools for American Indians". (Brian Bielenberg). (Contains references in each paper and contributor profiles.) (SV)

# Learn in Beauty

*Indigenous Education for a New Century*

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Louise Lockard

W. Sakiestewa Gilbert



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***Learn  
In  
Beauty***

***Indigenous Education for a New Century***

edited by  
**Jon Reyhner  
Joseph Martin  
Louise Lockard  
W. Sakiestewa Gilbert**

**Papers Published In Honor Of  
Regents' Professor Dr. Gina Cantoni  
Upon Her Retirement From**



**Flagstaff, Arizona  
2000**

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Northern Arizona University's Center for Excellence in Education has published a series of monographs on indigenous issues. These include *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* edited by Gina Cantoni (1996), *Teaching Indigenous Languages* edited by Jon Reyhner (1997), and *Revitalizing Indigenous Languages* edited by Jon Reyhner, Gina Cantoni, Robert St. Clair, and Evangeline Parsons Yazzie (1999). *Learn in Beauty: Indigenous Education for a New Century*, a fourth publication in this series, is a compilation of papers submitted for the Second Annual Learn in Beauty Conference on June 23 and 24, 2000 at the University Union at Northern Arizona University along with some additional papers submitted in honor of Dr. Gina Cantoni's retirement from Northern Arizona University.

Copies of these Northern Arizona University publications can be obtained from Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University, Box 5774, Flagstaff, Arizona, 86011-5774. Reprinting and copying on a nonprofit basis is hereby allowed with proper identification of the source. These publications are also available on the world wide web at <<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL.html>>. For more information contact Jon Reyhner at 520 523 0580 or <[Jon.Reyhner@nau.edu](mailto:Jon.Reyhner@nau.edu)>.

### **Learn in Beauty Conference Chair**

Louise Lockard

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**Dr. Gina Cantoni**

Northern Arizona University Regents' Professor Dr. Gina Cantoni was honored for her over quarter century of service to the university at the Learn in Beauty Conference at Northern Arizona University on June 23, 2000.



## Introduction

The title of this monograph, *Learn in Beauty*, is adapted from a traditional Navajo prayer that calls for listeners to “walk in beauty” and live in harmony with their world. Dr. Louise Lockard wrote a Title VII bilingual education “Learn in Beauty” teacher training grant in 1999 that was funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA). This grant provides advanced training for teachers from seven public school districts in the Navajo Nation and sponsors “Learn in Beauty” summer conferences. Most of the papers included here were presented at the second annual Learn in Beauty conference held on June 23 and 24, 2000 in Flagstaff, Arizona. At this conference, Northern Arizona University (NAU) Regents’ Professor Dr. Gina Cantoni was honored for her many years of service to NAU and to the many students she taught over the years, and this monograph is dedicated to her.

Much of the coursework being delivered through the Learn in Beauty grant was originally designed by Dr. Cantoni during her 16 years at NAU’s Center for Excellence in Education. Dr. Cantoni received her doctorate in Letters and Philosophy summa cum laude from the University of Rome in 1943. From 1963 to 1968 she taught French and ESL at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, and from 1968 to 1972 she taught education and English courses at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. She came to NAU in 1972 as Professor of English and Chair of the Committee on Teaching English as a Second Language. In 1984 she moved to NAU’s Bilingual/Multicultural Education Program where she developed masters and undergraduate endorsement programs in bilingual multicultural education (BME) and English as a second language (ESL).

While NAU now delivers courses throughout Arizona through Interactive Instructional Television (IITV) and most recently through the World-Wide Web (WWW), Dr. Cantoni from the 1960s through the 1980s drove thousands of miles delivering courses and workshops on-site to teachers. In addition to her teaching and program development, she has written and edited extensively on BME and ESL topics. For example, she edited the Arizona TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages) newsletter from 1974 to 1979, wrote *Content Area Language Instruction: Approaches and Strategies* published by Addison-Wesley in 1987, and edited *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* published by NAU in 1996. From 1972 to 1975 Dr. Cantoni directed the annual “Navajo Summer Institutes in Linguistics and ESL for Teachers” and from 1972 to 1975 co-directed national seminars on Indian education. From 1988 to 1995 she ran bilingual teacher training programs for hundreds of teachers of Indian students, and in 1994 and 1995 she and Dr. Dick Heiser held the first two Stabilizing Indigenous Languages symposiums to help implement the Native American Languages Act of 1990, which made it U.S. Government policy to support, protect, and promote Native American languages.

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### **Assimilationist versus culturally responsive education**

As this book goes to press Proposition 203 “English for the Children” is going before Arizona voters. While it is hard to quarrel with its title, the passage of this proposition will largely ban bilingual education in Arizona’s public schools. Patterned after California’s Proposition 227 passed in 1998, Arizona’s Proposition 203 is a throwback to an assimilationist educational agenda that Dr. Cantoni has effectively taught and written against, and the Navajo Tribal Council has unanimously condemned it.

Cultural assimilation, based on the idea that Indian cultures contained nothing of value, was the dominant theme of efforts to school American Indians throughout the last four centuries (see e.g., Swisher & Tippeconnic, 1999). American Indian schooling was largely a Christian missionary effort in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Christianity was taught not just as a theology but as a way of life that included dressing and speaking like White Americans. In the nineteenth century the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) began building an extensive school system of on- and off-reservation schools. As the twentieth century progressed, a greater percentage of Indian children attended school and more and more attended public schools. While there are exceptions (see Reyhner, this volume), throughout most of its history the goal of BIA schooling was to assimilate Indians into the mainstream English-speaking culture with little or no attempt to provide either culturally sensitive education or to maintain the strengths of Indian cultures. This cultural insensitivity has contributed to the poor performance of American Indian students in schools and sometimes has led to the outright rejection of schooling by Indian children and their parents.

As we enter the twenty-first century with Indigenous education, the question is will the United States, Canada, and other countries move back towards forced assimilation for American Indians as Proposition 203 suggests or will they move forward in a post-colonial direction that the papers collected here advocate. The papers in this volume are indicative of the increased cultural sensitivity being attempted in the schooling of American Indians and other indigenous peoples with the end of colonialism.

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The first section of this monograph focuses on *Language, Culture, and Teaching*. Ann Batchelder’s paper on “Teaching Navajo Culture and Language in Navajo Schools” describes how members of one of the largest tribes in the United States are ambivalent about the role of schools in keeping their language and culture alive. Elders are distrustful of schools based on past experience, and parents are worried about the future of their children. In the second paper on “Language Revitalization in Navajo/English Dual Language Classrooms,” Mary Ann Goodluck, Louise Lockard, and Darlene Yazzie provide Navajo teachers’ voices on the effects of past assimilationist English-only education policies and their hopes for culturally appropriate education in the future. In the third paper titled “Racing Against Time: A Report on the Leupp Navajo Immersion Project,”



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Michael Fillerup describes a Title VII funded bilingual program designed to promote both an indigenous Navajo education and mainstream academic success. The fourth paper on “Community-based Native Teacher Education Programs” by Connie Heimbecker, Sam Minner, and Greg Prater describes two community-based indigenous teacher education programs designed to prepare new indigenous teachers. The last paper of this section on “Measuring Language Dominance and Bilingual Proficiency Development of Tarahumara Children” by Carla Paciotta is an example of how researchers are trying to understand better the influence of bilingualism on indigenous children.

In the second section on *Indigenous Perspectives*, the authors give various views on indigenous education. Angelina Weenie describes her need for post-colonial recovering and healing from the effects of centuries of discrimination and repression. In the second paper, Stephen Greymorning gives his experiences with the resistance exhibited by mainstream university students to post-colonial efforts to restore balance in regard to teaching about the centuries of colonialism. At a more abstract level Robert N. St. Clair in the last paper in this section on “Visual Metaphor, Cultural Knowledge, and the New Rhetoric” describes how teachers need to be aware of the way oral and written cultures view our world differently.

The third section considers issues surrounding teaching methods. In the first paper, J. Dean Mellow defends a centrist position where indigenous educators are encouraged to make informed pedagogical decisions about their teaching methods without going to either extreme of unconsciously perpetuating mainstream Western approaches or blindly rejecting them. In the second paper of this section, Jon Reyhner documents how not all the Indian education of the past has been misguided and repressive, and in the last paper Brian Bielenberg documents the persistence of traditional mainstream teaching methods even when indigenous educators take control of their schools.

Together, the papers collected in this volume indicate some of the new directions that indigenous education is taking in North America. Since the 1970s the United States Government has had an official policy of self-determination for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The efforts by various Native groups to chart their own destinies have resulted in both successes and failures, and education is just one aspect of their efforts. The editors hope that the discussion of indigenous education in this volume contributes to the progress of indigenous education in Arizona, the United States, and the world.

Jon Reyhner  
Joseph Martin  
Louise Lockard  
W. Sakiestewa Gilbert  
Center for Excellence in Education  
Northern Arizona University

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## Teaching Diné Language and Culture in Navajo Schools: Voices from the Community

Ann Batchelder

*In 1984 the Navajo Nation mandated that all the Nation's schools make language and culture instruction part of the curriculum at all grade levels. This paper is based on an on-going study of how communities across the Navajo Nation are going about meeting this mandate. It draws on responses of community members to a survey and follow-up interviews that asked respondents to reflect on how language and cultural studies should be treated as a part of school instruction. This study included citizens of the Navajo Nation who are community members, parents, teachers, teacher assistants, and school administrators. Findings indicate that in communities across the reservation there are different beliefs about the nature and extent of what should be included in learning about Navajo language and culture in schools. There are also differences in beliefs about who should be involved in the teaching of culture and language. These beliefs seem to be tied to the size and location of communities, the age of the person, and individual experience with K-12 schooling.*

Since 1984 the Navajo Nation has mandated instruction in Navajo language and culture in K-12 schools within its boundaries. There was a great concern then, and this concern still exists today, that fewer and fewer members of the Nation have access to their rich cultural and linguistic heritage. Clearly there is substance to these concerns. The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (1999) reports that there are 148,530 speakers of Navajo in a Nation of 250,000 to 275,000 people (statistics on the population of the Nation vary by source). A study conducted by Paul Platero of children in reservation Head Start Programs in the early 1990s found that of the three- to five-year old children included in the study only 18% spoke Navajo (Watchman, 1994). Agnes Holm and Wayne Holm (1995) reported that only about half the students attending schools on the reservation still spoke Navajo. From another perspective, James Crawford (1995) found that between 1980 and 1990 the number of Navajos who are monolingual English speakers grew to about 15% of the Nation's population.

The loss of language is closely tied to a loss of culture. As Jon Reyhner points out: "Our languages contain a significant part of the world's wisdom. When a language is lost, much of the knowledge that language represents is lost" (1996, p. 4). Joshua Fishman concurs:

The most important relationship between language and culture that gets to the heart of what is lost when you lose a language is that most of the culture is in the language and is expressed in the language. Take it

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away from the culture, and you take away its greetings, its curses, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its riddles, its proverbs, its cures, its wisdom, its prayers. The culture could not be expressed and handed on in any other way... That is, you are losing all those things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thought, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about. (1996, p. 81)

The Navajo Nation Education Policies (Navajo Tribe, 1984) targeted schools as agencies to foster the development of Navajo language and culture. As part of an ongoing study that examines the ways in which reservation schools are attempting to meet this mandate, this paper discusses concerns of Navajo teachers and community members about the role that schools should play in fostering Navajo language and culture.

### **Background of the study**

In 1997, a written survey asking some basic questions about what should be included in Navajo culture and language studies in K-12 reservation schools was conducted in communities across the reservation (Batchelder & Markel, 1997). The Navajo Nation covers a vast territory that includes parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Reservation communities in each of these states participated in the survey as well as members of the Navajo tribe that reside outside reservation boundaries in places such as Albuquerque, Farmington, and Santa Fe in New Mexico and Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Holbrook in Arizona. The 150 respondents for this survey were parents, community members, teachers, teacher assistants, and other school employees.

The initial survey found that there was strong support for including Navajo language and culture studies in schools; however, there was not agreement as to what the nature and extent of these studies should be. To follow up on this initial survey, a second phase of the study was done. In this second phase, 48 participants from 20 Navajo communities filled out the survey and then were individually interviewed about their responses from May 1998 to September 1999. Follow-up interviews typically took place the same day that participants completed the survey. Some respondents to the original survey were included in this second phase of the study as well as others who filled out surveys after the initial study was completed. All the participants in this second phase of the study were members of the Navajo Nation. They represent the same wide range of communities and classifications—parents, community members, teachers, teacher assistants, and so forth—as those who participated in the original survey.

As follow-up interviews took place, it became clear that while education for the Nation's children was an extremely important issue to all who participated in this study, there were several important demographic and personal characteristics that tended to color each participant's beliefs about the value of Navajo language and culture studies. These characteristics can be broken down into the following categories: age, personal school history, where the participant grew up, the present community of residence, and the location of that community.

## *Teaching Diné Language and Culture in Navajo Schools*

The responses to questions on each of the following four topics are discussed below along with how demographic and personal characteristics of the respondents shaped their answers:

- What aspects of Navajo culture should be included in instruction?
- Who should be responsible for teaching language and culture?
- How fluent in the Navajo language should students become?
- To what extent should the school day be devoted to these kinds of studies?

### **What aspects of Navajo culture should be included in instruction?**

To the majority of the participants this was a very sensitive question. A large number believe that Navajo religion and ceremonies are not appropriate subjects in any school's curriculum. Elders and others who follow closely Navajo traditions felt that the teaching of culture, particularly those aspects that are religious or ceremonial in nature, did not belong in schools. They thought that these are things that must be passed on to the next generation by family and community members. Many of the key tenets of living in beauty and in harmony are things that are not discussed openly even with close family members. From this perspective, no aspects of the Navajo culture should be "taught" in the way that schools "teach."

There were also study participants, mostly young and from outside the reservation or living in large towns on the reservation, who believed that teaching Navajo culture is not a good use of school time. These participants in their late teens and early twenties felt that teaching the traditional beliefs would not help the Navajo Nation move into the future—a future that depends on communication outside the reservation. If people want to learn about their heritage, it is something that they should pursue on their own. They tended to express the view that schools are to help students get into college or get jobs that bring money into the community in order to make the Nation stronger economically.

One other group of participants indicated that Navajo language and culture has no place in school. This stance was based upon their personal history with schools. Participants in this category do not trust the schools to teach their children about such things as Navajo language or culture. In their experiences schools are places that try to strip students of their Navajo heritage. They tended to think that giving schools responsibility for *helping* Navajo children learn about their culture and to speak their language is dangerous and could only lead to failure in preserving the language and culture.

At the other end of the spectrum there were an equally large number of participants who believed that the study of Navajo culture has some place in schools. For those living in smaller communities in the central part of the reservation and not directly connected to major roads there was agreement that while religion and ceremonies are not appropriate for inclusion in school studies, traditional stories (if taught within the proper season of the year), Navajo history, and the clan system can be included in the school curriculum. These participants also felt that it was important for students to understand respect for elders, re-

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spect for traditions, the means for properly addressing others, and how to speak properly to others. They expressed the belief that schools could help children to learn these things.

Another group composed primarily of parents and teachers not living in their original communities suggested that, if nothing else, students should learn about the clan system and some of the more important events in Navajo history. A few suggest that this could be done as part of a special month set aside for Navajo studies or as a unit that would be part of the existing curriculum in history or social studies courses at designated grade levels.

### **Who should be responsible for teaching Navajo language and culture?**

While this is not as sensitive an issue as the first question, participants had very strong opinions about who should be instructing students about language and culture. Again, there is a wide range of responses. At one end, elders, community members who did not work at schools, and those from smaller communities believed that the best instructors for teaching both language and culture are Navajo elders who are community members. These participants felt that those who would traditionally teach outside of school are also the best choice to instruct students within the school.

Another group of participants representing most reservation communities, including Indian teachers and some older community members, hold that the most important characteristic for an instructor is that the person is Navajo and a member of that community. These instructors can be teaching assistants, community members, or special instructors as long as they are part of the community in which the school is located.

The emphasis on membership in the community for this group cannot be stated too strongly. Two Navajo teachers who participated in interviews said that they would be looking for other jobs because of the criticism they had received from parents and other community members about teaching Navajo language and culture in their own classrooms. Neither of these teachers had grown up in the community in which they were teaching. Both had been directly confronted by parents and other community members about their "right" to teach language and culture to community children. Neither one wished to stay at a school in which they felt they were not welcome.

On the opposite end of the continuum on this issue was a group of participants that represents residents of large reservation communities, communities on the south and east edges of the reservation, and those who live off the reservation. This group believed that the most important characteristic for Navajo language and culture instructors is that they be certified teachers. To the majority of these people it does not matter if the instructor is Navajo or not. Holding a degree is more important. Several of the participants from this group reported that the person in charge of language and culture instruction at their school was non-Indian. Many also indicated that the certified teacher, regardless of their ethnic background, who has full charge of a classroom should be the person responsible for language and culture instruction.



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In the middle of this continuum was a group of participants, mostly parents in their thirties, who were not really sure who should be responsible for Navajo language and culture instruction. Some members of this group indicated that the choice of instructor would depend on the grade level of the students—some feel that elementary age students need Navajo instructors, while at the secondary level this is not as important. Others felt exactly the opposite—it really does not matter who instructs younger children, it is the older children who need Indian role models.

The last group of participants were those who indicated in the first question that the schools have no place teaching language or culture because of the nature of schools. These participants strongly believed that the only way students will learn Navajo is by learning and using it within the community, not within schools. For this group, schools are seen as places that focus on obliterating any trace of Indian culture. They believe that culture and language are the responsibility of the parents, elders, and other community members who have traditionally taught these things.

### **How fluent in Navajo language should students become?**

The responses to this question are divided almost exactly equally into three categories, and each of the categories seems to represent the type of community that the participants live in. Those who believe that fluency in Navajo should be the goal of a Navajo language program are from smaller and more isolated communities. Communication in Navajo outside the school setting is common in these communities, and community members want their children to be able to become fluent speakers in order to participate in all aspects of community life.

Those who favored competency, defined here as the ability to carry on simple conversations in Navajo, generally represent middle-sized communities across the reservation. Several of the respondents wanted children and grandparents to be able to communicate with each other. In several of these communities there are some places in which Navajo is spoken, but fluency in Navajo is not felt by these respondents to be necessary for conducting daily life. Many of these participants thought that, while fluency in Navajo would be ideal, it is unrealistic to expect all children to become fluent native speakers.

In off-reservation communities, many communities bordering the reservation, and some large reservation communities on major highways, knowing the basics of the Navajo language is felt to be sufficient. Basics, in this case, mean the ability to label places, people, animals, and objects and to be able to greet and bid farewell in Navajo. There are a large group of parents and young adults in this group who emphasized that learning English is more important for students to become successful in life than learning Navajo. Three participants in this group had moved their families out of their home communities to other places where English language instruction is a strong component of the curriculum. They felt that this move was necessary in order to give their children a better chance for future success.

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### **To what extent should the school day be devoted to Navajo?**

Those participants who felt schools are not the place to teach language and culture indicated that no school time should be devoted to these endeavors. Other participants were not so decisive. For many of the participants, the answers to this series of questions brought out more feelings about the relationship of schools to the community and the purpose of schooling in general than pat answers to “how much” and “how often.”

There were a number of study participants who felt that the instruction of every school subject, every day, should be focused on making the Navajo Nation stronger. This group is composed of members that cut across the age and location categorization created by the first three questions. It included elders, traditional people from small communities, teachers from schools across the reservation, and those that live off-reservation, particularly in large cities. Some of these people want to see Navajo language and culture become a component of every class in every subject area. Others felt that a portion of every school day should be devoted specifically to instruction in Navajo language and culture as specific study areas. The objective here is not only to promote preservation of language and culture but to shift the purpose of all schooling to the advancement of a Navajo-focused school curriculum.

Another group of participants, who represented larger reservation communities and those on the southern, western, and eastern edges of the reservation, tended to see language and culture instruction as more of a “sometimes thing.” Many participants in this group felt that setting aside time for instruction, particularly language instruction, at the elementary level was essential. Past lower elementary grades, however, language instruction could be conducted in twice-a-week sessions till the end of grammar school. After that, students should be able to continue Navajo language studies as an elective. Cultural studies, for this group, would be best combined with existing social studies classes, with certain grade levels designated for in-depth Navajo cultural studies.

The rest of the responses about how instruction should be conducted in schools cannot be easily categorized. One person wanted to see every Friday become a *Navajo Language and Culture Day* at both the elementary and secondary levels. Several elders and residents from smaller communities wanted to see specific times during the school day allocated to studying Navajo language and culture so that children could go to designated places in the community—such as senior citizen centers and homes of elders—in an attempt to link schools and communities in the learning process.

### **Conclusions**

While the Navajo Language and Culture Mandate is designed to bring Navajo language and culture studies to reservation schools, success for this effort will require an understanding of the individual characteristics of schools and communities across the reservation. Results of this study indicate that not all members of the Navajo Nation share the same beliefs about how their children

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should be educated in regard to Navajo language and culture. As Barbara Burnaby (1996) points out, this lack of shared beliefs seriously undermines the chances for success for any school-based efforts at promoting Indigenous languages and cultures.

From the information gathered in this study, the size and location of communities seems to have an impact on the kinds of language and culture studies that communities will support. The larger the community and the closer a community is to major roads or the border of the reservation, the more likely Navajo language and culture studies are treated as academic subjects. Conversely, the smaller, more rural, and more traditional a community is, the more likely Navajo language and culture studies are viewed as a lifeline to cultural preservation.

Age and educational experiences of participants also play a significant role in the types of programs that are advocated for schools. Younger members of the Nation who were interviewed had a very different idea of the purpose for schooling than did elders or those from more traditional communities. Younger Navajos want schools to move the Nation into the future and view schools as a means to connect the reservation to outside cultures. Elders hope that schools can help school-aged children make the connections to traditions they feel are quickly slipping away.

Navajos whose schooling was directed toward erasing traces of Navajo language and culture do not see K-12 schools as a place to trust with culture and language studies. These people, who in this study range in age from their late twenties to early sixties, see schools as separate from the community, pointing children away from traditions rather than toward them. This group feels that schools only hasten the process of cultural extinction.

It appears that if the Navajo Nation is to continue to rely on schools to help preserve its linguistic and cultural heritage, then more than one model of how to make this partnership successful needs to be acknowledged. Fishman (1989) advocates that to preserve language and culture a society must begin with the home, then build through the community, and continue moving outward to achieve success. For the Navajo Nation this means inserting schools somewhere in this process. From the responses of the participants in this study, embedding schools more firmly inside Navajo and other indigenous communities as has been recommended by Stephen May (1999) may be the key to success.

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## **Language Revitalization in Navajo/English Dual Language Classrooms**

Mary Ann Goodluck, Louise Lockard, Darlene Yazzie

*This paper describes the Chinle Primary School Dual Language Project in terms of both the activities of the project and the attitudes and aspirations of the bilingual teachers who have restructured the educational setting to meet the needs of students who are speakers of Navajo as their primary language and of students who are speakers of English who are learning Navajo as their heritage language.*

The Navajo language is an essential element of the life, culture and identity of the Navajo people. The Navajo nation recognizes the importance of preserving and perpetuating that language to the survival of the Nation. Instruction in the Navajo language shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation. (Navajo Tribe, 1984, p. 9)

Ambrose Yazzie, a teacher at Chinle Boarding School, describes the purpose for dual language instruction in Navajo and English,

Throughout my education I spoke Navajo. English was my second language. Today when I speak Navajo with my students, they often respond in English. I tell them they should not be ashamed of speaking the Navajo language, that it is good to know two languages.<sup>1</sup>

Of the approximately 175 American Indian languages still spoken in the United States, only 11% are being taught to children (Kraus, 1996). Of the 175 surviving languages, Navajo is in the best shape with 148,530 speakers (Estes, 1999). Chinle is a town near the geographical center of the Navajo Nation in Northern Arizona with a population of 7,230. The Chinle Unified School District enrolls over 4,000 students in seven schools. Ninety-nine percent of the students in the district are American Indians, and 62% or 2,633 are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP).

The Chinle Primary School 1995-96 Home Language Survey indicates 700 students speaking Navajo as a home or ancestral language, and 393 of these students were limited English proficient. In 1996-97 the number of limited English proficient students increased to 456 or 61% of the school population.

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<sup>1</sup>All quotes in this paper, unless otherwise identified, are student reflections from a course in bilingual methodology in which the authors participated in the fall of 1998 in Chinle, Arizona.

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District assessment measures document a 50% decline in Navajo language proficiency for students in grades 1-3 since 1975. This trend, which might mistakenly be interpreted as a successful transition from Navajo to English, has not been accompanied by increases in academic achievement in language or mathematics. Since 1975, average student achievement has remained in the lower 30% of the population in these content areas. This low academic achievement, lack of proficiency in English, and language shift away from the students' ancestral language have been accompanied by a demographic shift from a rural, traditional lifestyle to an urban, deculturalized lifestyle where Navajo language and culture are no longer part of the young child's everyday experience.

In 1983 the Chinle Unified School District K-12 enrollment was 3,100. In 1985 and 1990 two extensive public housing projects were constructed in the community, which led to a significant increase in the number of limited English proficient speaking students. In 1996 the student membership was 4,787. This growth has been reflected in the enrollment at Chinle Primary School.

A Dual Language Program was implemented with two classrooms at each grade level in 1997 in Chinle Primary School. In each classroom a bilingual teacher and a paraprofessional work with 50% Navajo dominant LEP students and 50% English proficient students. Within the dual language classroom students interact reciprocally as active learners. A curriculum outreach component focuses on the design and implementation of curriculum and multimedia presentations in the content area of mathematics to enhance the status of the Navajo language for all students at Chinle Primary School. A Summer Dual Language Camp extends the school year and provides community based language learning experiences to reverse the tide of language shift that has limited human potential in the Chinle community.

The staff development component of the Dual Language Program combines the resources of Northern Arizona University and the Annenberg Rural Systemic Initiative to provide bilingual and ESL endorsements for teachers. Teachers are developing a new perspective on successful learning in mathematics using both Navajo and English. These teachers have a background of experience that provides them with the ability to convey content area subject matter from a perspective of shared cultural values and norms. First grade teacher Alta Clements provides an example of the need for culturally based mathematics when she reflects on the use of story problems in her first grade textbook, "They ask students to count the number of blocks on a trip to the store. Kids here count the fence posts not the blocks. They need to think about their world when they solve problems." A sample unit illustrating Clements' call for Navajo cultural incorporation is described next.

### **"The lamb's wool feels like a blanket."**

The thematic unit "Dibé Iina At'e: Sheep is Life" integrates the world of Chinle Primary students with the teaching of mathematics. Themes are coordinated with the Arizona State Standards for Mathematics. For example, to assess Objective 1.1: "Represent and use numbers in equivalent forms through the use



of physical models, drawings, word names and symbols” (Arizona Department of Education, 1996), teachers discuss the use of visual models for measurement. Traditionally Navajos did not use cups, yardsticks, or any type of measuring tools. They used a hand to measure flour for frybread and estimated a day’s travel not in miles or kilometers but in the length of a day on horseback or in a wagon. When a weaver sat in front of a loom preparing to weave a rug, she did not draw a diagram. She constructed a mental model of the rug. Second grade teacher Beulah Yazzie discussed the visual model developed by weavers, “Everything they’re going to make comes mentally.... They’re going to know if it’s going to be centered or off-centered.”

Teachers at Chinle Primary School ask students to use these visual models to estimate the distance around sheep corrals, cornfields, and hogans. Students confirm their estimation using yarn or sticks as units of measurement. Beulah Yazzie began the “Sheep is Life” unit with a KWL chart showing what the students Know already, what they Want to learn, and what they Learned after completing the unit. She then asked students to interview their parents with questions that were generated from this class discussion. “Where do sheep get their water?” “How much do they need?” The students experienced measurement in this traditional setting. Yazzie’s second grade students reported that “My grandparents did it this way.” Yazzie and her students learned from the grandparents that sheep need additional water in the winter—about two buckets a day.

Yazzie concluded the unit with a visit to a summer camp where the students selected a sheep for butchering. The students noticed the different textures of the sheep’s wool, took pictures, and recorded their observations in a learning log written in Navajo and English. The students learned about changes in livestock husbandry over the years. They viewed a film *Seasons of the Navajo* (Borden, 1990) that showed the sheep dipping process, read a bilingual book written in the 1940s titled *Who Wants to be a Prairie Dog?* (Clark, 1940), and discussed the sheep dipping process. Students compared the process of caring for sheep in the 1940s with the 1990s. A student wrote about the texture of the wool, “The lamb’s wool feels like a blanket.”

**“I was told that I would no longer live in my hogan and shade house”**

Just as students write to reflect on changes in the community, these bilingual teachers reflected on changes in the school setting that they have experienced. As a group they wrote of their initial schooling experiences. This section of the paper will reflect on common themes in the writing of these teachers and return to the discussion of Navajo language and culture in classroom and community contexts. The reflections of the bilingual teachers come from a course in bilingual methodology in which the authors participated in the fall of 1998 in Chinle.

Suppression of Navajo language within the institution of the school is a common theme for many of the teachers who entered school in the 1950s and 1960s. This era has been described as the era of termination. At a 1948 congressional hearing Willard Beatty, Director of Education for the Bureau of Indian

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Affairs (BIA), testified that the “basic purpose of Indian education for Navajo children is to teach them to speak, think, and read and write in the English language” (Boyce, 1974, p. 233).

Linda Henley wrote of her experience in a BIA dormitory in the early 1950s,

There we were all required to speak English. All our house mothers or matrons were Hopis except one lady was an Apache. These ladies disciplined us like we were at [an army] boot camp. I believe they were treated like that when they went to school. They were very harsh on all us Navajo girls.

Mary S. Begay repeats this theme, “I was told that I would no longer live in my hogan and shade house. The person who told me this was a Navajo person working in the boarding school dormitory.” The loss of the native language has been linked to a sense of shame and a loss of cultural identity in the memory of several of the teachers. Tony Smiley wrote, “I went through the BIA era of speak English only or else you were punished.” Karen Smiley concurred, “Once I began to understand the English language the Navajo language became negative for me.”

The teachers describe their resistance to learning English as they used Navajo words that sounded like English to respond to their teachers. Eleanor Smiley wrote,

We were all forced to change our Navajo language into English. Speaking my language became hard for me to speak in front of the dorm aide. I had to stay quiet around them. It was funny too. Our dorm aides spoke to each other in Navajo and we couldn't.... One day I decided to mumble anything, just so something would come out of my mouth and to show them that I can speak English.

The teachers describe their efforts as individuals to adapt the language of their home to the classroom: efforts that they continue today in bilingual classrooms. Mary S. Begay recalled,

I was born and raised at the hogan level of traditional life. My first language is Navajo. I am proud of my native language. At the age of seven I started school at Rough Rock Boarding school. I told my mother that I wanted to read and write in Navajo..... She said that Navajo would be easy after I went to school and completed my formal education.

The teachers reflected on the absence of Navajo language and culture within the educational setting. Salita Begay wrote,

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During my elementary school years Navajo literacy was never mentioned and wasn't part of the school system. It was even like this in my secondary school years. In fact, Navajo language wasn't used by the teachers even though they were Navajo. The main emphasis was to teach English.

The first Navajo controlled school, Rough Rock Demonstration School, opened on July 27, 1966. Rough Rock was "regarded not just as a place for educating Indian children, but as the focus for the development of the local community" (Roessel, 1977). Ramah Navajo High School, which opened in 1970, was the first contract high school (Iverson, 1993). Borrego Pass School opened in 1972 with students in grades K-3. At Rock Point Community School, which gained contract status in 1972, the goal was to educate students within the community and to educate students in their native language (Holm & Holm, 1990).

Loretta Begay, who attended Rock Point Community School in the 1970s, wrote, "When I was a child at the age of 5 years old the first year I started school I was told to say my clans. I remember that I already knew my clans.... I was then introduced to the phonetic sounds of the Navajo alphabet that was above the chalkboard in our classroom. By first grade I was getting good at writing sentences and reading the language."

The teachers also discussed how they learned Navajo in community settings outside the classroom. The institutions of the church, Navajo Headstart, and the family provided support in maintaining the language in both oral and written forms. Linda Henley wrote,

One time my mother took us to church.... I was very impressed when I saw the community people ... and they had never had English education go up on the stage and they sang Christmas songs all in Navajo. Some of them actually held song books and looked at the words while singing.

Charlene Begay remembered,

When I was about seven years old, my grandmother took me to the Presbyterian Church. There I sat with her and she would be holding a Bible and the preacher would be reading the verses in Navajo. I looked at the Bible while sitting by my grandmother.

Marie Kiyannie recalled, "The church services were usually conducted mostly in Navajo.... I remember sitting there reading the Bible and singing the hymns with the grownups."

Navajo Headstart was founded in 1968 as a part of the Lyndon Johnson Administration's War on Poverty and staffed by Navajo teachers, aides, bus drivers, and cooks. Karen Smiley wrote,

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I remember the songs I learned in preschool.... Each song had action of movements and each song was meaningful to a five year old. I think that's where I began to understand that the language was important to my family and relatives because each time I sang a song or said a word in Navajo they would all smile.

This sense of positive identity as a speaker of Navajo was supported within the institution of the family. Virginia Jones recalled,

Most of what I learned, the language itself, is from my own family. Learning the language at home was an everyday activity and I felt comfortable using it because it was vital to communicate with one another.

The language was transmitted both in oral and written form within the family. Virginia Jones continued,

I started seeing my young nieces and nephews bring home papers written in Navajo. It is from this experience that I really wanted to learn myself and knew that someday when I had children of my own they will need to learn themselves too.

### **“Learning continues on everyday throughout your life”**

Teachers discussed their role as language learners as they assumed the role of bilingual teacher. Charlene Begay wrote, “Even though I speak my own Navajo language fluently, I’m still learning how to read and write in Navajo. Learning continues on everyday throughout your life.” Gloria Denny concurred, “I was having a hard time writing in Navajo.... I used to get confused when I was learning how and when to use these marks like glottal stop, nasal and high tone. At one time, I was trying to write the word ‘night’ and I wrote a nasty word.” Isabelle Yazzie wrote, “learning Navajo language for me was very difficult for me because it was like programming a computer. I had to sit there for hours just to think about what words to use and how to spell them correctly.”

Many of the teachers found that they lacked a foundation in Navajo language literacy. Salita Begay wrote, “finally I knew the Navajo language was written using the consonant sounds. I started writing entries in my journal... my entries became longer.” Carol Johnson wrote,

Sometimes we would ask the meaning of a word. A lot of times we broke up the word. I always think this is amazing. Even with the names of people. It helped me to become aware of the language and to analyze it. It helps me to learn to say the words right.

Carol Johnson, a Kindergarten teacher wrote, “I’ve come to believe that Navajo is essential to the students. I’ve grown up mostly without it. Kindergarten being

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the foundation of the school, I would like for my students to know that they also have a foundation in their own lives.”

As teachers gained proficiency in oral and written Navajo, they strengthened their cultural identity. Tony Smiley, who worked as a literacy tutor at Rock Point Community School, wrote,

there were Navajo literacy classes offered locally. Diné college also offered classes and we were even encouraged to get our certification in Navajo language through the college. Eventually I ended up in the classroom and taught Navajo language. I think that this is the best thing that has happened to me. I believe that it made me more aware of myself. I consider myself lucky to be able to read and write in Navajo.

Carol Johnson wrote,

From writing I've learned how to read. It has helped me to feel confident in the classroom. I've also greatly improved in my speaking of the language. I can read Navajo stories to my students.... They know that our language has its own writing. I always tell them that it is hard to learn but once you've come across that barrier, you can accomplish anything.

Cindy Aronilith wrote, “I am still learning the language and I am proud that I am a Navajo.” Sondra Nez wrote,

I remember making mistakes and repeatedly sounding out the proper pronunciation of our language while reading in class or at home nestling by the wood stove.... I began to wonder and listen to my own children speaking our language and realizing that those same words have sounded beautiful.

### **“If you write in Navajo you are expressing exactly what you want to say”**

These bilingual teachers have discussed how their attitudes as language learners were shaped by their early schooling experiences and how they have transformed these experiences and to revitalize the teaching of Navajo language and culture within the school. Mary Boyd wrote,

Since most Navajo children often learn through demonstration and observation prior to performance, I do a lot of modeling to heighten the Navajo cultural awareness of the students. As a bilingual teacher, I try to create social well-being in my classroom by expressing ideas and knowledge in a variety of ways.

Cindy Aronilith wrote, “ The one method that I found to be very useful is learning as ‘co-learners and co-teachers’.... We take it day by day and try to

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relate what we do to our own lives and interests.... Our class takes both the Navajo and English language (reading, writing, and speaking) one day at a time.”

The teachers have introduced Navajo language literacy into the curriculum Sondra Nez wrote, “During the listening comprehension time I read books that are written in Navajo for 20 minutes reading. There are times the students would recall hearing that particular word at home or at their grandparents home.” Veronica Ahasteen reflected,

As a bilingual teacher I try to encourage my students to sound out words and to try their best developmental spelling. Some of my students are also learning to understand Navajo and I try to give them as much encouragement as my family gave me. Most of my students are learning to say Navajo words.

The teachers also discussed the support that they find as both teachers and learners. Mae Goldtooth wrote,

At a young age children are inquisitive about learning new things.... Young learners acquire language or culture much faster than an adult would.... My children help me to spell words that are a little too advanced for me. I remind them why it is very important to learn to speak, read and write in Navajo. I explain to them if you write in Navajo you are expressing exactly what you want to say.... We, as a family, are helping one another to spell words and to build our vocabulary.

Pandora Yazzie wrote,

Every other day students would have Navajo conversations for at least 15 minutes. We would start with a proper introduction and pick a topic to talk about. I am going to do a project with their children as part of our community unit, to visit our elderly group home in Ganado every other month. This would help our children to understand that our grandparents are important resources.

Marie Kiyannie wrote,

I interpret instructions, word meanings and numbers that pertain to mathematics. Sometimes we discuss a ceremony and things that happen around the school in Navajo. Just translating from one language to another so someone can understand, really uplifts my spirits.

The teachers discussed a curriculum that includes the prior knowledge of the students. Al Begay, a parent educator, wrote, “I have the parents make big books with all Navajo words that relate to their children because the parent knows the child better than anybody else.” Virginia Jones wrote,



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I am doing whatever I can to make my students realize that their culture is unique and that there is more to it than just learning to read and write the language.... You can create books or video or whatever you want.... I want them to be creative in their work and to think of new ideas that may not have been touched or tried.

This curriculum extends beyond the classroom. Marlene Tsosie wrote,

We explain to the parents that we need their help at home by talking Navajo to their child for one hour a day. We give them home activities to do that stress language usage. We also tell them to use the language as naturally as possible and to talk about any situations they can in the home.

The teachers have transformed the schools of the past to meet the needs of their students. Darlene Yazzie wrote, "As a bilingual teacher I really want to teach the Navajo language. I approach my students differently than those who taught me how to read and write."

