

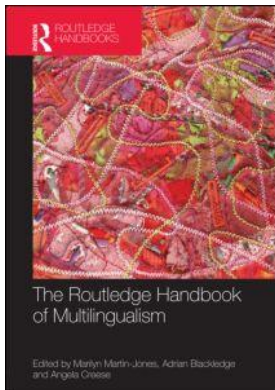
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Part I

Discourses about multilingualism, across political and historical contexts

Indigenous contexts

Donna Patrick

Introduction

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, we have come to take for granted a category of people called ‘Indigenous’, with distinctive collective rights and identities. Yet, Indigenous peoples themselves have, of course, been around for millennia, each group developing its own legal, cultural and economic systems. Central to maintaining this distinctiveness has been the use of languages in pursuing trade and maintaining relations between groups across time and space. Language has also been linked to changing cultural practices internal to Indigenous communities, as people have engaged with modernity in diverse ways, creating and reflecting religious, economic and other institutional transformations. As Indigenous identities develop on a global scale and Indigenous engagements with nation-states continue, the role of language in maintaining local identities and in accessing and participating in discourses of power, social transformation and resistance becomes crucial.

This chapter will approach the topic of multilingualism in Indigenous contexts by examining the ways in which Indigenous multilingualism has figured in the neighbouring disciplines of linguistics, anthropology, social psychology and education. This will involve examining the theoretical underpinnings and methodological practices of these disciplines and tracing the implications of research across these fields both for understanding Indigenous multilingualism and for applying this understanding to policy and other spheres. The perspective on Indigenous language contexts that will emerge is one that highlights the historical continuity of Indigenous multilingual practices as well as contemporary social and political realities of Indigenous communities and language use. In other words, this perspective will reveal the importance of studying language use among Indigenous groups before as well as after the onset of colonization, global capitalism, the intervention of the nation-state and other engagements of Indigenous groups with modernity.

The body of this chapter will begin by first addressing the complexity of the notion of ‘Indigenous groups’. Of particular importance here are how this notion differs from that of ‘linguistic minorities’; what contexts of language use and what language practices are uniquely Indigenous; and how historical, political and economic power relations have shaped these contexts and practices. The chapter will then turn to a review of early developments in the

study of Indigenous languages. This will include discussion of the work of early linguists in developing language typologies and in tracing ‘genetic’ relations between Indigenous languages and groups, and the subsequent rise of the Boasian and structuralist traditions in North American linguistics and anthropology. The chapter will then offer a historical analysis of Indigenous multilingualism itself. Drawing primarily on examples from the North American context, it will consider how and why multilingualism developed among Indigenous groups in North America both before and after their contact with Europeans, and offer a critical perspective on descriptive approaches to Indigenous multilingualism. After addressing these questions, it will examine contemporary approaches to the study of multilingualism in Indigenous contexts, focusing on the role of quantifiable and descriptive survey methods, explanatory and ethnographic approaches to research, and critical and Indigenous-centred theoretical frameworks in the study of Indigenous multilingualism.

Finally, the chapter will take up the question of how Indigenous languages have recently gained prominence in Indigenous and other discourses of language rights and language survival and how and why Indigenous groups have mobilized around language in their struggles for political and cultural recognition. It will conclude with a brief discussion of potential policy implications of Indigenous multilingualism and directions for future research in the study of this area.

What is an ‘Indigenous’ group?

Indigenous groups and the term ‘Indigenous’

In order to address multilingualism in Indigenous contexts, we first need to be clear about what we mean by an ‘Indigenous’ people or group. Significantly, ‘Indigenous’ is a transnational category created in the twentieth century, which has gained rapid currency in social, political, economic and legal domains. In this section, we shall examine this category and the rise of ‘Indigeneity’ as a global movement as well as the associated interest in Indigenous languages globally. We shall also examine the implications of this internationalization for Indigenous language speakers at both national and local levels. Crucially, Indigeneity has no ‘unified trajectory’: it is not ‘a singular ideology, program, or movement, and its politics resist closure’ (de la Cadena and Starn 2007: 4). Nor is Indigeneity isolated from other ideologies and movements – for political recognition, self-determination, socio-economic development, and cultural and linguistic ‘survival’.

A basic observation that we can make is that Indigenous peoples are survivors of colonialism and resource exploitation on territories that they have occupied since ‘time immemorial’. Their traditional subsistence-based communities and land-based economies have been threatened by states seeking political, economic and territorial control. In addition, their traditional cultural, linguistic, and spiritual practices and knowledge have at times been appropriated by others and otherwise demonized and threatened by proselytizing and cultural assimilation. They are groups that strive for recognition of their sovereignty, including the right to self-determination and to culturally and linguistically distinct forms of education, spirituality, justice, economic development and governance (Niezen 2003).

One way to understand Indigenous peoples as a group is in terms of the ‘narrative elements’ of Indigeneity described by Pratt (2007: 401), which include (1) ‘unsolicited encounter’, where Indigenous subjects are on the ‘receiving end of an encounter [they] did not seek’; (2) ‘dispossession’, through conquest or settler colonialism, which involves losing control of one’s land base and thus the need to sell one’s labour; (3) ‘perdurance’, the continuation of a

self-identifying collectivity through relations of exploitation, which is necessary to justify the ‘distinct, nonequivalent group’; (4) ‘proselytization’, crucial to an ongoing ‘asymmetrical engagement’; and (5) ‘unpayable debt’, which unfolds in the relationships embodied in Indigeneity.

Of course, the term ‘Indigenous’ itself is a non-Indigenous creation. Moreover, as Pratt explains,

‘[I]ndigenous’ is rarely if ever the primary identity of [I]ndigenous people. One is first Maori, Cree, Hmong, Aymara, Dayak, Kung, Quiché or Adivasi and one claims [I]ndigeneity by virtue of that (temporally and socially) prior self-identification.

(2007: 399)

The term, in fact, has its origins in the United Nations, where it figured largely in human rights initiatives and in the 1957 International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 107, ‘Concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries’. Yet, the development of this notion took place with little input from Indigenous populations themselves; and ‘few, if any, had developed a self-referential “[I]ndigenous” identity’ (Niezen 2003: 4). The idea of self-referential identity as ‘Indigenous’ did, however, soon become part of a working definition of ‘Indigenous peoples’ (ILO Convention 169; Hughes 2003: 19), a definition that included a sense of ‘shared experiences’ and global relatedness. This definition has served to unite Indigenous peoples and distinguish them from other ethnic minorities.

