

# Language Renewal as Sites of Language Ideological Struggle The Need for “Ideological Clarification”

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Drawing on 25 years of linguistic documentation and language renewal research in the Western Mono communities of Central California and the Arizona Tewa community, this paper explores the conflicts over the beliefs and feelings about languages and the importance of early-on resolving these conflicts at a local level to enhance language revitalization efforts.

Though the work of language renewal properly focuses on the production of critical resources for purposes of documentation (e.g., grammars, dictionaries) and on activities of instruction and transmission (e.g., creating practical orthographies, indigenous language pedagogies), those who have engaged in these activities recognize, often too late, the fundamental need for dealing with “ideological clarification”. This notion covers the conflicts of “beliefs, or feelings, about languages” (Kroskrity, 2004) that are the inevitable outcome of the interaction of indigenous, colonial, post-colonial, and professional academic perspectives. The differences between these points of view are displayed and even magnified by language renewal activities. I first became aware of this concept while reading the well-known behind-the-scenes study by Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer (1998) of their decades of experience working with various Tlingit, Haida, Tshimshian-speaking communities in Southeastern Alaska. They traced many of the difficulties and failures of these projects to noting that they, as language activists, had prematurely assumed that community members had achieved an “ideological clarification” that would provide unambiguous support to language renewal yet later discovered that there was little or no such clarification. Instead they found a “broad gap between verbally expressed goals, on the one hand (generally advocating language and cultural preservation) and unstated but deeply felt emotions and anxieties on the other (generally advocating or contributing to abandonment)” (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998, pp. 62-63).

My goal here is to affirm the importance of recognizing this language ideological dimension to language renewal activities and to further develop the concept of ideological clarification by linking it more explicitly to language ideological theory and practice (Schieffelin, Woolard & Kroskrity, 1998; Kroskrity, 2000a, 2004). Treating language renewal activities as “sites” (Silverstein, 1998a) for ideological struggles and as stages upon which differences in language beliefs and practices are often dramatically displayed, I focus on the necessity of recognizing and resolving ideological conflict that would impede local efforts at linguistic revitalization.<sup>1</sup> Though theory guided, this chapter also draws on a comparative analysis of a variety of Native American communities as well as on my 25 years of linguistic documentation and language renewal research for the Western Mono communities of North Fork and Auberry in Central California and

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on very recent efforts to begin a linguistic revitalization project for the Arizona Tewa (Village of Tewa, First Mesa, Hopi Reservation) after conducting long term field work there. By so doing, I hope to demonstrate both the practical benefits of attending to this theoretical orientation and the fortified notion of ideological clarification that it enables.

### **Ideological clarification: Basic concepts**

Though the notion of ideological clarification is compellingly applied by the Dauenhauers, they do not explicitly define it. This appears to be true of other scholars who have used the phrase including, for example, Joshua Fishman:

Furthermore, RLS [reversing language shift] movements must realize from the very outset of their *ideological clarification* [emphasis mine] that ethnolinguistic authenticity and identity must be associated not only with Xish versions of modern Yish-dominated pop-culture and consumerism (which can be pursued in any language, including both the local Big Brother and English) but, even more importantly, with a continuing ethnohumanistic, ethnoreligious and ethnocultural constellation of beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. Only such a constellation will ultimately provide a rationale going beyond the economies of scale inherent in the materialist view of those who have essentially concluded that ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’. It is only the conviction that one’s own-language-in-culture is crucially different ... that makes RLS worthwhile. (2001, p. 17)

As in the case of the Dauenhauers, Fishman observes the importance of ideological clarification as an apparent achievement of community consensus about the linkage of language renewal to other projects of cultural revitalization. What I find problematic about these previous applications of “language ideological clarification” is their relative lack of theorization. Rather than attempting to anchor it on a firmer conceptual foundation, the notion seems to float on ambiguous assumptions of cognitive consensus and inappropriately monolithic conceptions of contemporary communities (Silverstein, 1998b). A better foundation for this concept can be supplied by the theory of language ideologies especially in its more restrictive sense (Kroskrity, 2004). Language ideologies “refer to the situated, partial, and interested character of conceptions and uses of language” (Errington, 2001, p. 110). Though it has precedents in the ethnography of communication and types of sociolinguistic analysis that invoke power and social inequality (Kroskrity, 2000b), language ideological analysis synthesizes an interest in inter-relatedness of linguistic awareness, linguistic beliefs, feelings, and practices, and relations of political economic power. Elsewhere, I have described this movement as consisting of a number of analytical dimensions and several of these are especially relevant here (Kroskrity, 2004). Perhaps the most important of these interrelated dimensions is the recognition that language ideologies “*represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a*