These bilingual teachers discussed the need for language learning in the future. As Caroline Johnson put it,

As a Navajo teacher I feel we need to listen to our Navajo vocabulary in real-life situations.... We should not take our language and shelve it as we do books. If we use the language our students will begin to model it at home and in their communities. Students need to know it is special to speak their own language.

For the teachers, the transformation of the curriculum and pedagogy, which is founded on this understanding of the need to preserve and revitalize Navajo language and culture, is based on this awareness of the value of the language and culture in their own educational development. Mary Ruth James Goy felt "We must carry on what is given to us by our ancestors and teach our children the importance of preserving our language."

### **"To prepare Navajo teachers who read, write and speak Navajo"**

To conclude this discussion of the revitalization of Navajo in the Chinle community we will discuss the literacy of Helen Dineyazhe, a dual language teacher at Chinle Primary School. Today Helen Dineyazhe, a 1994 graduate of Diné College and a 1997 graduate of the Ford Foundation Teacher Education Program at Northern Arizona University, is a bilingual third grade teacher at Chinle Primary School and a participant in the Learn in Beauty Master's Fellowship at Northern Arizona University. The goal of the Ford program is,

To prepare Navajo teachers who read, write and speak Navajo, who understand the social, economic and cultural dynamics of Navajo com-

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munities, and who motivate and challenge students in the classrooms while providing a quality education that empowers Navajo students to succeed.

Diné College worked with Fort Lewis College, Northern Arizona University, Prescott College, The University of New Mexico, and The University of Northern Colorado to graduate over 200 teachers by 1996 with a retention rate for the project of 85%. Students in the program earned both a teaching endorsement and a bilingual endorsement in Navajo. Students were required to select an academic specialization in Navajo language, culture, and history. Courses included Navajo Literacy for Speakers, Navajo Literature and Grammar for Speakers, Navajo Descriptive and Narrative Writing, Foundations of Navajo Culture, Navajo History to the Present, and one restricted elective related to Navajo studies. Students were also required to take courses in Diné Educational Philosophy, first and second language acquisition, teaching Navajo to non-native speakers, teaching literacy in bilingual education/ESL classrooms, and teaching Navajo to native speakers.

Today, Helen Dineyazhe works with bilingual classroom teachers to prepare Navajo language thematic units that focus on culturally bound content area instruction. She talks about how she studied Navajo literacy at Diné College and how learning to read and write in Navajo prepared her for her teaching career.

The daughter of a bilingual first grade teacher at Chinle Primary School, Dineyazhe spoke English as a child. When she entered the Navajo Teacher Education Project she enrolled in Navajo 101 and 102: Navajo for non-native speakers. Her instructors encouraged her to think in Navajo, and she began to practice grammatical substitution drills while jogging. Dineyazhe read children's books in Navajo and asked colleagues and family members questions about the language. When she gained proficiency in oral and written Navajo she enrolled in courses for native speakers: Navajo 211 and 212. Her proficiency in reading helped her to become a better speaker. Her instructors, A.J. Becenti and Martha Jackson, encouraged her to use her interest in music in preparing class presentations. Dineyazhe wrote songs in Navajo that she published and taught to the class. For an oral history project, she interviewed elders in the community in Navajo about their early schooling experiences. The elders told her that they had been hit with a wooden spoon as punishment for speaking Navajo in their dormitory rooms. Dineyazhe used these stories to improve her ability to record and transcribe oral Navajo, as a reminder of changing attitudes toward Navajo language, and as an example of the importance of respecting her students.

Dineyazhe's instructor, Martha Jackson, used sketches and photographs from the community to allow students to explore their language and their culture. In one lesson the instructor observed students discussing a photograph of a winter hogan and recorded students' comments in Navajo on the chalkboard. Jackson's students generated a vocabulary list in Navajo and English, and the class read the list from the chalkboard. Students dictated sentences using these vocabulary

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words, and the instructor used these key sentences to write a group story on the chalkboard. The story was typed and reproduced for students to read aloud in small groups.

Students used this growing body of student writing to increase fluency (Slate, Jackson & Goldtooth, 1989). They also read the bilingual *Rock Point Community School Newspaper*, Navajo language readers produced in the 1970s by the Native American Materials Development Center, and the bi-weekly Navajo language page in the *Navajo Times*.

Jackson's students wrote in Navajo for personal purposes, including notes for oral presentations, class notes, lists, personal journals, and rough drafts. Students also wrote for assignments, including Navajo jokes, oral histories transcribed for class presentations, radio scripts, essays on cultural issues, video scripts, and writing integrated with content area coursework. Peers who were fluent native speakers of Navajo edited these assignments.

Helen Dineyazhe enrolled in Navajo language literacy classes at Diné College and used community resources to gain proficiency in her ancestral language. Today she uses examples from her study of Navajo language and culture to inform her own teaching practice. As a dual language Navajo language teacher she uses her language to transform the educational setting.

### **Note**

This paper was presented at the 1999 Athabaskan Language Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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## Racing Against Time: A Report on the Leupp Navajo Immersion Project

Michael Fillerup

*This paper describes a U.S. Department of Education Title VII funded language preservation program at Leupp Public School in the Navajo Nation. Funded in 1997 for five years, this school-wide project is designed to help students become proficient speakers, readers, and writers of Navajo while enhancing their English language skills and preparing them to meet state academic standards. The program combines Navajo immersion with ESL inclusion, literacy initiatives, sheltered English/Navajo, parental involvement, and take-home technology. Academic content and state standards are initially presented from a Navajo perspective via four global themes with a unifying concept of hozho or "peace, beauty, and harmony." This paper (1) presents the need for the program and how it was developed with staff, parental, and community involvement, (2) presents a program overview, (3) describes the Navajo-specific curriculum, and (4) discusses some of the inherent challenges in developing and sustaining a language preservation program based upon a Navajo-specific curriculum in the English-only era of high stakes testing.*

Díí binahjí niha'álchíní biláají' hózhóq doo,  
bikéédéé' hózhóq doo, biyaa hózhóq doo, bikáá'déé'  
hózhóq doo, dóó binaagóó hózhóq doo.

*In beauty they will walk, in beauty they have walked, in beauty they will learn their Diné language and culture.*

In the fall of 1978 I started my teaching career at Chinle Junior High School on the Navajo Reservation. By this point in time, the English language had made significant inroads on the Navajo Nation. John Travolta was wooing my junior high students in *Saturday Night Fever* and the rock group KISS was very much in vogue. Nevertheless, while I never conducted a formal survey, I would say that 90% of the students at Chinle Junior High could still speak their tribal language. Back then, Navajos living on the reservation spoke Navajo. It was a given. I do know for a fact that every one of the teenagers in the church youth group I supervised could speak Navajo quite well. Any time they wanted to make fun of my *bilagaana* mannerisms or Quixote countenance they whispered vociferously among themselves in their native tongue. (I was an easy target, by the way.) If someone had told me then that within a generation the Navajo language would be dying a swift death, I would have scoffed: "No way, John Wayne!"

Now flash forward 18 years. It is the 1996-97 school year, and I am the director of Bilingual and English as a Second Language programs for the Flag-

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staff Unified School District (FUSD). One of the 18 site-based programs I supervise is located 45 miles east of Flagstaff, Arizona, on the western edge of the Navajo Reservation. Leupp Public School serves about 270 students in grades K-8, 99% of whom are Navajo. Almost all of the students come from low-income families, and the community's unemployment rate is 58%. In addition, about one-half of the students are limited in their ability to use the English language. Demographically speaking, Leupp is a typical reservation community.

I say this with great misgiving. There is no question that the statistics on American Indians are abysmal. For years, they have led the nation in negative indicators, including: highest dropout rates (Swisher, 1991); highest unemployment rates (Szasz, 1991); highest poverty rates (Hodgkinson, Outz, & Obarakpor, 1990); and highest suicide rates (Bowker, 1993). Add to these the fact that American Indians have inordinately high instances of alcoholism, fetal alcohol syndrome, depression, and substance abuse (Szasz, 1991), and it would be hard to argue with Coombs' (1970) charge that our nation's educational system has placed the American Indian "at the absolute bottom of the barrel among the country's ethnic minorities and socio-economically disadvantaged groups" (p. 11).

In the case of Leupp, there are other disturbing statistics. As the only reservation school in the FUSD, Leupp has occupied the cellar in standardized test scores for several years now. For example, in 1995 Leupp 4th graders scored 25, 21, and 16 percentile points lower in reading, language, and mathematics, respectively, than students at FUSD schools in town. The differential among 7th graders was even more pronounced, with in-town students outperforming Leupp students by 27, 27, and 23 percentile points in reading, language, and math.

As educators, we know that if a child does not develop strong literacy skills at a fairly young age, that child will be academically crippled throughout his or her school career, however long or short that may be. For graduates from Leupp Public School, educational careers tend to be shorter rather than longer. Although they represent only 7.5% of the student body at Sinagua High, the feeder school for Leupp graduates, 25% of the school's dropouts are from Leupp.

These statistics are not presented to throw you into a state of hopelessness and despair. If you have worked in Indian education for any length of time these figures probably sound all too familiar. I present them as an argument for a different type of educational program for indigenous minorities. The starting point is to reclaim that which has been taken away. I am not talking so much about land as I am about the heart of a people. And the heart of a people is passed down through the generations via language. Language, of course, is the primary vehicle through which we express poetry, literature, genealogy, history, philosophy, and religion. It is through language that we define who and what we are, and our unique place in the universe. On a more direct level, Reyhner and Tennant (1995) have claimed that language is inextricably bound to one's cultural values, and cultural values are "psychological imperatives" that affect one's self-awareness, identity, interpersonal relationships, self-confidence, and success in life. They argue that,



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giving young Natives the opportunity to keep and learn their tribal language offers them a strong antidote to the culture clash many of them are experiencing but cannot verbalize. (p. 280)

This is why an even more disturbing statistic than the ones previously mentioned is the light-speed decline of the Navajo language. A 1994 study revealed that only 45% of Navajo Headstart children had any knowledge of the Diné (Navajo) language, and most had only limited knowledge (Bippus & Bray, 1994). Other reports have indicated that lack of knowledge of the Navajo language to be as high as 50% in reservation and bordertown schools (Division of Diné Education, 1996). Unfortunately, data for Leupp Public School painted an even grimmer picture. Navajo language proficiency tests in the fall of 1996 revealed that only 7% of the students could speak Navajo fluently, while 11% had limited proficiency, and 82% had no proficiency (FUSD, 1997).

So we go back to 1996. Ironically, the FUSD is embroiled in a bitter lawsuit filed by members of the Leupp community who have accused the district of discriminatory practices. Specifically, they have charged that the FUSD has failed to provide Leupp with facilities, services, staffing, equipment, and materials that are equitable with those of the 17 in-town schools. While the Leupp lawsuit does not force the district to pursue a native language program at Leupp, it certainly helps to create an environment for proactive change. So did the Leupp principal, Joan Gilmore. The daughter of George Kirk, a Navajo Code Talker, Gilmore is passionately committed to preserving the Navajo language and culture. She is a stark contrast to her *bilagaana* predecessors, one of whom eyed me warily when I suggested a bilingual Navajo/ English program at Leupp 15 years ago: "We don't want any of that here."

Gilmore and several other staff members were shocked by the 1996 test results: less than one out of ten students can speak the language. There was a sense of urgency. We knew that we had to do something and do it fast. We started with a survey of parents and community members to determine two things: (1) Do the parents and community of Leupp want a Navajo/English bilingual program? (2) Will the parents and community support a bilingual program if it is offered? We know that if the parents do not back the program, or simply do not care, our efforts will be fruitless.

The outcome of the survey was as shocking as the results of the Navajo proficiency tests. Over 95% of the parents "greatly favor[ed]" a bilingual program, and 100% indicated they would support the program if it was implemented. Although some faculty and staff at Leupp School opposed the initiative, we argued that a few individuals do not have the right to deprive Navajo children of the opportunity to be taught in their tribal tongue, especially if this option is supported and valued by their parents and their community.

In the spring of 1997, we applied for and were awarded a \$1.5 million Title VII grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a Navajo/English bilingual program. The icing on the cake came in December 1997 when the Leupp Chapter House signed a resolution to formally endorse the program.

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### **The Leupp Project**

The heart of The Leupp Bilingual Education Project is to provide all Leupp students with Navajo-based education delivered largely via the Navajo language. However, there are other key components that supplement the Navajo language initiative, including:

1. **TAKE-HOME TECHNOLOGY:** Leupp has the highest poverty rate of any school in the FUSD. Many students live in remote areas without electricity or running water, let alone home computers. Grant monies are used to purchase battery-powered laptop computers. These are checked out to students and parents who use the computers to complete specific classroom assignments at home. In addition to improving computer literacy skills this Take-Home Technology program helps “demystify” technology in rural Navajo homes.
2. **GIFTED SERVICES:** In 1996-97, only nine students at Leupp School were identified as gifted or talented, as opposed to 805 gifted students at the in-town schools. A gifted resource teacher was hired to implement alternative measures to identify more gifted students, provide training to classroom teachers on how to incorporate critical thinking activities into the regular classroom curriculum, and provide supplementary services to gifted students. Interestingly, the gifted resource teacher found that by simply screening more students using conventional methods, the number of gifted students triples.
3. **SHELTERED INSTRUCTION:** All classroom teachers are trained in the use of sheltered instructional strategies (i.e., extensive use of visuals, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, whole language instruction, thematic units, project-centered field-based activities, and so forth). In addition to helping students bridge the gap between language and content, many of these strategies are more conducive to American Indian learning styles than traditional teaching techniques. Teachers write up an individualized Language Acquisition Plan documenting how each child’s academic, linguistic, social, and cultural needs will be met.
4. **FAMILY LITERACY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT:** Leupp offers an Adult Education and Family Literacy Program in which parents can earn a GED, improve literacy skills, and learn basic math and other subjects. Beginning Navajo and Navajo literacy classes are offered free of charge. A home/school coordinator strengthens the connection between Leupp School and Navajo families by making home visits, providing parent workshops, and offering special cultural activities.
5. **LEUPP/SINAGUA HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAM:** A home/school coordinator is stationed at Sinagua High School to develop a program to help Leupp students make the cultural, academic, and linguistic leap from an all-Indian K-8 reservation school (Leupp) to a predominately white high school in the city. Transition activities include home visits, mentoring, parent and student preparation workshops, special cultural counseling, and careful monitoring of Leupp students who attend Sinagua High. On the average, 260 hours of in-service training is provided each year. In addition, Title VII mon-

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ies are used to pay the tuition for teachers and staff to take college coursework towards state ESL or bilingual certification. Teachers and staff have completed a total of 518 credit hours of college coursework, or an average of 173 credit hours per year.

6. INTENSIFIED SUMMER INSTRUCTION: Title VII funds are used to extend learning opportunities by providing five weeks of summer school instruction to Leupp students. High school students from the Leupp community take classes for high school credit at no charge.
7. STAFF DEVELOPMENT: The project provides extensive staff development opportunities, including tuition and books for college coursework, cultural workshops, and conferences. For example, during the first year of the project, all teachers and staff at Leupp (62 total), 13 from Sinagua High, five district-level administrators, and one school board member participate in Hooghan University, a series of workshops designed to sensitize individuals about Navajo culture.

In addition to these components the following initiatives are implemented to improve student literacy at Leupp:

1. SUSTAINED SILENT READING (SSR): All students and staff read silently for the first 15 minutes of each school day.
2. READ ACROSS THE REZ PROGRAM: Students and classrooms are rewarded for the number of books read at home.
3. BOOKS IN THE HOME: This initiative attempts to place ten additional books in the home of each Leupp student each year.
4. EXPANDED LIBRARY HOURS: Leupp pursues an agreement with Coconino County to expand the collections and hours of the school library to serve Leupp and the surrounding community.

There is not much controversy surrounding the above mentioned components of the project. For the most part, they are viewed by teacher and staff as desired additions to the existing programs at Leupp. The Navajo language initiative is a different story.

#### **The Navajo Immersion Program**

In the fall of 1997, a committee consisting of Leupp faculty, staff, parents, and community members was formed to review and develop a blueprint for the Navajo language program. Most committee members agreed that it is best to teach students *through* the Navajo language rather than *about* the language. However, the amount of time that should be devoted to instruction via Navajo elicited a lengthy and lively discussion. Opinions ranged from those favoring full immersion in Navajo to minimalists who feel an hour a day of Navajo is sufficient. The former camp agreed that full immersion was necessary to jump-start Kindergarten students in their Navajo language development. The minimalists feared that English language development would suffer in a Navajo-only

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program. In the end, the committee arrived at a compromise: Leupp students would be taught subject matter through the use of the Navajo language for at least half of the school day. The committee also agreed on a set of program goals and assumptions upon which the program is predicated:

### **Goals:**

- **BILINGUALISM:** Students will acquire the ability to speak, read, write, and communicate effectively in different social and cultural contexts in Navajo and in English.
- **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:** Students will meet the district and state standards in all academic subjects.
- **CULTURAL ENRICHMENT:** Students will gain an in-depth understanding of the Navajo culture and its philosophical, historical, social, intellectual, and spiritual relationship to the social and academic mainstream.

### **Assumptions:**

- Language is the lifeblood of culture.
- The ability to speak the Navajo language is essential to the self-identity of a Navajo child and to an understanding of the Navajo way of life.
- It is just as important for a Navajo child to learn the Navajo language as it is for him or her to learn English. However, both languages must be learned and learned well. As Dick Littlebear (1990) explains, the English language may provide physical sustenance to American Indians, but tribal languages will feed their spirits.
- An immersion program will help preserve the Navajo language and the Navajo culture. A Navajo immersion program will provide a medium through which Navajo children can communicate and thereby connect with their Elders. This linguistic bridge to the past will also form a bridge to the future as subsequent generations of Navajo children learn to speak, read, and write the language of their ancestors.
- A language cannot be preserved solely through the schools. Language instruction must begin in the home, and language preservation must be a community-wide effort.
- The Navajo language and culture are inherently good and ought to be preserved. The Navajo people and the Navajo language have played an important role in the history of the United States. For example, the Navajo Code Talkers of World War II developed and utilized an unbreakable code based upon the Navajo language that saved thousands of American lives in the Pacific War.
- The United States Government has a legal responsibility to “preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages” (Native American Languages Act, 1990)
- The Leupp community, the Navajo tribe, and the Flagstaff Unified School District value the Navajo language and culture.
- People who can speak, read, and write more than one language have certain cognitive, academic, social, cultural, and professional advantages over those who cannot. (FUSD, 2000)

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### **Characteristics**

The Navajo Immersion Curriculum is Navajo specific, meaning that subject matter is taught initially from a Navajo perspective. For example, one of the district's Kindergarten social studies goals states: "*Students will show respect for others.*" Students in the Navajo Immersion Program are taught traditional Navajo forms of respect, including how to enter a hogan and how to greet people in the Navajo way. Building upon this foundation knowledge, the formalities and etiquette of the mainstream culture are later taught within a broader context.

In the unit on plants (Nanise'), students learn about the importance of corn to the Navajo, as well as traditional uses of plants (e.g., for food, dyes, the arts, tools, medicine, and ceremonies). Students participate in the traditional practice of running to the east to greet the rising sun as part of the unit on exercise (Naa' azdilts ood). The unit on astronomy introduces students to Navajo constellations and Navajo beliefs about the heavens as well as the western view of astronomy.

### **Organization**

Central to the Navajo culture is the concept of *hózhó*, or maintaining a life of "peace, beauty, and harmony." Likewise, *hózhó* is the unifying theme of the Navajo Immersion Curriculum. All objectives and activities are designed to help students develop themselves intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially so they may "walk in beauty." The curriculum is organized in fours, the sacred Navajo number.

Subject matter is presented holistically through four global themes, each representing one of the Four Sacred Mountains of the Navajo and its corresponding cardinal direction—HEALTH: EAST (Mt. Blanca): LIVING THINGS: SOUTH (Mt. Taylor): FAMILY and COMMUNITY: WEST (San Francisco Peaks): EARTH and SKY: NORTH (Hesperus Peak). Each global theme is designed to be presented over a period of about nine weeks.

Four thematic units have been developed for each global theme. Each unit includes a goal, objectives, key vocabulary, and suggested activities. Objectives are correlated with the Arizona State Standards, and suggested activities are cross-referenced with the unit objectives.

The following is a sample thematic unit from the global theme family and community:

#### Global Theme: Family and Community

Global Goal: To develop an awareness of self and to perpetuate the Navajo language, culture, and traditions relative to family, friends, and community.

Thematic Unit: SELF (Shí)

Thematic Goal: To develop an awareness of self. Táá hó ádaa ákozdínóodzijl

Objectives: The students will:

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1. Demonstrate respect for themselves, classmates, and others
2. Identify who they are by their two clan affiliations (maternal & paternal)
3. Identify Diné cultural values
4. Identify the parts of a cradle-board and explain its purpose
5. Identify the five senses
6. Identify the location of their home

Suggested Activities (correlated with objectives):

1. Perform student duties (1, 3)
2. Make clan charts; introduce yourself (1, 2, 3, 6)
3. Make a family tree with pictures (2)
4. Make a model cradle-board (3, 4)
5. Draw a self-portrait and label body parts (1, 5)
6. Sing “Shí Naashá” (1, 3)
7. Make “Me” books (1, 2, 3, 5, 6)
8. Discuss and graph likes and dislikes (1, 5)

Subject matter is taught in an integrated manner. For example, the following Suggested Activity, *Visit local hogans; keep a sketch book of types*, integrates four subject areas:

1. STATE LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARD 2: Communicate by drawing, telling, or writing.
2. DISTRICT SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD 10: Identify home, local neighborhood, and school.
3. STATE MATH STANDARD 2: Collect, organize, and describe simple data.
4. STATE VISUAL ARTS STANDARD 1: Students know and apply the arts disciplines, techniques, and processes to communicate in original or interpretive work.

Figure 1 illustrates how the various unit activities can be used to teach multiple subjects in an integrated fashion.

## **Cultural Center**

In the Summer of 1998, two individuals were hired by the FUSD, each of whom play a very different but significant role in the future of Leupp Public School: Mrs. Amy Begay and Mr. Larry Bramblett. Begay, a Title VII-funded Bilingual Resource Teacher, is responsible for implementing the new Diné Immersion Curriculum at Leupp. In addition, she serves as the Navajo language teacher trainer, materials developer, and program specialist. Bramblett, on the other hand, was hired as the new superintendent of FUSD. Bramblett was impressed with the Navajo (Diné) Immersion Program. He was also convinced that Navajo children can succeed in school if expectations are high and equal

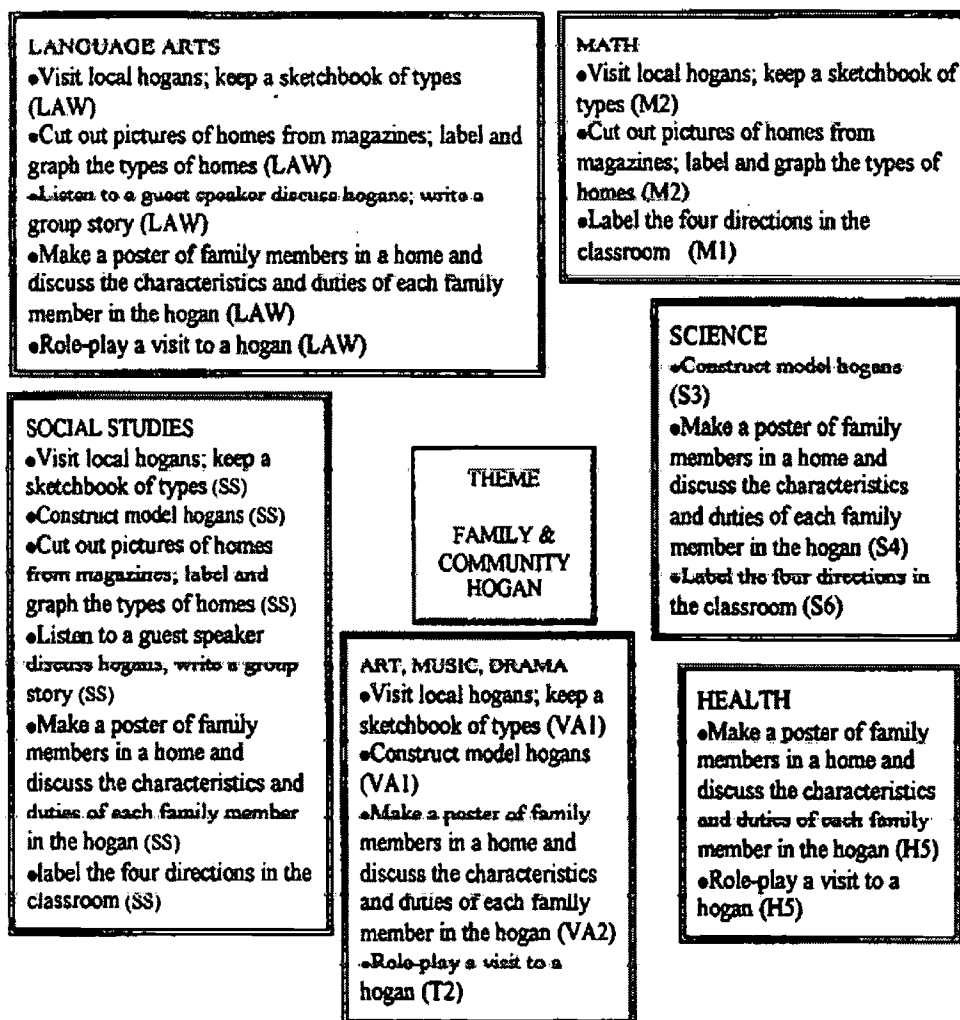


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opportunities are provided. Within a year, Leupp Public School received a makeover. A green lawn and a sign chiseled out of adobe now greets visitors in front, and crushed red rock and juniper trees landscape the exterior.

In the spring of 1999, Principal Joan Gilmore was replaced by Louise Scott, Leupp Public School's second Navajo principal. Scott shares Gilmore's commitment to preserve the Navajo language and culture and brings with her several years of experience with Navajo transitional, dual language, and immersion programs. In the fall of 1999, Scott presented Superintendent Bramblett with a proposal to create a Navajo Cultural Center to be constructed on the grounds of Leupp Public School. FUSD committed \$30,000 to the project. The purpose of the center is to provide students with an educational experience that integrates academic subjects, vocational skills, and Navajo culture with traditional arts,

Figure 1. Sample web showing unit activities (FUSD, 2000)



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crafts, dance, music, and storytelling. The Cultural Center will serve four functions:

- Student Learning Center and Learning Lab
- Community Learning Center
- Global Resource Center
- Cultural Arts Center

The Cultural Center will include an 800 square foot hogan, shadehouses, a male sweatlodge, a female sweatlodge, a garden, and a sheep corral and will facilitate a variety of activities, such as:

- Navajo language and culture classes
- Cultural and Historical Museum (of Leupp and the Navajo Reservation) designed, developed, and operated by Leupp students
- Community meetings and workshops
- Integrated thematic/academic projects
- Showcase for student academic work, arts, crafts, etc.
- Storytelling
- Traditional dances
- Tours provided by Leupp students
- Performances for students from other schools/districts

As part of the thematic units, students will apply their knowledge of math and science to construct shadehouses and traditional sweatlodges. Students will plant and maintain a garden, eating the foods that they grow. A corral will be built so that students can raise sheep and use them for traditional purposes. Morning runs to greet the rising sun will be included as part of the units on health and well-being. Students will decorate the interior of the Hogan Center with murals featuring events from Navajo history. The Hogan Center will also house artifacts and cultural projects created by the students. Visitors to the cultural center will be given guided tours by students who will inform them about the culture, language, and history of the Navajo. Instead of planting seeds in paper cups and monitoring their growth, young learners at Leupp will prepare the ground, plant corn seeds in soil they have furrowed, water the seeds, and tend the garden. They will learn about the historical and symbolic significance of corn to the Navajo. They will harvest the corn and with help from their parents and elders make corn meal mush, corn cakes, and other corn dishes that they will eat as part of a culminating cultural celebration. In conventional classrooms, students often dissect frogs or worms, taboo activities to traditional Navajos. Leupp middle school students will learn about internal anatomy by assisting in or observing traditional sheep butchering. They will learn the traditional teachings about why it is acceptable to take an animal's life in one context but not in another and how no part of the animal is wasted. In the process, Leupp students will acquire a far deeper knowledge and appreciation of science, math, social studies, language, and the innate cultural connections between them.

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In other words, raising sheep, tending a garden, performing Navajo songs and dances, and learning about traditional science, arts, crafts, and storytelling will be part of what students do when they attend Leupp Public School. State and district standards will be taught through these activities. What we are striving for is a different way of teaching—a marriage between the Old Ways and the New Ways. This union is exemplified in our Cultural CD ROM Project, where Leupp students interview Navajo elders about their personal stories, videotape traditional weavers and artisans at work, and document various cultural traditions. This information is presented on the CD-ROM in Navajo with a voice-over in English. Using modern technology, Navajo students can work collaboratively with their elders to preserve their history, language, and culture.

### **Challenges, problems, concerns**

At the end of the project's third year, Navajo language instruction had been implemented in Kindergarten and first grade and was in the fall of 2000 being expanded to the second grade. An additional grade will be added each year until all students at Leupp are receiving bilingual instruction. One student shadehouse project was completed, as well as the male and female sweatlodges. Construction on the hogan center was also started in the fall of 2000. On paper it appears as if things are progressing smoothly. However, we face many of the challenges common to language revitalization projects throughout the world. These include:

1. Lack of Certified Navajo Teachers: At Leupp, there are six bilingual instructional aides and three certified Navajo-speaking teachers, one at Kindergarten, one at first grade, and one at second grade. In the past, the bilingual aides provided Navajo language instruction for part of the day as an enrichment activity. However, this sent the wrong message to the students; i.e., that Navajo is a subordinate language, an add-on if we have time for it. Consequently, we are committed to having certified Navajo teachers in each immersion classroom working collaboratively with the Navajo-speaking aides.

This commitment has created anxiety for two reasons. First, as the program expands to third grade and beyond, we will need to find more certified Navajo-speaking teachers. Second, although they have been assured that no teachers will be involuntarily transferred to another school because of the program, some non-Navajo speakers feel threatened by the need for Navajo speaking teachers. There is no question that, over time, many of the retiring teachers and teachers who voluntarily transfer to other schools should be replaced by Navajo speakers, if Leupp is truly to become a Navajo language school. However, in the interim, the shortage of Navajo teachers can be addressed by creative scheduling, such as multi-age classrooms team-taught by a Navajo and a non-Navajo speaking teacher, the former providing the Navajo instruction, the latter the instruction in English.

2. Lack of Navajo Language Materials: The lack of native language content materials, especially in the upper grades, remains a serious problem. The Navajo language materials market is too small to attract major commercial publish-

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ers, so we, like other Navajo programs on the reservation, continue to laboriously develop our own materials while relying on the efforts of the Navajo Curriculum Centers that survived the funding cuts in the eighties.

3. Lack of Navajo Testing Materials: Instruments to assess language and content knowledge via Navajo are as scarce as Navajo language materials. We develop, borrow, and adapt as we go. Instruments are not normed or standardized and can be subjective and exclusive.
4. Lack of Community Participation: One common feature shared by successful language revitalization projects throughout the world is a high level of community involvement and a sense of community ownership in the school. We have not yet achieved that at Leupp School. We may have to overcome a bit of history first. As survivors of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools, many parents in Leupp still view the school as a closed shop. We plan to change this perception through the increased presence of Navajo language and culture in the school, the introduction of the Cultural Center, and a more pronounced effort to invite parents and community leaders into the school as consultants, volunteers, and mentors in classrooms and on curriculum development committees and parent councils.
5. A House Divided: When the idea of a bilingual program was first presented to the Leupp staff, about a third of the teachers and staff were in favor of it, a third vehemently opposed it, and a third were unsure. There were many meetings and discussions, some of them heated. Opponents expressed a sincere concern that Navajo children needed to improve their English if they were going to succeed, especially since the state graduation exam, Arizona's Instrument for Measuring Success (AIMS), is only offered in English. Ironically, several Navajo employees were the most vocal opponents of the program, having experienced firsthand the "English Only" regime of the boarding schools. Since the implementation of the program in the fall of 1997, most of the "undecideds" have joined the proponents, but opposition to the program continues, although in more subtle ways.

### **Some recommendations**

Some of the aforementioned problems are internal or local issues that need to be addressed in-house. Others, however, could be resolved if the various Navajo immersion and bilingual programs throughout the reservation and the bordertowns formed a consortium to address common concerns, provide training, share resources, and collaborate on the development of Navajo assessments, materials, and curriculum. This collaborative effort could reduce duplication of labor and free up time and resources, allowing us to create far more instructional and testing materials than any one program could possibly develop alone. However, this type of collaboration will require a certain level of standardization in terms of language, Navajo terminology for the academic content areas, and curriculum goals and objectives. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it may be an essential next step if we are to petition the state to provide the AIMS test in Navajo. It may also be essential if we are to preserve the language.

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### **Closing thoughts**

The problem with language loss is that it can happen so quickly and effortlessly, without much hoopla or high drama. There was a time when the U.S. Government actively tried to eradicate American Indian languages. The strategy was simple: kill the language and you kill the culture. Kill the culture, and you eliminate the people. This was the Government's solution to the so called "Indian Problem." So in BIA boarding schools young American Indians were often punished for speaking their native tongue.

But compulsion has never been as successful as persuasion. English has become the lingua franca not only because it is the language of money but also because it is the primary tongue of Hollywood, MTV, and the NBA. And with these come glitz, glamor, hype, and all things cool and wannabe. We as educators can rant and rave about how important it is to preserve the language, but to a seven year old child it is the moment that counts, not the blood and tears of their ancestors.

In 1978, my first year on the reservation, many Navajo still lacked electricity and running water. Today, if you travel to the most remote corners of the reservation, you will see satellite dishes sprouting from the rooftops. Today, federal legislation protects indigenous languages. American Indians cannot be prohibited from speaking their tribal tongue. They can, however, be persuaded not to speak it or simply lulled into a state of denial or indifference about its death.

In March 2000, I had the opportunity to visit some of the highly successful Maori Immersion schools in New Zealand. Thanks to Professor Timoti Karetu I was also able to participate in a *marae*, or traditional gathering. In my informal conversations with Maori immersion teachers, I was impressed by their passionate commitment to their work. They told tales of broken treaties and their bitter struggle to create Maori language schools. I sensed that back in the 1970s the Maori people had reached a point in time—do or die, so to speak—when they realized they must either fight to preserve their language and culture or allow it to be consumed by English. They chose to fight.

The Navajo have reached a similar crisis point. If they do not act now and galvanize their efforts to revitalize the Navajo language, it will be lost within another generation. And if Navajo, the most widely used of all our American Indian languages, dies, what hope remains for other indigenous languages in this country? I realize there are concerns and apprehensions about using Navajo as the primary language of instruction. "How will our students pass the AIMS test?" "They'll fall even further behind in English!" Yes, it will require a leap of faith. It will require an appeal to history. We have tried "English Only" with the Navajo for over 130 years, and the results have been catastrophic. With Navajo immersion programs, we cannot do worse, and most indicators suggest we will do much better.

But as I write this, my thoughts keep returning to the image of a young Navajo watching the TV screen in awe and wonder as the currently famous basketball player Michael Jordan flies through the air. I think it is safe to say that



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the macro-culture is not going to ride off into the sunset and magically disappear. It is here to stay, and it will become even more prevalent as we progress through the new millennium. The challenge for the Navajo will be finding a way to Walk and Learn in Beauty despite encroachments from the world beyond the mesa. This is not news to the Navajo. For centuries their culture has not only survived but flourished largely owing to their ability to selectively borrow things and ideas from the outside and adapt them in ways that remain uniquely Navajo. But language is the key.

Ultimately, it is through language that we not only preserve what we have but create and re-create that which is to come. And if we can ignite the fire of everyday life back into the language, we will no longer be racing against the clock, but instead trying to outrun the sun: the former quest is finite, the latter eternal.

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## Community-based Native Teacher Education Programs

Connie Heimbecker, Sam Minner, Greg Prater

*School-based Native teacher education programs are relatively uncommon. This paper examines two pioneering programs based out of Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, serving Navajo students and Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, serving members of the Nishnabe Nation of Northern Ontario.*

Teacher education programs that prepare teachers within the context of functioning elementary and secondary schools are widely discussed and debated (Lapan & Minner, 1997). Studies show that effective preparation of good teachers includes intensive practical experience with K-12 students under carefully supervised conditions in collaboration with experienced teachers (Holmes Group, 1990; Carnegie Forum on Education, 1986; Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1987). School-based programs are a particularly effective way of recruiting minority teachers into the profession because they can stay in their home communities, which provide the social supports needed to enable them to graduate at a very high rate (Prater, Miller & Minner, 1997).

School-based Native teacher education programs are relatively uncommon in the United States and Canada. In this paper we describe some of the features of two exemplary school-based Native teacher education programs based out of Northern Arizona University (NAU) in Flagstaff, Arizona, serving Navajo students and Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, serving members of the Nishnabe Nation of Northern Ontario.

### **RAISE Program in Kayenta, Arizona**

The Reaching American Indian Special/Elementary Educators (RAISE) program is located in Kayenta, Arizona, on the Navajo Indian Reservation, which covers 24,000 square miles. With a population of approximately 5,000, Kayenta is one of the largest communities on the reservation. An important goal of the RAISE program is to decrease the attrition rate of special education teachers working on the Navajo Reservation. Lancaster (1992) surveyed 45 rural school districts on Arizona Reservations and found that some schools reported a 100% turnover rate of special education teachers, while the average attrition rate was 35%. Stressors such as challenges working with parents, geographical factors, cultural features, and professional and social isolation contributed to teacher retention and recruitment problems (Helge & Marrs, 1981; Helge, 1980).

Few special education teacher training programs focus on preparing teachers to work in rural and remote areas, and it is difficult to recruit and retain special education teachers to work on American Indian reservations (Helge, 1983; Peterson & Montfort, 1997). By providing experiential field-based training that immerses students in Navajo culture and by recruiting paraprofessionals in the

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Kayenta Unified School District (KUSD), the RAISE program develops teachers who are more likely to spend their entire professional careers teaching Navajo students. Many participants in this project commented that without the RAISE program they probably would not have become teachers.

The KUSD plays a significant role in the RAISE program. The KUSD's K-12 enrollment for the 1998-99 year was 2,740 students living in an area of 3,000 square miles. Home language surveys indicate that Navajo is the primary language spoken in 92% of student homes. The primary and intermediate schools both have one transitional bilingual classroom for each grade level, kindergarten through fifth, with approximately 18-25 students in each classroom. Twelve teachers in the District hold bilingual Navajo teaching endorsements. Beginning in fifth grade there is funding for an ESL program for which approximately 63% of students are eligible. Many students are in an ESL certified teacher's classroom, and all elementary teachers (grades 7-12) and language arts teachers (grades 7-12) are required to begin work on a 21 credit hour ESL endorsement within the first year that they are hired. Approximately 80% of students ride the bus to school every day—some for as long as 3 hours a day. Two hundred and twenty-three students are enrolled in special education programs in the KUSD.

