ABSTRACT

Sociologists of language and linguistic anthropologists have focused their attention on the relationship of language to ethnicity and increasingly over the last three decades on issues of language and identity shift and death. While the role of language as one among multiple markers of ethnic identity is clear, only fairly recently has there been discussion among scholars of the role of language in constructing and maintaining ethnicity. Only more recently still has attention been given to the role of ethnicity in the construction and maintenance of language.

In a globalizing world, most communities are exposed to and have significant levels of contact and interaction with others who have different, and even multiple, ethnic identities. This paper explores the role of language and languages in negotiating these contacts. The functions of multiple languages within a community’s linguistic repertoire in transmitting the memory of an ethnic identity are considered along with the roles of various modes of language use: oral, written, and digital. The process of maintaining the public memory of a traditional or heritage ethnicity using all of the linguistic and technological resources available to a community is examined. The paper examines various community postures towards identity maintenance and the role of language in fostering sustainable identity within each of those.

A hierarchy which takes identity to be foundational is proposed and the concepts of language, domains of use, and modalities of use are explored as a framework for describing and reinforcing public memory of a heritage ethnic identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sociologists of language and linguistic anthropologists have focused their attention on the relationship of language to ethnicity and increasingly over the last three decades on issues of language and identity shift and death, the loss of language and identity.

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which language is used for ethnic identity construction and maintenance and the ways in which language itself is constructed by ethnic identity, either current or remembered. I propose that ethnic groups in contact deal with multiple ethnic identities, multiple knowledge-bases, and multiple languages, some of which may be current and active, and others which may be only remembered. I
identify language as the primary means by which identity and knowledge are remembered and transmitted from one generation to another.

Ethnic identity has been approached from two perspectives (Ross 1979): the objectivist and the subjectivist. Briefly described, the objectivist view is that identity is derived from the collection of behaviors that have come to be associated with a particular group. These behaviors define the identity. As the behaviors change, the identity is modified as well. Identity, for the objectivist, is a collection of observable behaviors.

In contrast, the subjectivist approach understands identity to be distinct from and ontologically prior to the behaviors which are associated with it. Identity is understood as a more basic sense of collective consciousness which is the source of the behaviors which both unify and separate the group from all other groups. According to this view, the external behaviors which represent the identity are changeable or even disposable. They serve as symbols of the more basic sense of identity and of group solidarity and oneness. Bastide (1978) describes it in this way: “Codes, religious institutions, dance steps, and family forms are no more than a language by means of which consciousness, individual or collective, expresses itself.”

Cultural markers of identity according to this view are sets of distinguishing behaviors that through repetition and common use become sedimented over time and become very closely associated with a particular identity. While this relationship may be very strong, the external markers of identity are not the same as the identity itself. Just as fashions change, tastes change, innovations come and go, so the markers of identity can be acquired and shed as groups adapt and interact with each other and with their changing environment. The fundamental basis of identity is the desire to unify around perceived similarities and to separate from the “other”. The markers of identity can and will change as various “others” are encountered and come into contrastive focus.

This theoretical distinction may seem moot, since an internal sense of identity is itself constructed based on individual and group perceptions (and transmitted memories) of shared lineage, co-location and other factors, and is marked by and only observable through the overt behaviors associated with it. Nevertheless, I argue here that the conceptualization of identity as ontologically prior to its behavioral markers is a heuristic that leads us to a better understanding of how identity can be remembered and retained. This understanding provides a framework for collaborative interventions with those members of threatened identities who wish to celebrate and memorialize their heritage identities, knowledge-bases, and languages.

A. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AS ONE AMONG MULTIPLE MARKERS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY.

Language is one very significant marker of identity. A particular language, or set of linguistic behaviors, may come to be closely associated with a particular identity, so much so, that at times the language and the identity are seen as one or are named interchangeably. Eastman and Reese (1981) identify this close association of language with identity: “From the point of view of ethnic identity it does not make any difference whether we know, speak, or just claim an ethnically related language as long as there is one we can somehow associate with.” The general case is that there is a set of linguistic
behaviors that are so closely associated with a particular identity and which have become so conventionalized and sedimented that we can call that set the language of an identifiable ethnicity.