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*specific social or cultural group.*” A community’s conceptions of its language are critically influenced by its position in political economic and other relevant cultural systems. Those who have political economic power will rationalize inequality by viewing their language as superior and their linguistic practices as exemplary. Those whose languages do not enjoy the hegemonic support of nation-states must either resist by locating authority in alternative, local sources (e.g., House, 2000; Gomez de Garcia, Axelrod & Lachler, in press) or submit to dominant views that equate linguistic vitality with linguistic superiority thereby conceding their own linguistic inferiority (Dorian, 1998).

Though it is critically important to recognize the political economic grounding of language ideologies, it is also necessary to recognize the *multiplicity of ideologies* that routinely collide within and across communities during acts of language renewal. Within Native communities there are widely held cultural beliefs about language to be sure but there are often also significant differences due to generation, gender, kinship group, cultural stance, and differential adherence to non-Native religions like Christianity that are often linked to pejorative views of indigenous languages (e.g., Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998; House, 2000). Language renewal activities not only involve the decolonizing need to eliminate pejorative views from the outside but also involve the confrontation and contestation that arises when indigenous communities must forge language policies in collaboration with government officials and professional linguists (Collins, 1998; Meek, 2007, forthcoming). In such contexts, the multiplicity of contending ideologies contributes greatly to a heightened awareness of linguistic and discursive practices. Language ideological research attends to *members’ awareness* and notes when such beliefs and feelings are largely taken-for-granted aspects of “practical consciousness” or when they are elevated to the “discursive consciousness” (Kroskrity, 1998) of speakers who can now more fully talk about and discuss previously submerged beliefs and feelings. This recognition that awareness does vary and change is potentially very important in language renewal contexts since it alerts researchers and language activists to “read” ideologies not only from the voices of community members but also from their embodied linguistic practices.

So, then, how might we redefine “language ideological clarification” in a way that is both more explicit and theoretically contexted? Language ideological clarification is the process of identifying issues of language ideological contestation within a heritage language community, including both beliefs and feelings that are indigenous to that community and those introduced by outsiders (such as linguists and government officials), that can negatively impact community efforts to successfully engage in language maintenance and renewal. This process of identifying and raising consciousness about linguistic and discursive issues enables appropriate discourses to occur between community members, or between members and either linguists or government officials who have differing opinions. Ideally these discourses would promote actual resolution—a clarification achieved—or foster a tolerable level of disagreement that would not inhibit language renewal activities.

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### **Some examples of the need for ideological clarification**

Though work on language renewal understandably accentuates the positive and minimizes the difficulties (e.g., Hinton & Hale, 2001), there is clearly a need to learn from instances of ideological struggle and to examine and compare case studies that relate problems encountered in language renewal to beliefs and feelings within Native communities about their heritage languages. In addition to the justifiably famous study by the Dauenhauers (1998), there are other notable examples of the sort of ideological struggle suggested above for the Hopi (Hill, 2002), Northern Arapahoe (Anderson, 1998), Kaska (Meek, 1997), Navajo (House, 2002) and White Mountain Apache (Nevins, 2004). Margaret Field and I expanded this corpus of case studies when we sought to produce a collection of case studies of Native American/First Nations communities that deployed the notion of language ideologies and in so doing discovered that a common theme in many of these case studies was the role of language revitalization as a site for producing and revealing ideological display and contestation (Kroskrity & Field, in press). Studies in this volume demonstrate that local ideologies involving variationism, utilitarianism, the genetic fallacy and the ideology of contempt (Dorian, 1998) for languages with little “market value” can pose obstacles for such languages such as Kiowa, Northern Shoshoni, Kaqchikel Mayan and Western Mono (Neely & Palmer, in press; Loether, in press; Reynolds, in press; Kroskrity, in press). Other studies suggest that local ethnotheories of language socialization (Bunte, in press) on San Juan Paiute) and of revalorization of indigenous languages as “sacred” or exclusively associated with elders (e.g., Meek, 2007; Gomez deGarcia, Axelrod & Lachler, in press, for Cochiti) may place heritage languages more at risk by reducing the number of environments as well as the numbers of speakers in which and by whom they can be appropriately used. A few brief examples must suffice here.