In addition to an expression of identity, ‘Indigenous’ has also become a legal and analytical category. According to the definition given in ILO Convention No. 169, people are considered to be Indigenous

on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

(ILO 1989)

The notions of colonization, original descent, and geographical and social continuity that figure in this definition are often closely associated with those of collective rights, which have represented a remedy to collective oppression, vulnerability and marginalization. Claims to such rights have been basic to struggles of Indigenous groups to gain recognition and sovereignty (territorial authority, self-determination or autonomy) and to win control over land and waterways and the resources on, and under, these (Niezen 2003: 18).

What is also becoming recognized as a key element of definitions of ‘Indigenous’ is Indigenous language practices. But these practices must be seen to include not only those related to the traditional language of a particular group, but also multilingual practices. Such practices have arisen as dominant (often colonial) languages have entered into competition with Indigenous ones; or where migration, sometimes forced, has led to the interaction of Indigenous and other languages, creating new ways of speaking in new social contexts. During such interactions, Indigenous languages, like the cultures and peoples themselves, have been vulnerable to institutional and social processes of assimilation – although assimilation has, in many cases, not actually occurred – and to dispossession and state violence. State violence has included symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990: 4), whereby power has been legitimized in meanings institutionally produced and reproduced through everyday practices of negative stereotyping, derogatory labelling, and the devaluing of Indigenous languages and epistemologies.

These processes, along with disease and famine, drastically reduced Indigenous populations in the decades following contact, although Indigenous populations have been growing steadily in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Smith 2007). In fact, Indigenous languages and cultures have been remarkably resilient despite assimilation, dispossession and state violence. Although exact numbers are difficult to determine with any precision, the number of Indigenous societies is thought to be between 4,000 and 7,000, and, according to the UN, the world's Indigenous population is over 370 million. Aside from these numbers, many Indigenous groups have maintained their social and political institutions, and as just suggested, their cultural and linguistic practices have in many cases experienced a resurgence, even in the face of state and global pressures. Moreover, Indigenous linguistic practices turn out to be far richer than is often assumed, having long included various forms of multilingualism. It is these multilingual practices that are the focus of the rest of this chapter.

Some questions about Indigeneity and multilingual practices

The theoretical and methodological concern with multilingualism and multilingual practices raises some key research questions about the interaction of multilingualism and Indigeneity. These include such questions as how Indigenous languages and multilingualism became objects of study; how researchers of language and culture have approached Indigenous languages in multilingual contexts; and how contemporary research of Indigenous multilingualism can shed light on the engagement of Indigenous groups with global capitalism, neo-liberalism and modernity more generally. Such investigations also include the question of how such research impinges on Indigenous groups themselves, particularly given the concerns that Indigenous people have raised about the potential for both the research process and research results to have negative impacts on Indigenous political, economic and cultural well-being (see e.g. Smith 1999).

I shall be approaching these broad questions as follows. First, I shall be examining early developments in the field and how scholars approached Indigenous contexts in the development of linguistic and ethnographic study. These include late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century European investigations into language classification and twentieth-century American anthropological-linguistic approaches. I shall then consider historical perspectives on Indigenous multilingualism, with a focus on North America and Canada, in particular. All of these approaches and perspectives have set the stage for contemporary examinations and understandings of Indigenous groups' linguistic diversity, which I shall be discussing in the latter sections of the chapter.

Early developments in the field

Language typologies and comparative-historical linguistics

Indigenous languages, diverse and grammatically complex, have long been the objects of comparative-historical linguistic research, an approach to language study that blossomed in the nineteenth century. This approach focused on the 'phyletic' relations between languages (how languages are related to each other in terms of their 'evolutionary' development) and the 'proto-languages' (hypothesized original or ancestral languages) from which they were seen to derive. It involved documenting individual languages, as discrete objects of study, and placing them within language families, in order to determine how languages were related. This tradition of comparative-historical research has been seen as aiming 'to discover and maintain' the unity of

humankind ‘in the phenomena of language’ by ‘seek[ing] a unity of origin in the past’ (Hymes 1974: 209). In the North American context, this approach was applied to Indigenous languages, which were carefully documented and analysed by the intellectual descendants of the European comparative-historical linguists, who were in fact continuing work initiated centuries before by missionaries. Most prominent among these linguists were Franz Boas (1858–1942), who brought the European tradition to North America and influenced a generation of North American linguists and anthropologists, and Boas’s student Edward Sapir (1889–1939).

Boas and his students, in describing and documenting Indigenous languages, saw them as equal to European languages in complexity and cultural specificity and as worthy of study for their own sake. Such study led not only to the publication of grammars, including the four-volume *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (1911–41), but also to the pursuit of the more rarefied goal of understanding the general ‘laws’ of culture that united humankind. Anthropologists following in the footsteps of Boas collaborated with Indigenous informants and collected texts describing myths, legends and other narratives in addition to grammatical information. Although they made little space for understanding or documenting multilingualism, as I shall be explaining in the following section, their work did pave the way for more nuanced comparative work in linguistic and cultural systems. Such work included cognitive anthropology and linguistic research that embraced the idea of ‘linguistic relativity’, according to which language played a key role in shaping thought and structuring human cognition.

Language and ethnography

As just mentioned, the work of documenting and describing the Indigenous languages in North America was basic to the research of linguists and anthropologists starting in the late nineteenth century. As it happens, this work gave rise to the research programme of structural linguistics in the twentieth century – research that had a similar goal of seeking ‘unity’ within and across languages, but rather than hypothesize a ‘proto’-language, the goals were to uncover the abstract linguistic structure hypothesized to exist in all of the world’s languages. A key figure in this research programme was Leonard Bloomfield (1887–1949), who is generally credited with leading the development of this programme. Needless to say, the autonomous, abstract linguistic systems posited as ‘languages’ for study left little room for more messy, mixed multilingual practices of actual Indigenous speakers.

Structuralism, and its view of languages as autonomous systems worthy of study in themselves, dominated linguistic research in the early decades of the twentieth century. Yet, by mid-century, as noted below by Hymes, the limits of this research paradigm for the investigation of the linguistic practices of Indigenous communities were becoming clear, and the 1950s and 1960s saw the development of sociolinguistics and a return to ethnography in the study of Indigenous languages. This shift led to new kinds of research questions, related to the pragmatics of language use, language variation among speakers, language maintenance and shift, language and educational practice and policy, and the role of culture and political economic processes in these.

