Contents

List of Figures and Tables viii
Preface ix
Series Editor's Preface xi
Notes on Contributors xii

1 Introduction: Can Schools Save Indigenous Languages? Policy and Practice on Four Continents 1
Nancy H. Hornberger

Part I Case Studies on Four Continents

2 'Out on the fells, I feel like a Sámi': Is There Linguistic and Cultural Equality in the Sámi School? 15
Vuokko Hirvonen

3 Top-down and Bottom-up: Counterpoised Visions of Bilingual Intercultural Education in Latin America 42
Luis Enrique López

4 Māori-medium Education: Current Issues and Challenges 66
Stephen May and Richard Hill

5 Learning with Differences: Strengthening Hñähñö and Bilingual Teaching in an Elementary School in Mexico City 99
Nicanor Rebolledo Recendiz

Part II Commentaries: International Perspectives on the Case Studies

6 Revitalization through Indigenous Education: a Forlorn Hope? 125
Leena Huss

7 Commentary from an African and International Perspective 136
Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu

8 Riding the Tiger 152
Bernard Spolsky

9 Schools as Strategic Tools for Indigenous Language Revitalization: Lessons from Native America 161
Teresa L. McCarty

Index 180

1
Introduction: Can Schools Save Indigenous Languages? Policy and Practice on Four Continents

Nancy H. Hornberger

The precarious circumstances of the world's Indigenous languages are by now well known: of 6800 languages currently spoken in the world, not only are more than half at risk of extinction by the end of this century (Romaine 2006: 441), but approximately 95 per cent are spoken by less than five per cent of the world's population (May 2001: 2), mainly Indigenous languages and speakers. Meanwhile, more than half of the world's states are officially monolingual, and less than 500 languages are used and taught in schools. Not only the survival of Indigenous languages is precarious, but also especially the survival and economic viability of their speakers in national contexts where educational systems massively fail Indigenous people, closing them out and leaving them illiterate and oppressed in their own land (Kamwangamalu 2005).

This volume offers a close look at Indigenous language revitalization efforts in schools, on four continents, to compare and draw out successes and challenges in this work, both in the schools and in the wider societies in which the schools are situated. We start from the premise that Indigenous language revitalization is worth doing, both for the sake of the speakers of the languages and for the ways of knowing and being that their languages encode and express. Our focus here is on *how* to achieve Indigenous language revitalization, and in particular, the role of schools in that endeavor.

We recognize that schools alone are not enough to do the job. Indigenous language revitalization always occurs within an ecology of languages, in a context of other local and global languages with their relative statuses and uses in domains and social fields such as employment, religion, government, cultural life, media, and others. Indigenous language revitalization is subject to the vagaries of policy, politics, and power; and it is subject to the economics of the linguistic marketplace.

Nevertheless, schools do have an inevitable and important role to play and it is this role that we explore here.

By the same token, we recognize that Indigenous language revitalization is never only about language, but also about the identities and experiences of speakers and communities. Nor is Indigenousness found only in rural, traditional communities and territories, but increasingly also in urban contexts, in a world in which by 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas. Nor, finally, is revitalization about bringing a language back, but rather bringing it forward (Hornberger and King 1996). All these realities infuse and inform the chapters herein.

The volume is comprised of this introduction and eight chapters organized into two parts: four chapters in Part I, describing and analyzing particular cases of school-based Indigenous language revitalization on four continents, and four chapters in Part II, discussing, reviewing, and commenting on the cases, while also incorporating insights from still other cases. In both parts, the combined perspectives of recognized, senior scholars and on-the-ground innovators provide both in-depth coverage of the cases and a critical perspective on them.

The cases taken up here are the Māori of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Sámi of the Nordic countries, the Hñähñö of Mexico, and Quechua and other Indigenous languages of Latin America. Māori and Sámi are cases of remarkable successes in Indigenous language revitalization over the last quarter century, while the Mexican case considered here is in an initial stage and the other Latin American cases cover a spectrum of experience. Yet all the cases face similar questions and issues.