**Kiowa Heterographia.** Neely and Palmer (in press) have produced a valuable study of an apparently dysfunctional plurality of writing systems for what is today a small population of Kiowa speakers in various Oklahoma towns. They estimate that there are only about 10-20 highly fluent speakers out of the 50-200 that have some conversational ability. But despite the small population, the lack of a localized heritage language community and a variationist “respect” for diversity along kinship, regional and institutional lines has produced and promoted about a half dozen partially overlapping but nevertheless distinct writing systems. Three of these have significant traditions of use. As Neely and Palmer observe:

- 1) the Parker McKenzie system, used at the University of Oklahoma since 1992;
- 2) the Alecia Gonzales system, an English-based orthography used at Anadarko High School since 1990; and
- 3) the hymnal booklet published in the SIL system in the 1960s is also still used.

Given the importance of standardizing native literacy to language renewal efforts (Hinton, 2001, p. 240), Kiowa practices of promoting multiple orthographies, or what Neely and Palmer term heterographia, and rationalizing them in “discourses of authority and ownership” pose a real challenge to effective linguistic revitalization. Under the present system, Kiowa is providing a symbol of identity for some Kiowa people, but it is not fulfilling an intratribal, intergenerational communicative function for the larger heritage language community. Clearly the target of ideological clarification is the need for a common orthography. If people can recognize how their feelings of ownership and authority that underlie their allegiance to particular writing systems are also obstacles to the creation of a more effective and widely shared Kiowa orthography, they can engage in the appropriate dialogs and discussions that can ultimately produce clarification.

**Northern Shoshoni ‘Elder Purism’.** Though the Northern Shoshoni of Idaho also have many orthographies, the most severe threats to their language, as analyzed by Christopher Loether (in press), are generation based ideological differences and dysfunctional patterns of intergenerational linguistic transmission. In communities of about 12,000 members there are still about 5,000 speakers. These communities have tended to emphasize the utilitarian aspects of their heritage language in their local ideologies and have discounted its role as a symbol of Shoshoni identity. For young people, such language ideologies promote a sense of the irrelevance of their heritage language to their contemporary economic needs in an English language dominated world and encourage a view of the heritage language as tied to local cultural practices of the past. In such a view, elders are not only exemplary speakers but also the only authoritative speakers. While every viable language must change with time, elders often perform their authority by freely critiquing the Shoshoni spoken by younger generations. The net effect is a Shoshoni “elder purism” in which elders display linguistic authority but discourage younger speakers from adapting their heritage languages to the contemporary world. In such cases, elder purism, like other forms of linguistic purism in language renewal contexts (Dorian, 1994), has a damaging effect on any program of language renewal that would aim to multiply speakers and expand the contexts of use. Here an intervention in the name of language ideological clarification would attempt to create intergenerational dialogs that would promote a greater awareness of the ideologies involved and the unintended consequences associated with the practices of elder purism such as the overt critique of younger speakers and the negative view of condemning the need for extending indigenous language into the contemporary worlds of younger speakers. Rather than condemning such uses as non-traditional and inauthentic, elders should appreciate that healthy languages continuously change and adapt to changing historical and social circumstances.

**San Juan Paiute Language Socialization.** Based on long-term field research with the San Juan Paiute, Pamela Bunte (in press) has produced a provocative study of how local theories of language socialization can create problems for language renewal. Living within the confines of the Navajo Reservation, this group has experienced considerable heritage language loss even though it has