The limits of structuralism and the need for sociological and ethnographic methods to explain the linguistic practices were famously noted by Hymes (1974: 71). White Thunder, an Indigenous speaker of Menomoni from Wisconsin, had been previously described by Bloomfield – in language that today is difficult not to be seen as arrogant, ignorant and offensive. White Thunder’s language had been observed by Bloomfield, leading him to remark that he spoke

less English than Menomini, and that is a strong indictment, for his Menomini is atrocious. His vocabulary is small; his inflections are often barbarous; he constructs sentences of a few threadbare models. He may be said to speak no language tolerably.

(cited in Hymes 1974: 71)

What Hymes recognized about this description of White Thunder's bilingual speech was that it was consistent with structuralism's analysis of language into discrete linguistic 'systems'. This left no room for the possibility of bilingual mixed-code speech or multiple contexts of language use or for the notion of a bilingual 'communicative competence'. The pragmatics of how the language was actually used in communication was not part of a structuralist view of language. In other words, Bloomfield had formed his opinion of White Thunder's speech only from attempting to elicit grammatical forms from him. Moreover, White Thunder was not the only member of this community who spoke 'no' language in its complete form: as Hymes points out, Bloomfield noted that other speakers spoke the same kind of 'threadbare language' as White Thunder did.

Yet, Bloomfield's assumptions about the nature of language had not allowed him to entertain the possibility that in other contexts of language use, White Thunder might have communicated effectively, using what linguistic resources he had at his disposal. Indeed, investigation of language use in a variety of social and cultural domains certainly reveals contexts in which full communication is effected through mixed language or morphologically or syntactically reduced forms. Although Hymes did not discuss this, it is also clear that, once we adopt a more nuanced, sociologically informed perspective on language, the particular forms of Menomini and English used by this speaker suddenly become worthy of investigation themselves. The questions that they pose for research then become how they reflect not an 'atrocious' semilingualism, but bi- and multilingual competence, and how the historical, social and cultural circumstances gave rise to them in the first place. Investigation of such circumstances, which include social, political and economic influences, all of which have had a great impact on Indigenous language use, can thus help us to understand the multiple forms of Indigenous multilingualism.

Hymes's ethnographically oriented work set the stage for the research programme in linguistic anthropology known as the 'ethnography of communication' or the 'ethnography of speaking'. The focus of such research, which encompasses work both within and across cultures, has been in the 'pragmatic' domain, specifying aspects of language use in broader and narrower communicative contexts. Research undertaken within this programme has addressed a range of questions related to Indigenous contexts, which will be discussed further in the section on ethnography in our discussion of contemporary theory and methods.

What our discussion has highlighted so far, is the usefulness found in contrasting ethnographically oriented research with more linguistically oriented research. The latter focuses on the often dramatic grammatical, phonological and morphological changes occurring in situations of language contact; whereas the former examines the cultural, economic and institutional domains in Indigenous communities in which more powerful languages encounter less powerful ones. I shall have more to say about these and other approaches to Indigenous language practices, including those coming from the disciplines of social psychology, education and policy studies, later in the chapter.

However, before embarking on further discussion of theoretical and methodological approaches, it might be worth returning to the discussion of Indigeneity that began this chapter. In this way, we can see how the insights about language practices that flow from that discussion can inform our understanding of the forms and continuity of multilingualism, within and between Indigenous groups and across time and space.

Historical perspectives

Indigenous language practices pre- and post-contact

Earlier, I noted that an understanding of Indigenous peoples must include an understanding of the term ‘Indigenous’ itself; and that a key part of the latter involved a recognition of the historical processes that have shaped their economic, cultural and linguistic practices. Given this chapter’s focus on Indigenous language practices, it is worth exploring the historical dimension of these practices, and in particular examine the form that they took both before and after contact with encroaching states and with the European-dominant world economic system. These practices encompass phenomena such as mixed languages, bilingualism and multilingualism, which over the years have developed and been transformed in ways consistent with changing political and economic arrangements, and with socio-economic and cultural patterns of language use. The examples that I shall be drawing on to illustrate my discussion will be from North America, where colonial relationships were rooted in trade and the multilingualism necessary to achieve this. Similar patterns, however, may also be found on other continents and in other locales.

I shall begin this historical examination of Indigenous multilingualism in North America with the role of language in trade relationships. One place where this role is particularly easy to observe is the northwest coast of British Columbia. It was there that James Cook arrived in 1778, encountering the Mowachaht people on what has come to be known as Nootka Island. Cook wrote in his diary that the first word that these people uttered when he first met them was ‘Makook’, as he spelled it. This word meant ‘let’s trade’, including in its meaning both ‘buying’ and ‘selling’ or ‘exchange’ (Lutz 2008: ix–x). From 1778 to the late 1790s, this coastal region in what is now British Columbia was the centre of European trade in the area. Every trading vessel stopped there – including ones from Spain, which led to the establishment of a Spanish settlement there (2008: ix). Trade shaped the encounters between the Europeans and the Indigenous peoples they met, as the Europeans sought wealth and resources for further exchange in Europe.

Although these encounters might have resulted in the first records of multilingual practices involving Indigenous peoples, such practices, and the vast networks of Indigenous trade that supported them, existed long before any Europeans arrived to write about them. Despite the lack of written records, other evidence exists that Indigenous multilingualism characterized social relations between various autonomous societies dependent on trade for survival. Although certain Western ideologies have taken languages and cultures to represent discrete systems and thus conjure up images of static and culturally and linguistically closed Indigenous groups, bi- and multilingualism appear to have flourished among Indigenous communities, indicating the dynamic nature of these communities and the relatively porous boundaries between them. The multilingual practices in which these communities engaged included the use of multilingual interpreters, lingua francas and trade jargons, and mixed languages, and the circumstances giving rise to these practices included exogamous marriage, trade and capture in conflicts. I shall discuss examples of each of these practices in the following section.

The role of interpreters as ‘bilingual brokers’

One well-documented multilingual practice among Indigenous communities was the use of interpreters, who were needed to negotiate and interact with neighbouring groups. Of course, interpreters were also needed after European contact. Thus, in what is now British Columbia,

‘wise chiefs’ would send ‘a son to learn a colonial or missionary language of the Europeans ... apparently following an [I]ndigenous pattern of training interpreters among political elites’ (Silverstein 1996: 121). This form of language education persisted in the region into the twentieth century, although it came to involve educating a son or daughter in Western law, politics and English, in order to advance Indigenous claims to sovereignty.