With regard to Indigenous languages in schools:

- Is the Indigenous language (IL) taught to all students or only to Indigenous students (and if the latter, how are they identified or defined)?
- Is the IL taught as medium, first language (L1), second language (L2), subject?
- Is the IL taught in a monolingual immersion or bilingual/biliterate program structure?
- What is the role of codeswitching in IL instruction?
- What is the role of writing in IL instruction? And what of the visual, audio, spatial, artistic, electronic, and other modes?
- Is the IL taught as many varieties or only one?
- Who are the teachers? Are they speakers of IL? Literate in IL? How were they trained – where, by whom, in what language? Are teachers Indigenous-minded or 'West-minded'?

- Is the Indigenous curricular content transformative – or additive – in relation to the official curriculum? And how so?

With regard to the role of schools in Indigenous language revitalization:

- How can we develop a broader array of functional uses in society for threatened Indigenous languages?
- What do we understand by the term bilingual program in an Indigenous language context?
- Is the role of teacher as cultural mediator effective for Indigenous language and culture maintenance and revitalization?
- How can we go about incorporating Indigenous values and knowledge in school curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment?

In all, we pay particular attention to how, on the one hand, ideological spaces opened up by policies or discourses may carve out implementational spaces; and on the other, implementational spaces at classroom, school, and community levels may serve as wedges to pry open ideological spaces that are closed or closing (Hornberger 2002, 2006a).

In Chapter 2, '"Out on the fells, I feel like a Sámi": Is There Linguistic and Cultural Equality in the Sámi School?', Vuokko Hirvonen of Sámi University College in Guovdageaidnu, Norway, and author of the first doctoral thesis written in Sámi (Hirvonen 1999), reports on her evaluation study of Sámi teachers' views on the possibilities of implementing Norway's Reform O97 Sámi (O97S) in practice, on the local level. The adoption of the O97S Sámi curriculum marks, in her words, 'the biggest step ever taken in Sámi educational matters … the first time that the Sámi got a separate curriculum which has an equal status with the national curriculum'. To put the O97S reform and her evaluation study in context, she provides an overview of the historical development of Sámi schools in Norway since 1967, as well as statistical information on their current coverage and enrollments – some 3000 students in Norway being taught in Sámi, in close to 30 schools (in the 2004–05 school year).

Hirvonen discusses the O97S Sámi curriculum and Sámi language instruction provisions in detail, evaluating them as strong, weak, or non-forms of bilingual education (following Baker 2001 and Skutnabb-Kangas 2000), and concludes that there are three main forms of language programs in use with Sámi: mainstream with foreign language teaching, late-exit transitional, and maintenance or heritage, of which only the last can be considered a strong form of bilingual education. Drawing on teacher narratives from the evaluation study, Hirvonen provides examples

of innovative pedagogy in the teaching of Sámi language and culture, while also identifying a series of challenges yet to be met, among them the need for schools to give systematic priority to hiring bilingual personnel and to teaching not only Sámi language but other subjects in Sámi as well.

In Chapter 3, 'Top-down and Bottom-up: Counterpoised Visions of Bilingual Intercultural Education in Latin America', Luis Enrique López of PROEIB Andes at the University of San Simón in Cochabamba, Bolivia, reviews challenges and initiatives arising from the direct involvement of diverse Indigenous communities and organizations of Latin America in determining their own education from the bottom-up. The analysis seeks to establish to what degree these challenges and initiatives coincide with top-down governmental designs for bilingual intercultural education (EIB), a widespread educational model in Latin America (compare López 2005, 2006) – where overall more than 40 million people claim Indigenous identity or speak an Indigenous language and no less than 400 different Indigenous languages are in active use. His focus is on experiences directed toward the revitalization of Indigenous languages in national contexts where, despite increased national and international attention to the Indigenous question, heritage Indigenous knowledges and the languages which convey them are threatened by the ever greater advance of Western traditions and a hegemonic way of life – creole by nature in Latin America and expressed through the Spanish language.