Funding for the RAISE program is through a three-year grant provided by the Department of Education's Office of Rehabilitation Services. This grant enables delivery of the year and a half long RAISE program to two cohorts of students for about \$115,000 a year. Grant funds available for students' textbooks, fees, materials, and professional development are crucial because of financial constraints faced by students, most of whom are adults with family responsibilities.

Every two years up to 18 participants are recruited for the next RAISE cohort. Usually about half of the participants are selected from the NAU Flagstaff campus and half from the Kayenta community. Students from the Flagstaff campus find out about the program in a first year education course all education majors are required to take. They complete an application and write an essay detailing why they want to participate in the program. Applicants must be admitted to NAU's teacher education program before they may be considered for the RAISE program.

Navajo paraprofessionals employed by the KUSD are also encouraged to apply. The RAISE Project Director and Project Manager, who are NAU faculty, assist KUSD administrators in the selection of Kayenta applicants. Project personnel rely heavily upon input from the KUSD Special Education Director who is a long term resident of Kayenta and a well respected Navajo educator. Since 1992, the student makeup of cohorts with the RSEP and RAISE programs has varied from year to year. Typically students recruited from the main campus are non-Indian women in their early twenties following the traditional path towards an undergraduate degree and teacher certification. Kayenta participants are usually thirty-year-old Navajo women who are married with two or more children. Some students need to travel long distances in order to participate in the program. For many participants, their mother-tongue language is Navajo.

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English is a second language for them, but they are fully bilingual. Some Navajo students speak English as a first language, though this is rarely standard English. Similarly, different dialects of Navajo are spoken by different students coming from different parts of the reservation. Some students are biliterate in Navajo and English.

Throughout the RAISE program students learn about each other culturally, with all participants living on the reservation. Students in every new cohort participate in two orientations. The first orientation is on the Flagstaff campus where special education and Native American faculty and students make presentations to students. The goal of this presentation is to share information about Native American culture and to discuss potential issues that could arise during the year. Throughout RAISE classes, Anglo, Navajo, and Hopi cultures are discussed. Indian students are encouraged to act as cultural advisors to the Anglo students who in many cases have had minimal experience with Native American culture and traditions. Anglo students experience the culture first hand at such events as Navajo weddings, ceremonies, and the Navajo Nation Fair. The RAISE program also makes special efforts to engage students in the profession of education. Students in each cohort collaboratively research, write, submit, and deliver papers at local, regional, and national professional meetings. Many papers have been published in conference proceedings.

For example, one project involved getting Indian students' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. Students answered the following survey questions:

“ What kind of teacher do you learn the most from?”

- I learn the most from teachers who have hands-on projects. They listen to your ideas. They don't make you feel uncomfortable when you talk to them.
- Teachers that explain new ideas and show new ideas on how to learn different things in different ways.
- Ones that show respect and teach me responsibility.
- She can always help and explain things when you don't understand.
- I learn the most from strict teachers who give homework, who are easy to be with, and have a good sense of humor.

“If you were a teacher, what will you do in your classroom? What wouldn't you do?” A summary of the responses indicates they will teach with patience and honesty, being careful to never put anyone down and to teach by the golden rule. Some of the students' responses were as follows:

- Teach kids, be honest, and I wouldn't yell at my students. I will have to be patient.
- As a teacher I will try to get to know each person individually. To see how they were doing at home and at school.

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- Help them but never put them down, help them understand and make learning be fun and interesting.
- I will teach my class, treat them the way they want to be treated.

“What are some things that teachers do that may prevent you from learning?”

- Slams about their culture
- Having boring lectures, talking too slow.
- Letting kids mess around or talk when someone else is talking.
- They move through a section of work too fast, and don't explain the work, often speak too quickly and don't repeat themselves

Another question important to elaborate on regarding cultural sensitivity was question six of the survey, “Do you believe effective teachers need to be aware and sensitive of the culture of the students they are teaching?” An overwhelming response was in favor of cultural sensitivity. They believed it was important so that their culture was not made fun of and so that the teacher will not be put in an unknowing situation that could allow them to offend their students. However, some students expressed the fact that they still want to be taught the basic skills: “reading, math, writing, with culture not being a big issue” (Prater, Rezzonico, Pyron, Chischille, Arthur, & Yellowhair, 1995).

Students enter the RAISE program with all required liberal arts courses completed. Admission requirements, course of studies, and student teaching expectations for the RAISE program are similar to those at the home campus, but all courses are highly contextualized for the settings in which students live and work. Ideas offered in class are related to students' classroom experience, while suggestions made during the Teacher Aide practicum are related to course work. When methods of data collection are discussed in class, students often practice the techniques in their practicum setting the following day. Participants employed by the KUSD work in their classrooms week days, while those from the main campus complete their Teacher Aide practicum requirements on weekday mornings or substitute teach throughout the day. All participants attended classes weekday evenings. Throughout the program, students complete all required elementary and special education courses. The 46 hours of coursework focus on foundations, methods, assessment, and curriculum and the teacher aide practicum. One student stated, “The time we spend in the KUSD classrooms is invaluable. I already feel like a real teacher.”

Currently all coursework is delivered on site at the RAISE classroom situated within the KUSD intermediate school. The project manager typically teaches class two or three afternoons a week. Another faculty member travels to Kayenta to teach one night a week and in the past has taught via Interactive Instructional Television. KUSD teachers and administrators with Masters degrees and expertise in certain areas serve as instructors for specific courses. Additional faculty from the home campus deliver guest lectures on special topics.

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Students in the program enter as a cohort, see each other every week day, and are encouraged to work cooperatively in class and when working on assignments. Students assist and support each other in many ways (e.g., offering rides to class, helping with childcare, etc.). One student this year commented, "We all seem like one big family. We all support each other." This type of statement is made each year by various program participants. These and other factors such as highly contextualized and relevant curriculum and the focus on full professional development of project participants have contributed to a high RAISE and Rural Special Education Project (funded by an OSER's grant between 1992 and 1998) retention rate. Between 1992 and 1996, the retention rate of Native Americans in the early RSEP program was 100%, with 36 participants completing the program.

On-going program evaluation has been built into the RSEP and RAISE programs. All participants are required to keep a daily journal of reflections, documenting their feelings and experiences with the program (courses, teaching, professional development activities, etc.). These journals are periodically reviewed by grant personnel. Student achievement of competencies outlined in the original program proposal are assessed in their practicum settings, under the supervision of program faculty and mentor teachers, and through written and oral presentations in coursework. An informal survey conducted among 1994-95 RSEP participants showed that students had gained a great deal from the experience both culturally and educationally. Many Indians stated that RSEP had given them the opportunity to further their education without having to relocate families and move to the main campus. Other Native Americans felt the program had given them the opportunity to view the Anglo culture in a different way than how they were taught. By the end of the program, both Native and Anglo participants felt more confident in the classroom.

#### **Lakehead University's Native Teacher Education Program**

From 1993 to 1996, Lakehead University (LU) offered three community-based Native teacher education programs in conjunction with program management committees for the Sioux Lookout District, the Rainy Lake Education Authority, and the Wabeseemoong Education Authority. The programs offered to each of these communities were very similar. Within this paper we will focus only on the Sioux Lookout District Program.

Lakehead University, in Thunder Bay, offers pre-service teacher education programs leading to provincial certification, in-service professional teacher education courses, and graduate Master of Education programs. It has offered an on-campus Native Teacher Education Program (NTEP) since 1974. In 1993, Lakehead University entered an agreement with the Northern Nishnabe Education Council (which delivers off-reserve education services to First Nation students from the Sioux Lookout District) and the Sioux Lookout District Native Teacher Education Program Management Committee. The goal of the Sioux Lookout District Native Teacher Education Program Management Committee



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(PMC) was to ensure the provision of a teacher education program that meets the needs of the District's First Nations peoples.

LU agreed to provide a two year Native Teacher Education Program in accordance with standards established by the LU Faculty of Education and the Ontario Ministry of Education. The LU program enabled candidates to obtain a Primary/Junior (kindergarten to grade six) Ontario Teacher Certificate. Supervision of student teachers was provided by qualified LU staff in a manner very similar to the on-campus program. LU provided education courses designed to train teachers to deliver a bilingual/bicultural program and meet the needs of First Nations communities. LU staffed the program according to university policies, with involvement of the PMC Coordinator. In conjunction with the PMC Coordinator, LU arranged practice teaching schedules and assessed candidates. Lakehead University ensured the design and delivery of the teacher education program that met the needs of the Sioux Lookout District First Nations by adapting courses to meet First Nations needs. LU monitored and evaluated the program, assisted with on-site student counseling, supervised students, and worked with district First Nations communities (Lakehead University, 1997).

LU's Sioux Lookout Program simultaneously served 23 different communities scattered throughout Northwestern Ontario between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay. They range in size from approximately 80 people to over 400. Most are "fly-in" communities, accessible only by plane. Each community has a school with three to 52 staff members and is populated primarily by members of the Nishnabe Nation. Virtually all communities are reserves with band controlled schools administered by the local First Nations Band Council versus the provincial Ministry of Education or the federal Department of Indian Affairs. As such, they are able to hire uncertified teachers for their schools. Each of these teachers assumes full responsibility for her or his classroom.

The First Nations of the Sioux Lookout District needed aboriginal teachers who were fluent in the Nishnabe language and knowledgeable of the Nishnabe culture. Such teachers could deliver bilingual/bicultural programs and act as role models to students in their schools. Teacher candidates could not drive to university campuses to take education courses. Mature and experienced classroom assistants and uncertified teachers usually have large families that cannot relocate to an urban center for four year university programs. Consequently, one of the primary goals of the Sioux Lookout Program was to instruct Native teacher candidates to develop and deliver high quality bilingual-bicultural programs in First Nations schools of the Sioux Lookout District. Native teacher candidates were taught to implement a variety of teaching strategies required to meet the needs of multigrade classrooms and classrooms with a wide range of student ability levels. Candidates learned to plan lessons, units, and activities that would meet the needs of Native First Language, English Second Language, and English Second Dialect students (Lakehead University, 1996).

First Nations communities recommended suitable teacher candidates to the program (i.e. adults fluent in the Native language who had classroom experi-



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ence and were working or volunteering in a school). School principals agreed to release students with pay from teaching responsibilities to attend classes and the student teaching practicum. The Nishnabe Nation Education Council contracted with LU for delivery of the Sioux Lookout Program and paid for tuition and student and instructor travel and accommodations during coursework and student teaching. Wherever possible, LU supported the ongoing needs of the program via the university's application for provincial and federal funds. The Nishnabe Nation Education Council secured funding for the program primarily from federal grants.

The PMC and LU developed teacher candidate selection criteria similar to the University's admission regulations. The PMC and LU's Faculty of Education jointly reviewed applications and determined acceptance to the program. Selection criteria of PMC included that candidates had to be mature Native people fluent in a Native language with classroom experience. LU preferred that candidates have the requirements of a secondary graduation diploma or equivalent, but relevant life experience was included in the admission evaluation when an applicant had not completed grade 12. English and math courses offered during the first summer of the program were used to assess candidates' skills in terms of ability to handle course materials. Those candidates unable to successfully complete these courses were encouraged to enroll in upgrading courses and re-apply to a later program.

Students who entered the NTEP were Nishnabe people who spoke Nishnabe as their first language and English as their second language. Many students were also biliterate. All students were mature adults with extensive classroom experience. Many were classroom teacher aides or uncertified teachers for five to ten years or more. Approximately two-thirds of the candidates were female. Candidates ranged in age from about 20 to 55 years old, with most between 25 and 35.

Students enrolled in the Sioux Lookout NTEP took only the education component of LU's four-year B.A./B.Ed. program. While typically students in a B.A./B.Ed. program took their Arts courses before their education courses, NTEP students began with their third and fourth year education courses. They were then able to take their first, second, and third year Arts courses after their education courses. The NTEP program included two introductory and orientation courses, seven and one-half B.A./B.Ed credit courses, two non-credit half courses, and a student teaching component.

Instructional delivery methods for these courses consisted of on-site instruction at Lakehead University's main campus and the Pelican Falls Education Center and two-way radio broadcast transmission via the Wahsa Distance Education network. Classroom interaction between students and faculty was supplemented by classes via simulcast radio. Approximately two-thirds of the coursework was done in each student's home community.

The PMC coordinator stated that "One of the greatest challenges of the NTEP program to be resolved is how to keep the students committed

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for the duration of the program.” The program was condensed into a very demanding two-years, and unlike on campus students, NTEP students were working full-time as educators throughout the duration of the program (often with primary responsibility for the classrooms in which they work). In contrast to the on-campus program, the majority of students were women with obligations to the family as homemaker, mother, and wife. When candidates were released from their classroom responsibilities for student teaching, they were often required to prepare weeks of lesson plans for substitute teachers (Levi, 1998a).

The coordinator also cited reasons students gave for dropping out of the program. These included feelings of guilt for neglecting their families and work; loneliness during summer sessions and practicum; feeling overwhelmed by obligations of family, work, and school; lack of time to complete assignments; being assigned full classroom responsibilities without sufficient direction or feedback; lack of support from family, friends, employer, and colleagues; poor organizational and time management skills; and social problems and unresolved personal issues. One response to these issues was to implement a mentor program. School principals were consulted and asked to select a teacher/mentor for each student. The mentor worked closely with the student on a daily basis, providing an example of professional behavior and additional support (Levi, 1998a).

The graduation rate for the Sioux Lookout Community Based Native Teacher Education Program was high considering the numerous demands, responsibilities, and challenges that candidates have faced. Of the 20 students registered in the first 1993-1995 program, 15 students graduated (75%). From among the 35 students registered in the second 1995-1997 program, 25 graduated (72%). With a total of 55 graduates in four years, as of 1998, 44 were teachers, three were principals, two were working in non-teaching jobs, one was employed as a teacher assistant, and one was employed as a tutor escort (Levi, 1998b).

During the summer of 1998, the PMC coordinator conducted a program evaluation for the 1997-1999 program (Levi, 1998a). Participants were asked to list the strengths and weaknesses of the program and to make suggestions for improvement and other comments. Program strengths included:

- The instructors know their field and share that knowledge with us.
- There is a good selection of courses to meet the requirements.
- This program shows encouragement to have Native teachers.
- The radio teleconferencing courses are effective and very convenient.
- Funding provides the practical resources we need for our studies.
- Most of the courses are interesting and challenging.
- It has helped having the opportunity to get experience in the classroom and in other schools.
- I would not be able to take classes like this if the program was not brought to the North.
- Working with other students is a real incentive and encouragement.

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Weaknesses included:

- Scheduling of courses is too close to holidays.
- Some of the lectures are too long.
- More hands on activities are needed to gain even more practical experience.
- There is a lack of student input into schedules, it would help if the students' were consulted on scheduling too.
- We need more resources. There is a lack of research materials for assignments.
- A one week course is too little time to cover everything.

Additionally, students mention that it was a great program and that it gave them the opportunity to stay in their communities and be with their family and friends.

### **Conclusion**

The most significant differences between these programs are what we perceive as their highlights. Many students perceive the highlight of the RAISE program to be the opportunity to research, write, and present an academic paper at a minimum of one national conference. Over the years of the program, students have presented in Tucson (Arizona), Albuquerque (New Mexico), and Washington (D.C.). In contrast, students of LU's NTEP have often cited the highlight of their program as being the opportunity to student teach in First Nations communities and schools other than their own.

We think that these programs provide a tremendous opportunity for indigenous students, their schools, and their communities. Educators who otherwise may never have the chance to pursue teacher training are becoming teachers, department heads, principals, and role models in remote and rural Native communities. Furthermore, they are able to pursue this training while continuing to contribute to the educational endeavors of their schools and communities. Consequently, key educators are not leaving the community at a crucial time in their community's development.

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## Measuring Language Dominance and Bilingual Proficiency Development of Tarahumara Children

Carla Paciotto

*This paper presents an analysis of language dominance and oral bilingual proficiency of Tarahumara-Spanish speaking children from Northern Mexico within the framework of Cummins' model of bilingual proficiency development. The children were assessed through a bilingual interview, which allowed for the testing of language dominance along with the constructs of BICS and CALP and language interdependence in the oral domain. Preliminary findings indicate that these constructs are applicable to a context where the two languages are in a relation of diglossia. In this case where the children enter school as bilingual speakers dominant in Tarahumara and the native language is not used as a medium of instruction.*

Bilingual educational programs for minority language students are still contentious in most multilingual regions of the world. In general, proficiency in the dominant language has been considered by program developers and teachers to be the solution to the obstacles that a high number of language minority children encounter in school. In order to reach this goal, monolingual programs in the second/dominant language and transitional bilingual programs are commonly perceived as more effective than additive programs that foster the development of first and second language literacy. This perception is based on the rationale that, since school success is a function of proficiency in the dominant language, it is "common sense" to provide maximum exposure to the second/dominant language as quickly as possible.

These beliefs and corresponding instructional practices persist in spite of the conspicuous evidence of the learning advantages that additive bilingual and biliteracy education programs present for language minority children over monolingual and transitional bilingual practices. Among the second language learning models that illustrate such advantages, Cummins' (1979, 1996, Cummins & Swain, 1986) psycholinguistically oriented theoretical model of bilingual proficiency has gained wide support over the last 20 years. In spite of the critiques of Cummins' model, which are beyond the scope of this article (Edelsky, 1996; Edelsky et al., 1983; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986), this has been considered as offering a strong explanation of how the development of academic language skills (higher-order cognitive knowledge) in the first language (L1) facilitates and strengthens the development of academic skills in the second language (L2) through a process of cognitive transfer.

Over the years, Cummins' model has been refined and tested through studies carried out primarily within the contexts of language minority education for immigrant students in the U.S.A., Canada, Europe, and Australia. The research

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of interest here relates to the examination of Cummins' model in the analysis of bilingual proficiency of students who are native speakers of an indigenous language. Specifically, the present investigation follows a recent research direction in this area (Francis, 1997, 1999, 2000) that focuses on how Cummins' framework can help to describe bilingual proficiency development within a diglossic language contact situation, where an indigenous language holds a subordinate prestige-value, a restricted functional domain, and is not used as a medium of instruction. First, a brief description of Cummins' model for the study of bilingual proficiency is provided as the theoretical framework of relevance.

### **Cummins' framework**

Among the most important theoretical constructs proposed by Cummins since his early work (1979) is the distinction he made between the development of conversational language (also termed basic interpersonal communicative skills or BICS) and academic language proficiency (also termed cognitive academic language proficiency or CALP). This construct postulates that every first language learner develops a language proficiency for face-to-face daily conversation, which Cummins calls conversational language and also defines as "surface level fluency" or "basic fluency" in the native language. L1 conversational proficiency is usually reached around six years of age. Children who enter school taught in a L2 take from two to three years to develop a peer-appropriate conversational fluency in the L2 (Cummins, 1997; Collier, 1995).

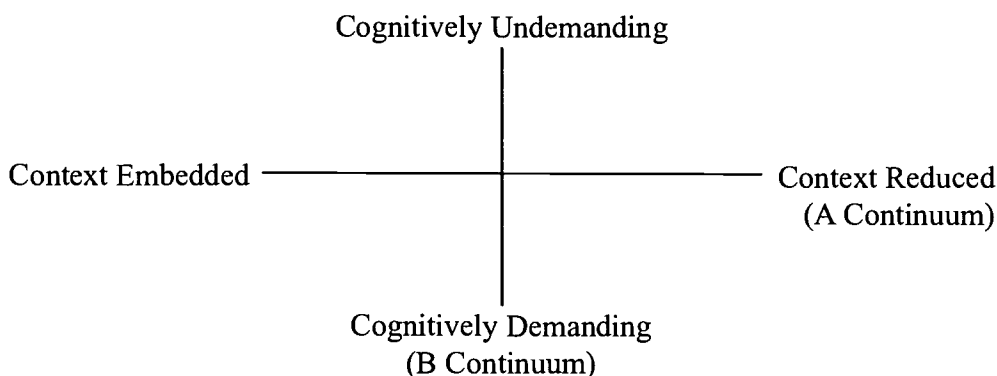
Conversational language represents a distinct—but not unrelated—level of language development from academic language proficiency, which is developed with school experience and continues throughout life. In the context of schooling for minority language students, CALP development in a second language usually follows BICS development and takes from five to seven years.

It is important to emphasize that the distinction between conversational and academic language does not refer to two opposing dimensions of language acquisition, but rather to language tasks and activities that are characterized by different degrees of (1) cognitive effort/involvement and (2) contextual information and clues needed to process those tasks. These two dimensions are conceived as two intersecting continua: (A) context-embedded vs. context-reduced and (B) cognitively undemanding vs. cognitively demanding communicative events (see Figure 1). At one extreme of the (A) continuum, we find communicative events typical of everyday face-to-face conversation where "the participants can actively negotiate meaning ... and the language is supported by a wide range of meaningful paralinguistic and situational clues" (Cummins, 1986, p. 154). This type of activity is also cognitively-undemanding since the "active cognitive involvement" (Cummins, 1997, p. 58) is low when processing language. On the other end of the continuum, we find context-reduced communication, which "depends heavily on knowledge of the language itself" (Cummins & Swain, 1983, p. 36) and is characteristic of school-related tasks. An example of such activity is essay writing, where meaning is not produced by any cue external to the text. In this case, the task requires a high level of cognitive involvement; therefore it is placed at the extreme of the (B) continuum.



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**Figure 1.** Range of contextual support and degree of cognitive involvement in communicative activities



Authors from different perspectives (Biber, 1986; Feldman, 1991; Tannen, 1985) have demonstrated how oral and written texts are not oppositional forms. Depending on the contexts and purpose of the speech event, both the oral and written texts can rely on conversational or formalized language. The important point of these studies for the educational context is that oral language, especially oral language used and developed in school settings, contributes to the acquisition of high cognitive skills in a similar fashion as literacy. That spoken discourse can possess similar characteristics as written discourse is demonstrated both by studies of children's language developed in school settings (Tannen, 1985) and studies of oral genres present in oral/traditional societies (Feldman, 1991). Both studies illustrate that oral discourse can be based on highly formalized and self-contextualizing structures that possess the qualities of academic discourse.

In any case, the failure to recognize the distinction and relationship between conversational/BICS and academic/CALP levels of oral and written development in the case of minority students, according to Cummins (1986), often results in an incorrect use and interpretation of assessment measures of language minority students' academic abilities. Proficiency in conversational skills—developed through conversation with peers—is often expected to predict proficiency in academic discourse—developed through academic tasks. When this expectation is in place, and second language learners possessing peer-appropriate proficiency in conversational language score at low levels on school standardized (cognitively-demanding) tests, the low scores are interpreted as indicating learning disabilities instead of a student's lack of academic language proficiency. This misinterpretation causes minority students to be inappropriately placed in special education classes.

The construct of CALP proficiency also becomes critical when combined with the evidence that academic discourse in both L1 and L2 is built on the same cognitive knowledge and structures (common underlying proficiency or CUP). Once these are acquired in one language, they are shared by and transferable to

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other language systems (the principle of language interdependence). In this perspective, the development of higher order/school-related cognitive structures in L1 does not present an obstacle to the development of L2 skills, but, on the contrary, creates a strong base for L2 development. Developing higher order academic discourse in the stronger/more proficient language (L1) can take place earlier in the schooling process and, most importantly, at grade level. In this way, academic skills can be readily transferred to L2 after surface fluency in the second language is acquired, instead of directly developing them in L2 at a much slower pace, which risks that a learner will not catch up with mainstream class level.

This transferability of skills from L1 to L2 implies that for language minority students who are exited from transitional bilingual programs after three years and are provided no support in L1, through which they could perform grade-level tasks, the transfer and general developments of cognitive knowledge are interrupted or slowed down (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1997). The tendency for such students is to fall behind and fail academically, since at this stage they have not developed enough L2 proficiency to perform at grade level. Second language instruction with no bilingual component can yield the same results. Typically, the first years are focused on grammatical competence, and second language learners fall behind in the development of grade-level academic language. The case of submersion programs in the dominant language is also common, and the most relevant for the present discussion. Education for many indigenous populations in Mexico follows this pattern, where no L1 instruction and no second language instruction is offered even where the school is attended by a majority of indigenous language speakers and the teachers are bilingual.

### **The Tlaxcala study**

Francis' (1997) study of Nahuatl-Spanish speaking students in the state of Tlaxcala, Central Mexico, examined precisely the development of bilingual proficiency in a school where the native indigenous language was not employed as a medium of instruction. The examination of the development of bilingual proficiency when the native language is not used in instructional context "represents a different vantage point from which to conceptualized the models of linguistic interdependence, common underlying proficiency, and transfer" (Francis, 2000, p. 170) proposed by Cummins' model.

The purpose of the Nahuatl study was to analyze "the degree to which comprehension skills and discourse competencies learned in school through the medium of Spanish, would be available to the students when presented with similar tasks in Nahuatl" (Francis, 1999, p. 534). The study tested the distinction between BICS and CALP and the principle of academic language interdependence by comparing levels of higher order discourse through oral, written, and reading tasks in the two languages, where levels of oral bilingualism were correlated with reading and writing abilities. Through this series of tests, the study showed evidence of a parallel development in L1 and L2 of higher order discourse structures across the three modalities. Even though the mother tongue

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was not employed for academic purposes in the school, its CALP development trend across the oral and literacy dimension was comparable to that found in Spanish. This result suggested a relationship of interdependence of the higher order cognitive processes underlying the oral, written, and reading tasks in both languages and the general applicability of the construct of CUP even in unbalanced diglossic relationships (Francis, 1999, p. 534) where the indigenous native language is not employed for academic tasks in class. The Tlaxcala study presents an additional case suggesting that native literacy could be developed without impinging on the development of L2 orality and literacy; on the contrary, it could potentially strengthen L2 academic proficiency owing to the transferability of academic skills from one language to the other.

Following the Nahuatl-Spanish case study's framework, the *Entrevista Bilingüe* (Bilingual Interview) was employed to provide a measurement of language dominance and bilingual proficiency development of Tarahumara students by looking particularly at oral conversational and academic language. Specifically, the replication of this part of the Tlaxcala study in a Tarahumara contexts addressed the following questions: (1) What is the language proficiency and dominance profile of Tarahumara children entering the primary school and how does it change across grades? (2) How accessible to L1 are higher-order oral discourse skills, when L1 is not used in class for academic discourse and tasks? (3) What do the answers to these questions say about the possibility of creating a language maintenance program that benefits both L1 and L2 development of academic discourse?

### **Context of the study**

*The Bilingual-Bicultural Program:* Tarahumara is a Uto-Aztecan language spoken by one of the largest indigenous group of the Southwestern area inhabiting the Sierra Madre Occidental of Chihuahua, Northern Mexico. Even though in some areas of the Sierra range Tarahumara is reported to be still strong and the primary language of many communities, at the same time, it appears to be undergoing a fast shift in areas of intense and increasing contact with the Spanish-speaking populations. Seasonal migration to mestizo towns and cities to find work also seems to bring about a rapid shift to Spanish by younger generations.

Since 1993, the State of Chihuahua—reflecting the federal education policy for indigenous populations—has mandated a bilingual-bicultural education program (BBEP) for the schools attended by a majority of Tarahumara children. In light of the failure of Spanish-only education to produce successful learners among the Tarahumara, the program was created as an attempt to reduce the gap between home and school culture and language and foster a more favorable learning environment by strengthening the sense of cultural and linguistic identity of the students. In this perspective, the BBPE theoretically conceives of literacy in the native language as beneficial for the development of L2 literacy and for academic success in general, and at the same time it considers the written word as possessing a reinforcing power for the native language and speakers' sense of identity.

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The BBEP was designed as a transitional program where children would be taught literacy in their native language and in Spanish up to third grade, after which Spanish would increasingly become the main medium of instruction. For this purpose, the state developed a standard written form of Tarahumara used in a complete series of bilingual textbooks freely distributed to the primary schools and offered a series of summer teacher training sessions to enable the implementation of the BBEP. However, interviews with the teachers working in the uplands of the Sierra showed that bridging home and school environment and maintenance of the native language are not strong enough motives to introduce Tarahumara literacy in the classroom.

The data presented here are part of an ethnographic study of the BBEP for the Tarahumara of the Sierra Madre, Northern Mexico, carried out in a community where the Tarahumara language presents a diglossic distribution in relation to the dominant language (Spanish). Tarahumara is the low-prestige language and is confined to the community and family oral communicative space, while the written and larger social domains are “occupied” by Spanish. Part of the study was devoted to delineating the sociolinguistic and language dominance profile of Tarahumara students across the six grades and to contextualizing the work and instructional choices of the teachers and the perceived (in)feasibility of the BBEP. At the same time, the study sought to assess the indigenous children’s oral and written proficiency in the two languages in a developmental perspective by replicating the study of bilingual proficiency conducted in Tlaxcala (Francis, 1997). The Tarahumara study can provide further data on the acquisition of bilingual proficiency and its potential benefits in an indigenous language context, which bears similarities with the sociolinguistic and instructional settings of the Tlaxcala study.

*The Community:* The study was carried out in the primary school located in Mawichi (a pseudonym), one of the most accessible all-Tarahumara villages in the uplands of the Sierra Madre Occidental in the State of Chihuahua. Located at 7,000 feet in a small valley surrounded by canyon walls, Mawichi has recently become more accessible by car from Creel, a well-known tourist destination. The nearness to Creel, the presence of a renowned mission built by the Jesuits in 1740, and the recent opening of a high-quality handicraft shop have made Mawichi one of the top stops for tourists. Almost every day at least one bus or car loaded with foreigners and Mexican tourists arrives in the village.

The village is the center of Sunday gatherings of the broader community for religious and land-related reunions, together with sport competitions and commercial transactions. The village is also where the health clinic, the largest boarding school of the *ejido* (land unit), and the civic registrar are located. However, the village is not where the majority of the Tarahumara families belonging to the *ejido* of Mawichi live. Apart from a limited number of families living around the church and school area, the rest of the Tarahumara—a total of 1,247 people—live in three to four house-clusters overlooking their cornfields. These cornfields provide them with their annual ration of corn and are scattered around the valleys and canyons of the *ejido* (30,700 hectares).

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This form of settlement and geographic isolation required by the Tarahumara corn-based subsistence economy has pushed the department of education since the 1970s to create a system of boarding schools for primary education throughout the Sierra, which can be reached by children in a maximum of one or two hours of walking. The location of the boarding schools within the community boundaries and the 5-day-a-week attendance arrangement allow children to return to their families during the weekends. The boarding school system represents a successful alternative to mainstream day and religious year-around boarding schools (*internados*), which are usually far removed from the native communities.

The boarding school in Mawichi has reached a higher enrollment only in the last 10 years owing to the increased need of the Tarahumara to work outside of the native community, for which they require at least basic literacy and oral proficiency in Spanish. However, dropout rates are very high, mainly because of the need of young people to support themselves and their family. According to local census data, the level of attendance has increased in the younger generations, but it still remains low.

Teacher and parent interviews suggest that the introduction of bilingual teachers in the boarding school has favored a better communication between school and community and a more favorable instructional environment for the children, who typically are incipient learners of Spanish upon entering first grade. In light of this perspective, bilingual education is understood by teachers and parents as using Tarahumara as an “*apoyo*” (support) in the classroom for the translation of Spanish content, instructional directions, discipline purposes, and informal talk.

Teachers agree that the native language is generally in danger of shifting and that literacy could strengthen the language and the sense of identity among children. However, they do not consider maintenance of the native language to be a priority, considering that children are rarely exposed to Spanish before school and that Spanish is required to deal successfully with the dominant society. Similarly, the majority of Tarahumara parents do not see the disappearance of their native language as a possibility, considering the strength of the language in the homes, and therefore they do not see the need for a maintenance program in the school. At the same time, teachers and parents often think of the children’s first language as an hindrance to the acquisition of Spanish. Even though many teachers in these days are attending teacher education programs that emphasize the importance of valuing the Tarahumara language and culture in class, these training courses appear to overlook the usefulness of literacy development in L1 for general academic success.

Therefore, the indigenous language still remains an oral language for the great majority of the Tarahumara, in spite of the fact that there is an increasing number of materials written in both standardized and vernacular forms of the language. However, the presence of the bilingual books in the school is very important for the conceiving of Tarahumara as a written language by Tarahumara speakers. Even though they were not used in class for formal instruction, chil-



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dren had access to them and sporadically read them spontaneously outside of instructional time. In addition, almost all the (literate) parents interviewed knew about the books and had an opinion about the standardized form of Tarahumara used in the book. There seemed to be no aversion to the concept of writing in Tarahumara, only a rejection of the standardized form and a general indecision about how the written language could serve them.

*The School:* The primary school under study had 147 children enrolled, with the majority of students in two 1st grade classrooms and two 2nd grade classrooms. Among the entire student population, 22 were monolingual speakers of Spanish, two of whom had passive knowledge of Tarahumara and 11 of whom were the children of the teachers and staff members. The other 11 lived very close to the school in the village of Mawichi, and typically one or both of their parents did not speak Tarahumara. These students were distributed across the six grades.

According to the teacher and student interviews, the rest of the students were native speakers of the indigenous language and second language learners of Spanish, which they mainly learned in school. However, Tarahumara for the native speakers generally remained the language of informal student-to-student interaction in and out of the classroom and across grades.

The primary school was served by six teachers. Three teachers were fluent speakers of Tarahumara, one had a passive knowledge of the language, and two were monolingual Spanish speakers. For the most part, the teachers came originally from other Tarahumara communities but now lived in or very close to Creel, the major mestizo town in the area and the headquarters of the school district. During the week, teachers usually lived at the school with their families, returning to Creel on the weekends.

## **The study**

*Method—The Entrevista Bilingüe:* The Bilingual Interview was administered to systematically measure language dominance and to detect trends in the development of oral bilingualism throughout the schooling process. The interview was designed to elicit language data from two sets of plates illustrating familiar situations (see Figure 2) and two illustrated stories of five pictures each that depicted familiar daily life situations in rural contexts (see Figure 3). The illustrations took into account cultural and environmental references for Nahuatl speakers located in Central Mexico and were judged by the school teacher to be appropriate for the Tarahumara children's cultural context.

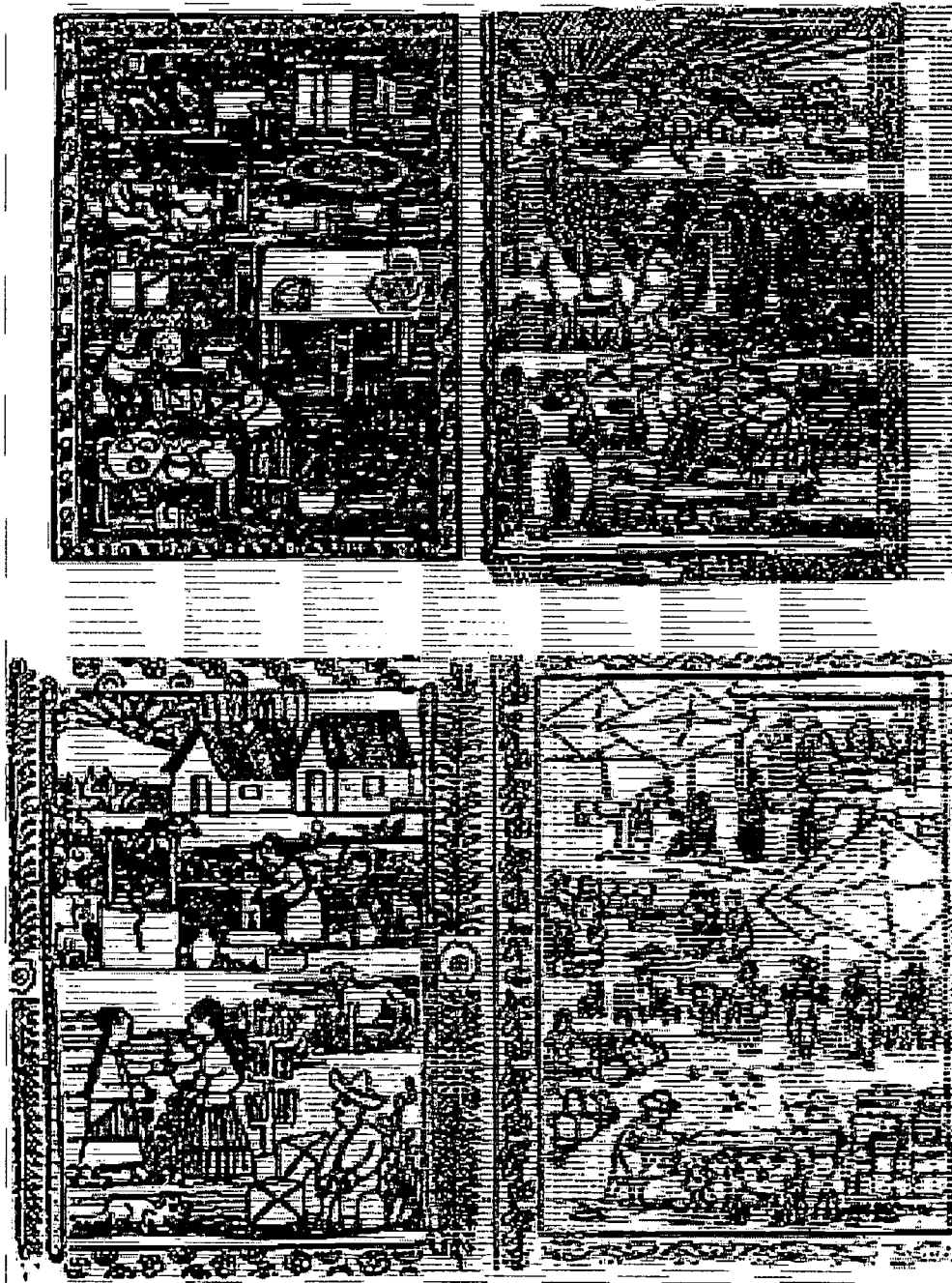
The bilingual interview was divided into three sections:

1. A vocabulary section, which elicited two lists of words per language based on the two plates per language;
2. A conversation/dialogue (question and answer) section based on two five-picture stories;



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Figure 2. Plates employed for the bilingual vocabulary task (illustrations by Antonieta Castilla from Francis, 1992)



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3. An oral narration section, based on the same picture stories, which tested the students' ability to produce a complete text independently. This section was analyzed according to the following criteria:
  - (a) minimal acceptability of individual sentences judged by a native speaker to be native-like and connected to the pictures; and
  - (b) textual complexity of narration judged by the number of connectors (e.g., therefore, then, later, because) and inferences.

Section 1, 2, and 3a, were respectively considered as providing a measure of conversational proficiency, testing the ability to produce everyday vocabulary, understand and answer intelligibly simple questions, and produce grammatically acceptable texts. On the other hand, 3b was considered as providing a simple measure of discourse competence, as signaled in the texts by (1) the ability of the students to make inferences, where inferences "form an important part of the higher levels of literacy" (Olson, 1991, p. 263) and (2) students' use of connectors to build coherent texts, where coherence is defined as "the ability to arrange ideas in logical sequence and organize meanings effectively" (Cummins, 1986, p. 113).