In many cases, Indigenous interpreters were women. However, these interpreters had not been singled out for language learning to fulfil their roles as members of Indigenous elites. Instead, they had often been taken prisoner or married off into another language group. It is likely that these linguistic interpreters were as valuable before European contact as after it (Miller 2004), although there is obviously more documentary evidence of their role in the latter case. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example, women played a prominent role as interpreters in trade and as language teachers and diplomats for the Hudson’s Bay Company, a vast fur-trading enterprise founded in 1670, and other fur traders in Canada (Van Kirk 1980: 65), their multilingual skills often advancing European trade.

The existence of some of these interpreters was documented by European traders and explorers. One such interpreter was Thanadelthur, the most ‘outstanding female diplomat in fur-trade history’ (Van Kirk 1980: 66). She was ‘a young Chipewyan woman, who acted as guide, interpreter, and, peace negotiator’ for James Knight, a Hudson’s Bay Company Governor at York Factory, an early settlement in what is now northeastern Manitoba (*ibid.*). Thanadelthur had been captured by the Cree and held prisoner, and in this way learned the Cree language. The Cree had been aligned with the Hudson’s Bay Company post, and good communication between the English and the Cree became possible as multilingualism arose. The Chipewyans, however, had not entered into trade and were fearful of doing so, as the Cree had firearms obtained through their trading relationship with the Europeans. Thanadelthur escaped from the Cree in 1714 and headed to the Hudson’s Bay Company post, where she was hired by Knight to help bring the Chipewyans into trade. They mounted an expedition into Chipewyan territory to convince the Chipewyans that they could trade at the post in peace, without retaliation from the Cree. When Thanadelthur returned to the expedition camp, after going along for ten days to find her people, she had a hoarse voice from negotiating and was accompanied by over 100 Chipewyans (Van Kirk 1980: 69). Thanadelthur’s multilingualism thus turned out to play a crucial role in the expansion of westward trade in this period.

Another Indigenous interpreter was described by William Clark, of the renowned Lewis and Clark expedition of 1803–6 (cited in Silverstein 1996: 118). Clark recalled that a Shoshone boy ‘had been taken prisoner by ... the Tushepaws [also known as Flatheads, a Salishan group], whose language he had acquired’. Clark was able to communicate with him by speaking English to a French-speaking Euro-American, who relayed the message in French to Toussaint Charbonneau, another member of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Charbonneau then relayed the message in Minnetarée (or Hidatsa), a Siouan language, to his wife, the famous Sacagawea, a Shoshone who had learnt this language during the time that she had been held prisoner by the Hidatsa. Sacagawea then spoke to the boy in Shoshone.

These examples show how interpreters were key to European expansion and how their multilingualism had developed from patterns of multilingual language acquisition embedded in long-standing cultural, economic and political practices. Those Indigenous people who had close relations with the traders became language learners and language teachers themselves. This multilingualism, aligned with European power, was coupled with the multilingual practices of those who had been captured by or had married into other groups. As Miller (2004: 11) notes, ‘in both the pre-contact period and after the Europeans established themselves’, Indigenous groups ‘frequently incorporated members of other nations into their body, particularly to

replace individuals lost to disease or warfare'. For some Indigenous nations, such as the Iroquois, those adopted into another group 'found themselves accepted completely as members of their adoptive nation' (ibid.) – a status that involved being fluent in the adoptive language and thus a potential interpreter.

These individual cases of multilingualism, however, were not the only forms of trade or diplomatic communication. Various others also developed, as I shall discuss in the next section.

Lingua francas, trade languages and mixed languages

In other Indigenous contexts, multilingual practices arose through the use of gestures (a kind of sign language); lingua francas, languages used as a common language between speakers of different languages; trade languages, simplified language varieties that arise in a trade context when no common language exists between speakers; and 'mixed languages', which arise from the languages of fluently bilingual speakers. These new ways of speaking were encountered and documented by Europeans who, in their quest for mercantile trade and colonies, needed to communicate with Indigenous peoples.

According to Campbell (1997) and other authors, a number of Indigenous languages were used as lingua francas across broad regions of North America (Campbell 1997: 24). Several of them came into existence after contact with Europeans (Silverstein 1996: 118), although some would have been in use pre-contact (Campbell 1997: 24). The geographical expansion of these languages was assisted by the fur trade and by European expansion across the continent. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Algonquian language (also called Chippewa, Ojibwa, Saulteaux or Ottawa) had become one such lingua franca, used in the Great Lakes region.

Trade languages were also used by various Indigenous groups for facilitating relationships between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages. Trade languages each had different historical trajectories and their use may have peaked at different times. Some of these languages, such as 'Eskimo trade jargon', were pidgins, grammatically and lexically reduced (second) languages. 'Eskimo trade jargon' had two distinct varieties: one, called 'ships' jargon', arose with the arrival of European whalers; the other may have been used solely by Indigenous peoples. These two varieties are described by Stefánsson:

Among the Mackenzie River Eskimo there is, beside the ships' jargon, a more highly developed one used in dealing with Athabaska Indians around Fort Arctic, Red River, and Fort Macpherson. ... It has probably more than twice as extensive a vocabulary as the ships' variety and is so different from it that some white men who know the ships' jargon have employed as interpreters Loucheux Indians under the impression that the Indians spoke real Eskimo.

(Stefánsson 1909: 218–19, quoted in Campbell 1997: 18)

Another trade language, Mobilian (also called 'Chickasaw trade jargon', as much of its lexicon was derived from the Muskogean languages Chickasaw and Choctaw), was used in Louisiana, where French settlers arrived in 1699. This language 'served as the general language of communication' in an extensive area, westward into Texas 'by the expansion and increase' of French and later American settlers (Crawford 1978: 7–8). It was spoken as far north as the Ohio River and east into Florida. And although, according to Drechsel (1984), it was in use prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the French 'likely contributed to its diffusion ... in the historic periods of greater Louisiana' (Drechsel 1984: 172, cited in Campbell 1997: 21).

A final example of a trade language is ‘Chinook trade jargon’, which developed on the northwest coast of British Columbia and persisted in more remote areas in Chilcotin territory into the 1930s. The language probably had its roots in Indigenous trade prior to the arrival of James Cook in 1778 at Nootka Island. As trade developed, however, so did this second language of communication. Thus, ‘when trade shifted to the territory of the Chinook people at the mouth of the Columbia River after 1800, the traders took this simple jargon with them’ (Lutz 2008: ix). From these origins, the language eventually developed ‘from a trading language ... [into] the language of work, used in mills, canneries, and hop fields’, where Indigenous people interacted with non-Indigenous immigrants and other Indigenous people who spoke no other common language (Lutz 2008: xi).