In particular, López draws our attention to key issues raised by contemporary Latin American Indigenous leaders, intellectuals, and organizations, including demands for expansion of EIB to all rural Indigenous communities as well as to urban areas, where Indigenous populations are increasingly present; the need to extend EIB to hegemonic Spanish-speaking populations and not just to the Indigenous; the urgency of modifying the official curriculum to acknowledge Indigenous sociocultural practices and ways of life as integral to an alternative knowledge system; and the obligation to take action toward the rescue and revitalization of endangered and vulnerable Indigenous languages. He outlines a series of ideological/epistemological tensions that will have to be resolved if EIB is to contribute effectively to Indigenous language revitalization in the Latin American context, namely counterpoised top-down governmental and bottom-up Indigenous visions of inclusion versus exclusion, pedagogy versus ethnic reaffirmation and epistemology, and economy versus identity in relation to literacy.

Chapter 4, 'Māori-medium Education: Current Issues and Challenges', by Stephen May and Richard Hill of the University of Waikato in

Hamilton, New Zealand, summarizes key issues and challenges arising after more than 25 years of Māori-medium education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, drawing from international and historical perspectives on Indigenous education and language minority rights (compare May 1999, 2001, 2004). From the establishment of the first *Kōhanga Reo* (preschool 'language nest') in 1982, Māori-medium education has been predicated upon the principle of *He kōrero Māori* ('speaking in Māori') and the practice of full immersion, as distinct from bilingual education involving use of both Māori and English. Whereas in the international literature on bilingual education, immersion is seen as a form of bilingual education, in the Māori experience the two are sharply distinguished. The aims of Māori-medium education have been first and foremost the revitalization of the language, at which considerable success has been achieved; more recently, a complementary focus on the educational effectiveness of Māori-medium education has begun to emerge. May and Hill explore the negotiation of, and occasional tensions between, the wider goals of Indigenous Māori language revitalization and the successful achievement of bilingualism and biliteracy for Māori learners in Māori-medium educational contexts. They draw particular attention to the reality that most students currently in Māori-medium education are L1 speakers of English and L2 speakers of Māori, as are many of their teachers, and point to the implications of this not only for Māori programs but also for Indigenous heritage language education programs situated in similar language shift ecologies elsewhere in the world.

After reviewing key evaluations of Māori programs undertaken over the past 20 years, including those by the government's Education Review Office and the National Education Monitoring Project, the authors highlight two indicators of good practice for further development of Māori-medium education: one relating to levels of immersion and the other to the Māori L2 language base of the majority of students. Specifically, they call for a reconsideration of the full immersion-only philosophy in light of research evidence around the world that partial immersion programs can be effective as additive bilingual programs as well; they simultaneously caution that partial immersion programs that have less than 50 per cent instruction in the target language should be redesignated as Māori language support programs rather than bilingual or Māori-medium. With regard to the Māori L2 language base of the students and teachers, May and Hill warn that many programs are not teaching sufficiently through Māori for the students to achieve bilingualism and biliteracy, and that consideration needs to be given both to teacher professional development in Māori academic language and

Māori-medium pedagogy, and to providing students adequate time and exposure to Māori to enable their acquisition and development of Māori academic language proficiency in addition to the Māori conversational competence already being achieved.

Chapter 5, 'Learning with Differences: Strengthening Hñähñö and Bilingual Teaching in an Elementary School in Mexico City', by Nicanor Rebolledo Recendiz of the National Pedagogical University in Mexico City, Mexico, centers around the difficult schooling through which Indigenous Hñähñö residents of Mexico City pass, focusing on the case of the Alberto Correa Elementary School and in particular the objectives and initial year of an experience in bilingual education set in motion in the school. There have been strong waves of Indigenous migration to large cities in Mexico over the last half-century, mainly to Mexico City (Federal District) where despite their growing numbers, discrimination is a daily lived reality for the Indigenous migrants. Hñähñö, who number close to 300,000 and constitute Mexico's sixth largest Indian group, began to arrive in Mexico City in the 1940s, most coming from Santiago Mezquititlán in Querétaro and maintaining ties with their community up to the present.