*Limitations of the Instrument:* The fact that the instrument does not look for specific language-bound grammatical features allows for its use in testing bilingual speakers of any language. Its manageability and easiness of administration and scoring allow teachers to carry it out without any specialized knowledge of linguistics and without the need for extensive training. However, because it does not look for specific items, the interview cannot clearly identify distinctions between intermediate, advanced, or native-like speakers proficiency, rather it provides a general estimation of language dominance.

*Administration of the Bilingual Interview:* The administration of the interview was carried out by two different interviewers—myself and a bilingual teacher, who was a native speaker of the Tarahumara variant spoken by the children under study. The designated teacher-assistant taught kindergarten and had been teaching at the same school for five years, and almost all the children were familiar with her and recognized that she was a fluent speaker of Tarahumara. In my case, I waited for a few months before administering the interview, giving the children a chance to become accustomed to my presence. By the time I started interviewing, I had substituted as a teacher for all of the classes, interacted with every grade in the various classrooms, participated in school activities, and played with children during morning and afternoon recess for three months.

During the administration of the interview, the majority of the children seemed to enjoy the one-on-one attention and the picture-description tasks. Only one first grader refused to speak during the interview and had to be excluded from the sample. However, some children were shy and did not always appear to be comfortable with the one-on-one interaction with adults and often needed repeated prompting to respond. The teacher-assistant who administered the Tarahumara part of the interview also encountered a similar situation. She

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**Figure 3.** Picture stories employed for the bilingual dialogue and free narration tasks (illustrations by Antonieta Castilla from Francis, 1992)



noticed that some children were “slow in answering” and that with some children she had to repeat the questions a few times. Her observations indicated that the data was collected under similar constraints and could be compared, despite the use of two interviewers.

The teacher also felt that the production of the free narration was somewhat “stiff.” Comparing her class experience, she said that children in her kindergarten class usually speak longer and “invent” a lot more. On one level, she confirmed the fact that children in the lowest grades and in kindergarten are familiar with picture description and story telling; on another level, she indicated that the interview process might elicit somewhat contrived responses.

*Sampling:* In the Tlaxcala study the subjects were selected from three grades: second, fourth, and sixth. The bilingual interview was only one part of a large battery of tests, whose general objective was to examine the students’ reading and writing abilities in light of the children’s oral proficiency across grades. The school had 400 enrolled children; the bilingual students were sampled by asking teachers to make a list of students belonging to high, medium, and low reading and writing skills in order to be representative.

In the case of the present phase of the study, all the grades were included in the sample, since oral bilingual data across the grades was deemed crucial to the understanding of the relationship between teacher language use in the class and the children’s language skills. Especially in the case of first graders, their lan-

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guage proficiency and dominance profiles were important in order to understand the quality of their experience during the first phases of literacy training. All the Tarahumara children enrolled were rarely in school at the same time and on average only 90 attended regularly. Because the 3rd, 5th and 6th graders were very few, all of them were included in the sample. First and second graders were chosen randomly.

Monolingual Spanish speakers, who represented a minority population in every class, were excluded from the sample. Their monolingualism was determined by the teachers and confirmed by observational data. Also, four students whose first language was Spanish and were said to be beginning learners of Tarahumara as a second language in school were excluded from the analysis. Both these groups were considered nonrepresentative of the majority Tarahumara-speaking student group.

In total, the sample of children interviewed was 66 children from the first through the sixth grade.

1st grade	=	13	(5 girls, 8 boys)
2nd grade	=	16	(10 girls, 6 boys)
3rd grade	=	9	(2 girls, 7 boys)
4th grade	=	15	(7 girls, 8 boys)
5th grade	=	7	(2 girls, 5 boys)
6th grade	=	6	(2 girls, 4 boys)

## **Results**

All the children interviewed, with the exception of one, produced a complete language sample in at least one language and showed sensitivity to the separation of codes.

For the statistical analysis of the data, the six grades were clustered in three groups, where the first and second (Group I), third and fourth (Group II), and fifth and sixth (Group III) grades were paired in order to have larger sample sizes. This combination also reflected the fact that in reality the 3rd and 4th and the 5th and 6th grades were attending two-grade classrooms.

*Language dominance:* In order to establish students' language dominance, the scores from both the conversation section and minimal acceptability of oral narration in the two languages were combined. The inclusion of everyday vocabulary in an analysis of language dominance was not considered reliable for languages experiencing a prolonged diglossic relationship.

The question and answer section was scored for a maximum of ten points. Both fragmented and one-word answers were scored as acceptable if intelligible and showing comprehension. The oral independent narration was scored for a maximum of five sentences that were judged by a native speaker as minimally acceptable for a maximum of ten points as well.

The language dominance scale employed here was based on the "Guía del Maestro: Entrevista Bilingüe" (Francis, 1992) (see Appendix for Interview and Scoring Sheet). According to the scale, the language dominance profiles include the following:



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- 100 to -75 = Spanish Monolingual
- 74 to -10 = Bilingual Spanish Dominant
- 9 to +9 = Balanced Bilingual
- +10 to +74 = Bilingual Tarahumara Dominant
- +75 to +100 = Tarahumara Monolingual

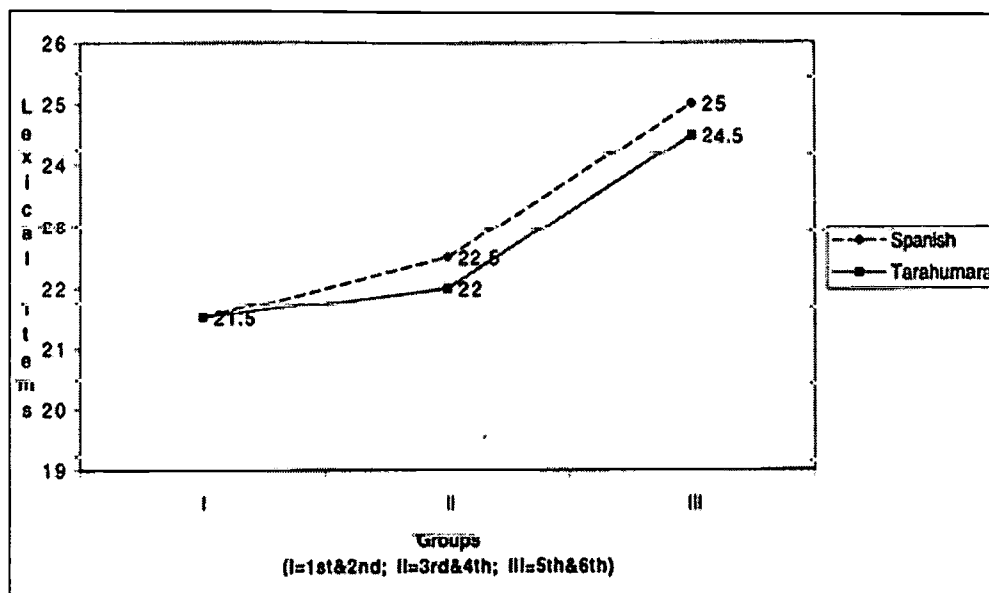
The interview identified three groups in the sample:

1. The first group consisted of four Tarahumara monolinguals, who were found exclusively in the first and second grades. In first grade they made up 23% of the sample. Tarahumara monolingual children showed high proficiency in the face-to-face conversation task and were able to produce a complete minimally acceptable narrative text in Tarahumara. On the other hand, they produced no narration and showed minimal conversational skills in Spanish.
2. The second group included a total of 29% of bilingual Tarahumara dominant speakers across the whole sample. They showed limited proficiency in basic Spanish conversation and limited or no production of a minimally acceptable independent text (low intermediate or beginning learners). In the Tarahumara section, they obtained the highest score in the conversation task and were able to produce a complete minimally acceptable text in Tarahumara. The highest concentration of bilinguals dominant in Tarahumara was found in the first three grades (1st grade = 46%; 2nd grade = 43%; 3rd grade = 44%, 4th grade = 13%; 5th and 6th grade = 0). As confirmed by student language history, observation in and out of the classroom, and teacher and parent interviews, these children were native speakers of Tarahumara.
3. The third group was the most numerous (64%) and was constituted by balanced bilinguals who showed comparable advanced or native-like levels of conversational proficiency and minimally acceptable text production in both languages. As expected, the highest concentration of balanced bilinguals was found in the highest grades (1st grade = 31%; 2nd grade = 43%; 3rd grade = 55%; 4th grade = 87%; 5th and 6th grade = 100%). Even in this case, the students' language history interviews, personal interaction in and out of the classroom, and the teacher and parent interviews confirmed that these were all native speakers of Tarahumara and second language learners of Spanish, with the exception five children who spoke Spanish at home.

The interview yielded language samples that revealed children's abilities in both aspects of bilingual proficiency: Conversational language and academic language. In regard to conversational language proficiency the findings were:

1. *Vocabulary*: All the children interviewed produced a list of words in both languages. The scoring was carried out counting all the lexical items in the list. When a Spanish word appeared in the Tarahumara section, it was added to the Spanish list and vice-versa (see Figure 4).
2. *Dialogue/Conversation*: In the Spanish section, children's scores were highly variable across grades. In the first two grades the ability to understand and

Figure 4. Bilingual vocabulary



answer to either conversational language was low and increased throughout the higher grades, where all the children scored the maximum. This was confirmed by a one-factor ANOVA, which showed a significant difference between Group I and Group III ( $F(2, 57) = 4.65, p \leq .01$ ). This appears to reflect the fact that the majority of the children came to school with low or almost no knowledge of Spanish and were intensively exposed to Spanish for the first time in school. As expected in a school where the medium of instruction is Spanish, proficiency in conversation language increased with the years of attendance. For the Tarahumara section, no variation across grades was found and the great majority of the children scored 10.

3. *Oral Narration—Minimal Acceptability*: In the Spanish section, scores were variable in the first and second grades, while the children scored the maximum in the higher grades. A one-factor ANOVA confirmed that there was a significant difference between Group I and II ( $F(2, 63) = 7.84, p < .01$ ), and Group I and III ( $F(2, 63) = 6.79, p < .01$ ). Again, exposure to schooling in Spanish seems to account for this variation. For the Tarahumara section, with the exception of one second grader, all the children obtained the highest score.

Correlation between dialogue/conversation measure and minimal acceptability of narrative text is very high ( $r = .768, p \leq .05$ ). An increase in comprehension and ability to respond to everyday questions is related to an increase in grammaticality and ability to describe event sequences. This correlation was anticipated since these skills are part of the same basic conversational competence (BICS) that is acquired in the first years of exposure to a second language and is expected to plateau in two or three years.

In regard to academic language proficiency, the findings were that in both languages the narrative structure of the oral discourse/text shows an increase in



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complexity and coherence through the use of connectors and inferences across the grades. This increase is confirmed by one-factor ANOVA, which for both languages shows a significant difference between the Group I and Group III (Tarahumara:  $F(2, 63) = 12.64, p < .01$ ; Spanish:  $F(2, 63) = 11.84, p < .01$ ). In the Spanish task, I also found significant variation between Group II and III ( $F(2, 63) = 3.7595, p < .01$ ); while in the Tarahumara task, significant variation is found between Group I and II ( $F(2, 63) = 12.6418, p < .01$ ). The increase of connectors and inferences across grades also shows a positive correlation between the narration task in Tarahumara and in Spanish ( $r = .4169, p \leq .05$ ).

### **Discussion**

*Study of language dominance:* The fact that all the children showed the same high scoring patterns in Tarahumara, across the grades on all the tasks measuring language dominance, indicates that exposure to Spanish-only instructional experience did not result in attrition of Tarahumara conversational proficiency. The indigenous language did not undergo a process of displacement in spite of the fact that instruction was exclusively in Spanish and in spite of the conflictive situation with the dominant language. On the contrary, observation and language history interviews showed that some of the native speakers of Spanish coming from the surrounding community had learned Tarahumara as a second language in school.

At this point of the study, it can only be hypothesized that factors both internal and external to the school and instructional environment play a role in the maintenance of the native language across the grades. In fact, children are free to interact in any language in and out of the class, and the interaction in Tarahumara with the bilingual teachers might have a positive impact on children's level of comfort toward using their native language. At the same time, the low number of monolingual Spanish speaking children in the school, the location of the school within the community boundaries, and the fact that children return to their homes every Friday might also favor the high retention of the native language at any grade level. However, an analysis of whether Spanish lexical items are replacing existing Tarahumara vocabulary could yield a more detailed perspective on the level of shift and maintenance of the native language.

*Conversational language proficiency/BICS:* The vocabulary list task was not considered a completely reliable measure for the determination of the students' conversational language proficiency and language dominance. In a prolonged diglossic situation as found in the Spanish-Tarahumara language contact dynamic, the indigenous language is the low prestige one and is constantly incorporating new Spanish vocabulary that refers to semantic areas introduced by contact with Mexican culture and technology. For example, school-related vocabulary is a recent acquisition of the Tarahumara everyday life and is reflected in the prevalent use of unmodified Spanish lexical items (e.g., "*lapizero*," sharpener; "*pizarrón*," blackboard; "*libro*," book). Other semantic areas, such as common home furniture vocabulary, are sometimes present in the everyday Tarahumara talk in Spanish and in an incorporated version (e.g., "*cama-cami*,"

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bed; “*balde-baldi*,” bucket; “*plato-pelati*,” plate), perhaps reflecting an earlier introduction of those referents in Tarahumara life. The fact that Spanish lexicon in Tarahumara talk was present in the children’s Tarahumara word list in first grade and in sixth grade at the same level (18%) also might indicate that there is a body of lexical items part of the Spanish lexical knowledge common to all the Tarahumara speakers, which is independent from their Spanish proficiency.

In the question and answer and minimal acceptability tasks, all the children by the age of six were judged by a native speaker of the language to be able to express themselves adequately with grammatically acceptable responses and to organize a narrative-like sequence at least in one language. This general ability relates to everyday conversation skills (BICS) and indicates that all children have access to the basic grammatical principles of at least one language for context-embedded face-to-face communicative events, even in cases of unbalanced diglossic relationship between the native and dominant language.

These results present further evidence of the fallacy of the concept of “semilingualism” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukoma, 1976), which refers to a supposed subtractive effect of bilingualism for bilingual children coming from low socioeconomic situations. A semilingual is defined as a speaker who cannot develop a “complete” or “sufficient” competence in either language. According to the concept of semilingualism, the speaker is unable to develop full competence in both languages owing to exposure to low-standard input in either languages and is consequently doomed to fail academically. Such concepts have been widely criticized (Eldesky et al., 1983; Eldesky, 1996; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986) as pointing to some inherent cognitive deficit resulting from the speakers bilingualism. The point of the critics is that so-called semilinguals are in reality speakers whose language competence relates to language varieties and repertoires that are considered as nonstandard. Therefore, so-called semilinguals are not linguistically and cognitively deficient, but, in truth, competent and fully fluent and functional in specific domains, which are arbitrarily defined linguistically inappropriate because they are regulated by different norms than the standard academic language of the classroom.

The preliminary results presented here seem to add support to this hypothesis that there is no speaker who is inherently deficient and lacks the linguistic basis for developing literacy skills. Even in situations of unbalanced bilingualism where Tarahumara and Spanish are in a diglossic relationship and indigenous children live in depressed socioeconomic environments, they invariably possess the grammatical competence necessary to interact successfully in everyday situations in at least one language. This ability is acquired through “natural” exposure to language interaction since a young age and produces the linguistic/grammatical foundations for the future development of literacy-related skills and academic success.

Finally, the data shows that exposure to Spanish instruction allows Spanish conversational proficiency to increase up to advanced or native-like proficiency levels. Specifically, variation in the basic conversational skills stops after third grade, when the great majority of the students show high levels of conversa-

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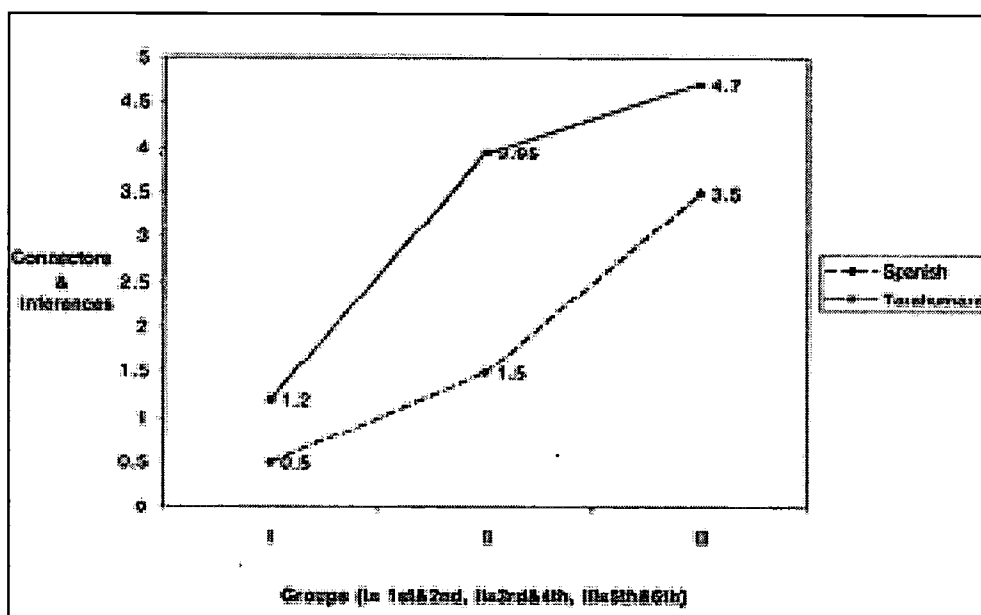
tional skills in the L2. This is consistent with the findings related to the typical development time of BICS, which in the second language takes approximately two to three years to manifest itself.

*Academic Language Proficiency/CALP:* When the oral narrations were analyzed for the number of connectors and inferences, a significant increase was found in both languages between the 1st/2nd and 5th/6th grades. Considering that conversational language did not show any correspondent variation across grades at least in one language, the variation in inferences and connectors must point at a distinct dimension of oral language development, which is discourse competence. The growth of oral narration abilities refers to the development of Cummins' academic language proficiency, which is acquired through school and school-like activities. Considering that academic language is acquired through literacy training, the new competence showed in the Spanish-Tarahumara oral narrations should predict later success with school-based academic skills.

In addition, the positive correlation between the measure of text complexity in both languages seems to be consistent with the principle of language interdependence, which proposes that both languages share the same cognitive knowledge to construct oral narrations. Considering the current submersion-like Spanish instruction provided to the children, the profile of Tarahumara language dominance for the majority of the children up to third grade, and the indication that the ability to produce narration in Spanish are the same or below Tarahumara (see Figure 5), we could speculate that spending time on instruction in Tarahumara would cause no delay in the development of Spanish, but on the contrary could further strengthen and develop the basis for its successful development.

Finally, the fact that the level of textual complexity in Tarahumara is equivalent to or above the level of Spanish could be viewed as consistent with Cummins'

Figure 5. Textual complexity



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affirmation that “transfer is much more likely to occur from minority to majority language because the conditions of exposure and motivation are met, whereas this is usually not so in the opposite direction” (Cummins, 1988, p. 156-157). In this perspective, students’ oral academic skills in Spanish, their weaker language, could be in a process of “catching up” with their oral native language skills. However, considering there is a slow closing of the gap between the ability to produce narration in Tarahumara and Spanish, it could be hypothesized that Spanish instruction is allowing for a steady growth of Spanish academic language, while the trend of Tarahumara discourse skills reflects the lack of “nourishment” by school instruction.

## **Conclusions**

The preliminary results reported here provide evidence that even in a case of diglossic relationship between the native and the second language, where the native language is not employed for school instruction, the basic processes of oral bilingual proficiency development proposed by Cummins are applicable. The question to be answered at this point is whether there is indeed a correlation between literacy skills and oral proficiency demonstrated by the Tarahumara children. This answer will be the object of the next phase of the study.

The present research shows that the *Entrevista Bilingüe* can provide teachers of bilingual children and researchers of bilingual education with systematic information—to add to observational data—for estimating a student’s language dominance and proficiency and to study the basic processes of oral bilingual proficiency development. All this information could be helpful for instructional choices. However, one has to keep in mind that the findings presented here also indicate that the production of bilingual vocabulary lists in a diglossic language contact situation might not be a reliable way to estimate students’ language dominance and proficiency; on the other hand, such information is provided by conversation (question and answer) and free narration tasks. Finally, through a simple assessment such as the *Entrevista Bilingüe*, teachers could easily differentiate and assess levels of conversational abilities of their students vis-a-vis academic abilities related to the production of narration.

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Appendix

Bilingual Interview

HOJA DE RESPUESTAS - ENTREVISTA BILINGÜE

Nombre (alumno) \_\_\_\_\_ Edad \_\_\_\_\_ Grado \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_  
 Entrevistador \_\_\_\_\_ Escuela \_\_\_\_\_

Sección I ("práctica" y vocabulario)

Práctica L-a	<u>L-a</u>		<u>L-b</u>		Requetas aceptables    L-a    L-b <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  Diferencia <input type="checkbox"/>
	1.	_____	1.	_____	
	2.	_____	2.	_____	
	3.	_____	3.	_____	
	4.	_____	4.	_____	
	5.	_____	5.	_____	
	6.	_____	6.	_____	
7.	_____	7.	_____		
	_____		_____		
	_____		_____		
	_____		_____		
	_____		_____		
	_____		_____		
	_____		_____		

Sección II (preguntas y respuestas)

<u>L-a</u>		<u>L-b</u>		L-a    L-b <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  Diferencia <input type="checkbox"/>
1.	_____	1.	_____	
2.	_____	2.	_____	
3.	_____	3.	_____	
4.	_____	4.	_____	
5.	_____	5.	_____	
6.	_____	6.	_____	
7.	_____	7.	_____	
8.	_____	8.	_____	
9.	_____	9.	_____	
10.	_____	10.	_____	

Sección III (narración libre)

<u>L-a</u>		<u>L-b</u>		L-a    L-b <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  Diferencia <input type="checkbox"/>
_____		_____		
_____		_____		
_____		_____		

Resumen

Sección	L-a	L-b	Diferencia	%
I				
II				
III				

Formulas para sacar porcentaje

Respuestas en L-a - Respuestas en L-b

Respuestas en L-a / Respuestas en L-b X 100 = %



## Post-colonial Recovering and Healing

Angelina Weenie

*Naming and defining the problem is the first step toward post-colonial recovering and healing. This paper addresses issues of racism, oppression, feminism, and resistance theory within the context of colonialism. This paper derives from the author's desire to work toward effective change in Canadian First Nations' education.*

I speak from the position of an Aboriginal woman, a single parent, and an educator. These identities are shaped by various social, political, and economic contexts and have named me as the "other." My history denotes me as a colonized person. By virtue of the Canadian Indian Act of 1876, I am considered a ward of the Federal Government. I am implicated in the dichotomies of colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed, male/female. These binaries depend upon "essentialized" notions of race, class, and gender.

The colonial encounter has been devastating to tribal peoples, and a reawakening is timely and necessary. Resistance, as part of decolonization, is as much a personal struggle as it is a group struggle. Resistance is analogous to extricating oneself from an abusive relationship. One must break through the denial and begin the process of recovery and healing. It means unlearning what we have been taught about ourselves and learning to value ourselves.

Emancipatory projects require a critical study of the colonial structures of domination and oppression. Resisting colonialism entails a reasoned and critical analysis of the systematic and systemic practices that exclude certain groups from full and equal participation in mainstream society. The underlying assumptions and apparatus of those ideologies and practices where the "other" is necessary need to be disclosed and challenged. The premise of this analysis is to explore how resistance is possible within colonialism.

### **What is colonialism?**

Colonialism is manifested through the "configurations of power" (Said, 1994, p. 133) that worked and still work to control indigenous lands and populations. Notions of white supremacy, racism, sexism, and patriarchy constitute the power relationships and hierarchical structures within the colonial endeavor.

It is within the ideology of Orientalism that colonialism will first be considered. Orientalism is "a whole series of 'interests' which...creates but also maintains...a certain will or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, and even incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world" (Said, 1994, p. 138). It is an obsession with the Orient or the "other," wherein cultural hegemony occurs. Power is accessed when certain cultural forms are made to prevail over others, thus producing racialized and marginalized identities (Chow, 1993).

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European supremacy is based on the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy, and it effectively justifies colonization. The colonizers are depicted as the advanced civilization, while the colonized are depicted as backward nations. This conception permits “ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality” (Said, 1994, p. 144). Racial and cultural differences are the markers and boundaries used to subordinate. Assumptions of racial difference are sanctioned on “the boundary notion of East and West” (Said, 1994, p. 140). The West is associated with superiority, and the East is represented as primitive, weak, and in need of salvation.

The advanced/backward dichotomy works effectively to support dominance and control (Said, 1994). It is also used to define male/female power relations. Men are epitomized as “the progressive agent[s]” and women are signified as “inert, backward-looking and natural” (McClintock, 1995, p. 359) in parallel to the dichotomies of civilized/uncivilized that colonialism perpetrates. Césaire (1972, p. 177) equates colonization with “thingification.” The native and the woman are objectified and seen as lacking, further justifying the bases of relationships of domination and submission.

Colonialism gets its support from schools and governments, and coercion and even “hideous butcheries” (Césaire, 1972, p. 176) secure the colonialist project. Wa Thiong’o (1986) interprets the establishment of colonialism as where “the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and blackboard” (p. 9). Colonialism is sustained by an intimate relationship with education, imperialism, and capitalism. In the Canadian experience, subjugation was carried out through armed conflict, the establishment of the residential (boarding) school system, and the implementing of the Indian Act of 1876.

The principles of patriarchy, racism, and sexism function together to center power with men and with white people. These principles are the roots of unequal power relationships and clarify how certain groups came to be subordinated. Colonialism is organized around male control and a fixated view of the “other.” Male ascendancy is explained in the “male conception of the world...where women [become] the creatures of a male power-fantasy” (Said, 1994, p. 145). This notion resembles the colonizer’s desire to “penetrate and possess the other” (Said, 1994, p. 148). The will to claim and control what is different is the main tenet of colonialism.

Colonialism is a “willed human work” (Said, 1994, p. 140). It is purposed and determined by human desire and intention, and we are all implicated. We participate in our own oppression in complex and contradictory ways. Césaire (1972, p. 176) states that “no one colonizes innocently,” and hooks (1992) maintains that “none of us are passive victims of socialization” (p. 14). There is no innocent space and the self is self-determining. We as humans can effect change, change that is moderated by power relations as we are not all equally positioned.

Césaire (1972) characterizes colonialism as a product of a sick society, a “pseudo-humanism” that “diminished the rights of man” (p. 174). It dehumanizes and destroys the human spirit without impunity. The space of the tribal peoples becomes merely “*geographical space* [to be] penetrated, worked over, taken hold of” (Said, 1994, p. 148).

Colonialism is organized around “essentializing” notions of race, class, and gender. The dominant group defines what is normal. Colonialism is a social construction, and its body of theory is created from Orientalism. It has no significance on its own, as it is defined only in relation to the “other.” This feature of colonialism creates a space for agency and change.

### **Critique of whiteness**

Whiteness is a visible marker of what has come to be accepted as superior. The deconstruction of whiteness as a sign superiority and the celebration of our difference is advocated as “a revolutionary intervention” by hooks (1992, p. 20). She asserts that a discourse on whiteness would facilitate the analysis of conventional assumptions about race. Anti-racism projects need to challenge white supremacy and “white racist paradigms.” Part of the process of unlearning racism is to recognize that all of our history has been defined from the white standpoint. Lorde (1981) characterizes racism as “that terror and loathing of any difference” (p. 101), and this is the issue that white people need to address.

Valuing ourselves and our difference empowers us and facilitates the deconstruction of whiteness. Our difference should be held “like a jewel high out of envious reach of those who would either destroy it or claim it as their own” (Marshall, 1983, p. 139). We have to be relentless against white supremacy and racism. Like colonialism, whiteness has no place of its own and is defined only in relation to the “other.”

### **Decolonizing the mind**

An articulation of resistance requires an examination of how we participate in our own oppression. Decolonizing the mind summons the capacity to think oneself out of the position of “other” (Wa Thiong’o, 1986). Intellectual awareness, critical self-reflection, and self-analysis are ways of transforming our lives. Those that are othered, excluded, or discriminated against have to effect their own cures (Parry, 1994). Fanon (1963, p. 230) states that “the body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation.” We are not victims. Individually and collectively we are responsible for ourselves within the structures we live.

Acknowledging the interrelationships of colonialism, racism, and oppression and employing a race, class, and gender analysis to all areas of our existence is a way of decolonizing the mind. We have been made to feel silenced, and we must begin questioning and becoming critically engaged in dominant discourse. The native intellectual has “to mark off the field” (Fanon, 1963, p. 227) and find his way out of the dichotomies that position him as one of the oppressed and marginalized.

We have to interrogate Western thought and be unwilling to confirm what the powerful have to say. Decolonizing our minds by way of breaking with “white supremacist thinking that suggests we are inferior, inadequate, and marked by victimization” is a strategy of resistance (hooks, 1992, p. 17). Positive affirmation and self-acceptance can help us to overcome the negative messages of who we are, but collective action is also necessary.

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### **Cultural nationalism as resistance**

The construction of national culture has been a response to colonization. The site of the struggle has been fixed on the culture. Cultural nationalism and cultural revitalization reflect the revival of pre-colonial cultures and the “valorized viewpoint” presented by Chow (1993). Valorizing the past and attempting to correct “the defiled, degraded images” of the past is limiting (Chow, 1993, p. 30). Valorization serves to keep those dichotomies of colonized/colonizer, essential to cultural hegemony, intact.

Fanon (1963) critiques the dangers of national consciousness, and he proposes that existing decolonizing practices follow the same logic of colonialism. Parry (1994) maintains that cultural nationalism is a “reverse ethnocentrism which simply reproduces existing categories” (p. 180). However, valorization should not be dismissed so easily. Cultural affirmation should be considered as a necessary phase of resistance. It is a place of beginning. Affirming our identities and cultures and concomitantly acknowledging the need for social change is a more tenable approach.

Theoretical perspectives are varied because colonial discourse is paradoxical. The key principle is that the claiming of difference corresponds with the colonialist and racist paradigm. Resistance, to be truly constructive, calls for the dismantling “of the master’s house” and discovering where the power lies (Lorde, 1981). Dismantling and deconstructing the master’s house implies that we have to confront and challenge the hierarchies.

Forms of oppression are complex and not easily eliminated. Resistance has been evidenced mainly through silence and passivity. Fanon (1963, p. 207) claims that “They fought as well as they could,” and in some instances First Nations’ people did stage an armed resistance. More importantly, however, resistance needs to focus on redefining relationships. This concept is central to the construction of a theory of resistance.

### **Indigenous women, feminism, and a theory of resistance**

White feminists, coming from a relatively privileged position, do not reflect the experiences of indigenous women. While the feminist movement developed in response to gender oppression and inequality, indigenous women have historically played a prominent role in resistance and continue to provide leadership to their communities. Indigenous women generally reject feminist views. One of the areas of disagreement is with “the tidy (if grossly misleading and divisive) male/female, warlike/peaceful dichotomies deployed by feminist thinkers” (Jaimes & Halsey, 1997, p. 303). The problems confronting indigenous women are related to white supremacy and colonialism. Racial and colonialist paradigms are the constituents of indigenous struggle, and any involvement with feminism would only perpetuate exploitation (Jaimes & Halsey, 1997).

Thus far I have been discussing resistance as “reverse-discourse” based on “counter-identification and disidentification,” the analysis that is used by Parry (1994, pp. 172 & 176). Reverse discourse meets with little success, as has al-

ready been stated, because it attempts to work within the colonial framework. Cultural forms inhibit the resistance process. Cultural nationalism is an element of the reverse discourse and change is restricted because race, class, and gender issues are overlooked. Patriarchal positioning and power are retained in the Western discourse. Coombe (1997) maintains that “to bypass issues of racism and power is to contribute to the process” (p. 91). This is the key component of a theoretical and philosophical view of resistance.

Resistance can be envisioned on “a progression from nativist through nationalist to liberation theory” as suggested by Edward Said (Parry, 1994, p. 180), moving from a cultural to a political position. A theory of resistance can be constructed on the acknowledgment of the mechanisms and systems of beliefs that ensure relationships of domination and submission and a reflection of how race, gender, and class are shaped. It involves the study of the constructed images of East and West and the essentialist notion of the self. A theory of resistance embodies an analysis of these processes.

The process of enlightenment begins when we can define the problem of colonization properly and when we understand that oppression is never complete. Power relations are shifting, not constant. There are always spaces of resistance. Essentialist notions of culture, language, and identity have to be deconstructed. To recognize that dominant space, like colonialism and whiteness, is ambiguous and has no essence except in relation to the naming of the “other” is to be able to transcend it. The native intellectual moves to find the way out and looks for spaces where resistance can happen.

Colonialism was carried out through physical and psychological violence (Wa Thiong’o, 1986). It supplanted the existing cultures of tribal peoples, and it brought irrevocable change. We have been naive in thinking that we had simply to revive our languages and cultures. The problem is all-pervasive. Anti-racism projects, as part of post-colonial discourse, are an unremitting concern. Expressions of racism and oppression change but they do not disappear. The resisting post-colonial voice confronts our histories of colonialism and the relations of power that continue to shape social relations of difference (Coombe, 1997).

### **Concluding remarks**

Racism is corrosive; it contaminates every part of our being, mind, body, and spirit (Memmi, 1968). Racism comes in many forms, but my experiences in an integrated school in the mid-sixties were probably the most indelible and damaging for me. I was made to feel ashamed because of my race. I trace my feelings of inferiority and inadequacy to my early school experiences because of the manner in which my history, culture, and language were devalued and excluded from the curriculum. There was much to be angry about and that anger was directed inward.

Any exclusion of my full and equal participation in mainstream society is not acceptable and deconstructing notions of racism, sexism, and white supremacy begins the process of individual and collective liberation. This analysis of resistance theory within colonialism has evolved through my desire to work toward



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effective change and to ensure that my children and grandchildren are never denied full and equal participation.

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## Observations on Response Towards Indigenous Cultural Perspectives as Paradigms in the Classroom

Stephen Greymorning

*For well over a century Indigenous North Americans (Canadian and American Indians) have been forced to adapt to Anglo-European perspectives on how Indigenous people should be educated and what they should learn. Over the past 15 years North American colleges and universities have experienced growing numbers of Indigenous faculty teaching Indigenous focused subjects. As an Indigenous North American (American Indian) I have taught classes at the University of Alberta in Canada, the University of Montana in the United States, and Southern Cross University in Australia. On the basis of experiences gained while at these institutions, this paper has brought forward my observations of various levels of response and receptivity toward the use of a teaching style shaped by an Indigenous perspective.*

Over the past two decades colleges and universities in North America have experienced greater numbers of Indigenous students who have completed college and university studies and obtained degrees across a broad spectrum of disciplines. As the number of Indigenous student enrollments has increased, interest in subjects concerning Indigenous issues has also increased. Coincident with this has also been a marked growth in the number of Indigenous faculty being employed to teach Indigenous-focused subjects at various colleges and universities.

In 1987, as part of that growing Indigenous education movement, I chose to leave Oklahoma, where I was a graduate student, and moved to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada to finish writing my doctoral dissertation on Indigenous North Americans and the ethnocentrism of the courts.

As Hinono'ei, an Arapaho Indian and Indigenous North American, I have lectured classes at the University of Alberta in Canada, the University of Montana in the United States, and Southern Cross University in Australia. Over the course of years that I have lectured, I have also had the opportunity to talk with other Indigenous scholars and have noted similar teaching experiences among many of us. Through my own experiences and those shared by others, I have become fascinated by the responses of students enrolled in courses on Indigenous North American topics. One of the observations noted is a difference that at times is displayed by students who take courses on Indigenous topics taught by Indigenous faculty, versus students who take courses on Indigenous topics taught by faculty who themselves are not Indigenous. Most notably, however, are responses I have noticed by students who have enrolled in Indigenous North American focused courses that I have taught from a perspective that in-

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corporated an Indigenous world view. While for the most part I have taught classes primarily composed of students who are not “Indian,” I have also had the opportunity to teach classes composed entirely of Indigenous students. I believe the comparison of these different situations presents noteworthy experiences. Before delving into these specific areas of observations, however, it is worth looking at a somewhat different area to provide a backdrop from which to work.

### **The horrors of semantics: Raving a graduate student’s bravings, or was that braving a graduate student’s ravings**

In January of 1989 I found myself teaching an Introductory Linguistic Anthropology course to a class of approximately 45 students. At the time I was just beginning to write my dissertation and was a recent resident of Canada.

One of the things that helped me get a clearer perspective on the experience learned from this class was the good fortune of having a graduate student in the class who was also taking another linguistic course. Throughout the term this graduate student would frequently comment on the innovativeness of material I presented compared to the other linguistic course she was enrolled in. One of the projects I had the class do was to break up into five groups of nine, and within each group one person had to learn the signing symbols used by Washoe, a chimpanzee that had learned to communicate using a type of sign language. Through the use of these symbols, and without speaking, the lead student had to teach the members of their group how to communicate with each other through Washoe’s signing.

Another project was to bring in speakers of four different languages. The guests represented speakers of Chipewyan, Cree, Portuguese, and Farsi—languages with which the students in the class were completely unfamiliar. Each speaker was assigned to a group which learned how to ask in the language of that group’s guest speaker, “what is this?” From this one phrase the group had to construct as much of the language as possible and then write a paper on the exercise and what was learned; the results were startlingly impressive. Though there were other such innovative exercises, as the term progressed one of the things that seemed to emerge was that students perceived me as a graduate teaching assistant. The class seemed to move well enough until the first quiz.

I had decided to blind test the first quiz on an individual who had no linguistic experience but who I knew was a good problem solver. The quiz was made up in such a manner that an observing student could find clues for answers to most of the questions asked within the body of the quiz itself. In some cases clues to an answer for a question could be found in the previous question. The student I chose to test the quiz on received a low “C.” When I graded the quiz for the class, however, the medium fell below passing. After the graded quizzes were returned and I explained how I blind tested the quiz, students became irritated and implied I had insulted their intellects by doing this. Matters became worse when the graduate student, in an effort to support me, informed students that the quiz held numerous clues to answers. As clues were revealed, students

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then believed I had subjected them to a test full of trick questions. In the end students perceived me as an instructor who was too young and inexperienced to teach, even though at 39 I was twice the age of most students in the class. One thing worth noting is that throughout the term students never seemed to deviate from identifying me as anything other than a graduate student teaching a traditionally academic subject which I was supposedly too young and inexperienced to teach. I was thus never cast as an “Indian” teaching a subject I did not have the experience to teach.

### **Native to Native: Teaching academic courses to Indigenous students.**

In the September 1992 term, I taught two courses for the School of Native Studies and a course for the Department of Anthropology. The two courses taught for the School of Native Studies were “Indian Activism” and “Aboriginal Self-Government.” The course taught for the Department of Anthropology was “Contemporary Canadian Native Peoples.” While about 96% of the students enrolled in the “Indian Activism” course were Indigenous students, the other two courses were taught for the Yellow Head Indian Tribal Council on the Enoch reserve and all enrolled students were Indigenous.

