

## REVIEW

**Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale (Eds)**

***The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice***

San Diego: Academic Press, 2001. Pp x, 450. Hb \$ 99.95, Pb. \$ 49.95.

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Red books list everything endangered; green books revitalize the endangered. That is exactly what Hinton and Hale set out to do when they brought together no less than-thirty three essays, divided into categories such as Language Policy, Language Planning, Maintenance and Revitalization of National Indigenous languages, Immersion, Literacy, Media and Technology, and Training in their *Green Book* to bring home the severity of languages in danger of disappearing and the necessity of revitalizing these languages. Otherwise speakers of endangered languages, they argue, face disenfranchisement and marginalization.

The categories are supposed to reflect the aim of the book: showing revitalization programmes in operation, and synthesizing principles and methods of language revitalization practice. Reference is made to Fishman's (1991, 2001) steps with regard to *reversing language shift*, (a synonym for language revitalization?) and some of the chapters in the book are assigned to 'illustrate' his steps, but no clear outline of the structure and argument of the Green Book is given.

Although the reader gets an excellent idea of revitalization programmes in the US, Australia and the UK, the relevance of the book is sadly reduced because it omits countries such as South Africa and India where excellent work in this regard is taking place. With its eleven official languages and various initiatives at revitalizing indigenous/heritage languages such as the Khoe, Ju and !Ui language families, including the Khoekhoegowab (Nama), !Xun, Khwedam, N!u and Xirigowab (Griqua) languages, South Africa could hardly have been overlooked for inclusion in this book. Let alone the pioneering work on the Khoe and San Language body by the South African San Institute. This institute traces, documents and develops these languages in equally compelling ways as being described in the Green Book.

The authors justify their prime focus on the US and the various excellent and successful revitalizing programmes done there by pointing out that other countries can learn from the 'principles' underpinning these programmes. Essentially these principles come down to three: persistence, sustainability and honesty to oneself. These principles are stressed in each of the programmes. But the overall impression of the book is that endangered languages are studied and documented as cultural curiosities, and the use of indigenous languages are encouraged in various ways as a means of self-empowerment, as a way of perpetuating cultural hegemony. Hardly any chapters deal with the real empowering stuff: what can these speakers do with a revitalized language in the 'real world'? To my mind, only one chapter deals with this issue in a direct way: Clay Slate's "Promoting Advanced Navajo Language Scholarship" in which issues such as employability, transferability and accreditation issues are raised and discussed at length. Concerns expressed at the outset of the book about the loss of indigenous knowledge systems and the infringement of human rights in the face of globalisation are addressed in a frank way in this chapter, but in few others.

Another issue that is scantily addressed in the book is the delicate intersection of language and identity. Most of the chapters assume a homogenous view of cultural identity. Few show or report

on clashing identities as a consequence of language use. That is why the most compelling chapter in the book is the last one by ‘independent scholar’, Linda Yamane. Hers is a testimony of real *perseverance* in tracing the recordings of her endangered Rumsien language, one of the Ohlone or Costanoan languages spoken by the native people of California’s Monterey area, and of her personal attempts to *sustain* the use of her language and of the *honesty* with which she reflects on the use of this language. This single personal testimony makes the book worth while as it single-handedly encapsulates all the principles of language revitalization.

‘To sleep, perchance to dream’, says a world weary Hamlet. Hinton and Hale are not as world weary. They have dreams; their authors write about their own dreams. (William Wilson and Kauanoē Kamanā write touchingly about “*Mai Loko Mai O Ka ‘I‘ini*” – Proceeding from the Dream. It tells about the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo Connection in Hawaiian Language Revitalization. They say *I ka ‘olelo no ke ola; I ka ‘olelo no ka make* – in language rests life; in language rests death.) Hinton and Hale want to wake up ‘sleeping’ languages (a word preferred by Frank Manriquez, to ‘dead’ languages, such as his native Tongva). They want to give a voice to ‘silent’ languages. And they do so in this book. Hinton’s chapter on Audio-Video Documentation is seminal. So is Laura Buszars-Welcher’s one on whether the web can save her language. Hinton and Hale show that between the birth and the death of a language plenty of living and dreaming can be done.