Although Mexico's national curriculum has long been a monolingual Spanish one, the government has recently undertaken reforms emphasizing educational attention for the Indian population in the Federal District and including the introduction of intercultural bilingual education (EIB) in some schools (compare Rebolledo 2002). Currently, an estimated 10,000 students of Indian origin attend schools in Mexico City, and the Secretary of Public Education identifies approximately 200 public schools in the Federal District with Indigenous enrollments. Alberto Correa School, unlike many of the others, serves a majority Indigenous student population: 80 per cent of the students are bilingual Hñähñö-Spanish speakers. With the school facing a situation of high absenteeism, low academic performance, as well as problems of drug addiction among the students and a school climate of discrimination against all things Indian and against Hñähñö as a language, the author, himself a Hñähñö speaker, has undertaken with colleagues a series of activities to establish a policy of Hñähñö revitalization and a model of bilingual Hñähñö-Spanish teaching at the school. Among the challenges the team has tackled, in ongoing and at times frustrating negotiation with the school staff, are fitting Hñähñö into the existing curriculum and schedule, locating qualified Hñähñö teachers, and designing the actual Hñähñö-Spanish bilingual curriculum.

Part II turns to perspectives and commentaries on the above cases, by four authors with distinguished research records in the field of Indigenous

language revitalization, who bring to their commentaries both their specialist experience in particular cases and their international perspective on a wide range of cases.

In Chapter 6, 'Revitalization through Indigenous Education: a Forlorn Hope?', Leena Huss of Uppsala University in Sweden, considers the problem of what to do about the shortcomings of Indigenous education. She takes a clear-eyed look at the disappointments in what has been accomplished in Sámi-medium education, as documented in Hirvonen's chapter and enriched by her own work on minority languages and Indigenous language revitalization in Scandinavia and Europe (Huss 1999): despite the strong political position of Sámi in the Nordic countries, too few children take part in Sámi-medium education, and in many schools with only a few non-Sámi pupils, Norwegian nevertheless tends to dominate in practice. She points out that the minor and most endangered Sámi languages are in an especially precarious state.

Huss notes various discouraging parallels with the other cases herein: that many Sámi pupils, like the Māori pupils May and Hill describe, are second language learners of Sámi, which the schools inadequately recognize and plan for; that many young Sámi, like the Hñähñö Rebolledo works with or the Latin American Indigenous groups more generally that López describes, leave the traditional areas in search of work or further education and 'end up far from local Indigenous communities and language and culture competent elders, overwhelmed by a strong majority culture'. Withal, Huss ends with an affirmation that an additive approach is indeed possible for Sámi and for other Indigenous languages worldwide – an approach combining Indigenous education based on Indigenous language and Indigenous knowledge with bilingualism and equal opportunity in the wider society. Far from being a forlorn hope, she reminds us that this 'struggle without end' can be as 'healing and empowering' as it is 'onerous and frustrating'.

Chapter 7, 'Commentary from an African and International Perspective', by Nkonko Kamwangamalu of Howard University in Washington DC, USA, takes up the question of how society can ensure that Indigenous languages and Indigenous knowledges continue into future generations, and the role mother tongue education might play in that purpose, comparing and contrasting the cases in Part I with efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages through schooling in Africa and globally. In Africa, he points out, discussions about mother tongue education from the colonial era to the present have been informed by competing ideologies of development and of (mental) decolonization, with the former implying use of colonial languages in education in order to provide the African

child access to processes of development, and the latter calling for replacing ex-colonial languages with Indigenous languages as media of instruction in order to counteract the effects of colonialism in stripping the African child of his/her cultural heritage.