Such a set of conventionalized linguistic behaviors, can serve as a marker of an individual’s identity whether or not the individual has competence in the language or even regularly uses it. I can self-identify as a Welshman even though I know no more than 10 words in Welsh. It suffices that I simply remember Welsh and willingly associate with it as the language of my father and of his forebears and as a marker of a contrastive identity that I wish to perpetuate. There are, of course, other cultural markers of Welsh ethnicity that I also embrace (and remember more than practice) such as the celebration of St. David’s Day (March 1st), the preparation and consumption of Welsh cookies using my grandmother’s recipe, and the celebration of Welsh singing and poetry at the eisteddfod and gymanfu ganu. In spite of this obviously less than full participation in the markers of my heritage identity, I remember them and appropriate them as markers of a Welsh-American identity. Ross (1979) thus makes the claim that: “An individual can speak an alien tongue, change his clothes, and abandon or modify old rituals without necessarily losing his sense of ethnic identification.”

B. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING ETHNIC IDENTITY.

Language also has an important role in constructing and maintaining ethnic identity. While I cling to and remember my Welsh heritage, I don’t dress like a Welshman, I rarely eat like a Welshman, and I most certainly don’t talk like a Welshman – neither through the use of Welsh nor even through the use of Welsh-accented English. When I visited Wales a few years ago, it was abundantly clear to all around me that I am, in fact, an American.

If I want to project my Welsh, or even less ambitiously my Welsh-American, identity, I need to make use of the markers of that identity. I need to take on those external markers associated with Welshness and make use of them in a way that will both unify me with those who share that identity and at the same time separate me from all others who have the misfortune not to have been born in Wales or be descended from those who were.

Language plays a significant role in the projection of ethnic identity. It is through language and the way I use my linguistic repertoire (inter alia) that I am able to signal to others who I am, or at least, who I want them to think that I am. Every utterance becomes, as LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985) have termed it, “an act of identity”. The concept of focused and diffuse identities, introduced by LePage and Tabouret-Keller enables us to understand a bit better the ways in which speakers manipulate
language and linguistic features to dynamically construct an almost infinite variety of nuanced representations of their multiple and overlapping ethnic identities in each context in which they find themselves. A more focused identity is represented and projected through the increased use of distinguishing behaviors, including linguistic behaviors, that are associated with that identity. A more diffuse identity will be less clearly marked and so projected less strongly. It is this more or less developed sense of who one is (or who one wants to be) that shapes our utterances through choice of linguistic code, selection of lexical items, and adaptation of accent. Much of this manipulation of linguistic markers may be unconscious though it can also be consciously manipulated. Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981, 1993) is one example of how linguistic behavior is used to project a contrastive identity and ideological orientation.

C. THE ROLE OF ETHNICITY IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF LANGUAGE.

The converse of the use of language to construct a remembered or current ethnic identity is the function of identity in shaping and constructing language. Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory developed by Giles and others (Giles 1970, 1977, 1979, 1980; Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977; Giles et al. 1991) emphasizes the notion that individuals perceive themselves as being members of a group and define their social identity in terms of their group membership(s). Each individual attempts to maintain (or achieve) a positive social identity by emphasizing the characteristics of their group which will be evaluated positively both by them and by others. Language is an obvious group characteristic and the in-group/out-group distinction is an important factor in affecting how individuals use their language.

As described above, speakers project their identity, in part, through language. They shape their linguistic production to best represent themselves in terms of their focused identities. LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985) describe this process for Central American Creoles, where speakers were observed to adapt their speech to more closely approximate standard English in some contexts and to diverge sharply from that same standard in other contexts. This range of variation, well-known to Creolists, is called the Creole continuum with the most divergent forms identified as the “basilect” and the most similar to standard English (or any more dominant language according to each context) called the “acrolect”. Most speakers generally communicate using forms somewhere between those two extremes and so speak some form of a “mesolect” most of the time. What LePage and Tabouret-Keller describe is how speakers freely and at will alter their speech to be more like the acrolect when the projection of that identity suits them or more like the basilect when the particular context motivates them to do so. Similar patterns of language use as identity projection have been observed in patterns of code switching and code mixing. This variation has less to do with proficiency in the standard or second language or with the level of education of the speakers than it does with the focused identity that the speaker wishes to project.