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recently achieved federal recognition. Though most adults were secure in their knowledge of the language, they did not actively promote environments in which younger speakers could actively speak. They assumed, like many other Native groups such as the White Mountain Apache (Nevins, 2004), that passive exposure to adult models of speaking—no matter how often or rarely displayed—should be sufficient to promote an understanding of the language that could be effectively retrieved and deployed later in their lives. Such local beliefs were supported by an occasional case of a Paiute elder who had not spoken Paiute publicly for decades (preferring Navajo for this function) but who could speak the heritage language fluently in hearings devoted to federal recognition due to his or her exposure to that language as a child. In Paiute theory, such words could “come on the wind” as a result of passive exposure. This belief was combined with a strong ideological preference for “respecting” the autonomy of individuals—even children—and not forcing them to speak Southern Paiute when they preferred to speak English in an expanding range of contexts. Together these ideological preferences were promoting a language shift and providing an excuse for adults not to act even though they were become increasingly alarmed with the reduction of heritage language use in their community. Though the majority persisted in practices associated with a belief that language learning was accomplished primarily through observation, some members sought to intervene either by bringing in external advocates (Hinton, 2002) of language renewal or by returning to indigenous traditions. Leanne Hinton and Nancy Steele (Karuk) were invited to the community to talk about the master-apprentice program—an effective transmission strategy in which adult learners play a very active role. In a far different strategy, some members of the community promoted a return to traditional, long storytelling sessions that would be attended by both adults and children (Bunte, personal communication). In these instances community members helped to create their own ideological clarification by conducting discussions among themselves in which they produced a compromise acceptable to all. Though reliance on words borne by the wind was not condemned or even disputed, members felt that it could do no harm to try these alternative interventions to better ensure the continuity of their heritage language.

### **Successes and dilemmas in my own renewal research**

Though comparative case studies of ideological concern are meaningful to all who work in language renewal projects, I think it is quite natural for us to feel that we learn the most from those revitalization situations in which we were directly involved. Here I want to briefly discuss some successes and dilemmas that I have encountered in my two major long-term research projects over the past 35 years. Though I have described each of these communities much more extensively elsewhere (Kroskrity, 1993, 2002, in press), some observations from past work in the Western Mono communities of North Fork and Auberry in Central California and more recent attempts to engage in language renewal work for the Arizona Tewa of the Village of Tewa, First Mesa, Hopi Reservation in N.E. Arizona are instructive here.

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The Western Mono community consists of about 1,500 members in several neighboring Central California towns. Within this group about 200 people have some knowledge of the language and about 40 of them can be regarded as highly fluent (Kroskrity, 2002, p. 172). In 1980, I helped to create the UCLA Mono Language Project in response to a request for technical, linguistic assistance from Rosalie Bethel, a distinguished elder, community leader, and language activist from the Western Mono community of North Fork. Though she did not have linguistic training, Rosalie Bethel had an acute sense of the importance of documentation for a heritage language that seemed to be losing all of its everyday functions to English (Kroskrity, in press) and when I first met her she showed me two shoeboxes filled with index cards containing Mono words that she had written using her own intuitions about how to adapt the Roman alphabet to her language.

The first major accomplishment of our joint project was the creation of a practical dictionary (Bethel et al., 1984) that incorporated Bethel's pioneering efforts. Though the goal was to produce a dictionary of maximal use to the community, community members and linguists contended over two issues that seemed to reflect conflicting ideologies. One of these issues was what I have come to call the "variationism" indigenous to the community. Members of the Mono community resisted the kind of standardization that is critical for the creation of a successful writing system by continuously pointing out phonological variation and lexical differences that were attributed to geographical and/or kinship network differences. In most cases we found we could accommodate this by adding additional information to lexical entries. For example, in the entry for *mutsipl* 'flea' we could note the North Fork pronunciation but also annotate the term indicating that it would be *mujipl* in the Auberry region (Kroskrity, 2002, p. 181-182).

While variationism challenged this and other conventional practices of standardization, it did not prove to be as much of an obstacle as did community beliefs and feelings about Mono literacy. Some community members, especially the oldest generation, questioned whether Mono could or should be written. Middle aged members, who were literate in English wanted a writing system that was like English though they seemed not to realize how inconsistent spelling conventions for English are or that Mono routinely used sounds that were not included in that alphabet. The linguists and community members met on several occasions to better accommodate community expectations. Though the linguists initially wanted an orthography in which one phonological unit would be represented by one letter, we had to admit that community members had a point when they wanted to write the diminutive suffix *-tsi* (following written English) rather than *-ci* (following traditional Americanist practices). But though the community finally succeeded in getting the linguists to understand their perspective as users of written English, the linguistic team was less than successful in convincing many community members that all of the folk writing conventions for writing Mono were inadequate because they could not consistently represent the distinctive sounds of Western Mono. Though this was difficult enough, further