Kamwangamalu traces renewed interest in mother tongue education in post-colonial nations of Africa and around the world to theoretical developments around language ecology and the valuing of local languages, to unrealized expectations of national unity via use of a national (ex-colonial) language in the post-colonies, and to widening gaps between elites educated in the colonial language and masses foreclosed from access to it. Yet he cautions that mother tongue education has the potential to disempower Indigenous peoples if it is used to marginalize, segregate and discriminate against them, perhaps especially the case in Africa, as compared to other parts of the world.

Taking note that mother tongue education is not always welcomed in Indigenous communities, Kamwangamalu summarizes questions and suspicions raised by parents and communities as recounted in the Sámi, Māori, Hñähñö, or Latin American cases in Part I, adding others from the situations of Tamil in Singapore (Gupta 1997), aboriginal languages in Taiwan (Li 2003), and Black communities in South Africa (Kamwangamalu 1997). He concludes that unless and until wider societal factors such as 'political will, economic returns, grassroots support, involvement of non-governmental organizations, availability and allocation of human and material resources' are set to support the use of Indigenous languages alongside the schools, speakers of those languages are likely to continue to choose the 'breadwinner' ex-colonial language, thereby feeding into the 'main conduit for language shift and loss in many Indigenous communities around the world, and in Africa in particular'.

In Chapter 8, 'Riding the Tiger', Bernard Spolsky of Bar-Ilan University in Jerusalem, Israel, poses the volume's question in terms of whether schools can preserve rather than weaken the heritage language of Indigenous peoples, that is, whether those who wish to preserve their heritage language and culture can ride the educational tiger that seems intent on consuming it? He begins by clarifying what he understands by 'saving a language' – alternatively revernacularization, revitalization, or regeneration, depending on particular situations and goals; and by 'Indigenous' – which he takes to mean 'a usually self-identified minority whose earlier rule of the territory is meant to give them a stronger claim to recognition than other more recent immigrants'.

Commenting on the four cases in Part I, and drawing also on perspectives from his own work on Māori, Navajo, and Hebrew (Spolsky 2002,

2003; Spolsky and Shohamy 2001), Spolsky concludes that the cases document that, with commitment and with help from majority governments or international bodies, it is indeed possible for Indigenous minorities to 'ride the tiger by harnessing the proven language shifting function of school systems in the direction of language maintenance', and that schools can thus help in the pursuit of saving the Indigenous language, though, with other authors herein, he acknowledges that schools alone are not enough. Failing full-fledged language revitalization, two more restricted potential successes Spolsky draws from these cases are the role of language education policy as a focus for mobilization of an ethnic movement, and the value of even a passive knowledge of the heritage L2, as a contribution to ethnic identity and to a linguistic reservoir available for potential future use. These two results, he says, permit a modestly positive answer to our question.

The volume concludes with Chapter 9, 'Schools as Strategic Tools for Indigenous Language Revitalization: Lessons from Native America', in which Teresa McCarty of Arizona State University in Phoenix, USA, taking as premise the caveat that schools *cannot* achieve the goal of saving Indigenous languages on their own, argues that this begs the question of just what 'schools *might* do to promote, maintain, and revitalize Indigenous languages'. Drawing on the cases in Part I and her own work with Native American communities and schools in the USA (McCarty 2002; McCarty and Zepeda 2006), she begins with evidence that, even in the face of the historical oppression of Indigenous peoples around the world, strong Indigenous bilingual/immersion/intercultural education (IBIIE) programs can do much to stabilize and strengthen Indigenous language proficiency and use and enhance educational opportunities and outcomes among the younger generations. In addition to recalling Sámi maintenance, Māori full immersion, and Latin American Indigenous bilingual intercultural education (EIB) programs highlighted in Part I, she provides examples from US Hawaiian and Navajo immersion that point to the effectiveness of sustained and academically rigorous Indigenous-language immersion programs as an 'alternative to English-only schooling, even for students with limited proficiency in the Indigenous language'.