The now classic example of the effect of group identity on language variation is the study of Martha’s Vineyard English carried out by William Labov (Labov 1972). Labov identified a pattern of vowel “raising” which characterized the speech of the residents of
the island. By observing their language use systematically, Labov determined that this particular phonological variant had been introduced and gradually grown to become widely used by residents of Martha’s Vineyard as they increasingly wished to distinguish themselves from the growing numbers of tourists and summer-only visitors. While there are recognizable phonological patterns that this change in pronunciation follows, its primary motivation is the expression of a particular distinctive identity. It is a kind of not-so-secret code by which long-term residents of Martha’s Vineyard can identify themselves to each other and differentiate themselves from outsiders.

These are the dynamics behind the maintenance of most regional and social class dialects and accents as well. With the homogenizing presence of broadcast media and the promotion of standardized languages in formal educational systems, the loss of regionalisms and social dialects would seem inevitable. Yet, while many learn to erase their accents as they reach higher levels of education and move away from their kith and kin, most can just as easily slip back into their regional variety when they come home to visit or when they encounter a friend from home in a far away place.

While linguistic features can and will be altered over time, it is the underlying identity that is being expressed, now through one set of symbols, and eventually through another, in what Labov identified for historical and comparative linguists as “sound change in progress”.

II. IDENTITIES AND LANGUAGES IN CONTACT

In a globalizing world, most communities are exposed to and have significant levels of contact and interaction with others who have different, and even multiple, ethnic identities. With the concepts of language and identity in mind, it is important to consider the dynamics of identity and language contact and the implications of that contact for how heritage identities can be remembered and the role of language in preserving and representing that memory.

A. MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, MULTIPLE LANGUAGES, MULTIPLE KNOWLEDGE BASES

Groups with different ethnic identities in contact with each other are immediately confronted with the differences and inequalities that exist between them. Some groups are more numerous, more powerful, and therefore in most cases, more prestigious. Inevitably the attraction of that power and prestige will begin to erode the value attached to the less powerful and less prestigious identities. Identity revolves around who wants to be in relationship with whom and what those relationships will look like. In some cases, less powerful groups in these sorts of contact situations engage in efforts to maintain not only their core identity but also to reinforce and strengthen their boundaries so that passage from one identity to another is made difficult. One of the effects of globalization, however, seems to be an increased facility to migrate among and to mix identities.

Where once a single set of linguistic features functioned as a marker of identity, in such contact situations, multiple linguistic sets come to serve as markers of the multiple identities. The language use patterns come to resemble much more closely the patterns
of the Creole continuum with mixing and hybridization of linguistic features resulting in a rich and highly nuanced array of languages of identities. Sometimes the identity in focus is more basilectal. Sometimes it is more acrolectal. In between there is a bewildering array of hybridized mesolectal forms.

Just as there are multiple identities and multiple linguistic forms in play, so there are multiple knowledge-bases which must be considered. With each focused identity, whether current or remembered, there is an associated body of lore and a shared body of historical knowledge. Who we are is shaped by where we came from, who our forebears were, how we got here. There is a shared body of knowledge regarding the environment and our relationship to it. We share a cosmology, and medical, agricultural, and technological knowledge that represent the way in which we as a group have interacted with our world. At the same time, people with a shared ethnic identity are increasingly in contact with others who have different cosmologies, histories, and technologies that are associated with their identities. With advances in the technologies of communications and the spread of formal, public education, different knowledge-bases are more and more accessible to others. As minoritized groups take advantage of digital media as well as other channels of communication to promote their own identity, they also are exposed to these alternative identities and to the languages and knowledge-bases associated with them.

This situation represents a huge expansion of opportunity for preservation but simultaneously a significant threat to smaller, less-powerful and less obviously rewarding identities. In linguistics, the topic of language endangerment has come to the fore as a major area of concern. The core of my argument here is that the loss of languages is a symptom rather than the cause of the loss of ethnic identity. The loss of a language and the loss of the knowledge that a particular set of linguistic forms encode represents the Alzheimerization of an identity—a gradual forgetting of group identity as bits and pieces of it are irretrievably lost for all time.

