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REVIEW ESSAY:  
**THE INDIGENOUS SPEAK BACK**

*Indigenous Youth and Multilingualism: Language Identity, Ideology, and Practice in Dynamic Cultural Worlds*

Edited by Leisy T. Wyman, Teresa L. McCarty,  
and Sheilah E. Nicholas  
Routledge, 2013. 256 pages.

This co-edited volume takes a forward-looking approach to multilingualism in indigenous communities. Unlike other work that proceeds on the idea that these languages are vanishing, the contributors and editors of this volume are documenting, researching, and supporting the everyday uses and preservation of bi- and multilingualism by youth of indigenous communities, who are shaping and adapting language to be of valuable traditional, modern, and future uses for their peoples. Poignantly, this volume brings together research from many different communities throughout North America and includes commentaries from the noted revitalization experts in the Hawaiian and Yu'pik contexts, as well as an overall critical summation from Ofelia Garcia. From hip-hop in Navajo (also being used by Anishinaabe and other youth language activism efforts) to youth leading the regional language revitalization efforts in the circumpolar region, to articulating complex and mutable identities in Hopi and Mexicano/Nahuatl, these scholars have forged a whole new area and way of thinking about language continuance through youth culture, a generation always renewing itself as well as renewing its uses of heritage languages alongside settler tongues.

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Throughout the text, many of the research insights are grounded in the thoughts of the youth themselves, who are keenly aware of the different spaces that they inhabit, how they create these spaces with language, and how language in turn shapes their multi-faceted and complex identities. This connection demonstrates the link that should be in place between language ideology and practice with language revitalization policies. The scholars also establish the differing historical realities and practical possibilities of the languages, as the youth who have led efforts of what is possible and best practice within the circumpolar region and in the Inuit communities may face similar and different obstacles than those successes in Hawaii, or the lessons learned in Mexico (Nahuatl) and New Mexico. This contrast demonstrates that geographic, historical, and current policy environments can influence the language, but that activism by the youth comes from that same background with different tools and new challenges and successes.

Importantly, this text will be valuable not only to those in multilingualism but also those in national, transnational, and indigenous studies areas, because the authors are engaged throughout with larger critical theory, including the contributions of language to survivance (Gerald Vizenor's literary and legal concept) as well as Philip Deloria's elucidation of the heteroglossia of indigenous youth language practices as well as its hybridity. In other words, these authors demonstrate through their research and observations that the youth are the ones making their languages relevant in the current moment, giving those languages uses for the future through form and mode, such as text messaging and other technological applications. This incorporation of new media is not without critics; however, adaptation continues to be an important part of language use and preservation. Importantly, many of the chapters in the text are contributed by indigenous scholars, including all of the commentaries, and even those by non-indigenous scholars demonstrate the importance of community engagement and leadership in the research enterprise, building language planning and policy efforts from learning what does and does not work, top-down and bottom-up, across and between borders.

While focusing on the importance of youth and activism in language revitalization efforts, these studies strongly emphasize the importance of intergenerational elements as influencers on that activism, though not uniformly in a positive relationship. Many of the intergenerational interactions, including the passing on of language for these communities from elders to the youth as

well as intergenerational and lateral-generational socialization and transmission have positive effects, there are some negative reactions from elders to the adaptations made to the vocabulary and applications of the languages. However, the most important element of the multilingualism is preserved even in these conflicted communities as the ideological multiplicity of the youth is created and sustained through these multiple forms of communication and relationships with their elders.

Further, the collection of studies in this text demonstrates that language activism is not always overt but includes the acts of revitalization, maintenance, immersion, and rights borne out of policies as actual and potential sites for youth language activism in these communities and beyond. Finally, while the editors name the work being done by many of the youth as counter to the previous stories of their communities and the continuance of their languages, the studies show that these youth (and their intergenerational language communities) are creating their own stories, not distracted with countering the ideas of others or with mere survival, but with creating something new that will sustain the youth when they are the elders, that will bring forth their language survivance. This text will be valuable to scholars of multilingualism, youth studies scholars, indigenous studies scholars, and those interested in community-driven research practices, and therefore provides a great resource to students at many levels who would be drawn to such community engaged work so that they can do so ethically and with the community needs in mind.