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complications arose when some members complained that even the revised orthography was not transparent enough. Though the dictionary provided a “guide to pronunciation” that included examples of each letter in the Mono script, some members complained that they wanted pronunciation information for each entry (not unlike English language dictionaries) and still others seemed stunned by how to pronounce written Mono at all. They were so unaccustomed to seeing Mono written and, for many, so unaccustomed to hearing spoken Mono that they seemed unable to even begin to decode these exotic representations. Since Rosalie herself never learned to write the orthography she sympathized with those who acted like they could never learn to pronounce the written language.

But when we were invited to participate in the Iowa Multimedia Workshop for Endangered Languages at the University of Iowa in the Summer of 1996, I quickly recognized that this new medium would allow us to produce a guide to pronunciation that was “self-pronouncing.”<sup>2</sup> Anyone could navigate the completed CD-ROM that we began that year and turn to a pronunciation guide in which they could click on any letter and experience the actual pronunciation as recorded in a Quick-Time movie of Rosalie Bethel pronouncing a sample word for that letter. These movies included important visual information about pronunciation such as the lack of lip rounding for the central high vowel that we wrote as a “barred i” [ī] in the Western Mono orthography.

Our published version of *Taitaduhaan: Western Mono Ways of Speaking* (Kroskrity, Bethel & Reynolds, 2002) won acclaim among language renewal specialists (Kroskrity, 2001) and temporarily attracted enough attention from community members that our orthography became more widely used within the community. Though we never completely eclipsed the multiplicity of folk orthographies, we seemed to be out-competing them—at least for a short period of time. However, as operating systems for MAC and PC evolved they soon rendered our CD-ROM unplayable. And now, I am told, the removal of our CD-ROM from the marketplace of orthographies has produced a resurgence of folk orthographies that is now explained by community members as the inevitable outcome of regional and familial differences—an orthographic reincarnation of the ideology of variationism. The lesson here seems to be that ideological clarification is not a one-time achievement but rather an ongoing process in need of periodic fine-tuning.

Though working with the Western Mono provided me with a variety of experiences some of which could be regarded as successful while others continue to provide ongoing dilemmas, it is the prospect of beginning language renewal research with the Arizona Tewa that is most responsible for my sense that the “language clarification” is not merely a useful concept but a necessary one. In the Village of Tewa, First Mesa, Hopi Reservation and in neighboring villages live about 700 descendants of the Southern Tewa who moved to the Hopi area after refusing to resettle their home villages after the second Pueblo Revolt of 1696. This community, as I detailed in earlier research (Kroskrity, 1993), has retained a discrete cultural identity and is the only group of more than 100 Post-Pueblo Revolt diaspora groups to maintain its heritage language rather than



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opting for complete assimilation with the host groups. This fact is not lost on most Tewa who recognize the language as an important symbol of their identity in many ways but perhaps most notably in their expression, “*Naavi hiili naavi wowac’i na-mu*” ‘My language is my life’. But today despite the importance of the heritage language, few young people are acquiring it. When I first conducted research in the Arizona Tewa community in the 1970s, half of all Tewa homes were raising children with some regular exposure to the Tewa language. But after a decade of not working in the community I was almost simultaneously contacted by younger community members, representing two distinct “factions” of the community. Each expressed an interest in my helping them develop a language renewal program. For me this represented a profound change since 30 years earlier I had offered my services to the community only to be told that the linguistic materials I was producing, while valuable, were not necessary for the transmission of the language since children were learning it in their homes. But by 2007, the number of Tewa homes in which the heritage language was regularly used had dropped from 50% to less than 10%. It was now obvious to all that the community’s distinctive heritage language was now severely threatened.