**B. The functions of multiple languages within a community’s linguistic repertoire in transmitting the memory of an ethnic identity.**

Within this array of parameters of contact, language plays a particularly important role not only as a symbol of identity as described above but also as a means of transmission of identity and of the knowledge associated with a given identity. Language is the medium of public memory. Certainly there are other non-verbal channels by which the memory of a shared identity can be preserved and transmitted such as the cuisine, dress, visual arts or dance, ceremonies and monuments, but the narrative that makes sense of those non-verbal semiotic systems must be expressed in words. The dilemma that each minority ethnic community faces is the decision regarding the linguistic repertoire they will use to preserve and transmit the shared group memory of identity and knowledge.

In addition to the words and structures of language, the two major modalities of language: oral use and written use are also significant. There is considerable evidence that the differences are more than technological, one using the technology of orthographies and the by-products of orthographies: paper, pencil, clay tablet, stylus,
typewriter, printing press, computers and LCD displays, laser printers, etc. and the other using the vocal tract and kinesthetic, gestural, and proxemic strategies (augmented occasionally by public address systems, recording technologies, radio, television, and the like). Just as different linguistic codes are associated with a particular identity, so the modality of those languages comes to be associated with an identity and thus is manipulable as a means of identity projection as well.

The modality of language can play a significant role in the preservation of the public memory of an ethnic identity. The oral modality, though simpler, less technologically dependent, and largely dependent on memory, is seen as ephemeral, restricted in its reach either geographically or socially and thus less permanent and sustainable. The written modality, though more dependent on technology (and learning), is seen as more permanent, more extensible, and more sustainable as an aid to public memory. These assertions merit further examination.

IV. SUSTAINING THE MEMORY OF A HERITAGE IDENTITY

It is frequently averred that the key to the preservation of a heritage identity is the enshrinement of that identity in literature written in the language most closely associated with it. I propose that the preservation of identity depends firstly and foundationally on the creation of space for that identity through reinforcement of the values and beliefs and of the rewards and benefits associated with that identity. With that in place, language policy and practice that preserves the oral use of the language is the next brick in the wall of heritage identity preservation. With oral transmission secure, the development of the language for written uses can become a useful tool in the preservation of the heritage identity. Without a secure identity and vibrant oral use, however, the preservation of heritage knowledge by writing it in the heritage language is primarily an exercise in documentation. While a noble and useful endeavor, documentation alone won’t achieve the goal of ongoing transmission of heritage knowledge. Those who currently associate with that knowledge and the language it is expressed in will, within a few generations, have moved on to another identity and its associated language and knowledge-bases at worst, or to another set of associated markers of that identity including a new language, at best.

It is a strong and vibrant identity that produces oral language usage that is authentic and that will be remembered and transmitted without conscious effort. Lacking that strong identity, oral language use will begin to shrink and become more and more ritualized. It will preserve the memory of the identity but only with conscious effort as ritual phrases, aphorisms, stories, and lore are learned and drilled and recited almost for their own sake. With strong identity, and authentic oral language use, the production of written literature follows naturally as an additional means of remembering, celebrating, expanding and developing “who we are” as a group and as individuals.

Without vibrant oral transmission, written use of language for the preservation of the memory of an ethnic identity, serves a function similar to that of a photo album. Over time the details behind each picture become more and more vague and eventually the memory of who that is a picture of or when that vacation trip happened is lost. The Rosetta Stone provides us with a window into the ancient world but it is hardly an
adequate basis for the ancient classical cultures it enshrines to be revived and carried on.

While all of these pieces can fall into place simultaneously and in any order chronologically (written literature serving in many cases as a way to restore a positive evaluation of an identity, for example), they are logically and conceptually hierarchically ordered. Simply producing written materials will not ensure the preservation of an identity. But the loss of identity inevitably leads to the failure of literacy to “take root” or be sustained and will ultimately lead to the demise of oral language use as well.

A. Sustainable Identity

If minority groups are dealing with multiple identities, knowing the general nature of how those identities can be negotiated will be important for the preservation of an identity and for remembering it from generation to generation.

There are only three identity configurations that are likely to remain stable over a long period of time.

Internal Identity Only A group may maintain only a single, traditional identity. This would be the case in situations where a community is isolated either by circumstance, or intentionally by the will of others or by their own choice. In most cases where a single internal identity is being maintained in today’s world of frequent intergroup contact, a heavy intentional investment is required. The isolated, unreachable and untouched community is a rarity.