In all three of the classes the work loads were quite rigorous. In all three courses students were assigned a paper on the first day of class that was due the next time the class met. Almost all students handed their assignments in on time, but in the few cases where extensions were requested, they were all reasonable and extended assignments were handed in on time relative to the adjusted dates. Another observation worth noting was the enthusiasm with which the Indigenous students pursued these courses. One example of this happened in the Indian Activism class. The second assignment for this class required the class go to see the movie *1492: Conquest of Paradise* and write a four to six page movie critique. The critique was due one week after the viewing. Two days after the viewing an Indigenous student turned in a 60 page critique! I was stunned and must confess my first thoughts were that the student must have borrowed liberally from a previous assignment. That, however, was not the case. All critiques were turned in on time, and I received a critique from another student that exceeded 30 pages. Throughout the term, attendance for this 2 1/2 hour night class of about 30 students remained high. Discussions and debates were quite lively. Students displayed the utmost respect toward each other, myself, and the issues that surrounded the topic. The two other classes were taught on the Enoch reserve and displayed similar student responses. In the end all students felt that they had learned and benefited from these classes.

### **Teaching through Indigenous perspectives**

Probably the first time I brought an Indigenous perspective to a class occurred during the September 1991 term when I taught a course for the School of Native Studies. It was within this academic venue that I had the opportunity to teach classes with a predominantly Indigenous student enrollment. The course was entitled “A Comparative Study of Indian Legislation in Canada and the

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United States.”<sup>1</sup> Student composition for this class was roughly 90% Indigenous, and 10% non-Indigenous. In spite of a high Indigenous student enrollment in the class, throughout the term I noticed a number of condescending remarks coming from the Indigenous students regarding Indigenous history and issues. When one Metis<sup>2</sup> student stated that “our” ancestors had given away their rights when they signed treaties and it was time “Indians stopped whining around about it and get on with things like every one else,” I finally decided that it was appropriate to address this perspective.

At the end of the ninth week of a thirteen-week term, I informed students that I was not happy with their efforts in the class, and as a result I was nullifying all of the grades they had received from the previous nine weeks of study. The class response to this was a bit explosive. Pandemonium broke out, but since the announcement was timed for the end of the class period and time had run out I informed the class that I would be prepared to continue discussions and negotiations the following week. I further informed them to think of the following week as a kind of treaty week. Over the weekend I took the liberty to draft a document which I modeled after the Canadian government’s treaty 6 document for that area of the province. The only drawback for them was understanding a treaty that was written in the Arapaho language. Once the treaty had been prepared, I then prepared an assistant to help me with simulation. The only thing that remained was to create an environment to pull them into for the finishing touch.

### **Treaty negotiations: Monday-day #1**

I arrived to the negotiations room early the following week in a stylized Plains Indian traditional dress. As students entered the room my assistant took their books and packs from them, piled them all in a corner, and assigned a seat to each student. When all arrived *nihinono’eitinou’u*, I spoke to them in Arapaho. After going on for about two or three minutes, my accomplished interpreter, who had been prepped for the part, translated my speech as, “He greets you.” I next informed them that as a representative of the Governor of Native Studies 309 I was there to explain what rights they, *Niiciihehe’ Hineniteeno’* or the Little River People, did and did not possess and how the grading system and their grades had been restructured for them. Displaying all the strength and diplomacy of my position I read to them the prepared document, pausing every now and then as my assistant paraphrased brief translations for them in English. The poor fellows, deficient as they were, had the clear misfortune of being a people enslaved by their literacy, and finding themselves devoid of all writing utensils, they could hold nothing in their poorly trained memories. After about 30 minutes *Niiciihehe’ Hineniteeno’* objected strenuously and demanded to see the treaty. I obligingly passed the treaty out and watched as they blankly stared at the incomprehensible document. As questions raged forth we tediously worked through translations, and then before they knew it the class time had come to an end. My assistant informed them that we would continue with negotiations in two days time.

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### **Treaty negotiations: Wednesday-day #2**

When we met again and Niicaihehe' Hineniteeno' entered the room they were informed as before that they would have to yield up all weapons in the form of writing implements and materials. When this was met with objections I set my assistant to the task of collecting their pitiful pamphlets and writing objects. Once again when denied the symbols of their culture's power and strength, they became docile. When I began to read the document to them, however, they again found cause for objection. This time they complained because they did not like the fact that I would read through passages of texts, but the translations they received would always be brief. They also complained that they were not able to remember everything said and demanded a translation written in their own language. It was impressed upon them that they were running out of time and that I was terribly disappointed with their inability to come to some sort of agreement among themselves. As the meeting time again came to an end, and with no conclusive agreement, the Little River People were informed that because of their poor level of cooperation and organization I was compelled to appoint two chief spokespersons for them: Beesheseis Hohootii'—Big Wind In The Trees, a person known for being argumentative, and Bei'ci3einii'ehihi'—Little Hummingbird, a person known for being demure. They now could only speak and work through these two individuals at the next appointed meeting time.

### **Treaty negotiations: Friday-day #3**

When I entered the meeting room I was immediately surprised to find the entire Little River People band had arrived much earlier and had taken the liberty to rearrange the meeting chairs in the shape of a semi-circle so they could better see and communicate with each other. They had decided to get down to the serious business of negotiations. I later learned that they had been meeting after class hours to come up with a clear and decisive negotiation strategy. While I must admit that they were better organized, it wasn't long before things broke down between the two chiefs, and between the people and the two chiefs. As things continued to break down a few members of the band resorted to trying to bribe me.

From a strategic point I clearly held the upper hand because while they struggled with the goal of understanding a treaty that was delivered to them in an unfamiliar language, my single objective was to get their chiefs to sign the treaty. In the last ten minutes of the class, and with time running out, agreement came and the appointed chiefs signed the treaty.

### **Treaty negotiations: Monday-day #4; the aftermath**

The following week when the Little River People again assembled they learned that they had agreed to a treaty that not only robbed them of their individual rights, but also the rights of all others who placed themselves in NS 309 and under the sovereign directives of the Governor's representative of Native Studies. As that representative was me, I thereby held the right to alter any individual's grade for any reason at my own discretion. Needless to say the



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Little River People became outraged and attempted to verbally accost me with a feeble threat of going to the media; I let them know that I liked the idea of being in the media and reminded them that they would also be put in a position in which they would have to explain why they signed the treaty. During the following days of debriefing, the class expressed their surprise over what they had learned and felt that they better appreciated the efforts of their ancestors, who must similarly had struggled trying to come to terms with concepts in a language they could not understand.

### **Circle the wagons: Indians!**

As a professor at the University of Montana, I have taught a variety of courses in areas that have included Native Religion and Philosophy, Contemporary Indigenous Issues, Native Health and Healing, Introduction to Anthropology, Introduction to Native American Studies, Ritual and Ceremony, Introduction to Native Languages, Indian Culture as Expressed through Language, Indians of North America, Language and Culture, and Indigenous World View Perspectives, to give an idea of the diversity. In many of these courses I have been quite surprised by student responses toward material presented to them. My courses tend to be a bit rigorous, especially when teaching what I refer to as “issues” courses. In 1996 I decided since students often hear about the “Indian world view” and since I was teaching an Introduction to Native American Studies class, I would teach a component from an Indigenous world view perspective. The results were quite interesting.

One of the components I included in this Introduction to Native American Studies class was on Native philosophy and ethics. In this section I explained in advance that since students hear professors talk about “Indian world view perspective,” I thought it appropriate that they should gain some first-hand knowledge of what an “Indian world view perspective” might entail. We discussed biases and different codes of ethics and worked through how things could be perceived through different realities. I explained that the first quiz would be tailored toward an Indigenous form of logical thinking and that they needed to be very aware that in this realm the rules that classically structured Anglo-European logic and thought would not necessarily apply. Even with this advanced warning, the cultural constructs of their logic were so strong that about 58% of a class of 160 failed the quiz. While some of these questions didn’t entail much more than understanding specific concepts with corresponding definitions as they pertain to biases, like:

When a Brazilian beat up a German, for flashing him what is classically thought of as the symbol for OK., the German had fallen victim to an example of

- A. a cultural bias                      B. a cognitive bias                      C. a conceptual bias  
D. a evaluative bias                      E. an ethnocentrism



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others were a bit more complex in nature:

Because there were witches and shamans in the bush, an “ethic of...”

- A. non-interference existed
- B. not showing fear existed
- C. withdrawal existed
- D. not showing anger existed
- E. none of the above

or:

In the Indian State of Mind, regarding imaging vs. imagining, the skilled imager existed

- A. metaphorically
- B. in a world of spirits
- C. in two worlds
- D. as a symbol for the tribe
- E. all of the above

or further:

In a car full of Indians if the driver didn’t see a deer step out onto the road and was about to hit it, the “Indian” response would be to

- A. politely inform him
- B. shout loudly
- C. try and grab the wheel
- D. clear their throat
- E. frantically point at the deer to get the driver’s attention

Questions like these were genuinely problematic for students, and their cultural intuitions were so pervasive that even when the same questions appeared on subsequent tests, many students repeatedly got them wrong. In the end students became so frustrated when actually having to face issues that actually represented a different world view perspective that they chose to believe the test questions were unfair because they were not logical or they believed them to be trick questions.

Some of the most puzzling responses, though, have come from students enrolled in courses that one would think would be best taught from an Indigenous world view perspective. These occurred when I taught an introductory course on the Arapaho language for “Introduction to Native Languages” and another entitled “Culture as Expressed Through Language,” both of which were taught under the Department of Native American Studies.

The Arapaho language class was small with only 16 students. The students were informed on the course syllabus that the course would be taught to parallel a language immersion teaching style. Students were frequently praised for an impressive ability they displayed in mastering fairly complex forms of the language. Yet, instead of being pleased by what they had accomplished, a number of students openly criticized the manner in which they had to learn the language. At the end of the term, while some students stated that the course would have been better if it had conformed to a more traditional academic style, others felt that the course would have been better taught by some one who was not Indian. While I was a bit surprised by this, I did observe an even more surprising response when I utilized an Indigenous perspective as a paradigm for another class.

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From January to May 1997, I taught a course on “Indian Culture as Expressed Through Language.” When first asked to teach the course I struggled with the difficulty in teaching such a course. The question that kept emerging was: how does one teach Indian culture as expressed through language when the only medium of expression in the classroom is English? Clearly it would not be fair to teach Arapaho to a class so they could gain an appreciation of differences in the forms of cultural expressions between Arapaho and English. Yet, even if this approach were to have been taken, I realized it would have been unrealistic to think enough of the language could have been learned in one term for students to have actually gained such an appreciation. After struggling over the dilemma for several weeks I decided on the method I was to use to approach the topic.

One of the early assignments had students look at what is called an interlinear translation of Arapaho into English and then manipulate the English words so that they conformed to story constructs and patterns familiar to English. Students were first prepped for this task by listening to a tape of an Elder telling the story in Arapaho. This was done so that they could get an auditory exposure to the sound and rhythm of the language. After this they received a handout with the story written in Arapaho with the underlying English interlinear translation as illustrated by the following excerpt:

Teecxo' ko3einiini hi'in nono'ei hi'in tih'iibeetesbi3i' hiit 3ebiisiihi'  
niiyou nuhu'  
long ago old one that Arapaho that when they used to fast here that way  
here it is this

heeteih cowouute' hinee [Beaver Rim] hiisoho' hetoh'entou' hi'in nihii  
hoxtono'ou'<sup>3</sup>  
where there's a ridge that this way where it is that well where there are  
cliffs

In addition to the story conversion, students also had to write comments on what they thought about the exercise. Some of the comments written conveyed that it wasn't a worthwhile exercise; some went so far as to write that it was the most worthless exercise they had ever encountered while at college. Few were able to recognize that by looking at a language with a word order radically different from English through which a people thought, it was possible to see how speakers of this language could possess logical constructs that led them to perceive the world much differently from that of an English speaker. Some students were so far removed from seeing this connection that they chose instead to believe that the text merely represented an example of an individual who didn't know how to speak English very well (they had been informed that the translator was the speaker's son).

This particular course proved to be extremely challenging for students. A number of students perceived that the course should have addressed the topic

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through the prose and poetic writings of Indigenous peoples, which again could only be done through the English language. As a result of the approach I had taken, versus what many students voiced they felt the class should be doing, there was a fair amount of resistance to learn what the course had to offer. This led me to explain to the class that the course would take on an “organic” quality, versus a static quality. From this position I felt I could bring in a certain amount of flexibility to change the structure that had been set for the course in an attempt to reach a greater number of students with examples that they could grasp. And, as I explained in class, as each week passed I would cast and recast the net, each time hoping that with the next cast I could draw in those students who had previously slipped through the netting.

In the last week of class final papers were turned in. One student paper sought to justify cooperative efforts between Peabody Coal and the United States government to exploit natural resources of Big Mountain and asserted that the government had every right to remove over 15,000 Navajos from their traditional homes so the land could be strip-mined.<sup>4</sup> The student believed that a movie about this issue, which had won international awards as a documentary and which documented numerous human rights violations surrounding the desecration of Indian people’s culture and land, was biased in favor of the Indians and not entirely truthful. The student also wrote that the class was biased from the start by showing a video about the boarding school period in Canada and its role in destroying Indigenous culture and language in children. Because the perspective of this paper concerned me, I decided to present a first-hand experience through a simulation.

The student’s basic premise was that the government held the right to do whatever it so desired to Indigenous people. I chose to take the student’s logic and extended it as my own position in the class. I didn’t grade the paper and informed the student to meet with me the day after the last class. At that meeting, as our discussion carried us through a number of relevant topics, I assessed the student’s knowledge and understanding of some very pertinent issues covered in the class. When it seemed clear that this student saw no problem with Indigenous people and culture being exploited and having their human rights violated, I began to implement the simulation. I informed John (a pseudonym) that he had been withdrawn from the class. Now as it turned out this was a graduating senior majoring in international business, and without this class he would not possess enough credits to graduate. The student was startled and informed me that I could not do that. I in turn informed “John” that because I was the government that ruled over the class I not only could do it, but in fact had done it. The student challenged and said that he would take the matter up with the Registrar. I explained to the student that it was the Registrar who changed the status. The student next countered by telling me that he would go to the Dean. I told the student that I had already been there and that the Dean would just send him back to me. When John told me that he would go to the University’s President I informed him that the President would only send him back to me. When John next told me that without this class he could not graduate and that I

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had no right to interfere with his life in this way, I replied “but I thought you understood, I have every right because in this class I am the government, and as you have already noted, the government has every right to do what it chooses to people.” The student defiantly stated that he would go to the Governor of the State. Realizing that I had neglected to inform the Governor of what I was doing, I informed John, “you will have to go outside of the state if you expect to get anywhere with this.” The simulation having done its work he then stated; “I had no idea, I never understood.” We had been in a discussion for close to three hours. Before it ended the student asked if I would take him onto a reservation about four hours away. A few days after our meeting I drove John onto the Blackfeet reservation, and for the first time since the course began, even though the term was now over, the student began to open up enough to hear and revisit the lessons that were supposed to have been learned.

It is interesting to note, that while the Dean was very uneasy about this exercise, his response was, “You know this is a new one on me. I’ve been at this University for over 30 years and I have never seen a professor go to such lengths to educate a student the way you have.” Prior to this statement he told me you can’t educate every student and wanted to know why this one student. To this I replied that my concern for those students who successfully understood the issues was not the same as it was for those students who did not understand the issues faced by my Indigenous peoples. What was underlying this was a concern that until the material was grasped, the potential to have a positive or negative impact might hang in the balance.

One more interesting note about this class. When I last taught the class during the spring of 1999, I had decided to begin each class by explaining in Arapaho what I would talk about that day. Several weeks into the term I noticed many students were still very uncomfortable hearing me talk in Arapaho. When I voiced that I had observed this and invited the class to discuss their thoughts about the relevance or non-relevance of Arapaho being spoken in the class, a graduate student was first to speak. He began by stating how when he first heard me speak Arapaho it made him uncomfortable and that he had felt the language had no place in the classroom. He also stated that had I not asked the class to reflect on this he probably would have continued to feel this way. This marked the first time he began to wonder why hearing me speak Arapaho sparked such a response. In the end, as a result of my being sensitive to this general discomfort and inviting students to discuss it, the class was able to gain a much better understanding of the language’s relevance in “Indian Culture as Expressed through Language.”

When I first came to the university in January 1995, I was asked to teach a course on Native Religion and Philosophy. Courses like these are what I refer to as soft courses because I don’t deal with difficult issues like human rights violations. Toward the end of the term a special class was held. Members of the class decided to meet at 5 am in the morning. At the appointed rendezvous we made our way to the top of a mountain where we sat, and after praying in Arapaho, genesis stories were told as the sun rose.

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When the class met again, because some students had chosen not to attend this class, I decided to have those who had attended form an outer circle facing those who hadn't attended, who formed an inner circle facing the other students. Moving around the circle, the students who had been on the mountain individually commented on what they had experienced. To my surprise many students expressed that their lives had been changed or significantly impacted. This response caused me to wonder how a single event such as this could have such a dramatic impact upon their lives. I later settled on a tentative realization that often in a course like this there is an expectation that some level of metaphysical or spiritual enlightenment might be experienced, which had unintentionally been supplied to them through the 5 am class held at the top of a small mountain.

### **The likes of a Dog Soldier in an Australian classroom**

From July to November 1997 I had the opportunity to lecture at Southern Cross University in Lismore, New South Wales, Australia. Making the long journey to Australia allowed me ample time to ponder what I would find with regard to any differences in response to the particular perspective that I brought to the classroom. As I reflected on a variety of issues, a change came over me that I likened to that of the Dog Soldiers. The Dog Soldiers were a society of Cheyenne warriors who had pledged their life as warriors to protect their people. When in battle they were often the first line of defense, standing between the advancing enemy and their people. Stories are told how they would tie a leather thong around their leg, the other end attached to an arrow or a wooden spike that was driven into the ground. From this position they defended the people, and by this act Cheyenne Dog Soldiers helped to ensure the continuation of both their tribe and culture.<sup>5</sup> Reflecting upon this I titled my first public talk in Australia "In the Likes of the Dog Soldiers the People are Making Their Stand."

During the middle part of September I was asked to give a guest lecture for a Spiritual Well Being class at Southern Cross University. Knowing the nature of my talk, I decided to prepare the room, students, and myself through a smudging, and as a result of this blessing way, I had little choice but to handle the material in the most respectful and caring way. At Southern Cross University classes were structured such that instructors would first give a formal lecture, which would then be followed by tutorials where students and instructors would discuss the material lectured about in the previous class. During the talk that I gave to this class the tone and demeanor of all involved was respectful. Many issues concerning Indigenous spirituality were covered, including the issue of cultural appropriation. I explained how Native Sacred ways of knowledge are culturally specific and when non-Indigenous people appropriate this knowledge they often unknowingly violate numerous restrictions. For some Indigenous cultures when this happens it does not bring harm to the violators, but rather to the people who are a part of the culture and who stand as the cultural caretakers of this knowledge.

Drawing from a parallel situation, I respectfully gave an example of the growing number of "Anglo" women groups and their women-only business. In



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spite of class members defending the right of women to exclude men from women's-only business, when shifting back to Indigenous ceremonies, and an espoused right by some Indigenous groups to exclude non-Indigenous people from their ceremonies, a number of class members stood firm in their belief that non-Indigenous people had the right to access Indigenous Sacred ways of knowledge.

During the tutorial that followed, at which I was not present, the instructor later told me that some members of the class sought to defend their position by proclaiming me to be an "angry young man" (though twice the age of many in the class) who spoke only from personal rage. While this voiced perspective contrasted interestingly with my having conducted a blessing way ritual which helped to put me in a mind-set that worked to keep me focused, patient, and passive, it also served to provide a rationale for those who did not want to give much thought to an issue presented from an Indigenous perspective that differed from their own personal perspective.

#### **The lesson to LERN is how to hear the lesson to learn**

While I have observed a mixture of student responses during my stay as a visiting lecturer at Southern Cross University, I have also been intrigued by the responses of individuals outside the structured environment of the classroom. In October 1997, my participation at the Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN) Conference in Alice Springs, Australia provided me an opportunity for such observations. At the conference my presentation was quite different from other presentations. This was by virtue of my presentation's focus on the integration of Indigenous perspectives in education. On the day following my talk, I was approached by one of the participants who informed me that what I was doing had more to do with bringing a good teaching style into the classroom than it had to do with bringing an Indigenous perspective into the classroom. Here it is worth commenting on why I believe I am able to assert the claim of my bringing an Indigenous perspective to the classroom. One reason I made this claim was due to my never learning of any other professor, at any school I had taught at, ever holding a class about an Indigenous North American culture while moving the class the entire lecture through a snow laden forest. The objective of this was to give them a sense of what it might be like if they were a group of Iroquois on the move. Another technique I have employed was holding several classes in a Teepee in a manner that reflected how a Plains Indian people would conduct a meeting. While I am sure such things have been done by others, one comment I can make is that even if non-Indigenous lecturers were to do this, there is in all probability a distinct difference between what they bring to the classroom and what an Indigenous person raised in his or her culture ways and who speaks their Native language brings to the classroom. Normally this would be recognized as an Indigenous perspective, and a person who has not shared in an Indigenous language, culture, or history can only questionably claim to share in an Indigenous perspective. Still, it is of further interest to ponder why what I presented as my Indigenous voice, representing



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my experience and perspective as an Indigenous person, would be corrected by a non-Indigenous person as not being an Indigenous perspective at all.

The last day of the LERN conference was devoted to a plenary session. When I was first asked to sit on the closing plenary panel to address the conference's closing question of "Where do we go from here?" I thought; "how presumptuous it would be on my part, as an outsider, to assume I should elaborate on where Australian education and educators should direct themselves." My initial response to this request was to try and politely decline the invitation. It was not until after the invitation was made a third time by an Indigenous Australian that I accepted and began to wonder how I could best address the issue.

Having been invited to their table and having taken a seat, when it was my turn to speak I communicated my uneasiness about being at the table as an outsider and explained that I felt the best way I might address the question was to give examples regarding Indigenous issues and education from my home country. Drawing from the genre of our Trickster tales, wherein we learn from Trickster's improper behavior how to behave properly, I delivered the following closing plenary statement:

*By the mid 1600s the colonization of Indigenous North Americans was in full swing. Then, after about 320 years, there was a shift in the paradigm, and Anglo-Americans representing their governments and institutions began to invite Indigenous people to their tables; the idea being that there might be something to learn from what Indigenous people had to say. It is thus interesting to note that once invited to the table, those who made the invitation were never quite patient enough to really hear the message that was to be learned. In retrospect there is an interesting parallel with this and a certain event that happened the evening of the LERN banquet that has drawn me to ponder the irony of my having been invited to this closing plenary table.*

*On the evening of the banquet I decided to tell an "Indian" story that was very meaningful to me. This decision stemmed from my feeling that being at the LERN conference had been a good learning experience. Having realized this I had wanted to share something in return with the people I believed I had connected with. It was a difficult decision for me to make, but because of the message within the story, that actually addresses the journey we all seem to be on and where one might be led to on that journey, I put my concerns at ease and decided to tell the story. It was thus ironic that the most dramatic part of the story, which addressed this journey in a very culturally specific way, was never reached because too many people were not able to figure out what they were listening to. Thus when the story's main character stood at a crossroad wondering where he must go from there, many of listeners, who believed at that very point the story was all part of a joke, reduced the story to a punch line and exploded in an outburst of laughter. Distressed by this response, I pondered for hours over what I had done.*

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*In North America, after 300 years of being told Indigenous people must be assimilated to the values and norms of Anglo-Europeans, in spite of our now having Indigenous people who hold PhDs over a broad spectrum of disciplines and who are Medical Doctors, Judges, Lawyers and in numerous other professions, we are still treated as if we do not know our own business and must therefore be either led or told what to do.*

*On those occasions when we find ourselves at a table of our own making within Anglo created institutions, there are times when we are subjected to people coming to our table only to walk away before our story has been fully told, which many times is due to finding Indigenous cultural paradigms too different from their own. It would thus appear that as long as Indigenous people remain a small minority, within non-Indigenous systems and institutions, true equity may never be realized. It is perhaps for this reason that some Indigenous groups, like the Maori of New Zealand and Hawaiians, have created their own institutions which operate exclusively under guidelines of their making and for their own well-being.*

*Recognizing that we can work together without necessarily having to undermine the integrity of who we are culturally, I would hope that those who would seek to invite Indigenous people to their tables can also see the merit in not interfering or becoming judgmental when Indigenous people create environments that we see as culturally proper. I would also hope that when people are invited to come to such places of learning they will sit at our tables and be able to hear the lessons to be learned.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For additional information about this class see Stephen Greymorning, *Integrating an Aboriginal Perspective into the Classroom* (Sydney: Aboriginal Studies Association Journal, University of New South Wales, 1993).

<sup>2</sup>Metis is a term officially used by the Canadian government for people of mixed Indian descent. While the term was used historically to imply mixed Indian and French descent, the term is now used by the Canadian government for Natives of any mixed descent.

<sup>3</sup>Alonzo Moss, *The Stories of Paul Moss* (Laramie: the Wyoming Council For the Humanities, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>For information on this issue see Ward Churchill, "Genocide in Arizona?: The 'Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute'" in *Struggle for the Land* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992, pp. 143-196).

<sup>5</sup>For more information on the Cheyenne see G. B. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (New York: Scribner, 1915) and G. A. Dorsey, *The Cheyenne* (Field Columbian Museum Anthropological Series, Vol. IX, Nos. 1 & 2, 1905).

<sup>6</sup>Stephen Greymorning, *A Message to LERN*, closing plenary statement at Alice Springs (Australia, 1997).

## Visual Metaphor, Cultural Knowledge, and the New Rhetoric

Robert N. St. Clair

*Modern Western European ways of thinking are based on a print culture that tends to use verbal metaphors, and indigenous ways of thinking are based on oral culture that tends to use visual metaphors. This paper focuses on the Quaternity, a common recurring theme of the sacred number four in oral cultures that can be seen in the Mayans' four pillars, the Navajos' four sacred mountains, and the Plains Indians' Medicine Wheel. Teachers need to be aware of the distinction between these two types of metaphors if they are to understand better how Indigenous people learn.*

After thousands of years of following the Western European tradition of rhetoric (the art of using language), we have finally come to accept the fact that this scholarly tradition is culture bound. While it has undergone many changes with the advent of the printing press, it still maintains its classical Greek and Roman roots in the works of Aristotle, Cicero, and others. Although once holistic, this tradition has fragmented into academic camps with Speech Departments handling speaking and debates, English Departments holding the reins over the college essays, and Law Schools dominating issues relating to argumentation.

This realization of culture boundness of thinking on the subject of rhetoric brings with it a sincere effort among rhetoricians to develop some insight into how a non-Western system of communication, or discourse, works. They have found that non-Western systems of rhetoric tend to use visual instead of verbal metaphors. Several interesting new ways of studying rhetoric have recently emerged (Kennedy, 1997). Once seen as the study of persuasion (Scott, 1959), rhetoric is now seen as the study of practical reasoning (Toulmin, 1958; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). It is now concerned with epistemology as a way of knowing. The new rhetoric, it is argued, is used to discover and understand knowledge. Hence, it is epistemic knowledge-seeking. It is in this context that this essay addresses the use of visual metaphor as a way of expressing knowledge.

Metaphors are really statements based on some kind of analogy where two things are compared to each other. This use of language allows knowledge to be seen in a new perspective. Visual metaphor is a term that designates how visual space is organized as a means of sharing cultural and social knowledge. The tradition investigated in this essay is non-Aristotelian, and it is based on non-Western epistemology that is embraced by oral cultures. Specifically, this essay looks at the tradition of the Quaternity, a common recurring theme of the sacred number four in oral cultures.

It is important to understand that the visual metaphor of the Quaternity comes to us from an ancient pre-printing press Greek tradition, and consequently it

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should not be judged by the tenets of modern Western rhetoric. Back then people believed that everything belonged to the great circle of life. In modern mathematics, we would call this concept modularity. For example, the face of a clock runs in twelve-hour cycles and repeats this pattern over and over again. In the Quaternity, the pattern is based on the number "four." Things move through four stages and then repeat themselves. The day has four parts: morning, noon, evening, and night. Life has four parts: birth, youth, adulthood, and old age. The earth has four directions: north, south, east, and west.

What is interesting about these early Greek traditions is that they have cultural counterparts among many indigenous language groups in the Americas. The Mayans, for example, talk about the four pillars, the Navajo of their four sacred mountains, and the Sioux of their Medicine Wheel and four cardinal directions. Why do things repeat themselves in units of four? Why does the Quaternity continue to exist as a number of importance in the folklore of many indigenous traditions in the Americas? What does this mean for the study of comparative rhetoric?

Prior to answering these questions, I must provide the epistemological frameworks from which these traditions emerge. Hence, there are several preliminary concepts that must be addressed before discussing the tradition of the Medicine Wheel of the Plains Indians. In particular, I will discuss how visual metaphors are structured, cognitively processed, and symbolically presented. I shall also discuss the significance of the study of visual metaphors within bi-cognitive educational systems.

### **What are metaphors and how can they be visual?**

What I find especially interesting in metaphor is that it is no longer considered a topic relegated to literature classes (Toulmin, 1958). Since the publication of Kuhn's (1970) model of scientific thinking, rhetoricians now realize that metaphors pervade all forms of knowledge. Kuhn, it should be noted, called these shifts in perspective *paradigms*. Brown (1976), a specialist in the sociology of art, sees metaphors operating in a larger context. He notes that metaphors provide a perspective on knowledge just as scientific paradigms provide a perspective on theoretical knowledge. Chet Bowers and David Flinders see an understanding of metaphors as essential for teachers because they "provide the schemes or cognitive models that are the basis of thought" (1990, p. 11).

A teacher who sees students as fragile human beings is using metaphor. He treats them as eggs and is afraid to hurt them. He does not want to see them crack. Another teacher may have a different metaphor when dealing with children. He may see the classroom as a battlefield. He wants his students to hit the target. His approach is one of toughening up the student for battle. They must combat the real world. Metaphors tell us much about those who use them. They provide insight into how these individuals view the world. Similarly, metaphors can be used to understand cultural differences. They tell us how some cultures envision space. They tell us why some cultures have stories about the stars, why some mark the land for cycles of the solstice and the equinox, and why some consider the land to be sacred.

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In order to explain how this works, we must realize that there are several kinds of metaphors that can be found in knowledge systems. For example, in theory building there is a gradual metaphorical process of breaking up knowledge into different parts. In scientific discovery, the process begins with a simple *illustrative metaphor* that provides a global perspective or point of view on how a subject area is to be organized. The example chosen serves to illustrate how things are to be seen and understood. Such a metaphor is frequently employed in a period of revolutionary science where events are described from a new dialectical perspective by means of an overall picture that is a new way of looking at things (Kuhn, 1970).

An example of an illustrative metaphor is “the atom is like a solar system.” It has a nucleus just as the sun is the solar system’s nucleus. It has electrons whirling around that nucleus just as the sun has planets circling around it. With the passage of time, this global view comes to be more fully articulated, the details are filled out, and what was once a simple plan for the structuring of knowledge soon emerges as an *iconic metaphor*, a description picturing events in photographic detail.

This semiotic process of differentiation, going from a simple overview into a complex and detailed result, is not limited to the scientific use of verbal metaphors<sup>1</sup> or to print cultures. It can also be found in the employment of visual metaphors. Gombrich (1963), a noted art historian, argues that images and symbols have meaning and appear in different forms. They function as visual codes or emblems and evoke a sense of artistic and cultural value. Such visual metaphors require a cultural context for interpretation. He gives the example of the traffic lights in which the color red is coded to signal “stop” and green “go.”

Gombrich entitled his collection of articles, “Meditations on a Hobby Horse.” This selection of a title reflects his profound belief in visual metaphors in art. He maintains that a hobbyhorse is the equivalent of a “real” horse because it can be ridden metaphorically.<sup>2</sup> Thus there is a transfer of qualities from one sensory experience to another. Gombrich is concerned with the interpretation of symbols in art history, and his line of investigation has to do with questions of cultural value. He wants to know why gold, for example, has become a visual metaphor of value and why it has developed into derivative metaphor of noble simplicity.

We do not need to call upon art historians to understand how symbols organize visual space. We can find advocates among ordinary art teachers. Recently, one of them organized this knowledge of visual space around the concept of *visual literacy*. Dondis (1973) has directly addressed the internal structure of the visual metaphor. He speaks of the significance of the individual elements such as tone, color, line, texture, and proportion and how these are maneuvered within a visual space to create either tension or harmony within the confines of visual syntax. He notes that visual space is organized in that it provides guidelines for the construction of art. His work provides the basic elements of art that he feels can be learned and understood by all students of visual media. He provides insight into how visual structures are created to convey visual messages, in other words visual metaphors.



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Dondis argues that the individual components of the visual process form a tool box for the artist. These components are the *dot* (which forms the minimal visual unit), the *pointer* (a marker of space), and the *line* (the articulator of form). But, there are also various *shapes*: the circle, the square, the triangle that occur in combinations, permutations, different planes of expression, and different dimensions of visual understanding. *Tone* (the presence or absence of light) is also a visual component that is employed along with *color* and *texture*. These are the visual elements from which a visual space is created, organized syntactically, and expressed metaphorically. These are the component, then, of visual literacy. Dondis demonstrates in his writing how *contrast* and *harmony* can be used as techniques to constitute a visual structure within the grammar of art. These techniques can be manifested in numerous ways as evidenced in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** The use of contrast and harmony to constitute a visual structure.

<b>CONTRAST</b>	<b>HARMONY</b>
Instability in visual space	Balance in visual space
Asymmetry of forms	Symmetrical forms
Fragmentation	Unity
Irregularity	Regularity
Variation	Consistency
Complexity	Simplicity
Opacity: (Meaning is not obvious)	Transparency: (Meaning is obvious)
Episodicity: (Life is like a TV episode)	Repetition

The key to creating contrast or harmony comes from the fact that all visual patterns have a center of gravity. Dondis demonstrates how a simple dot can be placed within a square to reflect with balance or instability. He also shows how there is a power of attraction among objects in a visual space, which he calls the “law of grouping.” Groups of objects fight for attention and in doing so express visual structures that connote either unity or fragmentation. The eye, he observes always seeks a simple solution—one of simplicity over complexity. Hence, the eye looks for patterns and patterned thinking has more to offer than just the relationship between psychophysiological phenomena and visual expression because no one unit of the system can be changed without modifying the whole.

Why are visual metaphors important? Why do they need to be explained? The answers to these questions come from an understanding of print cultures where words have replaced pictures and visual space has been reduced to the linear organization of the printed word. What these scholars tell us is that the metaphor of visual literacy is well articulated and defined within the field of art. Its theoretical foundations form the basis for analysis of major visually mediated traditions. It provides the rationale for the study of art history (Berger, 1977; Gombrich, 1979). It explains how cultures symbolically represent themselves and this can be done through the cultural analysis of art (Hatcher, 1974). It provides the concepts that articulate the language of painting and the structure of art



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(Burnham, 1971; Enright, 1990; Goodman, 1976; Matejka & Titunik, 1977). Visual literacy provides the concepts behind art education and visual learning (Dwyer, 1978). Both aesthetic theories of art (Osborne, 1970) and the psychology of perception or visual thinking (Arnheim, 1969, 1974) depend on these models of visual literacy. Hence, the concept of visual perception is central to the study of visual metaphor and for this reason it merits closer inspection.

### **Visual thinking**

Western cultures are so involved in written language that they have not seriously studied how humans structure information visually. However, Rudolph Arnheim (1969) differs from most of his fellow cognitive psychologists in that he is against the imposition of the print culture bias in research on human information processing models. Arnheim argues that those entrenched in this approach to research are only studying those psychological processes involved in the needs of a print culture. These models do not focus on the nature of those relational modes of cognition associated with the right cerebral hemisphere of the mind. They neither deal with visual thinking and its concern for the simultaneity of structures nor do they concern themselves with the role of affectivity in processing sociocultural values.

Gavriel Salomon (1979) shares the concern regarding the severe limitations of research in the theoretical framework of cognitive psychology. He reminds his colleagues that verbal languages evolved from earlier pictorial forms. They naturally developed from pictographic denotation and ideographic symbols. He also notes how verbal and visual thinking result in the creation of different experiences of cognition. What one learns from reading about an event is different from what one perceives if this information is processed within the mode of visual thinking. Hence, the world of visual metaphors is substantially different from the print culture world of verbal metaphors. This is why scholars who have approached the world of visual metaphors via the structures of the print culture have failed to fully understand the deeper meanings offered by those who live and express themselves within oral cultures. For example, Varda Langholz Leymore (1975) attempted to provide a semiotic analysis of commercial art and failed to do so because her model is essentially based on verbal patterns. When she is successful, it is because the visual pattern she is talking about actually accompanies her verbal description and analysis. By way of contrast, Donis Dondis (1973) used a very different language to discuss visual communication. In this case, there is a concern for the position of the dot, the movement of the line, the characteristics of a shape, the dimensions and the scale of the picture, the kind of color and tone, and so on. Visual meaning, in this context, comes not from verbal dichotomies, but from Gestalt configurations.

### **Print cultures versus oral cultures**

What is significant about this dichotomy between the print culture of the Western intellectual tradition and the oral culture of the American Indians is the fact that each medium provides substantially different ways of knowing (Salomon,

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1979). Where one sees words, the other sees visual patterns, shapes, colors, and moods. Where one finds education in the formal classroom with its structured textual requirements, mandatory certification hours, and rigid didactic requirements, the other seeks not knowledge, but understanding and employs an apprenticeship model in which the elders are given full opportunity to interact with the novice in an unstructured and experientially based system of learning (TenHouten & Kaplan, 1973).

The differences between the print culture of the Western intellectual tradition and the oral culture of American Indians are informative because they demonstrate how the child must accommodate to the dictates of the formal school systems to which they are exposed (see Figures 2 & 3). The formal school systems tend to focus on analysis whereas the oral culture is concerned with understanding how things are related to one another. The analytical mode is sequential and highlights rationalism and the use of logic, whereas the relational mode is concerned with the emotive or affective aspects of a simultaneous presentation of imagery.