It is worth noting, however, that Chinook trade jargon and other trade languages had severe expressive limitations – although these could be both a blessing and a curse. Although these limitations ‘led ... to misunderstandings’, such misunderstandings ‘had their uses. If the Nlaka’pamux of the Fraser River wanted to interpret the Chinook words used by the Anglican Bishop of Columbia to refer to the Christian God – Saghalie Tayee Papa (literally, ‘the above chief father’) – as the Sun and Creator, both sides could feel they had some common ground’ (Lutz 2008: xi). Yet, as Lutz notes, other missionaries found it difficult to use Chinook jargon to convey their intended meanings. For example, one Methodist clergyman, writing in 1860, noted the difficulty of addressing the Indigenous people as ‘children of the forest’ with a language that rendered the phrase as ‘little men among big stick’ (ibid.).

Not all contact languages, however, had such expressive limitations. What also arose from contact between speakers of Indigenous languages and speakers of other languages were ‘bilingual mixed languages’ (Thomason 2001). Unlike pidgins, these languages did not begin as trade languages with reduced grammar and vocabulary, but were ‘mixed’ and complex from their inception, having developed from the languages of fluently bilingual speakers. In some cases, these new ways of speaking became the first language of speakers raised in bilingual and multilingual environments (cf. *Media Lengua* in Ecuador; Muysken 1997).

One mixed language in North America was Michif, used by the Métis people (Brown 2004), a group with mixed Indigenous and European heritage now recognized alongside First Nations and Inuit as having Aboriginal rights in the *Canadian Constitution Act*, 1982. Historically, Michif was used across the Canadian and northern American plains and north into the Northwest Territories by the descendants of the early fur traders in western Canada and their Indigenous wives and children. Michif was often spoken along with English, French or another Indigenous language, depending on a speaker’s geographical location. The language itself is half Cree and half French, drawing its verbs from the former and its nouns from the latter (Bakker 1997: 1).

Interaction between the Métis, speaking Michif, and French- and Cree-speaking groups necessitated the use of Cree and French alongside Michif (Bakker and Papen 1997: 356). This multilingual situation changed during the twentieth century, however, leading to a situation in which ‘few if any Michif speakers spoke Cree beside Michif, and only one in three spoke French beside Michif; most Métis had grown up as monolingual Michif speakers’ (ibid.). By the latter half of the twentieth century, the number of Michif speakers had dropped from a few thousand to an estimated 1,000 speakers. As a result of urbanization and modernization, English has also entered the multilingual mix as another language that French, Cree and Michif speakers have had to contend with. Thus, multilingualism, which created the conditions for Michif to thrive in the first place, has been reduced to unilingualism over a few generations.

Even this decline of multilingual practices among the Métis reveals, just as the *lingua francas*, trade languages and other multilingual practices described in this section do, the dynamic

linguistic practices of Indigenous groups. Far from being either static or unilingual, Indigenous groups often depended on interaction with other groups and found the linguistic means to do so. Thus, before state intervention and forced schooling in dominant languages intervened, multilingualism flourished in many trade contexts. If some of these multilingual practices had expressive limitations, others – in particular, the strategic learning of dominant languages – did not.

The contextualized descriptions given above provide a sense of how multilingualism was valued in a few specific cases. What, then, are still clearly needed to achieve a deeper understanding of multilingualism in contemporary Indigenous societies and its consequences for these societies are more explanatory approaches to multilingual practices and more extensive documentation of these practices. We saw earlier in the chapter that multilingualism in itself was not an important issue – whether for colonial powers or for those studying contact between Indigenous peoples and European traders – as long as European and Indigenous interlocutors remained partners in trade and the relation between these two groups was one of mutual dependence. Yet, as relations changed over time, and Europeans came to depend less on Indigenous traders, navigators and assistants to carry out the goals of colonization in the ‘New World’, Indigenous multilingualism did become an issue for state processes of nation-building. In other words, for European colonial ideologies, Indigenous multilingualism came to be seen as a hindrance to the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the European or white settler social, economic and cultural order. According to these ideologies, then, assimilation meant unilingualism in the dominant state language.

This historical turn in the study of Indigenous language practices requires theoretical and methodological approaches rather different from those with which much of the research into Indigenous languages has been conducted. I consider some more recent approaches to this research and some of the issues that these approaches need to address in the next section.

Key issues of theory and methods

The previous section highlighted the role of historical processes in shaping linguistic interaction and creating new forms of multilingualism in Indigenous contexts. It also highlighted the linguistic ideologies associated with these historical processes. In this section, I shall be considering how these processes can best be documented, described and analysed, in order to help us to answer such general research questions as what forms Indigenous multilingual practices take; how and why they arose and have or have not persisted; and the implications of the answers for Indigenous language speakers. Of course, addressing these general questions forces us to confront a range of more specific ones.

Generally speaking, we adopt particular research methods in order to answer research questions like those just enumerated. These methods, operating within particular theoretical frameworks and epistemologies, are socially constructed systems of producing knowledge. Whichever methods we use can thus play a key role in how we interpret our findings. Moreover, although theories and methods often fall within particular disciplinary boundaries, what may turn out to be most productive for analysing Indigenous multilingualism, given its social, cultural and political complexity, is a multi- or interdisciplinary and community-based approach.

Doing research on Indigenous multilingualism

Research on Indigenous contexts of multilingualism can encompass a range of issues, including Indigenous language use and change, Indigenous language and culture, the politics of language

and policy studies, literacy and education studies, and Indigenous language revitalization. Such research can likewise adopt one or more of a range of research orientations. These can be grouped into (1) general descriptive approaches (as used, for example, in census data research, sociolinguistics and social psychology) that draw on survey methods and interpret the data collected based on discrete factors, including sociological factors such as class and urbanization and psychological factors such as prestige and attitudes; (2) ethnographic explanatory approaches, which make observations of actual language use and draw on social theory as developed in sociology and anthropology to interpret data; (3) post-colonial and decolonization frameworks, which draw on studies in ethics, critical theory and Indigenous scholarship across a range of disciplines; (4) liberal rights and recognition-based approaches, which draw on legal studies, political science and political philosophy; and (5) policy studies, including education and language policy as these concern Indigenous languages and language revitalization. In that which follows, I shall briefly discuss each of these, drawing my examples from multilingual research in Canada and elsewhere. For ease of discussion, my examples will focus on contexts of Indigenous multilingualism related to the Inuit in Arctic Canada, but provide further clarification from other contexts. The question to be addressed is whether a language shift is under way among the Inuit in Arctic Canada, whereby these speakers of an Indigenous language, in this case Inuktitut, are using English in an increasing number of social contexts – with the implication that over the next generations members of this community will end up speaking only English.