Where intentional isolation is opted for, group boundaries will tend to be strong and impermeable. The stability of this configuration depends greatly on the ability of the group to maintain its distinctives. Contact with outsiders and exposure to a different set of values can erode the internal identity and destabilize this configuration.

Internal and External Identity A group may choose to adopt multiple identities. One way in which this can happen is through the addition of identities. Thus a group may maintain its traditional identity and at the same time adopt external innovations or technologies and participate in those fully at different times and in different settings. This represents a kind of compartmentalization of identity with certain activities being conducted based on an internal, traditional or heritage identity and other activities carried out in a completely external identity orientation. In some cases this dual identity may be split across generations with older folks maintaining the traditional ways and younger people accepting external innovations and participating in the outside world.

While individuals can move between these two worlds, the two identity orientations are clearly distinct and maintained as being different from each other. If the old ways die with the older generation then identity shift has taken place and the traditional identity becomes no more than a memory. In some cases, the norm is that young people, as they grow older, will become the maintainers of the “old ways” leaving the “new ways” to their children who then become those who participate in and take on the outside identity. This may be accompanied by patterns of emigration and return (often between
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rural and urban settings) at different stages in life. In still other cases, the majority of the population of all generations may move freely between the two worlds of identity.

A second way in which a group can develop multiple identities is through hybridization. This will occur where both young and old maintain some traditional identity features while adapting and incorporating some external features as well. Homi Bhabha (1990) talks about this phenomenon calling it “the third space”. Both the internal identity features and the external ones are modified and blended. Neither identity orientation remains "pure". While the distinction between internal and external is still present, the internal is a modified internal identity and the external is a modified external identity.

In some settings, one generation may be practicing the addition of identities while the next is hybridizing. Others in the society may be assimilating to the external identity entirely.

**External Identity Only** A group may adopt an external identity and drop their heritage identity all together. Many immigrant groups experience this transition over several generations gradually losing their distinctive ethnic identity and assimilating more and more with the dominant group around them. The memory of the heritage identity may linger for many generations but other than a few relic representations of it (a particular ethnic food, some specialized vocabulary, etc.) the group identity becomes that of the dominant society.

This configuration, like the Internal Identity Only configuration is stable and will remain so until there is contact with some other, perhaps more powerful and prestigious, group and the process of addition, hybridization, or assimilation begins again. Over a long period of time, a group may undergo multiple shifts in identity in this way. What’s more, with the changing fortunes of dominant and less-dominant groups, the process might even reverse itself or come full circle as a previously waning identity regains strength and reasserts and often, reconstructs itself.

This representation of the process of identity contact is a significant over-simplification. It represents the process of change only from the perspective of the subordinate identity adapting to and assimilating with the more dominant one. It does not take into account that at the same time as the subordinate group is adding or hybridizing with another identity, the superordinate group is also adapting and may add or hybridize features taken from the subordinate, and other groups with which it is in contact.

These three stable configurations should be seen as three stopping points on a continuum of identity remembrance. The mono-cultural heritage identity may gradually give way to a multi-cultural additive or hybridized identity which may eventually turn into a monocultural assimilated identity with little or no memory of earlier times.

**B. Sustainable Language Use Configurations**

If identity is foundational, then language use should parallel and reflect the underlying identity configuration.
When there are multiple languages present in a community, whether there are significant numbers of bilinguals or not, those languages often become closely associated with particular uses or functions which are themselves associated with one or more of the identities of community members. *Diglossia* (Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1965, 1967) is the term used to refer to the state of affairs where community members have associated a particular language with a particular set of activities. While diglossia is not always present where there are multiple languages in close proximity to each other, it is the tendency of human societies to seek this kind of clearly defined compartmentalization so that speakers know which language to use in any particular setting. In its strongest form, diglossia represents an almost watertight compartmentalization of language functions. One language variety and only one is used for each function and all members of the community know what those functional assignments are. While not all may be able to use the appropriate language for those functions because of their lack of bilingual proficiency, they know which language ought to be used. Because of this tendency, diglossia is considered to be a very stable configuration. As a shorthand method of describing this relationship between languages which are almost always associated with groups with different degrees of power and prestige, one variety is called the High (H) variety and the other is called the Low (L) variety. Communities where diglossia has been established are often examples of very stable language maintenance over very long periods of time.