But though I was “invited” by these young people, I was soon informed that I would ultimately need a more official permission that could only be granted after making a successful presentation of a project proposal to each of two very different gate-keeping groups. The clan leaders from the most important clans of the *Munae Te’e* (Plaza Kiva) informed me that they were the traditional guardians of the community and that any project involving the Tewa language should be cleared with them. Though appropriately curious about the kinds of linguistic data I had collected over two decades of research, they sternly advised me to recognize their traditional authority and to ignore an alternative gate-keeping group. These leaders wanted me to disregard a group that was institutionally represented by the Village of Tewa Community Development (CD) process. Members of this group advised me to regard them as the legitimate group since they represented the vast majority of the Village and not merely a traditional elite. My previous research in the community was conducted from 1973-93 and during that time Dewey Healing served as my key consultant. As a Corn Clan elder with a vast knowledge of language and traditional culture and as an accomplished singer and songwriter, Healing had perceptively recognized that the language was in trouble and welcomed me, as a fledgling graduate student in linguistic anthropology, into his home. Though he died almost 20 years ago, he was still recognized as a distinguished Corn Clan elder (as well as a former Hopi Tribal Council Chairman)—and most *Munae Te’e* leaders still regard him as one of them. But Healing’s sons, and many of his relatives, were not part of this group, belonging instead to clans located in the *Pendi-te’e* (‘Outside’ Kiva). Though they were very interested in facilitating my work and in having me continue the documentation work I had begun with their father, they urged me to go through the town hall-like CD-process in which community members as a group would be called to a large meeting in order to hear the proposal, ask

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questions, make possible counter-recommendations and otherwise influence and approve an acceptable proposal.

In meetings with members of both these groups, I continually emphasized the need for a project in which all community members who could, would contribute their linguistic knowledge for the purpose of creating such resources as a practical orthography, a practical dictionary, sample narrative texts, a non-technical grammar of the language, etc. While this seemed to not pose a problem for the majority, represented by the CD process, the clan leaders did seem to have concerns about just whose language should be documented and who would have access to the products produced. Though I did not press them too far on this because it was clear that we would need to postpone our meeting until I could work up actual samples of the kinds of documentation I had already produced, I was struck by the profound need for “ideological clarification.” Though I cannot yet provide a success story here, I am optimistic that by bringing people, who are in apparent ideological conflict, into dialog with one another and with me as a professional linguistic anthropologist that we will ultimately come to understandings about access, the representation of intra-village difference, the need for native literacy and the need to produce practical resources for the entire community. For the Arizona Tewa, I interpret the need for ideological clarification as especially real. Not only is this type of ideological clarification a prerequisite to the kind of large-scale support from the community that is necessary for such projects, but a failure to achieve ideological clarification would result in the probability that any language renewal products produced for the community would only become instruments of social division rather than resources for uniting it.

### **Concluding remarks**

My goal here has been to both clarify and fortify a notion of “ideological clarification” and to suggest its relevance for linguists and activists interested in Native American language renewal. By treating ideological clarification, not as an afterthought, but rather as a precondition and an ongoing process for successful language renewal, communities can avoid, or at least minimize, the kinds of conflict and breakdowns in cooperation that can prove disastrous for such projects. Tying a notion of ideological clarification more tightly to language ideological theory is not merely an exercise in keeping up with a more current theory but rather it provides a demonstrably better conceptual tool for anticipating, understanding, and solving problems.

Three emphases in ideological theory—awareness, positionality, multiplicity—fortify a notion of ideological clarification to make it more useful. “Awareness” is critical because bringing linguistic beliefs and practices that may be taken-for-granted and moving them into discursive consciousness is often a critical step in being able to recognize problems, discuss them, and engage in dialogs. By recognizing that our beliefs and feelings about language(s) emerge from our “position” in a cultural group or a nation-state, we are better able to understand them and to appreciate why others, who do not occupy a similar position, may have different views. By expecting a multiplicity of perspectives

within a group and different language ideologies, we are better able to anticipate who needs to be dialoging with whom (e.g., younger and older generations, elders and teachers, traditional leaders and non-traditional representatives) in order to better achieve an elusive but important goal of ideological clarification.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Michael Silverstein (1998a, p. 138) describes the importance of sites in the following manner: “the site of institutionalized ritual and ritualization provides an essential place where societies and social groups, in effect, articulate the ideological, whether positively, as in the kiva, or negatively, as in the *kros*.”

<sup>2</sup>Our project was invited by Brenda Farnell who facilitated the workshop and whose exemplary work, *Wiyuta: Assiniboine Storytelling with Signs* (Farnell, 1995) inspired our group to do a performance based CD-ROM.

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