Descriptive survey approaches

One productive way to address this research question would be to address general sociolinguistic questions such as what languages people use – speak, read and write – in various contexts and more generally, what forms Indigenous multilingualism takes in specific social settings. Thus, if one is interested in whether an Indigenous language is undergoing a language shift to a more dominant or powerful language, one can draw on empirical findings in order to assess the range of multilingualism in a community of speakers and the languages used in specific contexts. Here survey data can be particularly useful, as they can readily cover both a broad range and a large number of speakers. Surveys that make use of standardized written questionnaires – as used, for example, in censuses and in social psychological and sociolinguistic research on language use and attitudes – can provide useful contextual information about multilingualism. It is crucial to note, however, that the data collected in such surveys have distinct limitations, lacking the nuance and detail found in responses to discrete-answer questions. Of course, survey questions have other well-known drawbacks, such as the tendency of the particular wording of the question to elicit particular responses and, in the case of self-reported responses, the subjectivity inherent in such responses.

These and other difficulties with survey data emerge clearly from an examination of recent Aboriginal population surveys in Canada. As already noted, a key use of surveys is that of census-taking; in Canada, such surveys have asked about respondents' first language, their ability to understand and speak an Indigenous language, and their use of that language in the home (Statistics Canada 2003). Admittedly, these very large-scale surveys have offered a useful picture of various Indigenous languages. Moreover, statistics gathered over different census periods have provided snapshots of trends in language usage. As such, the picture of Inuktitut that emerges is one whereby the language has a large number of speakers and is relatively stable – the latter conclusion deriving from a comparison of Inuktitut language use across the seven-year span 1996–2001 and across the entire Canadian Arctic. These facts about the language are indicated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Percentage of Canadian Inuit who learn and use Eskimo–Aleut languages

	<i>All Inuit</i>		<i>Children under age 15</i>	
	1996	2001	1996	2001
Have Inuktitut as their first language	78%	77%	74%	73%
Use Inuktitut at home	68%	64%	68%	64%
Can understand and/or speak Inuktitut	90%	90%	90%	90%
Can converse in Inuktitut	82%	82%	80%	80%

Source: Adapted from *Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001—Initial Findings: Well-Being of the Non-Reserve Aboriginal Population* (pp. 29–30), by Statistics Canada, 2003, Ottawa. Copyright 2003 by Statistics Canada. Cited in Allen 2007.

Of course, a downside to these census data is that the picture of Indigenous language use that they provide is only a very general one. In particular, we are provided with no information about, for example, who is speaking what language to whom, how often speakers are speaking or what other languages they are speaking. Moreover, as these data are self-reported, we have no real idea of what counts as being able to understand or speak the language or what frequency of use is reflected in speakers indicating that they use the language at home.

Other survey data, collected by social psychologists and sociolinguists, have been more specific, highlighting the use of one language variety over another in a number of domains. Although the questions asked in these surveys are much narrower than those of the census surveys, the information that they provide is still rather limited. For instance, Taylor and Wright (1989) used a 10-point scale for self-reported language ability and language use in various domains, such as the workplace, home, and while hunting and fishing. Taylor and Wright's scale for language use started at 0–1, indicating that Inuktitut was 'never' used and went up to 9–10, indicating that Inuktitut was used 'all the time.' The one domain that displayed a 'significantly greater use of English' was the workplace (Taylor and Wright 1989: 99).

Of course, such a survey result does not tell us what kinds of workplaces were involved and who was speaking to whom there. The latter consideration is especially important. If Inuktitut was always being used between Inuit co-workers, with English or French used between Inuit and non-Inuit co-workers, then the result that there was more 'English usage' might really indicate only that Inuit more frequently appealed to multilingualism in these workplaces in dealing with non-Inuit interlocutors. In other words, the survey instrument cannot, without becoming too cumbersome, indicate which particular contexts in Arctic settings are the ones in which French or English might be used. Yet, without this information, it is difficult to assess the potential of Inuit communities to experience language shift.

A third type of survey of language practices in the Canadian Arctic, reported in Dorais and Sammons (2002), exploited more qualitative research methods. This survey involved interviewing almost 300 people, almost entirely in Inuktitut, and conducting focus groups in three Arctic communities about speakers' 'linguistic choices and opinions' (2002: 7). Also significant was that the study used oral rather than written elicitation methods, facilitating data collection in this Indigenous context; and that respondents were asked, among other questions, why particular languages were used with particular people, such as parents, a spouse or peers, and why a language might be used in particular settings. This type of survey could thus cover a wide range of speakers who were asked the same questions, yet still reveal a much more complex picture of bi- and multilingualism than the more discrete-point questions of the other survey types just described. For example, this survey reveals the importance of Inuktitut in maintaining Inuit identities in the Arctic regions. It also reveals the role of

institutional factors such as education in shaping language choice, indicating that the use of English increases after around the age of eight, when the medium of instruction in schools switches to English. Nevertheless, this survey is still a survey, which by its nature cannot ask probing questions or foster detailed or exploratory discussion about language use.

Significantly, the survey data collected by Dorais and Sammons tend to support a key finding of the larger-scale census data: that Inuktitut is widely used in the communities where the surveys were conducted. But these data cannot support or explain the claim, advanced by many researchers and language activists, that bi- and multilingualism in Indigenous language contexts inevitably leads to language shift where one or more of the non-Indigenous languages used is associated with economic and social power and prestige. Even if the data suggested that a shift was under way, they could not explain why this was so; that is, the data could tell us little, if anything, about the mechanisms, social processes and language ideologies at play in language shift or maintenance. To address these sorts of questions, we need to adopt the ethnographic approaches to Indigenous multilingualism, as pursued by anthropologists and sociologists.

Ethnographic explanatory approaches

Perhaps the most salient aspect of ethnography is the way in which it documents social processes across time and space and examines ideologies and the political and social arrangements associated with these processes. Doing ethnography involves using a range of methods – participant observation, interviews, documentation of face-to-face interactions, visual and voice recordings, journal writing, text analysis – and engaging long term with a community of speakers. Language ethnographies, in particular, involve analysing a range of modes, including oral, written, gestural and visual, of languages and texts. Doing ethnography, moreover, involves understanding the power relations between the investigator and the individuals who are the subjects of this investigation. In Indigenous contexts, it also involves understanding the historical, political and material conditions of the Indigenous groups with whom one is working.