In many contact situations where bilingual proficiency is increasing or newly acquired, some of the clear cut compartmentalization may be breaking down or beginning to "leak". This represents the beginning of the loss of diglossia and a destabilization of the situation. The consequences of "leaky diglossia" can range from a reconfiguration of language use patterns to complete language shift. Thus the absence or presence (and the relative strength) of diglossia is an important factor to be considered in examining how the memory of a heritage identity will be transmitted.

There are three stable language configurations:

**Diglossic L** This is the situation of the relatively isolated monolingual community which functions almost exclusively in their single language --the language most closely associated with their heritage identity. Though there may be other languages in use with recognized functional assignments, most members of the community have little or no proficiency in them. This language use configuration closely parallels the Internal Identity Only configuration.

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1 Functional compartmentalization is often described in terms of "domains of use" which are constellations of topic, location, and participants with which a particular language becomes associated. In practice these domains become conventionalized and labeled as Home or Church or School because in the majority of cases those locations involve a recognized set of participants talking most often in a particular language about an expected topic.
Diglossic L and H This is the situation where there are multiple languages in use within the community, diglossia is present so the speakers have a clear sense of which language to use in which domain of use, and significant segments of the population have relatively high levels of proficiency in all of the language varieties. Thus speakers can readily switch from one language to another as they go from one domain to another in their daily activities. This language use configuration closely parallels the Additive variety of Inside and Outside Identity.

Diglossic H This situation is similar to the Monolingual L situation described above except that the speakers have proficiency in the H variety and not the L. This may be the situation of the dominant language group with a minority language community close by. It may also be the situation of a language community that has shifted from its heritage language to the dominant language. Because of the social dynamics and the perceived lack of rewards and advantages derived from proficiency in L, few speakers will be highly motivated to acquire (or maintain) L. Generally, any remaining speakers of L are expected to acquire and use H with little accommodation in the other direction. This language use configuration closely parallels the Outside Only identity configuration.

As can be seen, the common feature of these stable language configurations is the presence of diglossic compartmentalization of the language use functions. Where that compartmentalized assignment of language functions has not been achieved, the situation is likely to be in transition. A reconfiguration of the diglossic assignment of functions may also parallel the hybridization of identity.

C. SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE-BASE CONFIGURATIONS

It is not only language that transmits and marks identity. It is the information and knowledge that language communicates. So, in addition to the identity configurations and the language configurations, we can also talk about knowledge-base configurations. Ethnic groups are dealing with both their inside knowledge which connects them with their heritage identity and with outside knowledge which connects them with the wider world.

The three stable knowledge-base configurations parallel and are associated with the identity and language use configurations:

Inside Knowledge Only. This represents the situation of isolated minority language communities with little or no contact with outsiders. Where contact exists there may be an ideological rejection of that outside knowledge. In some cases, there may be no access to the outside knowledge either because of lack of communications infrastructure (roads, schools, market towns, etc.) or because of the lack of communicative tools (shared language, interpreters, knowledge brokers, etc.). Some groups develop an ideological rejection of the outside knowledge because of these lacks in access and opportunity. Sometimes the ideological rejection inhibits the development of access and opportunity. This situation remains stable as long as the isolation is maintained. When contact increases and when communications infrastructure and tools are developed, it becomes increasingly difficult for a community to maintain only their Inside Knowledge-bases.
**Inside and Outside Knowledge.** In this situation, community members acquire both sets of knowledge. As with identity, they may acquire this knowledge additively, essentially keeping the two bodies of knowledge separate and un-integrated. For example, they may operate simultaneously using traditional medicine and Western medicine. They may use one body of knowledge to solve some problems and another to solve others. Alternatively, they may hybridize the two bodies of knowledge reinterpreting heritage categories in terms of newly learned scientific categories, or vice versa. In religion, they may syncretize, assigning new names to old gods, or ascribing heritage characteristics to outside deities.

**Outside Knowledge Only.** Some communities choose to abandon their heritage knowledge all together and acquire and use outside knowledge exclusively. They may retain some features of their heritage knowledge as relics of the past but these are primarily nostalgic in nature.