**Figure 2.** Information processing modes of print and oral cultures

	<b>PRINT CULTURE</b>	<b>ORAL CULTURE</b>
<b>Cognition</b>	Analytical Mode: Look for the details and not the whole.	Synthesizing Mode: Look for the overall meaning and how the details fit together.
<b>Processing</b>	Sequential: Go from left to right.	Simultaneous: View everything at once just as one would view a painting.
<b>Thought</b>	Relational, Logical: Reason logically and use syllogisms. Put people into categories. Do not rely on emotions.	Affective, Emotive: Feelings are important. Use emotions to understand others.
<b>Predilections</b>	Mathematics, Science	Art, Music, Dance
<b>Legitimization</b>	Verbal Metaphor: Use metaphors based on language.	Visual Metaphor: Use metaphors based on the reorganization of visual space.
<b>Literacy</b>	Print, Technology	Orality, the Arts

1

**Figure 3.** Educational cognitive styles

	<i>PRINT CULTURE</i>	<i>ORAL CULTURE</i>
<b>Relations of Child &amp; Peers</b>	The child prefers to work alone, likes competition, & is task-oriented.	The child prefers to work with others, likes cooperation, & is person-oriented.
<b>Relations of Child &amp; Teachers</b>	The child prefers formal instruction, avoids stroking, & seeks cognitive feedback.	The child seeks personal instruction, stroking, and affective feedback.
<b>Relations of Child to the Curriculum</b>	Curriculum is made to incorporate details & structures. It uses impersonal content & structured subroutines. It stresses facts & formal knowledge. The <i>discovery approach</i> works best.	The curriculum incorporates the gestalt approach. It uses a humanized format. Its focus is on wisdom, & group attitudes are emphasized. The <i>experience approach</i> works best.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the print culture has a high regard for mathematics, science, and literary criticism while the oral culture values the graphic arts, music, and dance. Since these cultures are separated by cognitive styles, they are also divided by the kinds of metaphors they use.

For children growing up in a bicultural system, the problems of literacy are compounded. They must learn how to reconstruct the social reality of the host culture and also be able to shift from one system or form of legitimization to the other. At home, for example, the oral culture framework may pervade with its emphasis on cooperation, being person oriented, seeking affection as a feedback for group sanctioned behavior, and a concern for how things are related to a larger patterns or cultural configuration. But at school, the situation can be reversed. Here children are often asked to work alone and to compete with their fellow students. The focus is on completing daily assigned tasks for which the rewards are many, but of a different nature. Gold stars and the grading system replace the feelings of warmth and love of the primary socialization of the home. In school, there is much concern with details and with the acquisition of knowledge. Many of the deep concerns of the bicultural child go unnoticed or unconsidered. Under these circumstances, the difference between primary socialization in the home and the secondary socialization of the school system is one of social distance and personal alienation.

For the child of the Western tradition, the rhetorical style comes from the writings of Aristotle or from the essays of Cicero, but for the child of the oral culture, the Medicine Wheel and other strong visual imagery provide the essential metaphors of life (Blair, 1975).

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### **Visual knowledge**

Visual metaphors are just another way in which knowledge can be shared. In the heritage of the Western world, this is done essentially by means of a *print culture*. What this entails is an analytical mode of cognition in which verbal information is processed sequentially, logically, and rationally (TenHouten & Kaplan, 1973). In this framework, there is a predilection for such disciplines as the natural sciences, mathematics, and other rationally oriented and logically based activities. By way of contrast, there are *oral cultures* in which the relational mode of cognition prevails (Ramírez & Castañeda, 1974). Under this approach to human information processing patterns are not analyzed sequentially as in verbal expression, but are seen as simultaneous structures, as visual patterns. In addition, these patterns are perceived in more emotional terms. Consequently, those who operate within this cognitive style have a predilection for music, dance, and other forms of artistic expression.

What is significant about oral cultures is that they make common use of visual metaphors. It is their way of symbolizing their beliefs about the world. It is their way of organizing knowledge. This way of knowing is legitimized by the culture and expressed in a tradition of rich visual imagery. This legitimization of knowledge is commonly referred to as *the way* of the people. It is what folklorist and anthropologists attempt to describe, understand, and know when dealing with oral cultures. Their research details a different model of information processing, a sanctioned cognitive style, and another perspective. For these reasons, the Medicine Wheel is especially insightful in revealing and dealing with visual metaphors as bearers of cultural epistemology. But before considering this epistemological visual metaphor in detail, it is necessary to explicate the concept of visual metaphor as rhetoric.

### **The rhetoric of visual metaphors**

Rhetoric is essentially a way of thinking about the world and is predominately concerned with the perception and description of cognitive structures. It has a structural interest in the presentation of information. It focuses on structures which may be highlighted or foregrounded, and this is specifically accomplished in terms of such rhetorical devices as the:

- narration of a event
- description of a scene
- illustration of a concept by means of examples
- intricacy of a process underlying an event
- definition of major nomenclature upon which deductive conclusions rest
- classification of information into bodies of evidence
- comparison and contrast of underlying epistemological structures
- analysis of a cause and its effects on the issues being investigated
- employment of deductive reasoning and the use of induction where facts need re-evaluation as to evidential status
- use of analogical reasoning in arriving at conclusions

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- employment of logical argument
- emotive persuasion in formulation of a charge or an issue which is central to a cause (Benson & Prosser, 1972; Brent & Lutz, 1974).

More recently, it has been argued by Brown (1976) that root metaphors also provide some insight into the structure of a system by focusing on one unique perspective and by structuring lexical expressions from a certain point of view. These root metaphors, it can be argued, play a major role in the structuring of knowledge because they are epistemological in nature (St. Clair, 1980). They are the foundation upon which knowledge is given perspective. Just how this is accomplished is readily evident in some theoretical models, for example, which employ the Aristotelian metaphor of growth (Nisbet, 1969). Such models provide a major filter for their own community of specialists in which a framework is preordained through which all structures are created, organized, and coordinated (St. Clair, 1985).

#### **Rhetoric versus dialectics**

When Aristotle presented his answer to the problematic nature of *physis*<sup>3</sup> in Greek culture, he used the natural metaphor of growth as his way of explaining why and how change occurs (see Figure 4). The material cause is where growth begins, and the final cause (*telos*) is where it ends. In the transition from the beginning to the end is the alteration of forms, the formal cause. But change has to be connected for a purpose and underlying reason. For Aristotle, this was the motor cause, the original plan behind the growth itself (Cornford, 1952).

**Figure 4.** Aristotelian parallels of growth and rhetoric

<b>The Enfoldment</b>	<b>The Growth Stages</b>	<b>Rhetorical Stages</b>
<b>Prime Matter</b>	This is the beginning of the process of growth.	This is the introduction to the essay where the thesis statement is given.
<b>The Form (Morphology of Growth)</b>	The various forms which growth undergoes.	The body of the essay where the ideas grow, expand, take on different forms, and are discussed.
<b>The Final State of Growth</b>	The <i>telos</i> , conclusion of the growth process.	The conclusion of the essay, a summation of the thesis statement.
<b>Motor Cause or Thematic Connection</b>	The common thread, the unifying fact, the underlying plan.	The thesis, the theme, the rationale for the essay.

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Within the Western tradition of rhetoric, one divides an essay into three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The parallels here with the Aristotelian causes are obvious. Growth begins with primary matter, it undergoes a series of changes, and terminates with the final cause. Similarly, an essay begins with an introduction and expands the concept discussed into various forms of evidence, logical reasoning, and persuasive thinking. These various forms are known as the body of the essay. Finally, the essay is concluded just as growth also has its terminus. The path of growth from the introduction to the conclusion is connected by means of a thesis statement, a basic theme. It is the Aristotelian equivalent of a motor cause, an underlying reason for the process of growth.

### **The visual representation of the growth metaphor**

It is not surprising that this parallelism between rhetorical theory and the growth metaphor exists since both are products of Aristotle's own system of thought. But the significance of foregrounding the infrastructure of contemporary models of rhetoric is not to draw on the parallels between the growth metaphor and the structuring of an essay. What is important about the framework is that it is, in essence, an invisible matrix that silently operates within the epistemological framework of the culture itself. Although the metaphor goes unnoticed, it still operates as a structuring device for the organization and the presentation of written knowledge, debate, forensic rhetoric, and numerous other forms of knowledge presentation. It is not until one leaves the Western world and enters into the visual metaphors of the Mayans and other indigenous groups, for example, that it becomes obvious that other fundamental rhetorical systems, such as the Quaternity, can be employed as devices for the organization of cultural knowledge

There are two dominant metaphors among most indigenous groups in the Americas. One of them is the journey and the other is the Quaternity.<sup>4</sup> Among many of these groups, both metaphors are combined into the Quaternity, which consists of a circle in which the solar cross is inscribed. The circle represents the eternity of motion, and the cross signifies the four cardinal directions of the earth, the four winds, the four spirits of nature, and so forth. It would appear to the uninitiated that this emblem is just an artistic expression of minor cultural significance. There are two roads within this circle, and they are represented by the arms of the solar cross. One must experience life by taking one of these roads, go to the center, and then venture off in a new direction. Not all indigenous groups use these metaphors; however, many do.

Teachers of the western ways employed to teach composition on Indian reservations seem to comment endlessly on the difficulty their students are having with the basic tripartite system of Aristotelian rhetoric (Cooley, 1981; Cooley & Ballenger, 1981). They do not seem, it is argued, to begin their essays with an introduction, expound their ideas into a body of thought, and conclude with a strong ending. Rather, they strike out in a certain direction to explore some ideas, feelings, sensation, and moods. After a while the essay suddenly turns into another direction without any connection, without a central theme, and without



coherence markers. The whole paper is cyclical. It is, they argue, in the form of the spokes of a wheel. They always come to the center before striking out into another direction. Furthermore, these teachers contend that there is too much use of allegory and personification. The trees talk, and so do the animals. The birds leave messages and warnings. The sun welcomes them. The moon watches over them. The flowers feel their presence. These writings are childlike, they argue. They are lost in concrete operational thought (Ramírez & Castañeda, 1974).

Each of the four cardinal directions of the medicine wheel represents a perspective of the symbolic self (see Figure 5). Each one is incomplete by itself. The balance of the four great powers is known as the *Quaternity*. Carl Jung (1969) found great significance in the quaternity. For him it was the Mandala symbol representing the four basic human types: intuition, sensation, thinking, and feeling as seen in Figure 6 (Jung, 1923). These types function as opposites, Jung noted. The thinking type is the counterpart of the feeling type, and the intuitive person is contrasted with the sensation type. In the first two decades of life, one is dominant in one of these four types. Later, secondary and tertiary characteristics develop creating a temperament, a combination of types (Keirsey & Bates, 1984). But most significant of all is the underdeveloped trait that Jung calls the *shadow*. Until this part of a person becomes developed, the individual is unbalanced. However, when this great moment arrives, the individual arises to a new level of consciousness, the *quintessence*. The four parts of the person act as one, the person is whole, the self is united. This quintessence is the rationale behind the medieval concept of the sacred number five in Western thought.

### **The Jungian Quaternity of personality types**

According to Jung, the individuation process involves the separation of the ego from the self and the eventual return or reunion of the ego and the self in later life. In the first stage of development, the ego and the self are one. The child below the age of two cannot usually distinguish between self and other. In psychiatric terminology, this is referred to as a stage of inflation, but symbolically it represents an original wholeness in which all is unconsciousness. In literature, this original age of mankind is characterized by the legend of the Golden Age or by the story of the Garden of Eden before the apple of consciousness was eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. At this stage, Jung argues, the self is experienced as a deity.

During the second stage, the ego emerges from the self and begins to experience the pains of consciousness. This is where the concept of evil enters and is often characterized in mythological terms as the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden or the tarnishing of the Golden Age and its decline into the Age of Bronze. Many myths depict this period as the birth of consciousness and the alienation of man from god. This fall of man into the realm of consciousness is also depicted as the departure from the world of darkness into the world of light. For Jung, the dark basement represents the world of the original self and the upper floors of a house in his dream symbology are interpreted as signs of consciousness. He also quotes Buddhist teachings and feels that they represent his notion of the

Figure 5. The cardinal directions as Quaternarity

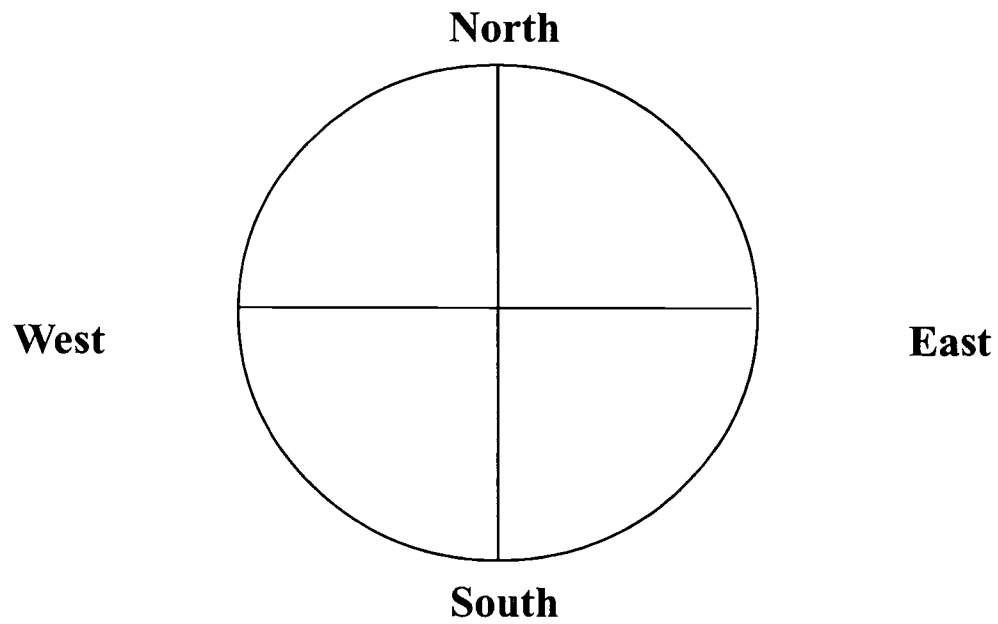
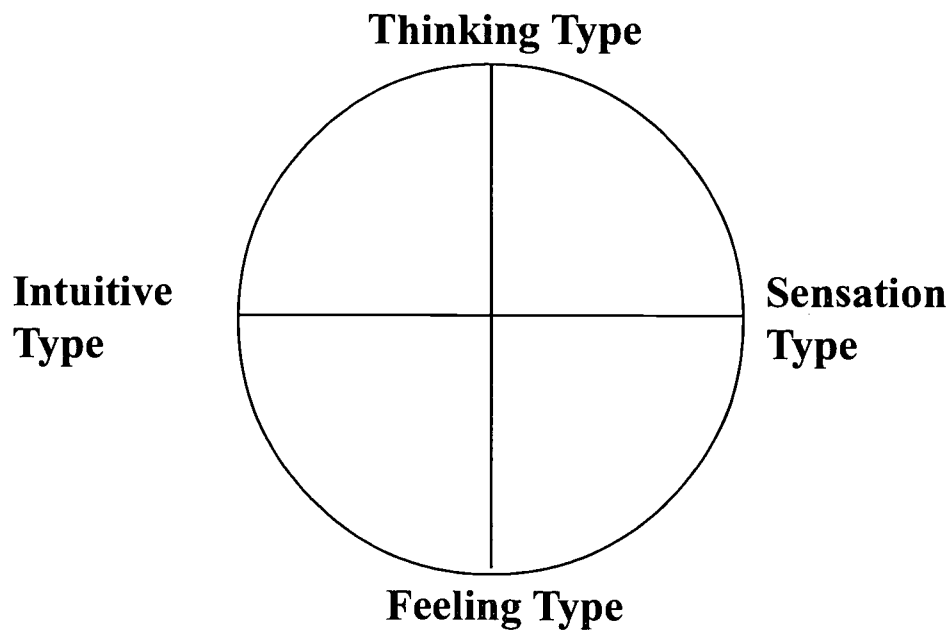


Figure 6. The Quaternarity and the Quintessence



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world of darkness. In Buddhism, the quest for *avidya* or not-knowing (unconsciousness) is seen as a return to the original darkness of the self. Not all scholars, however, fully agree with Jung on this last point. For many, the original self dwells in the World of Light and enters into the World of Darkness known as consciousness. It is in this state of consciousness that one forgets one's original self, and it is this stage which has been called sin.

As the ego continues to emerge and become alienated, it is eventually separated from the wholeness of the self. It is divorced from the powers of darkness. It is alienated from the *Force*. It takes a mid-life crisis or an empty nest challenge, Jung argues, before the individual is forced to look inwardly. For those who don't, the struggle continues and the pains of consciousness continue to grow exponentially.

Here we have the journey metaphor and the Quaternity. It is a different kind of journey from those of the indigenous groups of North America, but it does present cultural knowledge. In her discussion of visual metaphor, Evelyn Hatcher (1974) provides an informative analysis of the various elements of visual communication and relates her findings to the epistemological system of the Navajo tribes that she has worked with. She envisages art as a form of communication and notes how the arrangement of forms in space has special meaning. These elements receive additional meaning aesthetically from the way in which they are repeated, balanced, and colored. What these elements signify, however, varies from culture to culture. Usually, the triangle represents energy and activity and the circle signifies completeness. By the way, the upwards triangle in many cultures represents spiritual activity and the downward arrow signifies material concern. Nevertheless, Hatcher is among those who are sincerely searching for geometrical shapes in the form of universals of visual thinking (Arnheim, 1969).

Hatcher's use of visual metaphor among the Navajo differ from those described by Cooley (1981) and his associates (Cooley & Ballenger, 1981). In the groups that they worked with, they perceived the solar cross as the spokes of a wagon wheel. It is not how these tribes would see themselves, but it is their depiction of the events. They note how in writing English compositions Native American Indian students constantly return to the central hub before embarking on another trip to the rim of discussion. These students, it should be noted, do not use the syllogistic reasoning of Aristotle because it was not part of their cultural knowledge, nor do they use the forms of logic that underlie the classical tradition of rhetoric. By being different from the print culture and its school system, these students have been severely criticized by their composition teachers. They are often accused of not having any structure to their writing. The fact that they do have a structure and that it is based on the visual metaphor of the medicine wheel goes unnoticed. Their teachers fail to understand their special use of color symbolism and often treat their stories about animals as being allegorical, and their close union with nature as being personification. They take them literally at times and fail to draw upon the deeper symbolism of the epistemological system, which the medicine wheel represents.

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### **The metaphorical genesis of the western tradition**

The Metaphor of Verbal Form is highly significant in Western culture. It has dominated centuries of social and cultural (epistemological) scripts. There was a time long ago when this metaphor of form was visual. In its antecedent form it appeared as the journey from Involution of the Spirit into the body (incarnation) and Evolution of the Spirit from the body and back into the spirit world. This is a visual metaphor upon which all Western religions are based, a metaphor that provides the rationale for metaphysics and the occult, a metaphor of Jungian archetypes.<sup>5</sup> However, by the time of classical Greek philosophy, the visual metaphor was lost. It was replaced by the metaphor of oppositional forms. This new Metaphor of Verbal Form symbolizes the Platonic World of Ideal Forms and the Augustinian City of God versus the City of Man.

The Metaphor of Verbal Form also underlies the Structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure with its collective conscience (*langue*) and the Transformational Grammar of Noam Chomsky with its deep structures, d-structures, and linguistic competence. The Semiotics of Film, Art, Music, Dance and many interdisciplinary models of Language are based on this Verbal Metaphor of Form. Hence, in Western culture one finds that language functions as the new metaphor of form. It now provides the basis for analyzing visual metaphors (film, dance, opera, art, painting, etc.), visual literacy, and the interpretation of art through history (i.e., the iconic metaphors of form based on its parallelism to linguistic structure). Its only rival as a dominant Zeitgeist in Western history can be found in the Metaphor of the Path in Eastern culture (Campbell, 1988, 1990) and in the visual rhetoric of the Sioux (Niehardt, 1959).

### **Conclusion**

Why did I spend so much time on visual metaphors? Why are they important? The answers to these questions have already been given. Visual metaphors provide a dominant mode of information processing. If we are ignorant of this fact, we come to believe that they don't exist. Daily, we see advertisements on television and in magazines. Each is a visual metaphor. Unfortunately, they are aimed at persuasion rather than at sharing relevant knowledge. When we turn to the use of these metaphors among indigenous groups, we find that visual metaphors are used seriously to share cultural knowledge. Visual thinking occurs all the time. The host culture that we live in is oblivious to many things. One way of knowing involves how to read people through nonverbal communication. Much communication is nonverbal, but in the host culture, nonverbal communication can be virtually invisible.

Visual information is also another way of knowing. It too is virtually invisible in our modern culture. The problem occurs when knowing and sensitive children are judged by cultures that do not know much about visual thinking. These children are aware of visual space. They are sensitive to nonverbal communication and understand that silence communicates. This essay provides background information on visual metaphors. It provides theoretical information, research models, and counter-traditions to past modes of thinking. The new rheto-

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ric breaks away from the uses of formal logic and seriously looks at how we reason in everyday life. It does not include visual thinking. I not only argue that it should, I include information on how to begin that journey. I have cited noted authorities on the matter from such academic realms as rhetoric, philosophy of science, educational psychology, linguistics, and history. Visual metaphors need to be seriously studied and understood in the host cultures of North America.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The study of art through history is the study of visual metaphors. This essay provides examples of such metaphors and it is argued that those insights derived from verbal metaphors can also be found in visual metaphors. The former tends to occur in print cultures and the latter occurs in oral cultures.

<sup>2</sup>Psychologists argue that metaphorical thinking does not begin until a child is at least four years old. Some of my students, Tina Rose and Tyra Beaseley, have argued that “pretend play” in children is the non-verbal expression of metaphor. Children envision the world from a certain perspective.

<sup>3</sup>The Greeks differed substantially from the Romans in their epistemological frameworks. The Greek language deals with processes. It belongs to a process culture. For example, the word *physis* meant “becoming.” Things came into being, rested there for a while and dissolved back into energy. For Heraclitus, things were frozen moments of time. The Latin language, on the other hand, was part of a product culture. They saw things and not processes. Therefore, it is not surprising that they translated *physis* as nature, the end product of becoming (telos).

<sup>4</sup>This visual metaphor was chosen for several reasons. Not only has the author done field work with several American Indian languages in which this metaphor predominates, but he also found it to be a coherent symbolic system that differs substantially from Western visual metaphors that dominate medieval art, and even contemporary advertising.

<sup>5</sup>One can still find this metaphor in the form of the Roman parade (*Triumphus*). The parade opened and closed with the symbol of the spirit. The remainder of the parade represented the stages of life, the trials and tribulations of being human and on the earth. This symbology can still be found in the Stations of the Cross and in the Tarot where the Magician brings spiritual life into the body.

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## **An Examination of Western Influences on Indigenous Language Teaching**

J. Dean Mellow

*This paper examines how various "Western" approaches to teaching languages are influencing how Indigenous languages are currently being taught. A two-dimensional model of approaches to language teaching is described and compared to research on language teaching in general and indigenous language teaching in particular. The paper concludes with a recommendation that language educators use a principled eclectic approach to language teaching that draws on what we know generally about teaching languages as well as what is known about unique local factors specific to particular indigenous languages and communities.*

"Why do we have to listen to a non-Indian talk about linguistics? We are trying to teach our students orally. Why do we need him to tell us how to teach the language? He never lived like an Indian, so why does he think his way of teaching will be effective? He never walked in my moccasins and never will."

I received this written comment from an indigenous language teacher when I presented a paper at an indigenous language conference in 1997. In that paper, I attempted to indicate how indigenous language teaching pedagogies have been strongly influenced by two Western (or non-Indian) approaches to language teaching: (i) form-focused/grammar-oriented, and (ii) communicative. In many instances, syllabi and textbooks had been primarily developed according to only one of these Western approaches to language teaching. My purposes in that paper were to make participants aware of the diversity of approaches within English language teaching (both as first and second languages) and to suggest ways in which indigenous language teaching approaches could be locally developed and could be more inclusive of diverse activities.

In response to my original purposes and to this comment, in this paper I explicitly examine the influence of Western perspectives on indigenous language teaching. The paper is comprised of three parts. First, I propose a two-dimensional framework of approaches to language teaching, suggesting four types of language teaching activities. Second, I indicate how a number of approaches to indigenous language teaching have adopted and utilized specific Western approaches. Third, I discuss several aspects of pedagogical decision-making, including the examination of underlying assumptions and implications, the potential value of principled eclecticism, and the importance of the local determination of educational practices.

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### **A two-dimensional model of approaches to language teaching**

In this section I propose a two-dimensional model of approaches to language teaching. The dimensions of the model correspond to two basic theoretical commitments within any approach to language teaching (for additional discussions of the linguistic and psycholinguistic assumptions of language teaching approaches see Larsen-Freeman, 1986 and Richards & Rogers, 1986). The first dimension indicates the assumption that an approach makes about the nature of language, indicated as a dichotomy between *form* and *function*. Thus, some approaches largely focus on language as a structural system composed of forms such as phonemes (sounds), intonation patterns, morphemes (including conjugations), words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and turns (within a conversation). In contrast, other approaches largely focus on language as a system for expressing meanings, including past time, plurality, definiteness, reference (e.g., to entities such as books and teachers and to actions such as speaking and eating), requests, commands, apologies, questions, politeness, respect, and narration, among many others. Because functional approaches focus on the meanings that are communicated, language is usually considered in relation to the contexts of use in which meaning is situated.

The second dimension indicates the assumption that an approach makes about the nature of language learning, indicated as a dichotomy between *construction* and *emergence*. Thus, some approaches largely conceive of language learning as a process of active construction by the learner. In other words, language learning is thought to result from the cognitive processing involved in the comprehension of extensive input (both written and spoken) and the production of extensive output (both in writing and speech) in the form of practice, drills, exercises, and other guided, negotiated, or corrected language activities. In particular, the construction view assumes that new elements can be added to a learner's internal language system as a result of extensive processing, and input and output practice will result, over time, in the automatization or internalization of sounds, words, and form-meaning patterns. The construction approach, with the emphasis on practice and automatization, is informed by theoretical positions such as those discussed in N. Ellis (1999) and McLaughlin (1990). The term construction is used to evoke the idea of a house being constructed through a variety of deliberate building processes.

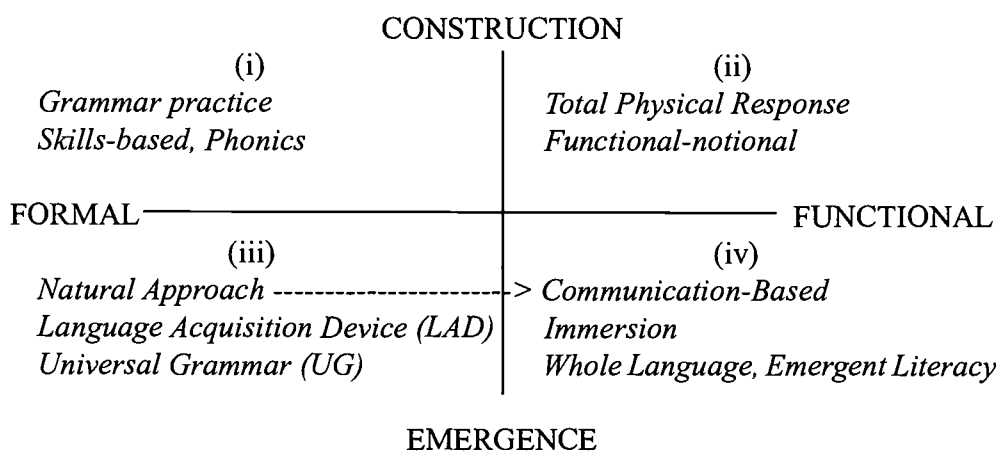
In contrast to the assumption of construction, other teaching approaches largely conceive of language learning as a process of emergence. Within these approaches, essential aspects of language learning are thought to result from innate cognitive abilities that only rely upon a subset of the input that a learner receives, and language emerges best in response to normal communicative language input. The emergence approach makes three important assumptions. First, language is hypothesized to emerge in a learner according to the learner's own internal syllabus, largely as a result of innate, biological, language-specific predispositions. Following the influential work of Noam Chomsky, in the 1960s and 1970s these innate abilities were often referred to as the Language Acquisition Device (or LAD). Since about 1980, Chomsky and his colleagues have

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used the term Universal Grammar (or UG) to refer to the hypothesized innate abilities. Second, language development is hypothesized to result only partially from the learner's general cognitive operations. For example, it is claimed that syntactic patterns are not learned with processes such as generalization, induction, deduction, and automatization. Consequently, deliberate practice and exercises are thought to contribute only minimally to development. Third, language development is hypothesized to rely only partially on the linguistic environment (e.g., the environment does not provide sufficient information for a learner to construct a knowledge of language) or responds only to certain types of linguistic environments (e.g., deductive instruction and correction of forms do *not* contribute to development). The emergence approach, with its emphasis on innate abilities and a de-emphasis of practice and automatization, is informed by the theoretical positions such as those discussed in Chomsky (1986), Goodman et al. (1987), and Krashen (1982, 1985). The term emergence is used to evoke the idea of a plant growing or emerging as a result of natural processes.

These two dimensions can be combined to create a model of different approaches to language teaching. If the first dimension corresponds to a horizontal axis and the second dimension corresponds to a vertical axis, then the intersection of the two dimensions creates the quadrants represented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Four quadrants within a two-dimensional model of approaches to language teaching



As indicated in Figure 1, the four sections or quadrants of this framework of approaches to language teaching are: (i) formal-construction, (ii) functional-construction, (iii) formal-emergence, and (iv) functional-emergence. Several language teaching approaches have been placed into the four quadrants, based on the degree to which each adopts specific assumptions regarding language and language learning. Specific approaches are discussed in detail below. In addition to approaches that primarily adopt one of these four perspectives, a fifth type of language teaching is one that is eclectic, using activities from more than one quadrant of the framework.

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The dimensions of this model are presented in a very simple way, as dichotomies. Consequently, the model could be significantly enriched if the axes were treated as continua which acknowledge that language is both form and function and that language learning results from some active construction by the learner as well as from biological and cognitive abilities that respond to normal communicative interaction and input. In addition, the model could be enriched by adding other dimensions of assumptions within language teaching. However, this simplistic categorization of teaching approaches may be valuable for educators because it indicates the assumptions that are adopted by certain approaches to language teaching.

### **Categorizing approaches to indigenous language teaching**

A number of approaches to indigenous language teaching are characterized in terms of their explicit use of Western approaches. The majority of the examples are found in the published proceedings of Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposia (Cantoni, 1996; Reyhner, 1997; Reyhner et al., 1999). Examples are discussed in relation to the four quadrants as well as to an eclectic approach that includes activities from more than one quadrant.

*Formal-construction:* Within Western approaches to language teaching, examples of formal-construction approaches include the Grammar-Translation, Audiolingual, Skills-based, and Back-to-the-Basics/Phonics approaches (cf. Langan, 1999; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rogers, 1986). Historically, many early approaches to indigenous language teaching adopted formal-construction assumptions. To a certain extent, this early trend can be attributed to the dominance of the structural linguistic paradigm (with its emphasis on phonology, morphology, and syntax) in North America and to the involvement of structural linguists in the description, preservation, and teaching of indigenous languages. The emphasis on grammatical structures and practice can be seen in the following directive from a Cree (northern Canada) language textbook (C. D. Ellis, 1983, p. 414): “Discuss something or things belonging to a third person, and *practise* Inanimate Intransitive describing *verbs* in the obviative taking care to mark singular versus plural *verbs*” [italics added]. An example of a recent teaching approach that adopts formal-construction assumptions is Kushner (1999). Kushner (1999, p. 76) describes Arikara (North Dakota) multimedia language lessons that follow a traditional, grammatical approach to instruction:

The Grammar segment explicitly describes how words function in model sentences in the Conversation segment. However, the explanation is in nontechnical terms and is illustrated with examples in Arikara and English as necessary. This way, although the student may not fully appreciate the *grammatical explanations*, he or she may *internalize* the rule through repeated exposure to examples.... Then, the student engages in exercises *practicing* these rules with the content he or she has already learned. [italics added]

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Drawing from the results of instructional experiments and from theoretical constructs such as *consciousness raising*, Kushner's approach focuses on grammatical rules and on internalization that may be achieved through practice.

*Functional-construction:* Within Western approaches to language teaching, an example of a functional-construction approach is the Functional-notional approach, with its use of linguistic categories such as exchange factual information, exchange emotional attitudes, and socializing (e.g., van Ek, 1987). Another example is Total Physical Response or TPR (Asher, 1977), discussed below. A number of recent approaches to indigenous language teaching have adopted functional-construction assumptions. To a certain extent these approaches have been a reaction to earlier emphases on grammatical practice. For example, Oller and Littlebear (1996, p. 114), in a summary of a November 1995 Education Roundtable, discuss this concern for the functional use of language:

Richard Littlebear thought there was too much stress today in classroom second language instruction on superficial grammatical analysis that just does not work. It makes no sense to have students who can name colors, body parts, and the like in isolation, but who cannot participate in conversations, give simple directions, tell a story, take part in a drama, carry out instructions, and the like.

Functional-construction assumptions can be seen in the advocacy of TPR activities for indigenous language teaching by Littlebear and Martinez (1996) and by Cantoni (1999). TPR is a teaching approach that emphasizes functional units of language, especially the command or imperative. Richards and Rogers (1986, p. 89) point out that advanced TPR lessons use other speech acts, such as requests and apologies. Through repeated physical responses to commands, TPR also utilizes extensive practice to develop receptive language skills. Although the theoretical principles underlying TPR are more complex than is indicated by the two-dimensional model (cf. Adley-SantaMaria, 1997; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rogers, 1986), these recent uses of TPR indicate the explicit adoption of functional-construction assumptions for indigenous language teaching.

*Formal-emergence:* Formal-emergence assumptions are a central part of one of the most influential Western language teaching approaches, the Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). A number of indigenous language educators have adopted or advocated the Natural Approach (e.g., Klokeid & Ratt, 1989, for Cree; Littlebear & Martinez, 1996, pp. 234-239). The empirical support motivating Krashen's approach is largely based upon an analysis of the development of grammatical structures such as English morphemes, as well as negation and question structures (Krashen, 1985, pp. 20-21). Krashen (1982, pp. 10 & 84) has also strongly articulated the claim that language development does not result from certain general cognitive processes, such as internalization:

The acquisition-learning distinction is perhaps the most fundamental of all the hypotheses to be presented here. It states that adults have two



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distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language. . . . this process of converting learned *rules* into acquired *rules* was called ‘internalization.’ Despite our feelings that internalization does occur, the theory predicts that it does not, except in a trivial way. Language acquisition, according to the theory presented in Chapter II, happens in one way, when the acquirer understands input containing a *structure* that the acquirer is ‘due’ to acquire. [italics added]

Instead of attributing language development to internalization, Krashen (1985, pp. 2-3) claimed that innate language abilities play an important role in acquisition and that not all input contributes to acquisition:

The acquirer does not simply acquire what he hears—there is a significant contribution of the internal language processor (Chomsky’s Language Acquisition Device: LAD). Not all the input the acquirer hears is processed for acquisition, and the LAD itself generates possible *rules* according to innate procedures. [italics added]

As Krashen indicates, the theoretical assumptions of the Natural Approach focus on language structures and rules. In addition, the assumptions minimize the role of general learning processes, minimize the value of production activities, and minimize the importance of all input. Instead, Krashen focuses on selective pieces of input that must be correctly timed in order to trigger rule development by a hypothetical Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Because of the difficulty in predicting which pieces of input are hypothetically necessary for which learners, Krashen advocates flooding learners with comprehensible input that is likely to include the necessary triggering input. Although motivated by different theoretical assumptions, the language learning activities proposed within the Natural Approach are similar to those proposed by communicative and immersion approaches (discussed below). This similarity is indicated in Figure 1 by the dashed arrow that extends from the Natural Approach into the functional-emergence quadrant. Because of the complexity of the theory underlying the Natural Approach, it is not generally clear whether indigenous language educators advocate the use of the Natural Approach because of its assumptions or because of the types of communication-oriented activities that it includes.

*Functional-emergence:* Within Western approaches to language teaching, examples of functional-emergence approaches include the Whole Language, Emergent Literacy, Immersion, and Communicative approaches (e.g., Goodman et al., 1987; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Pappas et al., 1990; Richards & Rogers, 1986). Many recent approaches to indigenous language teaching have adopted functional-emergence assumptions. For example, Adley-SantaMaria (1997) advocates the use of a combination of Communication-Based Instruction, Master-Apprentice Language Learning, and Immersion methods for teaching White Mountain Apache (Arizona). Adley-SantaMaria (1997, p. 139) indicates that Communication-Based Instruction is based on the view “that function (what

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language is used for) should be emphasized rather than the forms of language (correct grammatical or phonological structure).” In order to explain the rationale for immersion (and Master-Apprentice Language Learning) programs, Adley-SantaMaria builds from Hinton (1994). Hinton argues that fluent language use is not effectively learned by focusing on grammar and writing. Instead, Hinton (1994, pp. 18-19) claims that fluent language use is learned best through “just listening and talking, talking and listening,” and through “being immersed in an environment where the language is the dominant one being used.” Thus, the approaches that Adley-SantaMaria advocates make assumptions that can be characterized as functional-emergence, with language hypothesized to emerge in response to normal communicative language use.

*Eclecticism:* Although some language teaching methodologies can generally be placed within one of the quadrants in Figure 1, many Western approaches could be characterized as principled or enlightened eclecticism (cf. Brown, 1994). These eclectic methodologies involve a principled combination of a variety of learning activities. I believe that eclecticism also describes the reality of what many teachers actually do, selecting a variety of activities for their classes, rather than exclusively following one teaching method. Many indigenous language educators have proposed methodologies that involve a principled combination of activities. For example, de Reuse (1997) proposes language learning textbooks for Western Apache (Arizona) that include both grammar-translation and TPR style activities. These two types of activities have been previously classified as formal-construction and functional-construction, respectively.

An additional example of an eclectic approach is Cantoni (1999). Previously, I noted that Gina Cantoni advocated TPR activities. In addition, she suggests the use of story telling activities and discusses using a wide range of activities such as story creation, writing, revising, acting out, retelling, and videotaping. These content-based or communicative activities are presumably informed by functional-emergence assumptions, with language emerging as a result of the learners being actively engaged in these meaningful activities. Furthermore, Cantoni argues that TPR-Storytelling applies some of Krashen’s principles, including the concern for the provision of comprehensible input. As noted earlier, Krashen’s theories are derived from formal-emergence assumptions. Finally, Cantoni (1999, p. 57) proposes that teachers might also provide polite error correction, especially in interactive journals. In this way, the teacher might respond to an ungrammatical utterance with one that models the correct form. This inductive correction of ungrammatical utterances presumably draws upon formal-construction assumptions. Overall, Cantoni proposes the use of language learning activities that could be placed in all of the quadrants of the two-dimensional model. By carefully discussing when and why each of the activity types might be used, Cantoni advocates a form of principled eclecticism.

### **Pedagogical decision-making**

The analysis in the previous section suggests a number of implications for pedagogical decision-making. First, because indigenous language teachers have

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explicitly adopted or advocated the use of a wide variety of Western approaches to language teaching, educators will want to consider the assumptions and implications of these many approaches in order to determine which pedagogies are appropriate for the needs of their own community. The two-dimensional model presented in this paper may provide a useful way in which to examine these assumptions.