Beyond these evidences of IBIIE's effectiveness in strengthening Indigenous languages and Indigenous education, McCarty tackles the question of IBIIE's role in advancing 'a larger decolonizing and democratizing project'. All the cases in Part I contain elements of an intercultural approach that extends two-way IBIIE to dominant sectors of society, with the goal and potential of combating societal racism and discrimination.

In the Sámi, Māori, Hñähñö, and other Latin American cases, recent government and educational policy initiatives give strong support to Indigenous languages and multilingualism; McCarty provides examples of courageous school-based Native American educational efforts in New Mexico, Hawai'i, Alaska, and Arizona that wedge open implementational spaces for Indigenous languages and multilingualism in the face of ideological closing-down in the current US context of dominant monolingualism and pervasive English-only educational policy (compare Hornberger 2006a).

McCarty recalls Hawaiian activist Sam L. No'eau Warner's admonition that language issues are always people issues, and affirms that when we ask whether schools can save Indigenous languages, we are really asking about the fundamental right of choice of the Indigenous people who speak those languages to make their own decisions about the content and medium of their children's education. It's not about saving a 'disembodied' language but about achieving social justice for a people, and in this project, 'schools alone cannot do the job, *but* in tandem with other social institutions, they can be (and have been) a strategic resource for exerting Indigenous language and education rights'.

Whether the answer to our volume's question – *Can Schools Save Indigenous Languages?* – is a modest, nuanced, or enthusiastic affirmative, or simply a courageous stance in the face of discouragement over the many challenges remaining ahead even after so many have been overcome, we are above all conscious of the necessity for Indigenous peoples to take the lead in these matters. We advocate for the rights of Indigenous peoples to exercise both voice and choice in determining their own Indigenous language revitalization and education processes (Hornberger 2006b; McCarty 2006). Activation of Indigenous voice(s) through use of the Indigenous language in school can be a powerful force for enhancing Indigenous children's learning and promoting the maintenance and revitalization of their languages (Hornberger 2006b: 290). Equally important is Indigenous choice, entailing 'the right to linguistic and cultural distinctiveness and to self-education according to local languages and norms' (McCarty 2006: 313, citing Lomawaima and McCarty 2006). Choice and voice together open up new possibilities for Indigenous language revitalization and for empowering educational alternatives (McCarty 2006: 313).

By whatever name we refer to the school's teaching and use of Indigenous languages – whether Indigenous language-medium education, bilingual intercultural education, intercultural bilingual education, Indigenous education, mother tongue education, IBIIE, or heritage language education – we are convinced that schools have a powerful role to

play in Indigenous language revitalization and the empowerment of Indigenous communities. Too often, though, school-based efforts 'miss the mark' for having failed to 'include the Indigenous understanding, goals, purpose, and voice' (Romero-Little 2006: 400). A theme resounding in these pages is that of Indigenous peoples reclaiming ideological and implementational spaces 'articulating and constructing their own distinct paradigms based on Indigenous epistemologies and rooted in self-determination and social justice' (Romero-Little 2006: 399). We hope that this volume contributes a step along that way.

Note

Here and throughout, we capitalize Indigenous when it refers to people(s), in keeping with the practice of Indigenous organizations such as the Indigenous Language Institute of Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, or the American Indian Language Development Institute at the University of Arizona, USA.

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Index

absenteeism 6, 36, 103, 110, 114
academic language proficiency 6, 90–1, 169
achievement outcomes, bilingual education 9, 36, 38, 45, 68, 73–80, 87–8, 115, 127, 164, 167–9, 173
Africa 7, 136–49
Aha Pūnana Leo (Hawaiian language nests) 165, 167
Alaska 10
Aotearoa/New Zealand 5, 66–93, 126–7, 129, 131, 134, 145, 152–5
approaches to bilingualism
  additive 3, 7, 67, 84–6, 88, 90, 115, 134, 164, 167
  subtractive 67–8, 115, 134
Arizona 10, 173
assessment 37, 71–2, 74–82, 127
autochthonous, definition 153
Aymara 56–8, 61