**V. Conclusions**

Given the complexities that minority ethnic groups deal with in regard to multiple identities, multiple languages, and multiple knowledge bases, and the hierarchical nature of identity, orality, and literacy, we can begin to develop a model of the role of language in remembering ethnic identity.

I’ve described three analogous kinds of oppositions: inside and outside identity, inside and outside language (described as L and H), and inside and outside knowledge.

I’ve also argued that the foundational piece is identity and inside identity in particular. In some cases, that identity may be almost entirely from the past and so rely heavily on mnemonic devices such as traditional celebrations and rituals to keep its memory alive. In other cases that identity may represent a continuous link from past to present and be actively engaged in creating its own future through developing and evolving styles, artistic works, and adaptive patterns of language.

In addition, I’ve further argued that identity must lead to vigorous and vibrant oral language use and that only then does the written use of the heritage language where it has not previously been present have a reasonable foundation for sustainable ongoing development and use.

The key issue in preserving the memory of an ethnic identity is how innovations derived from contact with the outside will be managed. I will only briefly describe the options in terms of the concepts of Inside and Outside identities, languages, and knowledge-bases.

**A. Keeping the Inside**

The preservation of the memory of an identity depends heavily on Keeping the Inside. The maintenance of group solidarity and unity is fundamental. In this effort, language is an important mnemonic device. Like the acronyms we memorize before tests, mnemonic devices only help us if we remember what they stand for. And it is here that the use of writing to preserve the memory of antiquated forms can best be seen. With an identity
that is nearly gone, oral language use is also gone, and only the written records remain to remind us of and link us to that past.

B. Changing the Inside

A heritage identity can also be preserved and retained in altered forms. Since according to the subjectivist view, identity is the sense of belonging to a group, that sense can be retained even while all of the markers of that identity – the external behaviors associated with it – are gradually replaced. Thus, clothing can change. It’s the same identity but now wearing Levis or Wranglers. Food can change. Along with our traditional ethnic dishes, we now eat McDonald’s Ramadan Mexican Combo Pita Plates from time to time. And languages can be changed. Instead of Catawba or Miami or Apache or Nahuatl, we now speak some other language, perhaps with a distinctive identity-revealing accent. We are still (more or less) who we were, we just mark that identity with different external behaviors.

I would argue that to the extent that a distinct identity is maintained there will be distinctions retained (or constructed) in the mode of dress, the kind of food eaten or the language spoken or all of the above. Though some Native Americans have shifted to English, many speak a particular variety of English that identifies them as Native Americans. Distinctive identity is always marked externally in some way.

C. Bringing the Outside In

Probably the most critical area of negotiation for a minoritized ethnicity is how it will deal with outsiders and with the markers of outside identity. Boundary maintenance and isolation is one strategy that is increasingly more difficult to achieve. A strategy of addition, keeping the Inside and adding the Outside, may well be an ideal, but is no less difficult a strategy.

This represents to a great extent the area of work that many linguistic anthropologists are concerned with. As knowledge from the Outside is introduced it must be dealt with linguistically. One alternative is to transmit new knowledge in the Outside language. So, Japanese graduate students in linguistics talk about linguistics in English. Another alternative is to borrow, transliterate and assimilate the key terminology. A third alternative is that we actually develop terms in our own language that represent the concepts authentically. This is the realm of translation in the deepest sense. Not only taking external forms and exchanging them for internal forms but taking external knowledge and transforming it into knowledge that is authentically Inside and part of “who we are”.

D. Taking the Inside Out

Finally there is the question of how an Inside identity can be expressed to Outsiders in a way that will make sense to them. Some groups choose not to make their identity, language, and knowledge available to others. Most minoritized groups, however, struggle with the task of self-representation and with efforts to gain recognition and to be heard. Generally they are laboring against negative attitudes, inequalities, and the
hegemonic devaluation of who they are and so are pressured to abandon the Inside and with it their language and their knowledge-bases. The result is an identity not only abandoned but forgotten. Should they not choose the route of abandonment, however, the issues become the same as those faced when trying to Bring the Outside In. Translation of identity, language and knowledge becomes the focus and the key to not only maintaining but spreading the memory of an ethnicity.
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