Ethnography can address a host of research questions related to Indigenous multilingual contexts. These include how modernity has affected the way that Indigenous languages are learned and children are socialized in and through language; what role language ideologies play in creating ‘local modernities’, specific social and cultural conditions for textual production arising from economic, social and other changes; how these changes shape multilingualism, language shift, social identities and literacy practices; and how language communities are ‘converging’, and becoming more ‘modern’, or ‘diverging’, and retaining local diversity (see e.g. Kulick 1992; Patrick 2001, 2003a, 2003b; Robbins 2001; Schieffelin 2000).

At various points in this section on theory and methods, we have discussed the phenomenon of language shift. As it happens, ethnographic work has offered illuminating answers to the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of this phenomenon. For example, Kulick’s (1992) analysis of language shift in an Indigenous community in Papua New Guinea explains how speakers of an Indigenous language have come to use a dominant language when addressing each other and their children, even where this practice is at odds with what speakers say that they want to do. In this analysis, culturally situated language ideologies are examined – ideologies that shape multilingual language practice. This type of analysis thus requires not only an understanding of the Indigenous beliefs inherent in language socialization processes, but also an in-depth knowledge of the Indigenous language and how it is used.

What must also be recognized, however, is that ethnographic research, particularly in the current political and academic climate, generally requires the researcher to secure the approval

of two distinct communities: the community that is the researcher's prospective host, and the academic community, in the form of ethics and granting committees, which must endorse the project's academic value and its treatment of the human subjects under investigation. Although obtaining the latter kind of approval can be difficult, obtaining the former kind of approval, given the current post-colonial political climate and the historically asymmetrical relations associated with Indigeneity, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is often even more so: the community may grant its permission only after long consideration of, for example, the ethical dimension of the research, its methodology, and its likely benefits to the community, and many details may need to be negotiated. One of the results of this shift in the politics of research has been the rise of more applied Indigenous language ethnographies, which are attuned to educational and language policy, pedagogy, literacy training and community development, among other areas.

In my own ethnographic study of multilingualism in Arctic Quebec, conducted in the early 1990s (Patrick 2001, 2003b), I investigated patterns of interaction involving Inuktitut, Cree, English and French in a variety of community settings in order to answer questions related to multilingualism, education and local economic participation. To undertake this research, I sought collaboration with the Inuit school board and the community. My analysis was both historical and sociological. Its historical analysis involved showing how Cree and Inuit in this region were bilingual and multilingual, indicating historical social and economic relationships between Cree and Inuit, and French and English, which were either not widely known or taken for granted. The study's sociological analysis highlighted the construction of social and ethnic boundaries through language use and the ways in which language is related to the social categorization of groups of people. But the ethnography itself was rooted largely in applied research about language learning and language use outside of the classroom, and examined language requirements and language practices in local workplaces in the community, adapting some of this information for use in schools and teacher training programmes. This kind of research, linked to local collaboration and applications, has increasingly become the norm for research in Indigenous contexts. I shall examine some of the reasons for this in the next section, which considers post-colonial and decolonizing contexts of Indigenous language research.

Post-colonial and decolonization frameworks

In the current global political context, shaped by post-colonial and decolonizing processes, power, colonization and intellectual property rights have become some of the many issues with which researchers must contend. These issues are often framed in terms of ethics in research and the need to acknowledge and deal with Eurocentric ontologies, or descriptions of 'what exists' and the categories into which the universe's entities can be placed, and epistemologies, or theories of knowledge and belief. On a practical level, this means that investigating Indigenous knowledge and beliefs as related to language requires collaboration with stakeholders in an Indigenous community who are committed to such investigation. Such partnering would aim to reduce the power imbalance between investigator and investigated. It would also be driven by the understanding that the study would be respectful of people and have some benefit to the community; would be sympathetic to Indigenous goals of self-determination, autonomy and social justice; and would lead to a renewed understanding of the inequitable relations between Indigenous peoples and the state or other colonizing forces and the consequences of these for Indigenous people.

Given these ethical constraints on research related to Indigenous speakers, what also seems to be required for meaningful research in this context is an understanding of the need for

social transformation of Indigenous peoples to overcome the historical, social and economic deprivations of the colonial legacy (Smith 1999). Decolonization for Indigenous groups involves a process of establishing new relationships ‘within and between peoples and the natural world’ (Coulthard 2008: 201) and seeing what theoretical approaches and research methods can help to foster this. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her widely acclaimed book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, urges Indigenous researchers to conduct Indigenous-based, respectful research. This shift in research is welcome for studies of Indigenous multilingualism and addresses to the need to encourage Indigenous scholars and scholarship. However, as Smith (1999: 39) notes, decolonization ‘does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge’. Thus, although she advocates more Indigenous-centred research, which focuses on Indigenous ‘concerns and world views’ and ‘understands theory and research’ from Indigenous perspectives (ibid.), there is space for engagement with Western theories, methods and systems of knowledge. These engagements are necessary for cross-cultural understanding and the furthering of Indigenous perspectives regardless of the area of research.

Admittedly, the changes that have arisen in how Indigenous research is done and the ethical demands that such research imposes might now be so familiar to some, particularly in former European colonial contexts, as to go without saying. Yet, it is worth emphasizing that these demands have not come out of nowhere. Rather, they have emerged together with Indigenous mobilization and rights discourses associated with Indigeneity, as noted earlier. The rights-based approaches to understanding Indigenous multilingualism have also been prominent in the latter half of the twentieth century; we turn to a discussion of these now.

Liberal rights and recognition-based approaches

Although a great deal of research of Indigenous multilingualism has centred on the phenomenon of language shift, this phenomenon is certainly not the only one worthy of scholarly attention. This is particularly true in the post-colonial era, which has brought support for Indigenous languages, in the form of the recognition of language rights and programmes of language revitalization, and thus the promise that language shift may be slowed or even halted. Language rights have largely taken the form of official recognition of a particular language in institutional domains and the right of its speakers to be educated in that language. As noted earlier in the chapter, these rights are part of a larger rights discourse that has emanated from supranational organizations such as the United Nations (see Muelhlmann and Duchêne 2007 and Patrick 2007: 120 for discussion of these).

Research into liberal rights discourses and state recognition of these rights involves critical text analysis and draws on legal studies, political science and political philosophy. Such investigation uses critical discourse analysis to critically assess laws, policies and rights documents, and to understand their limitations as well as their appeal.