Baker, Colin 30, 33, 70, 92
Basque 147
bilingual education as counter-hegemonic project 60, 169
  financing of 44–5, 53
  forms of 28–32
  goals of 5, 29, 37–8
  immersion models *see* immersion education
  maintenance models 3, 30, 37–8, 68–9, 83
  non-forms of 3, 34, 37–8, 126
  strong forms 3, 29–32, 38, 128, 164–5, 169, 172
  transitional 30–2, 37–8, 67, 84, 115
  two-way/dual immersion 30, 169–71, 173
  weak forms 3, 29–32, 34, 37–8, 126, 129, 155
bilingual education vs immersion education 62, 85
bilingual education for majority language speakers *see* Indigenous language as L2
bilingual intercultural education (EBI) 4, 6, 9–10, 44–62, 105, 116–19, 145, 161–75
biliteracy 5, 38, 70, 75–6, 86, 92–3, 118, 169
Bolivia 55, 61–2

codeswitching 2
Colombia 52
colonialism 42–3, 166
  and decolonization 7–9, 53–4, 138, 161
  and language eradication 43, 163
  post-colonialism 8, 137–41, 148
community resistance to bilingual education 45, 50, 72, 104, 145–7, 156
community resistance to schooling 104, 109
continua of biliteracy 116
Cummins, Jim 39, 89, 91, 116
curriculum 3, 6, 15, 17, 21–2, 53, 75–6, 112, 173
  culturally responsive 21, 53, 105, 125
  Sámi 21–3, 33, 125–6, 155, 165

democratization 9, 161
development (economic) 7, 138

EBI *see* bilingual intercultural education
Ecuador 57
educational policy 10, 17, 21–2, 115, 172–3
  see also language policy; policy, language in education
EIB *see* bilingual intercultural education
Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act 172

ethno-education 44
ethnolinguistic pride 32–3, 166, 169
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 130
Fishman, Joshua 69, 96, 152, 155, 158–60, 165
  GIDS scale 158, 165

German 143–4
Ghana 147–8
Guaraní 55, 171–2
Guatemala 52, 54

Hausa 146–7
Hawai'i 10
Hawaiian 9–10, 165–7, 172
Hebrew 8
heritage language, definition of 28
heritage language education 3, 10, 37, 69–70
  see also Indigenous language as L2
Hinton, Leanne 36, 161, 166
Hñähñö 2, 6, 8, 10, 99–119, 132, 145, 157, 166, 170–1
Hñähñö 40/60 (Yoho Ya Näte/Ñhu Ya Näte) 117–19, 171
Hñähñö, history 100–2
Hopi 154
Hornberger, Nancy H. 2–3, 10, 49, 68, 116, 140, 145–6, 156, 161–3, 166, 169

IBIIE *see* bilingual intercultural education
identity 4, 9, 22, 29, 35, 37, 47, 55, 58, 72, 99, 102, 105, 108, 112, 143, 168–9
immersion education 2, 5, 9, 30, 35, 66–7, 83–8, 164–5, 167–9, 172–3
immersion, levels of 66, 75, 77, 81, 83–8, 92
implementation 44, 75, 82, 127, 156, 163, 165–6
'*indianidad*' 99
Indigenous cultural resistance 99, 104, 117
Indigenous, definition 8, 153, 154
Indigenous knowledge 2, 4, 7, 10, 21, 38, 46, 51–2, 60–1, 82, 105, 129, 131–3, 145, 162, 173
Indigenous language as L2 2–4, 24, 29, 33, 127, 166
  heritage learners 2, 5, 7, 9, 22, 28, 33, 68–70, 74, 83, 88–9, 126, 167–8
  majority language speakers 4, 9, 19, 21, 28–9, 33–4, 46, 49–50, 162, 170, 173
  see also heritage language education
Indigenous language as L2 for teachers 2, 68, 111, 113, 127, 157
Indigenous self-determination 4, 10, 11, 45, 51, 132, 169, 174
intercultural bilingual education (EIB) *see* bilingual intercultural education