In addition, the two-dimensional model may provide a starting place for examining the underlying assumptions and properties of traditional, indigenous approaches to language use, transmission, and acquisition. Indigenous language teachers could determine whether the dimensions and values of the model provide insight into the nature of traditional pedagogical practices. Indigenous educators could also determine other dimensions that characterize important aspects of traditional learning and teaching processes. For example, as indicated by the quotation that began this paper, a number of indigenous language educators are currently considering the mode of language use (spoken vs. written), discussing the value of using written learning activities within cultural traditions that involve only oral language use (cf. Bennett et al., 1999; Bielenberg, 1999; Littlebear, 2000). An additional dimension of traditional curricular planning is the extent to which the learners themselves are involved in the creation and sequencing of their own learning activities (e.g., Jones & Bedonie, 2000; cf. the process syllabus of Breen, 1987). Finally, indigenous educators have considered the overall structure of classroom activities or tasks. An example of this dimension of curricular planning is seen in the thematic units of Jones and Bedonie (2000). The planning of these units utilizes the four cyclic stages of the Diné Educational Philosophy Framework: Nitsáhákees (thinking and generating ideas), Nahat'á (planning and implementing), Iiná (achieving and producing), and Sihasin (evaluation and reflection). It seems possible that the dimensions of the model presented in this paper are complementary to these other traditional dimensions of curricular planning.

A second implication for pedagogical decision-making is that the most effective approaches may be eclectic in a principled manner. I support the position of principled eclecticism because language is both form and function, and because I believe that language can be internalized through practice and can be acquired through natural communicative use. As illustrated in Cantoni (1999), a combination of activities may best be able to maximize language learning, may appeal to different teaching and learning styles, and may provide variety in classroom activities, stimulating and motivating learners. The two-dimensional model provides an initial set of categories for selecting learning and teaching activities. For example, a language teacher might adopt some form of principled eclecticism, sometimes using structural training (e.g., to practice intonation contours or to memorize vocabulary), sometimes using functional drills (e.g., to practice politely and respectfully addressing one's elders), sometimes using communicative activities (e.g., to communicate complex meanings or content in realistic language tasks), and sometimes deciding that certain structures, especially complex structures, cannot easily be taught and hence not using class time for those structures.

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Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully consider the principles that could motivate these decisions, I will suggest several factors that might be utilized (see also Celce-Murcia, 1991). One principle could be a psycholinguistic concern regarding learnability. Certain elements may be late acquired or may only be acquired in a developmental sequence, and therefore are not likely to be quickly acquired as a result of formal-construction activities. An additional principle might be the contextual factor of intended purpose. For example, learners seeking to master academic, literate, or ceremonial varieties of language use may especially benefit from formal-construction activities. In contrast, learners seeking to develop conversational or informal varieties may especially benefit from functional-emergence activities. Another principle might consider the vitality of an indigenous language: Efforts to revive a language through schooling may need to rely upon formal-construction activities because of the limited range of use of the language in day to day community activities. Finally, although eclecticism may generally consider the combination of different activities into a larger curriculum, individual activities themselves might combine form and function and/or construction and emergence. For example, Long (1998, p. 40) argues for the value of Focus-on-Form activities, instructional practices that shift students' focal attention by "briefly drawing students' attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so on), *in context*, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication" (original emphasis retained). Focus-on-Form activities would be located at the center of the four quadrants, combining factors that are sometimes separated by other pedagogical approaches.

A third implication for pedagogical decision-making is that the two-dimensional model provides information that can inform that decision-making, but it does not indicate the values that educators should hold in making those decisions. As indicated in the quotation that began this paper, decisions about how to teach a language need to be made locally, in conjunction with the community (e.g., Ashworth, 1985). Local decisions are essential because only expert native speakers will fully understand the uniqueness and complexity of their language, allowing for effective and appropriate choices about the language content to be taught. In addition, because education alone is not the solution for stabilizing indigenous languages, maximally effective language teaching programs must be supported by efforts in the home and community to continue the intergenerational transmission of mother-tongues (e.g., Oller & Littlebear, 1996).

Furthermore, as indicated in studies of rural education, outside decision-makers may not be sensitive to local concerns, resulting in conflicts between local and regional decision-making and between the need for locally relevant classroom content, often related to the local culture, and the need for nationally relevant knowledge, potentially providing access to high status academic and literate knowledge (Foldes, 1989; Mellow, 1992; Nash, 1980, pp. 18, 20-35, 55-59). Finally, pedagogical decision-making will also need to consider the characteristics of successful educational change. In their review of 75 years of attempted educational changes, Orlosky and Smith (1972, p. 414) noted the following trends:

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A change that requires the teacher to abandon an existing practice and to displace it with a new practice risks defeat. . . . Curricular changes involving the addition of subjects or the updating of content are more permanent than changes in the organization and structure of the curriculum. Efforts to change the curriculum by integrating or correlating the content, or by creating new category systems into which to organize the content, are made at great risk. Complete or considerable displacement of an existing curriculum pattern is not likely to be permanent even if the faculty initially supports the change.

Thus, pedagogical changes must be very sensitive to the existing local practices. Attempts to significantly alter the existing teaching practices are unlikely to be permanent.

I hope this paper has indicated positive ways in which Western research and practice can contribute to indigenous language teaching. Western educational ideas and practices have had a significant influence on approaches to indigenous pedagogy. This two dimensional framework for understanding these influences may contribute to effective and selective local pedagogical decision-making. The framework may also provide a starting place for understanding the assumptions and properties of traditional indigenous approaches to language use, learning, and teaching.

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## Teaching English to American Indians

Jon Reyhner

*The education provided to American Indians by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) over the last two centuries has received considerable justified criticism by both Indians and non-Indians. However, it is important to realize that the BIA has also attempted to improve the quality of Indian education throughout its history. This paper details efforts within the BIA to improve Indian education, especially in regard to the teaching of English. It concentrates on the use of the "object method" at the end of the Nineteenth Century, the impact of Progressive Education in the 1930s and 40s, and the introduction of English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching methods in the 1960s and 70s.*

Many have heard horrible stories of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and mission schools punishing students for speaking "Indian" and the low academic expectations of these schools. Estelle Brown (1952), who started teaching in Indian schools in the 1897, wrote that teaching for the BIA "called for a belief in the necessity for recreating primitive children in my own image" (p. 42). She went on to write that "a knowledge of their pupil's home environment was not considered necessary since their education aimed to make that environment unsuitable to them" (p. 204). However, perceptive teachers of the time found this assimilationist approach wrong. Brown wrote, "I instinctively felt that, in teaching Indian children to like and want the things we liked and wanted, we were heading in the wrong direction" (p. 42). The "deficit approach" to minority education that Brown describes has been repeatedly criticized (e.g., Swisher & Tippeconnic, 1999), but little note has been taken of the positive efforts made in BIA schools to promote the education of Indian children and the learning of English. This paper describes some of these positive methods, materials, and motivational techniques used by BIA schools in the past that teachers today would do well to contemplate.

### **Motivating Indigenous language learners**

Well researched and designed teaching methods and materials help motivate students by giving them early success through the use of active, student-centered instruction and by providing comprehensible input. However, one should not stop there when considering the all-important issue of having highly motivated students. The issue of motivating students to learn a language is not new. For example, Carlisle Indian School when it opened in 1879 promoted the use of English through an English-language student newspaper and literary societies. Students were praised frequently and received rewards for speaking English.

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No textbooks were used with entering students who could not speak English. The principal of Carlisle's education department in a March 1882 article published in the Dakota Mission's bilingual newspaper *IAPÍ OAYE* described this approach to tap children's curiosity:

Almost from the first, by the use of slate and blackboard, the pupils were taught to write and read the names of objects, or short sentences—using script—describing actions. “Harry ran,” “Mathew ran,” “Lena ran,” written upon the slate, at first almost illegibly. . . .

No criticism was made, however awkward the attempt at imitation. . . . This is substantially the method pursued in the institution for the deaf mutes at Hartford, Conn., under the superintendency of Dr. Keep, and fully explained in his book—“First Lessons for the Deaf and Dumb.” . . . The phonic method is employed to aid in the pronunciation and discovery of new words. The combination of the phonic and word-method we find especially adapted to our Indian pupils. . . . It is often necessary to show the Indian pupil the proper position of the teeth, tongue and lips, and insist upon his imitation. . . . We believe it is a great mistake to use books at the first . . . also . . . time spent in teaching the alphabet is lost. (Semple, p. 23)

Students taught the alphabet would “parrot” it and if they were found “stupidly droning over a reading book, we throw the book aside and take up objects” (Semple, p. 23). Objects were also used to teach math and some classes kept diaries.

One of the first actions taken at Carlisle Indian School was to start a small student written English-only newspaper, *The School News*, that was filled with student written material in which students exhorted each other to just speak English. Sophie Rachel wrote her brother in the October 1881 issue,

I want you to try to talk English every day and I want talk now I must try try hard to talk this time and when we go home we must teach our own people I want to talk English every day and not to talk old Sioux....No let us stop that this time if you do not know how to talk just try (*sic*). (Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 3).

The school had been only open two years then and, according to that issue of *The School News*, only two students spoke English reasonably well. However, it is clear that a concerted campaign was being made to encourage the speaking of English, and that positive rewards were being given to motivate students. The importance of praising and rewarding student efforts for learning to take place is well documented (e.g., Chance, 1992).

Littlebear (1999) and others have spoken about how students learning their tribal language as a second language are often criticized by elders and peers for their poor pronunciation and grammar. Discouragement in the process of learn-

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ing English or any other language can be fatal to language learning efforts. Language learners need encouragement rather than criticism to help keep them motivated, especially during the early stages of learning a new language. However, relying on no explicit correction of errors that extreme advocates of the “Natural Approach” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) promote can lead to students habituating the use of grammar and pronunciation errors (Rivers, 1994; Higgs & Clifford, 1982).

### **Pestalozzi’s “Object Method”**

Swiss educator and writer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi’s (1747-1827) ideas for educating the children of the poor exerted considerable influence on education in Europe and America in the nineteenth century. Pestalozzi rejected the classical approach to learning of his time, which stressed discipline and memorization. In sharp contrast to the verbal education of the day, Pestalozzi stressed the use of the natural environment as a source of educational opportunities and the use of children’s senses, beginning with the use of objects found in children’s immediate experience (Gutek, 1968).

Educators that read Pestalozzi’s writings and visited his schools spread his ideas across Europe and to America. American educator Henry Barnard (1811-1900) published in 1859 a collection of his essays titled *Pestalozzi and Pestalozzianism*, and Edward A. Sheldon (1823-1897) popularized “the narrow English conception of the formal object lesson into teacher education” at the Oswego Normal School (Gutek, 1968, p. 163). According to Gutek, “The basic operating principle at Oswego was that all knowledge derived from sense perception and that all instruction should be based on real objects” (1968, p. 162).

As was previously mentioned at Carlisle, the use of objects was introduced early-on in Indian Schools. BIA schools picked up on the Americanized ideas of Pestalozzi under the title of the “object method.” This use of real objects in teaching had the potential of providing what Stephen Krashen now calls “comprehensible input” for students. According to Superintendent of Indian Schools Estelle Reel in the BIA’s 1905 annual report,

It was found that the most successful teachers worked objectively altogether, using articles with which the pupils were familiar and gradually bringing them to associate the English name of the object, spoken and written, with the object itself; many teachers were adhering too closely to text-books. (*ARCIA*, 1905, p. 397)

Her office distributed sample lessons to teachers to improve instruction.

Using the object method with Indian children was an improvement over using words without anything to give those words meaning, which led to the “parroting” described by Luther Standing Bear and others. Standing Bear (1928), who became a teacher at the end of the nineteenth century wrote,

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The Indian children should have been taught how to translate the Sioux tongue into English properly; but the English teachers only taught them the English language, like a bunch of parrots. While they could read all the words placed before them, they did not know the proper use of them; their meaning was a puzzle. (p. 239)

However, the rejection of the importance of what Pestalozzi called the “home circle,” which he credited as “the origin of all education,” in most boarding school education made reference to Pestalozzi a travesty. Gerald Gutek, a biographer of Pestalozzi, maintains that Pestalozzi would have hardly recognized the formalized object lessons used in England and America that he was credited with inspiring. For example, Don Talayesva, a Hopi, described his first experience with a BIA school in 1899,

The first thing I learned in school was “nail,” a hard word to remember. Every day when we entered the classroom a nail lay on the desk. The teacher would take it up and say, “What is this?” Finally I answered “nail” ahead of the other boys and was called “bright.” (1942, p. 90)

A better example of using objects in teaching was the use of “sand tables” in one-room day schools on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations in South Dakota at the turn of the century. The 1903 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (ARCIA)* contained a description and picture of a sand table, a sandbox built onto a tabletop, used for teaching primary students, sometimes by older students (see Figure 1). “The table is arranged like a home with irrigating ditch, ridge, fence posts made out of clothespins, house, etc. The pupil teacher says to the class, say ‘the horse,’ then ‘the horse runs,’ etc.” (*ARCIA*, 1903, pp. 376-377). The table was changed to suit the seasons of the year. Reel in her 1904 annual report again described the “sand table” and “teaching objectively” as working well and called for teachers to find out about their students’ home life, interests, and individual characteristics.

Reel’s description of using objects is very similar to the use of “realia” discussed recently by Edwina Hoffman (1992). Janette Woodruff (1939), matron working with Crow students in 1903, reported that “There always had to be a concrete, an objective way of presenting an idea” to the students (p. 65). In 1908 at Pyramid Lake, she described using picture writing to teach, “substituting drawings for words wherever possible” and using a “story and objective” teaching method (p. 169). This is an early example of what is now called Rebus writing.

### **Publishing students’ work**

The idea of printing students’ writing that Richard Henry Pratt initiated at Carlisle Indian school was continued in other BIA boarding schools (see Figure 2). The 1905 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs described the setting up of print shop in the Albuquerque Indian School as a means of



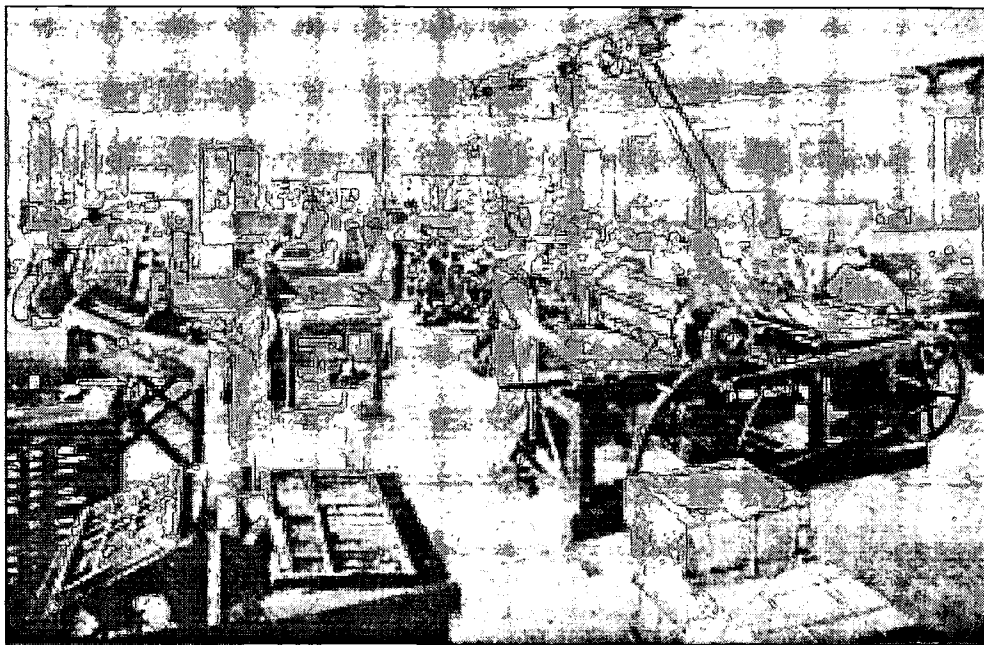
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**Figure 1.** Students at Pine Ridge Day School No. 27 using a Sand Table (Picture from the 1903 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*)



METHOD OF TEACHING ENGLISH BY USE OF SAND TABLE, NO. 27 DAY SCHOOL, PINE RIDGE.

**Figure 2.** Carlisle Indian School's Print Shop (Picture from the 1903 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*)



PRINTING OFFICE, INDIAN SCHOOL, CARLEISLE, PA.

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getting students to learn to write, and Chilocco Boarding School was described as having the most extensive print shop in the Indian Service:

A new plan for teaching language has been put into practice the past year. . . . The teacher of language and her class are constituted the staff—editors and reporters—of a weekly journal. They gather news all about the school and bring it to the classroom, where it is itemized and paragraphed. Criticisms are made. The paragraphs are boiled down to make them concise and simple . . . sent to print shop edited and corrected” (*ARCIA*, 1905, p. 428).

### **Progressive criticism of Indian education**

The spirit of Pestalozzi’s educational philosophy was continued into the twentieth century with the growing popularity of what came to be called Progressive Education. Progressive Education became popular at the same time more and more Indian children were being enrolled in schools. A government sponsored report, commonly known as the Meriam Report (1928) examined BIA education from a Progressive Education perspective and found it failing Indian children. In 1929 Charles Rhodes, the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, echoed the Meriam Report, emphasizing local material and the use of Indian daily experiences in teaching students, and he explicitly mentioned Progressive Education in his 1930 annual report where he wrote, “Emphasis is being placed upon the importance of basing all early primary reading on words that already have a place in the children’s speaking vocabulary” (*ARCIA*, 1930, p. 9). He also declared “All Navajo schools now have native weavers who teach blanket weaving to girls” (*ARCIA*, 1930, p. 11). The next year Rhodes encouraged elementary teachers to urge their students “to write about their own Indian life, and to depict their own customs, their own legends, their own economic and social activities” (*ARCIA*, 1931, p. 7). This emphasis on building on students prior experiences and knowledge is emphasized in today’s constructivist learning theory (Ellis & Founts, 1993).

The president of the Progressive Education Association wrote in 1930 that “the child rather than what he studies, should be the centre of all educational effort and that a scientific attitude toward new educational ideas is the best guarantee of progress” (Fowler, p. 159). Like Whole Language today, advocates of Progressive Education maintained that it “could not be defined, that it was a ‘spirit,’ a ‘method,’ an ‘outlook,’ a ‘matter of emphasis’” (Cremin, 1961, p. 258). John Dewey, considered the father of Progressive Education, saw it as an alternative to traditional education that was academic in orientation and divorced from the realities students faced. At the University of Chicago he found a laboratory school in 1896 to test out his theories. The problems he faced are indicated by a story he tells about trying to furnish his new school. All the desks at the school supply houses were designed for students to sit passively listening and studying whereas Dewey was interested in getting furniture where students

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could be active learners (Dewey, 1900). Dewey is famous for his dictum “learning by doing,” which fits in with modern constructivist learning theory.

### **Using materials that relate learning to students’ experiential background**

The February 1932 issue of the journal *Progressive Education* was devoted to Indian education and the lead article was written by W. Carson Ryan, Jr. and Rose K. Brandt, respectively the director of education and the supervisor of elementary education for the United States Indian Service. They declared that summer school training for Indian service teachers should include among other things:

- Environmental experiences of children as a basis for school procedure and curriculum content.
- Philosophy of progressive education, basing school work on activities and at the same time recognizing and providing opportunities for various learning outcomes rather than beginning and ending teaching procedures mainly with subject matter. (p. 83)

In the same 1932 special issue, Nancy Heger, a teacher at Eastern Navajo School, Crown Point, New Mexico, in her article “Before Books in an Indian School” saw the school lunch as the place to start teaching English, with students learning names for utensils and different kinds of food. She also recommended games to teach vocabulary and noted how,

The sand table provides another center of never-failing interest an opportunity for vocabulary building. Here are constructed houses such as we live in, barns, schoolhouse, sidewalks, windmill, stores, chicken houses, pens, fences, troughs, trees, tanks, church, garages, trucks, cars—all illustrative of the school and agency or the home community.

Usually, the first sand-table scene consists of the school village. (p. 143)

Helen Lawhead, a first grade teacher at the Theodore Roosevelt Boarding School at Fort Apache, Arizona, wrote in the same issue on “Teaching Navajo Children to Read.” She felt that Navajo students should not be expected to learn to read English without first developing some oral English vocabulary. Students would often read aloud well yet not comprehend what they were reading. She declared that “The child’s own experiences should form the basis of his reading materials” (p. 133). She wanted reading material with “simple sentences” and “plenty of action.” Her students would make original drawing for their favorite stories and would dramatize scenes from them. She also used a sand table to “make the story.” These suggested dramatizations are recommended today in second language teaching under the title “TPR Storytelling” (Cantoni, 1999).

In a section titled “Language Experiments of Children” contributed by Rose Brandt, the 1932 special issue had the following information:

The children talk over their experiences in group discussion, the teacher keeping a written record on the blackboard of their comments. These are later presented to the children to be read on large charts or in the form of booklets which have been hektographed or written on typewriters having Primer type faces. (Language, 1932, p. 154)

Two examples of first grade stories from Toadlena, New Mexico were given:

#### **Navajo Father**

Navajo father wears a shirt and pants. Navajo father wears a green head band. He wears red kil'chi on his feet. He wears a blanket to keep him warm. Navajo father wears blue ear rings. He wears beads on his neck.

Navajo father works. He plows the ground. He plants corn and watermelons. He makes the hogan. He chops the tree. He chops wood. He takes care of goats and sheep. He rides the horse.

#### **Navajo Mother**

Navajo mother wears a Navajo dress. A Navajo dress is a long dress. She wears beads on her neck. She wears shoes on her feet. Sometimes she wears kil'chi on her feet. She wears ear rings in her ears. She wears stockings. Navajo mother wears no head band. Navajo mother wears long hair. She ties it with a string.

Navajo mother works. She makes bread. She cooks corn, meat, potatoes, coffee, and pumpkins. The Navajos eat it. She makes the blanket. She makes kil'chi and a cradle. She makes a dress and shirt for father. She rides the horse. (Language, 1932, p. 154)

In a 1935 article in the BIA publication *Indians at Work*, Rose Brandt described in an article titled "We Make Our Own Books" how older kids wrote books for younger students to get vocabulary familiar to the students and how fourth graders at Toadlena wrote chapters on home life, history, customs, ceremonials, and legends.

#### **Having students write for authentic purposes**

Ryan's replacement as the BIA's Director of Education in 1936 was Willard Beatty, president of Progressive Education Association, who continued John Dewey's and the Progressive Education Association's emphasis on learning from experience and the development of community schools. In his memoirs, Indian commissioner John Collier (1963) was appreciative of the environmental and conservation curriculum that Beatty introduced into the schools. Collier noted in his autobiography that "Beatty began to build activities in the Indian day schools around the conserving and using of natural resources," and he noted that he and Beatty "intended that school life become bilingual, and that the schools should serve adult and child alike" (1963, pp. 195-196). According to Collier,

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Beatty “scoured” the Navajo reservation recruiting Navajo teachers, Navajo assistants, and translators. Beatty started some of the first bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) training programs in the United States (Szasz, 1977). Beatty’s efforts led to the publication by the BIA of Young and Morgan’s (1943) *The Navaho Language: The Elements of Navaho Grammar with a Dictionary in Two Parts Containing Vocabularies of Navaho and English* and the *Indian Life Series* of bilingual pamphlets.

### **Providing inservice training for teachers**

Both Beatty and Collier were aware of other countries’ educational approaches to indigenous education, especially Mexico’s, and foreign criticism of the United States’ treatment of its native population. Summer Institutes were held to give teachers special training in teaching Indian students, and a bimonthly bulletin, *Indian Education*, was started by Beatty shortly after he became the BIA education director to disseminate his policies and new educational methods. In 1941 a Hopi teacher, Polingaysi Qöyawayma, was chosen to demonstrate her teaching methods to other BIA educators at a summer training institute. She had found that her method of educating children starting “from what they already know, not from a totally new, strange field of experience” reduced the chance her students would withdraw into a shell (1964, pp. 151 & 174). She wrote a friend the same year:

If the teachers to the Hopi or other tribes would come to them [their students] with human interest and love and take them for what they are and where they are and begin from their world with them results would be success. There should be less teacher dominance and theories. . . . teacher and child should meet on mutual ground. (1983, p. 51)

Florence Little, one of the first Navajo “college graduate” teachers, took a similar approach. She used words such as *yucca*, *piñon*, and *hogan* as her initial English vocabulary for her beginning students rather than *post office*, *bank*, and *skyscraper* (Boyce, 1974).

### **Progressive Education: The Project Method**

The educational psychologist William Heard Kilpatrick wrote in Columbia University’s *Teachers College Record* in 1918 about the “project method,” which was to involve students in “purposeful acts.” According to Kilpatrick, “whole hearted purposeful activity in a social situation as the typical unit of school procedure is the best guarantee of the utilization of the child’s native capacities now too often frequently wasted” (p. 18). But in turn he also warned against foolishly humoring childish whims. The next year Branom in a book titled *The Project Method in Education* described projects as having to be related to the student’s interests and needs.

John Dewey added a short chapter on projects in the 1933 edition of his classic book *How We Think*. He wrote that “constructive occupations” or “projects” are characterized by the following conditions:

1. **Engage interest:** “Unless the activity lays hold on the emotions and desires, unless it offers an outlet for energy that means something to the individual himself, his mind will turn in aversion from it, even though externally he keeps at it.”
2. **Intrinsic worth:** “the activity must be worth while intrinsically.” Projects must “stand for something valuable in life itself.”
3. **Awaken curiosity:** The project must “awaken new curiosity and create a demand for information.”
4. **Time span:** “the project must involve a considerable time span for its adequate execution, The plan and the object to be gained must be capable of development, one thing leading on naturally to another. . . . It is not a succession of unrelated acts, but is a consecutively ordered activity in which one step prepares the need for the next one and that one adds to, and carries further in a cumulative way, what has already been done.” (Dewey, 1998/1933, pp. 218-219)

Gordon MacGregor’s (1964) reported that the “project method” was used very successfully in schools for Pine Ridge Sioux in the 1940s. He found that projects allowed students to work cooperatively as they did at home and for bilingual students to translate for students who spoke no English. Today, this project method goes under names such as the explorer curriculum, enterprises, and the like (McCarty & Schafer, 1992). Another approach used in the Progressive Era was what is today called thematic units. A detailed example of a unit on boats from about 1920 is reproduced by Cremin (1961) from the Lincoln School, a laboratory school at Columbia University.

### **The end of Progressive Education**

In 1949 Hildegard Thompson, who was then supervising all Navajo education programs, justified BIA teaching methods when Navajos demanded that their children to get the same type of education as white children:

Once, an entire day was spent with the Navajo Tribal Council explaining the methods used in teaching English to non-English-speaking Navajo beginners. Many Navajos at that time were critical of methods used in federal schools. Teachers provided a variety of first-hand experiences, much of which was in the form of play, to make oral English meaningful to small Navajo-speaking beginners. This did not look like good teaching to some Navajos. I used a pictorial chart showing the early experiences and language learning of two children—one learning in Navajo, the other in English. After sketching the learning experiences of each child to age six, I put the picture of the Navajo child

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beside the picture of the English-speaking child, each shown with a speaking vocabulary of 2,000 words, and I simultaneously removed from the mouth of the Navajo child all of the Navajo vocabulary in which he had learned to converse. Then I explained that both children entered school and that the child had to learn to talk in the language of the school—English—but that the English-speaking child was six years ahead of him in English language. I then showed some of the materials and toys which Barbara Henderson, a Navajo who taught at Beclabito, used to help overcome the English language deficit of Navajo beginners; and I explained how she used the materials. “This might seem that she was letting children play,” I pointed out, “but she uses the children’s play to teach them enough English so that they can begin their primary grade work.” (Thompson, 1975, p. 13)

After leaving Navajoland Thompson took over from Willard Beatty in Washington, D.C. She wrote in 1965 about experiments going on at Rock Point (later one of the first community-controlled schools with a strong bilingual program) and Shiprock, which she said affirmed the Bureau’s basic principles and premises on which the BIA’s English language program for the primary grades:

1. The development of spoken English precedes the development of English reading and writing skills. The Bureau sets aside the first year of school for the development of oral English, and oral English is emphasized throughout the grades. . . .
2. Spoken English in the early elementary grades should be developed in association with classroom, home, and community experiences. This practice recognizes that language learning accrues from experience, and in the beginning from concrete experiences.
3. Experiences provide the meaning content of language. Oral English expression should be welded to meaning since expression and meaning are inseparable in the communication of thought. Patterned drill is important to establish English patterns of expression, but patterned drill is undertaken in close association with meaning.

To summarize, oral language development requires that the individual learn to recognize and then to produce the complete sound system of English, to make the correct association between meaning and expression, and to make English patterns of expression a matter of habit. (p. 3)

Thompson asked teachers to ask themselves these questions: “Am I relating my oral English teaching to firsthand experiences? Do I make use of the everyday things children do at school, and do I provide children with a wealth of experiences to enrich their background?” (1965, p. 3).



**English as a Second Language (ESL) in Navajo Area BIA schools**

Rock Point in 1960 was one of the most isolated of eight Chinle Agency BIA schools, and it “ranked at the bottom in student achievement as measured by standardized tests” (Vorih & Rosier, 1978, p. 263). An intensive Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program was started in 1963 at Rock Point resulted in its scores moving to the top of the Agency, but they were still two years behind national norms at sixth grade in reading and math. Because of this continued lag in student achievement, Rock Point started a bilingual education program in 1967 using ESEA Title 1 funds. But the bilingual program remained limited till 1971 when ESEA Title VII Bilingual Education Act funds were received. Rock Point Navajo aides were trained as teachers, spending their summers taking courses at Northern Arizona University. “In 1977 fifteen Navajos received their BA degrees” and “staff adapted, translate[d], or wrote their own materials” in Navajo (Vorih & Rosier, 1978, p. 268).

In 1967 1,000 BIA teachers attended an ESL workshop at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, and the Bureau issued the same year a booklet titled *ESL for Navajos: An Overview of Certain Cultural and Linguistic Features* by the linguist Robert Young and revised it into 169 pages the next year (New Curriculum 1970; Young 1968). The booklet described the teaching implications of cultural differences and provided a contrastive analysis of Navajo and English. During the school year 1970-71, the Bureau was offering bilingual-bicultural kindergarten and first grade instruction in four BIA schools (Saville, 1970).

Early on it was recognized that ESL was just part of a total bilingual program as was the case at Rock Point. Spolsky (1973) estimated that in 1972 there were 50,000 Navajo students and that 98% of them entering BIA schools and 90% entering public schools were Navajo speakers. In the beginning there was little public school participation in these initiatives. For example, there were no Arizona public school representatives at a Navajo Bilingual-Bicultural Materials Conference held in Albuquerque in 1972 (Kari, 1973).

Spolsky found that Navajo ESL programs were ineffective and that teachers needed to be bilingual, stating in 1973 in the lead article in a Bureau of Indian Affairs publication that “Bilingual education has become a pressing need for Navajo schools; without it, Navajo students are doomed to inferior education” and that Navajo bilingual teachers were needed to teach Navajo students (1973, pp. 1-2).

In the fall of 1969, approximately 200 new teachers were hired to serve Navajo BIA schools, and their reaction to being told they need to teach ESL was “What is it?” (Harvey, 1970, p. 23). The then current focus of ESL was on oral practice and pattern drill in primary grades with not much for teachers of older students. In June 1969 the BIA held a workshop Brigham City, Utah, for its teachers to look at “all commercially available materials for teaching ESL at the intermediate and secondary levels” (Harvey, 1970, p. 25). Starting in November of that year, Dr. Gina Cantoni spent one or more days each week in 17 Navajo Area BIA schools observing, demonstrating, and offering encouragement, help, and advice for teaching ESL to Navajo students. The same year the BIA pub-

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lished a monograph on *Teaching English to speakers of Choctaw, Navajo and Papago: A Contrastive Approach* (Ohannessian & Gage, 1969) that compared and contrasted the grammar and sounds of English with three Indian languages. Dr. Cantoni directed annual “Navajo Summer Institutes in Linguistics and ESL for Teachers” from 1971 to 1975 and co-directed national seminars on Indian education from 1972 to 1975.

At Albuquerque Indian School students were one year behind in third grade and three years behind in seventh grade, and Annabelle Scoon wrote in the *TESOL Quarterly* in 1971 that “the results of TESL efforts have not been especially successful. Drills and pattern practice improve certain surface aspects of the students’ language, but higher level abilities still do not develop” (Scoon, 1971, p. 286). She continued,

If the students find that they can learn about the really important things in their lives just by making the effort to express themselves in English, we will find them talking. This has been demonstrated in classrooms that I have visited repeatedly. The quiet, monosyllabic Indian students will soon be interrupting each other to get a chance to talk, if the discussion concerns things they really want to know. Whenever they feel that they can learn something they want to learn, the language will grow to meet the demand. A student will work hard to find a means of expression for an idea he wants to express. Perhaps the area of affect is one of the first places we would seek for the content of lessons that will motivate the student to improve his English. (Scoon, 1971, pp. 290-91)

Gina Cantoni wrote in 1977 that the common practice in Round Robin reading instruction of “interrupting a child’s oral reading to point out his deviant rendition of a word does not help his understanding of the text.” (Cantoni-Harvey, p. 230). She advised that teachers should model standard English but not constantly correct students’ nonstandard English, and she emphasized that,

The respect for the learner’s home dialect, which is so important in the early grades, should not be set aside when the need arises for instruction in Standard English. Red [Indian] English may be encouraged to develop its fullest range of expressive power and flexibility in creative writing, where the freedom from certain grammatical restrictions, the slightly different connotations of lexical items, as well as some direct translation from the Indian language, along with the rich content of Indian tradition, may result in poetry and prose more exciting than the correct but cliché-ridden output of the Standard speakers. (Cantoni-Harvey, 1977, p. 232)

Later in 1983 she wrote,

I proposed that English-as-a-Second-Language be taught not as a separate subject but as an integral component of each content area; in other words, I felt that the particular needs of the student population would be served more effectively by an ESP (English for specific purposes) approach than by the more general ESL. (Cantoni-Harvey, p. 178).

#### **“English Plus” language policy**

As was the case with the educational leaders at Rock Point Community School, Dr. Cantoni found that ESL alone was not enough to bring Navajo students up to national academic standards. From 1988 to 1995 she ran bilingual teacher training programs for teachers of Indian students at Northern Arizona University, and in 1994 and 1995 she and Dr. Dick Heiser held the first two Stabilizing Indigenous Languages symposiums to help implement the Native American Languages Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-477) that made it U.S. Government policy to support, protect, and promote Native American languages.

For most of the history of BIA education, the popular idea was that Indian students who gave up their Native language and culture would do better academically in schools. However, Researchers Donna Deyhle and Karen Swisher (1997) found that Indians students who were more traditional did as well or better academically as students who were more assimilated. Beyond academic performance, concurrent with the loss of indigenous languages has been a rise of gang activity among Indian youth, Dr. Richard Littlebear (1999) writes movingly on how tribes already have all the signs, symbols, colors, and “turf” that today’s youth are seeking when they join gangs. Gangs are an attempt by youth to gain a sense of identity and belonging that has been denied them in a world of cultural homogenization, large impersonal schools, and mass marketing. In addition, these culturally lost children who join gangs in their search for identity are more susceptible to the allure of drugs and alcohol and learn the more negative aspects of the mainstream culture through television, movies, and popular music. Indigenous education should be a part of a movement for spiritual renewal and healing that is badly needed both among many indigenous communities and in the world as a whole. The loss of traditional cultural values, whether they be of American Indian or European origin, in our schools has helped contribute to tragedies such as the recent one in Littleton, Colorado. As I have maintained previously (Reyhner, 1999), children who learn their indigenous language and culture at their mother’s breast pick up immunities from the diseases of modern life that lead them to join youth gangs, abuse drugs and alcohol, and become members of a rootless consumer society.

#### **Conclusion**

Many practices in BIA schools were negative, but this paper has emphasized the positive aspects of ESL teaching that were implemented, such as using objects/realia to help provide comprehensible input, using students’ prior experience in teaching reading, and encouraging language practice through talking, writing, and publishing. Ironically, most, if not all, of the techniques the BIA

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adapted or developed to teach English are adaptable to teaching Indian languages as second languages today. As we see educational movements such as Progressive Education and Whole Language grow and decline both in and out of Indigenous education, it is important to remember what has worked in Indian education rather than just dwelling on the failures and to pass on this positive knowledge from the past to new teachers.

The problem with the all-English immersion teaching methods used in Indian schools were not the methods *per se*, but the fact that they were used to replace the children's Native languages rather than to give children an additional language. Indigenous language activists have recently strongly supported immersion language teaching methods for indigenous language revitalization. For example, in 1992 Dr. Richard Littlebear wrote a column "TPR Works" in the newsletter of the National Association for Bilingual Education and later put together a short training manual titled "A model for promoting Native American language education and teaching" (Littlebear, 1996) emphasizing Total Physical Response. Dr. Steve Greymorning (1997 & 1999) did an extensive study to improve Arapaho language classes in the Wyoming Indian School District and also concluded that immersion was the way to go. Immersion teaching methods initially call for the use of physical action and physical objects (realia) to help provide the comprehensible input necessary for language learning. More advanced immersion lessons usually involve literacy, and teaching materials usually include storybooks. Chosen carefully and used thoughtfully, many of the techniques used at Carlisle, in classrooms influenced by Progressive Education, and in BIA ESL classrooms in the 1970s can be used successfully in indigenous bilingual classrooms today.

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## Charter Schools for American Indians

Brian Bielenberg

*The charter school movement is a reform through which American Indians can gain back their sovereignty, a way in which they can step forward on their own behalf and on behalf of their children. However, the existence of such schools alone is not enough, as is shown in this paper through a small-scale ethnographic study of an urban charter school serving students from some 30 tribes. This study indicates that despite the best of intentions, it is often difficult to change common mainstream educational practices. Rather than simply changing what we teach, it is necessary to look more deeply at how we teach and how we structure the learning environment. Taking such issues into consideration can provide American Indian children with the education they deserve and the education indigenous people, both urban and rural, have been requesting for over a century.*

In effect, the Indian has rejected the American educational system because it first rejected him: Indians have desired education, but within a system that includes the home and community in the educational process. It is through this process that Indian children learn their tribal language, custom, tradition, religion, and philosophy. If the Native American Indian appears to be apathetic about supporting the efforts of his children to succeed in school, it is not because of hostility to the educational process, but rather because of his rejection of the narrowness of the system that controls the education process.