In this context, one recent rights document worth noting is the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, adopted in 2007 after over 20 years of discussion and debate (although, tellingly, without the support of Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand, the four major ‘settler states’). Articles 13, 14 and 16 of the Declaration pertain to language and ensure the right of Indigenous people ‘to revitalize, use, develop and transmit’ their languages; ‘to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages’; and ‘to establish their own media in their own languages’, respectively.

These articles governing language are part of a larger initiative to establish human rights standards for Indigenous peoples – an initiative welcomed by many language rights advocates.

In the 1990s the power of human rights discourses prompted many language scholars to support ‘linguistic human rights’ (LHR), a notion that drew support from language endangerment and language ecology and biodiversity movements (on the latter, see Muelhlmann 2007). However, even if we adopt a discourse of ‘inalienable’ human rights, it is nation-states that still decide whether or not to recognize them. Moreover, the granting of rights does not in itself make the ‘language problems’ or conflicts in nation-states disappear. Indeed, this might even serve to obscure other ‘conflicts’ between states and Indigenous people, as reflected in the endemic poverty and violence associated with many Indigenous communities and the loss of traditional territories and livelihoods. What is more, sociolinguistic critiques of the discursive treatment of ‘language’ have emphasized various dangers associated with this treatment. Among these are the dangers of (1) essentializing language and culture – that is, linking Indigenous language to reified ways of being Indigenous; (2) normalizing what counts as a language by unproblematically treating languages as fixed, bounded entities; and (3) devoting more attention to the languages as ‘entities’ than to the speakers of these languages themselves (on this, see e.g. Muelhlmann 2007; Freeland and Patrick 2004; Hornberger 2002). For further critique and discussion of rights discourses, see Freeland and Patrick 2004; Patrick 2007; and Chapter 7 of this book).

Notwithstanding these caveats, rights discourses have become extremely important symbolically, politically and legally in the recognition of Indigenous languages. Struggles for language rights have centred largely on creating a place for Indigenous language use in institutions such as schools, courts and governments. In addition, Indigenous language movements have often strategically drawn on discourses related to land, environmentalism, cultural heritage and traditional Indigenous epistemologies. Rights discourses have also been useful in garnering resources to maintain Indigenous languages and to promote Indigenous language revitalization. In short, the internationalization of Indigenous language discourses in turn creates a discursive space for Indigenous language researchers and activists to act. These initiatives are often driven by Indigenous communities themselves.

As already noted, investigating language rights and the recognition of them involves the analysis of texts used for justifying language rights and the critical assessment of the rights documents themselves. It also involves the question of how Indigenous groups have positioned themselves with respect to rights discourses and why have they done so. Language policies and language revitalization movements provide a large part of the answer: many Indigenous groups wish collectively to improve educational outcomes, regain Indigenous cultural practices and identities, and promote the Indigeneity of the group by regaining and strengthening Indigenous languages.

Policy issues: education, language policy and language revitalization

Given the attention currently devoted to language endangerment and language rights, language revitalization has become a major concern among Indigenous groups wishing to regain or stabilize the multilingualism undermined by decades of state intervention and economic transformations. Policy making and policy implementation play a large role in garnering the support and resources needed to undertake such initiatives.

Language revitalization involves a process of ‘re-establishing’ a language that is no longer used for communication (Hinton 2001: 5); or teaching or promoting a language that may still be in use but is in need of formal support. The latter process may involve the creation of school and after-school or home-based programmes and materials and the development of curricula for these programs (2001: 7). More often than not, such initiatives involve academic

partnerships. Partnering in this way can be part of an effort to obtain funding and technical and other know-how for curriculum development, in order better to promote multilingualism in Indigenous contexts. Crucial to these initiatives has been the focus on educational outcomes through the promotion of bi- and multilingual Indigenous language education.

Research in these contexts can take many forms. One such form is that of pedagogical studies of classroom interaction and cross-cultural contexts of learning, which have been largely qualitative and ethnographic in nature. One classic study of this kind is Philips (1983), which focuses on Indigenous classroom interaction, comparing two classrooms on the Warm Springs Reservation and the nearby off-reservation town in Oregon. Other forms include quantitative studies, which have involved the measurement of language proficiency in Indigenous and bilingual classrooms, such measurement being necessary to justify the continued funding and support of programs (see Allen 2007 for an overview of some of these cases in the Canadian Arctic). Such measurement of outcomes is, however, not unproblematic, given the questions that it raises about the utility of standardized testing in such contexts. Still other forms of research include studies that have focused on reading and writing pedagogy for bilingual Indigenous language classrooms, providing support for the view that learning in the medium of the first language assists second language acquisition (e.g. Francis and Reyhner 2002).

Language and educational policies are, of course, informed by research. Whether this research focuses on language acquisition inside or outside classrooms, on sociolinguistic interactions in different contexts or on cultural patterns of language use, it can all be valuable, as long it can benefit speakers and communities or be used to further our understanding of what is happening and why in particular sociolinguistic contexts. These are useful research directions for Indigenous multilingualism.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined multilingualism in Indigenous contexts through a study of research on language use both before and after colonization. The chapter's aim has been to show how the study of multilingualism has only relatively recently become an object of sociolinguistic concern, despite the long history of Indigenous multilingual practices. It has also aimed to dispel the myth of static, socially bounded groups located in a timeless past and to discuss current research directions in the study of Indigenous multilingualism.

We began by looking at the complexity of the concept of 'Indigenous' and how Indigeneity and Indigenous language groups differ from 'linguistic minorities'. We then examined how historical, political and economic power relations have shaped Indigenous contexts and practices, drawing on examples from North America. The language practices described have included ones based in trade and other more equitable power relations. When these relations gave way to assimilationist state policies and the incorporation of Indigenous peoples into broader social and economic processes, language practices also shifted. In this light, we examined early developments in the field, including the development of comparative-historical linguistic research, the rise of ethnographic approaches and the branching off of structural linguistics from this. Next, we examined different research approaches, doing so by addressing a research question relating to language shift. The research considered included that involving survey data collection and analysis; ethnographic research; Indigenous-based approaches; language, educational and legal rights-based approaches; language policy; and language revitalization. In sum, this chapter has provided an overview of the ways in which we can reflectively engage in questions surrounding Indigenous multilingualism.

Related topics

Lessons from pre-colonial multilingualism; language rights; Indigenous education; multilingualism in education in post-colonial contexts.

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