Khoisan languages 142–3
Kōhanga Reo 5, 66, 71–2, 84, 126
Kura Kaupapa Māori 66, 75–6, 81, 84, 87, 90, 153, 157, 170

language allocation 35, 73
language ecology 1, 8, 139
language maintenance 9–10, 68, 132, 155, 158
language policy 3, 21, 37, 115, 130, 146, 158, 172–3
  see also educational policy; policy, language in education
language reversal *see* reversing language shift
language revitalization 1–2, 4–11, 15, 32–7, 46, 67, 69, 84–5, 112–13, 127–32, 134, 136–49, 152–3, 158, 161–75
  definition 137
language revival 152
language rights 15, 17, 22, 32–3, 35–7, 103, 117, 125, 146, 175
language shift 8–9, 19, 32, 67, 69, 125, 149, 164
language standardization 57–8, 113, 130, 153, 161
language status 31, 34–6, 155, 161
language vitality 152

Latin America 2, 4, 8, 10, 42–62, 147, 156, 162
linguistic genocide 34
linguistic human rights *see* language rights
literacy 4, 15, 31, 38, 56, 77–9, 90–1, 114–15, 117–18, 140, 144, 168

Malaysia 146
Māori 2, 5, 8, 10, 66–93, 126–7, 129, 131–2, 145, 152–7, 162–3, 166–7, 170
materials, instructional 75, 79, 119, 146, 170, 172
Maya languages 54, 101
Mexico 6, 99–119, 145, 157, 162, 170
Mezquititlán 6, 101, 106–8, 113
minority, definition 154
Miskitu 148
Morales, Evo 61–2
mother tongue, definition 28, 138
mother-tongue education 7–8, 15, 136–49, 167
mother-tongue medium education (MTM) *see* mother tongue education

Namibia 148
nation-states and minority languages 8, 17, 42–3, 54, 60
Native American languages 9, 161–75
Native American Languages Act 172
Navajo 8–9, 152–4, 161–75
New Mexico 10
New Zealand *see* Aotearoa/New Zealand
Nicaragua 54, 148
Nigeria 146–7
No Child Left Behind Act 172
Norway 15–39, 125–34, 143–5, 155, 165, 170

Paraguay 171–2
parental support and involvement 88, 164, 166
Paulston, Christina Bratt 154
Peru 57
policy, language in education 10, 17–19, 21, 139, 155
see also language policy; educational policy
professional development 5, 48, 72, 79–80, 89, 92–3, 127, 145, 157
program evaluation 17, 37, 68, 71–8, 86–7
Puente de Hozho 173

Quechua 57, 163
Quichua 57, 130

revernacularization 8, 152, 158
reversing language shift 8, 55, 84, 125–6, 152–3, 155

Sámi 2, 3, 7–8, 10, 15–39, 125–34, 143–5, 155–6, 162, 165–6, 170
Sámi Administrative Area (Sámi Area, Sápmi) 18–19, 23–4, 126, 128–31
Sámi Educational Board 17
Sámi language groups 24, 130–1
Sámi language in education policy 17–19, 155
Sámi Parliament 17, 22, 125, 155
Singapore 8, 146
Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove 28–30, 34, 37, 136, 140, 145
South Africa 8, 142–4, 147–8
Spain 147
Stewart, William 158

Taiwan, aboriginal languages 8, 146
Tamil 8, 146
tangata whenua 153, 157
Te Kōhanga Reo *see* Kōhanga Reo
teacher training *see* professional development
team teaching 89
transition to mainstream schools 82–3, 89–90

urbanization 6, 46, 67, 100, 106, 128, 157, 169

vernacularization 142

whanau 71
whārekura 66
writing 45, 56, 58, 113–14, 118
see also literacy

Yup'ik 173