(Otis, 1972, p. 72)

The poor quality of education that American Indian and Alaska Native children have received over the past century has been well documented in a number of scathing reports (1928 Meriam Report, 1969 Kennedy Report, 1988 Report on BIA Education, 1991 Final Report of the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force). The inequity that continues today is evident in current demographic data. American Indian/Alaska Natives have the highest dropout rate of any ethnic group in the country, reported to be as high as 45% (Dingman, Mrocicka, & Brady, 1995). They also have some of the lowest academic achievement levels as measured by mainstream standardized tests, lowest rates of school attendance, and lowest rates of participation in post-secondary education of any minority group. Their attrition rate at the post-secondary level is well over 70% (Pavel et al., 1998, p. 3-21). The inequities do not exist only in education. American Indians and Alaska Natives have a much greater incidence of tuberculosis than the general population, a higher rate of alcoholism, greater incidence of diabetes, and a suicide rate many times higher than that of the general public. While education cannot be

blamed for all of these injustices, there is no doubt that past policies aimed at assimilating American Indians and Alaska Natives into the mainstream culture is a major cause of these health problems. These policies, coupled with widely held views of American Indian and Alaska Native children and their families as being culturally and even cognitively deficient, have played a significant role in leading to the current situation. In the past, and unfortunately even today, many educators have assumed that these children must change and/or be changed to conform to the mainstream education system. Seldom have educators accepted the blame for failing the children, acknowledging that it may be the educational system itself that must be altered. When a group of people such as American Indians is considered inferior by the mainstream society, as has been the case throughout history in the United States, it often leads to detrimental effects on the self-image of the minority people and, in turn, to subsequent social ills. The consequences are great economic and social cost to all groups involved, both the majority and the minority.

The educational system that for so many decades sought to destroy Indian cultures, languages, values, and people must now help to undo the damage of the past. It must be transformed in such a way as to provide a means by which to help American Indians overcome the great social injustices of the past and those still encountered on a daily basis today. It must become a system that includes the student, home, and community in determining what the educational process will look like. Educators can do this by focusing on reform of schools, classrooms, how we teach, and how we view learning. In particular we as educators must understand and accept that there are many ways of learning and knowing. The charter school movement is one current reform that offers great potential to accomplish these things in American Indian and Alaska Native communities by allowing for the relocation of the seat of power and control of education into the hands of the community, free of the rules and regulations determined by outside agencies.

But does change come about simply by relocating the seat of control and creating a community-based school? How easy is it to change how we perceive and practice education? These are the questions that arose out of the observations reported in the following pages. In this study I document the teaching observed in a charter school designed to serve American Indian students in an urban school setting. The answer revealed is that putting control of the education of American Indian children in the hands of parents and “the community” is helpful, but not necessarily enough. Although such actions help to provide a comfortable place to learn with teachers who understand and relate to the students, this in itself does not ensure innovation or better quality education than previous school programs. The reasons for this, I argue, include the centuries of colonial education, its structures, and its “culture”; that is, the Western educational institution, what is often referred to as the “grammar of schooling” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Institutions are massive entities that involve many traditions that have come to be accepted as natural and that are not easily changed. How a teacher views teaching and learning, the expectations students, parents, and com-

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munities have of schools, and the beliefs of all about how schools should be run and what a “real school” is are deeply entrenched norms that are not often questioned by the people being served. But it is these very structures that must be reformed in order to provide American Indian children with supportive and culturally appropriate education. The traditional beliefs about what schools are and how they function are the very thing that must be changed. The findings outlined in this paper point to some of the deep seated “norms” that all of us must question if we hope to improve schooling. It is hoped that through a discussion of what was observed in this classroom Indian communities will see the great potential for reform as we enter the new millennium: the potential to bring about “true Native education” (Charleston, 1994) in Indigenous communities through a movement that frees communities and educators from the outside rules and regulations that so often stifle education.

### **The charter school movement**

It is valuable to situate the observations of this study within the broader context of the recent development of charter schools. The central tenets of charter schools include autonomy (especially from some state public school standards), choice, accountability, and high degrees of local involvement. The principles behind charter schools, in fact, seem tailor-made to address the calls for greater local control and culturally and linguistically relevant programs that have been heard repeatedly from Indian parents and communities.

The first seeds of the charter school movement were planted by an Eastern educator named Ray Budde, who promoted the idea that school districts should provide educators the opportunity to create the kind of public school that would make sense to them. The idea was eventually picked up by a Minnesota senator, refined by educator reformer Ted Kolderie, and adopted by the Minnesota legislature in 1991. The past decade has seen tremendous growth in the number of charter schools from the first in Minnesota in 1992 to nearly 1,700 today. Charter schools specialize in serving unique populations of students, “particularly those typically underserved” (CER, 2000, p. 120). Several incorporate a mission specifically designed to improve education for American Indian/Alaska Native students. Charter schools empower teachers, reduce reliance on rules and regulations, promote equal access, utilize a nonsectarian curriculum, and provide choice and options for educators, parents, and students (Diamond, 1994). The Center for Education Reform (2000) provides the following definition for a charter school:

Charter schools are independent public schools, designed and operated by educators, parents, community leaders, educational entrepreneurs and others. They are sponsored by designated local or state educational organizations who monitor their quality and integrity, but allow them to operate freed from the traditional bureaucratic and regulatory red tape that hog-ties public schools. Freed from such micromanagement, charter schools design and deliver programs tailored to educational

excellence and community needs. Because they are schools of choice, they are held to the highest level of accountability—consumer demand.

Essentially, charter schools provide the opportunity for a community to create educational choices that best meet its needs. They can work towards excellence rather than compliance and set their own student achievement goals. They can be tailored to match the socialization and educational goals of the local community, as defined by the local community. Funding for these schools is received through the district or state and is according to average daily attendance (enrollment). The Federal government helps fund charter schools through the Department of Education's Public Charter Schools Program. The Federal monies can be used for planning, development, and start-up costs. Charter schools are also eligible to receive Federal education funds on the same basis as other public schools, including Title I, Title VII, and Title IX monies.<sup>1</sup>

Owing to the recent nature of this reform, it is difficult to judge the success of the charter school movement, but certain things cannot be denied. Charter schools provide a forum for experimentation with new and different educational strategies. The Little Hoover Commission Charter School Study (March 1996) reported that "There is ample evidence that innovation is the norm rather than the exception at the charter schools, successfully fulfilling the charter law intent of encouraging new methods." Charter schools often involve smaller class sizes, a focused mission, and strong parental involvement. They may be located in traditional or nontraditional settings. According to the California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC), charter schools allow communities "to develop the type of schooling that meets their unique needs" (CANEC, 1998). The Hudson Institute's 1997 report *Charter Schools in Action* found that charter schools are havens for children who did poorly elsewhere. Nearly half of the students who were doing "poorly" in their previous schools are now doing "excellent" or "above average" work in charter schools. Today, the purposes of charter schools are to encourage student learning, meet high standards, encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, and create new opportunities for teachers, parents, and students (Bierlein & Mulholland, 1994; CED, 2000), essentially the purposes first put forward by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1991.

As of June 1999, 36 states and the District of Columbia had charter laws on the books. The specific provisions in each state's law determines how many charter schools will open and how independent they will be. The Center for Education Reform offers a comprehensive evaluation of all charter school laws through their website, grading them on a scale of A-F as a function of how well they foster numerous, genuinely independent charter schools. Arizona was determined to be the state with the strongest law. Its law allows for an unlimited number of charter schools, three public agencies that are empowered to authorize charter schools, and the ability of virtually any individual or organization to petition to start a charter school. Arizona has allocated \$1,000,000 in start up funds. Full funding follows students to charter schools, and they are exempt from many state regulations.<sup>2</sup> The California charter school law, as another ex-



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ample, ranked eighth overall and also received a letter grade of A. Its law is somewhat more restrictive than Arizona's in that it requires state certification of all charter teachers. Additionally, it provides for only two possible sponsoring chartering authorities, and district regulations may apply in some circumstances. Although the underlying assumption of charter schools is the need for autonomy in order to be innovative, Wohlstetter, Wenning, and Briggs (1995) have shown that many states have written legislation in such a way as to prevent radical decentralization. Still, charter schools provide one of the best opportunities to implement deep educational changes.

Charter schools appear to have the support of both Republicans and Democrats with President Clinton stating a desire for 3,000 charter schools by the year 2002 and the Republicans wanting even more. The federal government has invested more than \$400 million in charter schools since 1994, and President Clinton has requested \$175 million for charter schools in fiscal year 2001. Clinton also recently announced the release of \$16 million in new grants and \$121 million in continuation grants for charter schools (Clinton, 2000). Such funding will aid the establishment and expansion of charter schools to serve students of every background and ability, including American Indian and Alaska Native students. The time is ripe for Indian students, parents, educators, and communities to work together in partnership to establish schools that will meet the expressed goals and high standards of the Indian communities. The charter school movement is a window of opportunity for Indian communities to reassert and regain powers of self-determination and self-education. However, it will take much more than local control of schools to undo the injustices of the past and unlearn the deeply ingrained "natural truths" of educating American Indian and Alaska Native children (Lomawaima, 1999), as demonstrated in the following classroom ethnography.

### **Teaching in an American Indian charter school**

Educational reform often calls for changes in the way teachers teach, with the ultimate goal being to make teachers more effective in helping students to learn. For many years, especially during the recent era of the "back to basics" movement, it was assumed by many that one could understand teaching through reference to a checklist of traits of teacher effectiveness (Cohen & Barnes, 1993). To extend this idea to teaching Indian children, it was assumed that if you focused on certain learning styles or used the "right" strategy, the children would be successful. This position, however, usually fails to take into consideration the context within which the teaching takes place (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1990) and the effects the context has on how a teacher teaches. Deep understanding of why a teacher teaches the way s/he does requires a different approach to teacher research, an approach that allows one to cross into the many domains of a teacher's life. Such research includes observing what the teacher does in the classroom, listening to what s/he has to say outside of the classroom, and, most importantly, looking at the multiple layers of context in which the teacher performs his or her duties. In so doing, one can begin to uncover the different layers in the particular case at hand.



This study is intended to be a brief entry into this type of ethnographic teacher research. It is an attempt at understanding how personal and institutional influences affect one particular teacher's instructional practices within the context of a charter school specifically designed for American Indian students in an urban setting. The goal is to identify the influences on this teacher's instructional practices as a means of highlighting aspects of teaching that all who work with American Indians and Alaska Natives must question and examine on a personal and institutional level.

*The Teacher:* The instructor observed and interviewed in the charter school of this study, Bernita Hobson (Apache),<sup>3</sup> is a middle-aged American Indian woman in her third year of teaching. During the course of the study, I began to understand Bernita's teaching better as I learned more about her past. Therefore, I find it useful to detail her background before entering into a description and analysis of what was observed in her classroom. Her history is one that is familiar to many Indian teachers, and thus I believe that her case has much to say.

I first met Bernita approximately one year before this study began through an after-school program I was setting up for the charter school. I often talked with her about education for American Indian children and was impressed with her desire to provide them with an education that takes into consideration the culture and ways of knowing associated with American Indians. It was a desire built upon her own experiences. Bernita describes her early encounters with education as "nothing but negative." According to her, "They [her teachers] were downright cruel to children of color. We were treated so badly that most of us just didn't even want to go to school. Most of my friends never did finish school." Yet Bernita did finish and soon was raising children of her own. When they reached school age she found that "To just send them off to school, to wave good-bye at the door, was not natural." So she became a regular volunteer at her children's school. She wanted to know what they were doing and what they were being taught, and she wanted to be sure that they were respecting their teachers. As she put it, "You know, first respect education, second respect your teachers. My being there was important for them, not for me." I interpret this to mean that she felt that her being at the school served to reinforce for her children the importance of education, an importance rooted in the widely held belief that education is the way out of poverty.

During the early years of volunteering Bernita survived mainly on welfare as her husband was often unemployed or not around. After several years of volunteering, she was offered a position as a teacher's assistant. By the end of that school year, she knew that she liked what she was doing. During an "acknowledging day" for the teacher aides at the end of the year she made an important realization. Some of the women acknowledged that they had been serving as aides for seven, ten, and even 19 years. Recounting this story, Bernita recalled that "I looked at her (the 19 year teacher aide veteran), and I thought, you know what, in 19 years if I go to school even a quarter time I could come out a teacher." And she never lost that thought. So when she returned home the following year she went back to college at a state university to begin work toward a teaching credential.

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In 1996, the same year Bernita earned her credential, approval was given by the State Board of Education for an urban Indian charter school. She was excited about the thought of teaching there, but didn't feel ready for a school with limited staff as well as students who had been failed by the public system. She began to look for a job elsewhere. A week before the school year was to begin she still had not found a position because, as many principals told her, she "had no experience." Fortunately, the director of the Indian charter school had heard of her and called to offer her a position. Even though she still felt insecure about her abilities as a teacher, she took the position.

*Data Analysis:* Since I had been volunteering my time at the school for nearly eight months prior to this study, I knew the setting and students. The children in the classroom were familiar with me and thus we all felt quite comfortable as I sat amongst them at a desk and jotted notes. The analysis that follows focuses on a period of three weeks in the Fall of 1998 in which I carefully observed and documented Bernita's teaching. Observations took place during Monday and Friday mornings and Wednesday afternoons and included time devoted to geography, literature, and physical education. During observations notes were jotted down concerning the type of activities taking place, the actions, behavior and interactions of the teacher and students, and the materials being used. Fieldnotes based on memory and jotted notes were composed within three hours of leaving the school. During observation I generally sat at one of the unoccupied student chairs at the back of the room, often with children on either side of me. The children readily accepted me into their classroom as evidenced by their willingness to include me in their activities. This began with the first observation when they asked me to share a story during oral storytelling time and continued from that point onward. During physical education period I was often a participant. Other sources of data include an open-ended, loosely structured, audio-taped interview with the teacher, several informal conversations with her, and two informal discussions with the director of the school. The interview was conducted during the second week of observation. The informal conversations took place at various times and proved to be a valuable source of insight.

Data analysis involved several re-readings of my fieldnotes in order to identify the general instructional practices used and the regular patterns of Bernita's classroom. I examined the transcription of the interview in order to identify personal and institutional influences that may have led to these practices. Informal conversations were used to fill in missing information that I felt would help to clarify the various factors influencing how Bernita taught in her classroom.

*The Setting:* The school in which Bernita's sixth grade classroom is located is an urban charter school with an explicitly defined mission that is discussed with all parents, students, and teachers at the beginning of the year. The school's mission is to "meet the academic, social, cultural, and developmental needs of American Indian and other students." The school serves approximately 80 students in grades 6-9. Nearly 80% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunches and 65% live in single parent households. The school is housed in an

old church building located in a neighborhood that was described to me as “run-down and somewhat dangerous.” The grounds are littered with trash, piles of used wood, and old church pews. A large cross is prominent on the front of the building next to the painted name of the school. The inside of the school has recently been repainted, and there is little or no graffiti. Still, it seems dark and dingy. Several lights are inoperative and there are boxes piled in the corners. The hallway walls are decorated with posters of famous American Indians, but this does little to distract attention from the double padlocks on the plywood classroom doors. The inside of the sixth grade classroom is tightly packed with 22 chairs with folding tablet arms lined up in three rows. The teacher’s desk is in the back corner of the room surrounded by boxes and filing cabinets. Lining two walls are eight brand-new computers that are covered and not used. Over the computers are more posters of American Indians, all, except one, being male. At the front of the room is a Dry Erase white board with the date written in the upper right hand corner. A clock is displayed in a prominent position above the board.

*The Findings:* As I rode public transportation to the school the first day I was to observe, I was excited about the prospect of viewing innovative ways of educating Indian children. What I encountered was an instructor with textbook in hand standing in front of 21 children nicely lined up in rows, raising their hands to solicit the right to speak.

The typical mode of instruction in Bernita’s classroom followed a pattern of teacher directed reading and/or structured questioning in the Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) pattern identified by Mehan (1982). This pattern is typical of what is found in a majority of teacher-centered classrooms. In examining the interactional sequences that constitute the instructional phase of the classroom lesson event, Mehan noted a repeated three-part sequence involving the reply to an initiation act followed by an evaluation of the reply. Typically, the initiation and evaluation are provided by the teacher, with the student giving the response. Quite often the initiation involves the asking of a question to which the teacher already knows the answer. At times the sequence is extended if the expected reply is not received. When this occurs, owing to lack of answer, a partial answer, or an incorrect answer, the initiator has several choices: S/he may choose to repeat the initiation act, simplify the initiation act, or prompt the responder for the correct answer. In any of the situations, the sequence is completed with the evaluation, as will be seen in the fieldnote excerpt below.

The beginning of each class typically found Bernita at the front of the room with a textbook or her notes in hand. She began each session by asking what the class had been working on the previous day. This request was typically met with over half of the students raising their hands, some halfway out of their seats trying to earn the right to give the correct answer, indicating an eagerness to learn and actively participate that contradicts the often referred to stereotype of the Indian child as silent and reclusive. If reading was involved, each passage was sure to be followed with a low level recall question about what had just been read. At no time was any open ended discussion established. When ques-

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tioning students, Bernita always seemed to have a particular answer in mind. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes is very typical of the types of interaction I observed in this classroom:

(10/19/98) 10:06 a.m. Bernita, standing in front of the class, writes "Lesson on Prewriting" on the board, underlines PRE and asks if anyone knows what PRE means. The first student she calls on answers "Brainstorming" (This is actually what the lesson is to be about). She responds by saying, "You are way ahead of me. Can anyone tell me what 'pre' means?" Several students attempt various answers such as "a long time ago" that are close and are good descriptions of the idea of PRE, but she simply says "No" and continues to probe until someone says "Before," to which she replies "Yes!"

As in this fieldnote, Bernita almost always searched for a specific answer to her question, extending the IRE sequence in ways quite similar to those discussed by Mehan. She controlled the flow of activity and served, along with the textbook, as the source of knowledge. Her methods fit quite well with the Western concept of education in which the students are viewed as empty containers into which the teacher, as possessor, will pour the knowledge.

Whole group introduction to the new topic or lesson was typically followed by individual seatwork guided by the questions provided at the end of the chapter or section in the textbook. During this time Bernita would move from student to student to check their work, generally placing her hand on their shoulder and providing words of encouragement such as "You always make such a good effort" or "I'm so proud of you." Bernita's role thus was not only that of source and authority over knowledge, but also of provider of encouragement and positive reinforcement. Research has indicated learners tend to base much of their motivation for learning on the affective relationship with the teacher, and this is a core part of Bernita's teaching philosophy, although her belief arises not from theory and research, but through lived experiences. Cajete points out that "Native American learners will respond more readily to personalized encouragement coupled with guidance and demonstration from the teacher" (Cajete, 1999, p. 143).

The pattern of instruction Bernita uses in her classroom arises from both personal and institutional influences. Foremost among these influences is the fact that Bernita teaches in the way that she has been taught. In talking about her own education, Bernita recalled that most teachers she has interacted with, both as a student and as a colleague, have tended to teach in a similar manner, beginning in primary school and continuing into post-secondary education. Bernita earned her credential from a state university in a program whose methods have been described as "drill, kill and a credential mill" by an instructor at the same university. Her credential program was a matter of learning the facts of how to teach, as told to the students by the teacher-authority. The results of this can be seen in her own use of carefully scripted lessons and textbooks that lay out the

facts children are to learn. Her classroom, like those in which she was taught and trained, is predominately teacher-centered. Decisions about what is to be learned are made by textbook publishers and other adults; children, those most affected by the decisions and possessing great curiosity about a variety of topics, are not consulted. The traditional structures of the educational system, and Bernita's experiences within them, have certainly influenced her own style of teaching.

A more recent influence, which affirms this mode of instruction, comes through the in-service training the charter school director regularly conducts. These in-services, which are intended to convey the director's curriculum and philosophy to the school staff, primarily involve the director telling the teachers about his curriculum and how he wants it taught; the director talks at the teachers. Bernita describes the in-services as very informative, a great source of information. The information, not surprisingly, is provided in the way that she teaches. The director often lectures about different learning styles by pointing out how two of the teachers take extensive notes, another takes only general notes, while a fourth just listens and observes. According to the director, this indicates differences in learning styles. It also explains Bernita's answer for why she teaches the way she does. When asked if children learn in different ways she replied, "Yes, that is why I lecture so much, so that those who learn orally can listen and those who learn visually can see what I write."

A final determining factor in how Bernita teaches arises from her lack of confidence in content area knowledge. Informal conversations revealed that Bernita is unsure of much of the content of the courses she is teaching, and therefore relies on the textbook for information. She generally ignores students' questions that go beyond what is explicitly stated in the book, discouraging critical and investigative thinking during the teaching of academic subjects. It is interesting to note, however, that Bernita's instructional method completely changed during the physical education period. Bernita freely admits that she is not athletic and knows very little about sports. However, rather than tightly controlling the structure of activities as in the formal classroom, she allows the children to determine and teach the physical education (PE) curriculum, herself becoming a student-participant. In the three weeks I observed formally at the school I saw the children organize football and basketball games as well as teach the other children Capoeira, jump roping, Kung Fu and dance steps. During this period the children are in charge of the entire curriculum, from deciding what will be taught to how it will be taught. It changes the entire character of the class. In this situation Bernita was comfortable letting the students determine what they were interested in, and they were highly motivated. Despite obvious successes of allowing student-centered, student-driven learning to occur, such policies did not transfer back into the other subjects.

*Collegial Influence:* The teachers at this particular charter school do not have a preparation period, and most were observed to leave the school almost as quickly as the students at the end of the day. Still, Bernita has been able to catch glimpses of other teachers' classrooms and commented on how she likes the



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hands-on learning that is done by one teacher. This indicates that some of the teachers have been exposed to other ideas, but there is no school wide implementation of such innovative methodologies at this charter school. Aside from a common belief in featuring Indian studies as part of the curriculum, the teachers appear to be on their own. When I asked Bernita if she talks with other teachers about how to teach students, she answered that there really isn't any time to talk.

In spite of this lack of time for collegial interaction, Bernita has picked up some teaching strategies. On my fifth observation of the classroom, Bernita mentioned to me that she had observed another teacher playing Bingo as part of a science lesson. The students seemed to enjoy it, so she decided to try the game as a way for children to study their weekly vocabulary list. Interestingly, the playing of Bingo followed the same IRE pattern of instruction present in her normal lessons. Bernita stood at the front of the room reading the definitions of words. The students were all seated at their individual desks, covering the words that they thought matched the definition. When one student called out "Bingo," Bernita walked to his chair and checked his card saying "Yes, I did that one" and "No, I haven't given that one yet." There was never any discussion about the ambiguity inherent in some of the definitions, nor were the students allowed to explain why they thought a given word matched a given definition.

*Trust and Responsibility:* Despite the fact that Bernita controls the flow of the academic activity and is, along with worksheets and textbooks, the final authority on knowledge, the children in this classroom have a good deal of autonomy. This arises from Bernita's belief that trust and responsibility are necessary components for learning to occur and that trust is a major component in behavioral interactions. Research supports the belief that it is especially important for teachers to find ways to build trust (Erickson, 1987).

Bernita seeks to establish trust and responsibility by a number of means. First and foremost is to give children responsibilities such as obtaining material from other teachers and taking lunch counts to the office. Their role of choosing PE activities also fits into this category. Furthermore, Bernita allows freedom of movement in the classroom. Students were often observed getting up to sharpen their pencils or to obtain supplies from the back cabinet without asking permission. This freedom of movement rarely led to any disturbance, even if Bernita was at the front of the room talking.

Discipline was only enforced when a student showed disrespect for another child, a teacher, or for someone's property. The general policy was to send the offending child to a corner of the room to stand with their nose to the wall. Some parents have complained of this method arguing that it is reminiscent of boarding school tactics, but the principal supports her because it gets results, meaning a decrease in disrespectful behavior. According to Bernita, "Hard and quick, Indian way is if you're going to teach them, you teach them with one lesson." Although Bernita claims that this is the "Indian way," many would disagree. Cajete (1999) summarizes an idealized Native American concept of discipline as rarely being direct punishment or personally demeaning. Rather, behavior is regulated through group and peer pressure: "Withdrawing approval, expressing



shame, and reflecting unacceptable behavior back to the individual are the main forms of punishment in the traditional Indian context” (p. 143).

Bernita’s primary goal is to create a classroom where everyone feels safe, trusted, and is trusting of others. She reinforces appropriate behavior with phrases such as “I’m so proud of you” and “I’m happy I can trust you.” Bernita’s description of her favorite teacher is a source of influence for this behavior. He was a teacher who had good rapport with the students. He “was more like a good friend than a teacher. He made class a comfortable place to be.” Open friendliness and sincerity help to ease tension in the classroom. This is what Bernita tries to convey to the students in her classroom. The following excerpt from my interview with Bernita demonstrates the importance she places in trust:

It goes back to trust. When Erica came in she wasn’t very trusting. But she turned out to be the best student. She can’t take notes, but when we’d go over something she’d be the first to raise her hand. She can’t remember dates, but she knows concepts. If she was at a public [non-charter] school I don’t think she’d have a chance. I think she would sit in the back of the room and just stay quiet. Trust is the most important, without it learning will not take place.

*Assessment:* Assessment is a necessary and potentially useful part of the education process. Bernita and the other teachers in the charter school all follow a portfolio assessment model prescribed by the director of the school. Files are kept on each student with examples of student records and evaluations. Traditional paper and pencil exams form one part of the assessment process, which also incorporates more general scaled assessments on such topics as critical thinking skills, social development, and cultural understanding and empathy. The school’s plan was to send these ratings home as the way of reporting academic progress, but the parents were uncomfortable with this idea and insisted on the issuance of letter grades. In this situation the parents’ familiarity with the traditional forms of grading in the broader institution of school decided the final form of reporting assessment. The school also continues to use standardized tests for district and state reporting requirements, although this may change in the next few years as new performance-based assessment methods are adopted by the state. Perhaps as schools in general come to accept newer forms of assessing and reporting student progress, students and parents will become more familiar with new models of assessment and accept them more readily. However, as Fox points out, “understanding the methods and purposes of these new forms of assessment challenges both educators and the general public, partly because the topic is so politically and morally charged. The old paradigm is deeply entrenched” (Fox, 1999, p. 162). It is likely, though, that as charter schools establish local goals and curricula that are culturally and linguistically relevant and focus more on a model of education that views the students as constructors of knowledge rather than empty containers to be filled, new methods of assessment will be required, adopted, and accepted. As communities begin to decide

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for themselves what they want Indian students to learn, many of the current assessment tools used on a national basis will become obsolete. In fact, recipients of several types of Federal funds are already being required to have performance-based assessment systems in place by the 2000-01 school year.<sup>4</sup>

*The Curriculum:* One of the most telling points about Bernita's teaching came during an informal conversation we had. I had noticed that a number of children at the school and in her class were not of American Indian heritage. This was, in part, a result of district requirements that charter schools allow open enrollment. In fact, one student in Bernita's class and his family were from Cambodia. I asked if this changed what and how she taught. Her reply went straight to the point: "No, I still teach my same curriculum."

The mission of the school is to meet the academic, social, cultural, and developmental needs of American Indian students. For the director, parents, and teachers involved with this school this means inserting American Indian literature, cultural studies, and history into the curriculum. While the content is different from what is taught in most public school, there is little evidence that other aspects of the structure of schooling has changed to better meet the needs of the children. Culturally appropriate curriculum has been defined as a curriculum that "uses materials that link traditional or cultural knowledge originating in Native home life and community to the curriculum of the school" (Yazzie, 1999, p. 83). But what happens when your students come from a variety of tribal backgrounds and range from traditional to highly assimilated? This is certainly a major issue in urban settings such as the one observed in this study, and it is likely to be an issue even in some of the fairly isolated Pueblos of the Southwest. There is no idealized, homogenous group of Indian children, especially in urban areas. The charter school at which Bernita teaches has chosen to deal with this problem by incorporating a sort of Pan-Indian curriculum that can be applied to anyone who attends the charter school. Rather than originating in the home, the concepts for the curriculum are strongly driven by the understanding of Indian culture of the director and teachers of the charter school. At the time of this study over 30 different tribal groups were represented in the student body. Perhaps this approach is the only one that can work in such a situation, but the concept of Pan-Indian stereotypes is not something accepted by all. Lomawaima (1999) resists generalizations about American Indians "because so many stereotypes rest on the mistaken assumption that all Indians are alike" (p. 5). As more charter schools designed to meet the needs of urban Indians are opened this issue will need to be examined in much greater detail. As with all charter schools the answers to what should be included must come about from extended discussion with the community and especially parents.

To extend the discussion of curriculum, it is useful to point out that it does not include only what is to be taught. It also should focus on how the content should be taught, when it is taught, where it is taught, and how it is organized. The structure of this charter school, which certainly affects the structure of Bernita's classroom, is unaltered from the traditional secondary educational institute. Students move from classroom to classroom for different subjects. Stu-

dents are separated by grade, and courses continue to be inserted into 55 minute time-slots. Literature books are put away before the geography books are taken out. Very little of the education takes place outside the walls of the school building. In a very telling way, the structure of the institution of Western, Anglo-developed education holds great sway over how Bernita teaches. Bernita and the school at which she teaches are certainly making an effort to provide an education that is respectful of American Indian culture, and the students are responding positively to being in a predominately American Indian environment with American Indian teachers. The staff has gone beyond the belief that these children come to school with deficiencies as a result of their background, choosing instead to view what the students bring to school as resources. However, much of how Bernita teaches continues to mirror the structure of the assimilationist schools in which she was educated. Graded classrooms and 55 minute periods for separated subjects are key components of this system. Graded classrooms, in which children are placed in different grades and follow structured curricula, were modeled on the division of labor and hierarchical supervision common in factories (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). They were set up for pedagogical efficiency and ease of reproduction. All students could be taught the same subject in the same way at the same pace. Such a system, which is now considered part of what "real schools" are, limits the opportunities for peer teaching, flexibility, and adaptation to individual differences, components that many argue should be part of Indian education.

The 55 minute periods and separated subjects that are part of the curriculum at this charter school are the result of a group of elite Euro-American males who got together in 1906 to determine a way to regulate what a college and university were and what was required to be accepted into one (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Their defining of requirements for entrance to universities in terms of the number of units of specific subjects studied led to the development of departmentalized classes and remains an integral part of the education system today. But does it have to be a part of the education system for Indian children? Most American Indian tribal philosophies do not view the world as separated parts, but rather as an interwoven whole. The current structure of secondary schools makes teaching and learning through holistic means quite difficult.

Much of what Bernita does in her classroom and the way that the charter school at which she teaches is organized can be traced to what are widely perceived to be natural truths of what schools are. It appears that these ways are accepted as natural rather than the product of history, a history which has ignored the ways of knowing of the original inhabitants of this land. The organizational framework of the school, in particular, shapes how Bernita teaches. Bernita's basic style of positioning herself at the front of the classroom, using a textbook, and engaging the children in a pattern of Initiate-Respond-Evaluate matches with set norms as well as her descriptions of how she was taught both in early and post secondary schooling. It also matches the modeling she receives from the director of the school during in-service training. The lack of opportunity to interact with other teachers and the traditional type of teacher education

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program she was trained in have limited her exposure to other possible models of how to teach.

Her background as an American Indian plays a large role in how her classroom functions and helps her to overcome some of the structures of the institution by affecting how she interacts with her students. For her, school was a negative place, and this is the last thing she wants her students to experience. She wants the students to feel safe, trusted, and trusting of those around them. In her words, "without trust, learning cannot occur." While this is an important aspect of making education more appropriate for American Indian students, it is not sufficient to ensure that children are being challenged with high standards. All too often Bernita's teaching remains at the level of recall questioning. She seldom challenges the students to think critically or to construct knowledge. For her, the teacher is still the source of knowledge. This, it must be remembered, is not her fault. It is a result of her teacher training and educational experiences. Much of what Bernita does with her students also arises from the broader institution of education itself. The fact that parents went through schooling and are familiar with structures such as A-F grading makes it difficult to institute alternative means of assessing and reporting student progress. Beyond this, the hidden structures that we often don't even think of affect how Bernita teaches. The school day is divided up into six 55 minute periods, students are separated by grade, and everyone takes a two week break at Christmas. No one in the school questions why this is so or how it affects teaching. These structures directly influence the material presented and the ways in which it is presented. They, in turn, reinforce Bernita's method of teaching. Although both Bernita and the school at which she teaches seek to change the way Indian children are taught, they seem unable to go beyond the traditional structures of schooling. Instead, what they settle for is changing **what** is taught rather than **how** it is taught.

### **Concluding thoughts**

If we as educators of American Indian and Alaska Native students, like Bernita and her colleagues, intend to truly change the way education occurs for Native children, we need to look more closely at both what we teach AND how we teach. We need to question why the school day is structured the way it is and ask if this fits with how a given community wants its children to learn. We need to ask why learning takes place predominately in a school building and not in the community. We need to reflect on how we were taught and compare it with how we teach. And we need to ask the community what they want their children to become as learners and people and begin to model that behavior more completely in the education system.

These ideas are not new, but their full implementation continues to elude us. Nearly ten years ago the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force (INARTF, 1991) recommended several reforms for schools involved in the education of Native children. The INARTF called for the incorporation of Native language and culture in school curricula, increased parental involvement, culturally sensitive teaching practices, and greater local input, most often in the form of community adapted

Tribal Education codes. The goals of these reforms were to increase average daily attendance, lower dropout rates, increase academic achievement, and maintain Native cultures and languages, the same as those of many charter schools. It is my contention, however, that it has been difficult to implement these reforms because of the micromanagement of tribally run schools, whether Federally or publicly funded, that continues to occur through rules and regulations established by non-tribal entities.

Most community run and public schools serving American Indian communities remain to a large degree accountable to state and federal agencies. The charter school movement is different. It provides American Indians an opportunity to create schools outside the bureaucracy of the federal, state, and local governments. It allows them to be free of many of the rules and regulations that have for so long forced upon them an education system that does not acknowledge their language, culture, or ways of educating their young. The charter school movement is a reform through which American Indians can gain back their sovereignty, a way in which they can step forward on their own behalf and the behalf of their children. They can finally have Indian controlled schools with no strings attached, and this goes beyond the publicly stated purposes of charter school legislation. It is a purpose that perhaps only American Indians, knowing their long history of an education system that has primarily sought to destroy their identity, can truly understand.

The purposes behind the current charter school movement, I argue, provide a new opportunity for American Indians to take control of their children's education, this time free of constraining rules and regulations. However, as demonstrated by the ethnographic study of one teacher in a charter school designed to serve American Indian students, simply providing community control and incorporating Indian content in a charter school does not ensure innovation in education. To do this, to achieve "true Native education," educators most look to change not only what is taught, but also how it is taught, where it is taught, and how the school is structured and managed. We must question the very foundations of the institution of Western education and ask which, if any, are appropriate for meeting the goals of a given American Indian or Alaska Native community. Only then can the reforms called for by those involved with educating Indian children succeed. The charter school movement is a tool that can be used to finally provide American Indians an opportunity to regain the sense of sovereignty that has been denied them by the Euro-American educational structure for over 100 years. That this best education can be accomplished by incorporating traditional values, knowledge, and language has been demonstrated by a number of successful programs around the country such as among the Hualapai, Navajo, and Yup'ik. As students are taught in ways that reinforce their cultural identity and values, their self-esteem rises. This leads not only to increased attendance and lower dropout rates, but to greater academic achievement as well, opening the doors to higher education and the ability to live and function effectively in a variety of settings, whether Native, Anglo, or a combination of both.



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Change must also occur at a broader level. The charter school legislation of several states requires that teachers be certified by the state. This means that there is a need for the development of teacher education programs that address issues surrounding the different ways of knowing that are often a part of non-mainstream cultures. From ways of viewing the world and thinking about science and mathematics to the structure of storytelling, the culture and knowledge of indigenous and minority peoples are often quite different from the “mainstream.” Teacher credentialing should enable teachers to recognize, teach, and respect different ways of knowing and learning. Educators of American Indian and Alaska Native students must demand the institutionalization of courses that will better prepare teachers for teaching diverse students in diverse environments. By developing and teaching such courses and by pursuing research on minority/indigenous education, the quality of education all children receive will be affected by better preparing future teachers for diverse classrooms and thereby preparing citizens for a richly diverse world. Only in a world where all ways of knowing and teaching are respected and valued will we see an end to injustices such as those suffered by the original inhabitants of this country over the past 500 years.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For more information on how charter schools can obtain these funds the reader is encouraged to consult the Department of Education’s website at <<http://www.uscharterschools.org/>>.

<sup>2</sup>Interested readers are referred to the Arizona Department of Education’s Charter school web page at <<http://www.ade.state.az.us/charterschools/info/>>.

<sup>3</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

<sup>4</sup>For a thorough discussion of performance-based assessment as it relates to American Indian/Native American students and what it may look like in practice the reader is referred to Fox (1999).

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## Contributors

- Dr. Ann Batchelder is an Associate Professor of Secondary Education at the Center for Excellence in Education at Northern Arizona University.
- Brian Bielenberg is presently a Ph.D. Candidate in Language, Literacy, and Culture in Education with a focus on Educational Linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley. He has a special interest in language revitalization and indigenous education. He has taught in Africa and the American Southwest.
- Dr. Michael Fillerup is the Bilingual Director for the Flagstaff Unified School District in Arizona.
- Mary Ann Goodluck (Navajo) is the Title VII Curriculum Developer at Chinle Primary School in Arizona. She works with dual language teachers, parents, and community members to implement a Navajo/English dual language curriculum.
- Dr. Stephen Greymorning (Arapaho) is an Associate Professor in Anthropology and Native American Studies at the University of Montana. From 1993 to 1995 he directed the Arapaho Language and Culture Project for the Wyoming Indian Schools. In 1994 he negotiated the production and distribution of an Arapaho version of the Walt Disney movie *Bambi*.
- Dr. Connie Heimbecker worked from 1983-1994 with members of the Innu Nation as a teacher, curriculum developer, education consultant, and university instructor. Since receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto in 1994, she has taught as an Assistant Professor with Lakehead University's Native Teacher Education Program and Northern Arizona University's RAISE program.
- Dr. Dean Mellow is an Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Canada. His research interests include analyses of the effects of instruction on second language development.
- Dr. Louise Lockard is a visiting Assistant Professor of Bilingual Multicultural Education at Northern Arizona University and a former teacher at Chinle Primary School.
- Dr. Sam Minner is Division Head of Education at Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri.
- Carla Paciotto is an Assistant Professor of Bilingual and Multicultural Education at Western Illinois University.
- Dr. Greg Prater is a Professor in the Center for Excellence in Education at Northern Arizona University (NAU). Most recently, Greg has worked with teacher training programs involving Native Americans for several years and has considerable international experience. During his career he has held a variety of faculty and administrative positions at NAU, Louisiana Tech, and Murray State University.
- Dr. Jon Reyhner is an Associate Professor of Bilingual/Multicultural Education at Northern Arizona University.

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Dr. Robert N. St. Clair was trained as an anthropological linguist at the University of Kansas where he did his doctorate on Yupik Eskimo. He went on to study other indigenous languages of the Pacific Northwest (Skagit, Lummi, Yakima, Wanapam, and Nez Percé). His other specialties include bilingual education, sociolinguistics, language and culture, and indoeuropean linguistics. He is the editor of *Intercultural Communication Studies* and is a director of the International Association for Intercultural Communication. He has written or edited about 50 book and has written over 300 academic articles. In the summer, he usually teaches American Culture at several Japanese bilingual universities. His current research interests revolve around cognitive linguistics and mental space theory.

Angelina Weenie (Plains Cree, from the Sweetgrass First Nations' Band) is a Lecturer at the Department of Indian Education at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Darlene Yazzie (Navajo) is a bilingual fifth grade teacher at Chinle Elementary School in Arizona.





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