Multilingual San Diego
Portraits of Language Loss and Revitalization

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Preface

The rich variety of the bilingual communities in San Diego—some of which are found in many large American cities and some of which are unique to San Diego—has never been documented. *Multilingual San Diego* exposes the paradox of the real and the tourist San Diego, underscoring the languages and cultures that have been elided in the narrative of what is often referred to as “the nation’s finest city.” We offer an antidote to the unreflecting praise that obscures San Diego’s multilingual heritage, highlighting community efforts to make respect for their native languages and English one way to bridge class and cultural divides, and foster unity in the city.

*Multilingual San Diego* is no mere description of bilingual locales in the style of a tour guide; it contributes to the facts and clarifies the issues in the volatile debate about the place of foreign languages in the nation. The elimination of bilingual education in California in 1998, and recent efforts to declare English the official language of the U.S.A., among other laws, reflect the ways race has been remapped from biology onto language today. English is in no danger of being replaced by any other language, but non English speakers and those with foreign accents have become convenient ways of identifying “un-Americans” who are accused of rejecting the language and culture of the nation. Every chapter of our book combats this hegemonic ideology and the damaging hierarchy of linguistic capital that it reflects.

This book began as student papers written for Ethnic Studies courses at the University of California at San Diego in 2005 and 2006. Because very little has been written about any of San Diego’s ethnolinguistic communities, I urged students to write the required course paper on a local community. The volume includes twelve revised versions of student explorations of the ethnolinguistic vitality of communities in San Diego that are bilingual in English and one of nine languages (Spanish, Japanese, Hebrew, Italian, Tagalog, Kumeyaay, Russian, Korean, and Mixtec). Spanish, Tagalog, and Japanese are the topic of several chapters because of the historical, cultural, and/or demographic importance of those languages in the region. Vignettes on communities that speak French, German, Arabic, Somali, Persian, Vietnamese, and Chinese complete the book. Every chapter and vignette analyzes some of the variables that determine the linguistic vitality of a community’s language(s), i.e., its demographic power, its status, and the extent of institutional support it enjoys. Locations that are described include shops, parks, schools, a library, and temples of worship in Vista, Escondido, Logan Heights, University City, La Jolla, Kearny Mesa, downtown San Diego, Chula Vista, National City, Lakeside, Little Italy and Southeast San Diego.

*Multilingual San Diego* will prove of interest to the general public and scholars alike, because it incorporates the voices and views of community members in every chapter, including what, if anything, families and communities are doing to foster language revitalization.
It encourages support for the efforts of communities to maintain their heritage languages as they develop English fluency, so as to challenge the monolingual ideology that impedes intergenerational communication and robs the city and the nation of the linguistic skills and cultural perspectives of its bilingual citizens.
GRACIAS

Multilingual San Diego is the culmination of years of work by/with UCSD students who went out into San Diego’s ethnolinguistic communities and took community concerns about language loss and maintenance to heart. Some are members of the communities they wrote about, others reached out to groups that were unknown to them; all are grateful to the many people who provided valuable information and insights about the role of language in their lives, and their hopes for a future that builds on the strengths of all the cultures that enrich San Diego. Above all, we thank the community members, and I thank the students for their hard work and patient acceptance of my many demands for re-writes.

Several institutions and students deserve special acknowledgment for their support and hard work: A grant from the UCSD Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, under the direction of Prof. Ramón Gutiérrez, was critical to the initiation of the project, as were the efforts of Jane Hashimawari, Ariana Valle, and Leah Muse-Orlinoff. Without the caring assistance of Christina Marino the book would never have seen the light of day; she is also the creator of the striking collages that capture the multilingual vibrancy of San Diego. And Rashné Limki’s work on the vignettes was invaluable, as well as her final shepherding of the collection. Generous funding from the Latino Studies Research Initiative at UCSD, the UCSD Office of Research, and California Cultures in Comparative Perspective at UCSD made the publication possible.

A final note of recognition for the faculty of Ethnic Studies, whose clarity on issues of race and ethnicity provide the groundwork for our students’ awareness of the importance of disrupting the social reproduction of inequality, and the need for each one of us to participate in that disruption. The Department’s support for the publication of Multilingual San Diego is in keeping with its commitment to its students and local communities.

Y como siempre, no soy la que soy ni podré ser la que voy a ser sin mi gente, especialmente mi papito. Que Dios me los bendiga a todos.

—Ana Celia Zentella
Multilingual San Diego
Introduction: San Diego’s Multilingual Heritage

Ana Celia Zentella

“Welcome to San Diego, California’s second largest city. Where blue skies keep watch on 70 miles of beaches and a gentle Mediterranean climate begs for a day of everything and nothing” (http://www.sandiego.org/nav/).

The opening line on the website of the San Diego Convention and Visitors Bureau paints an idyllic picture of San Diego as a tranquil paradise, one that brings in millions of tourist dollars and spurs the population boom. In 2006, 2,941,454 people lived in San Diego County, including 1,256,951 residents of the eighth largest metropolis in the United States. San Diego is frequently referred to as “America’s finest city.” Television weather reports alternate repetitions of balmy year round temperatures and views of San Diego’s 20 beaches with photos of freezing or boiling communities, snowstorms, hurricanes, or hail the size of golf balls. Competing with reports on the sun and the size of the waves are constant references to San Diego as home to some of the most expensive real estate in the nation; the median home price was $500,000 in July of 2006 (Showley and Pierce 2007). Not surprisingly, the most visible San Diegans are wealthy and well educated, and primarily Anglos. Medical and bio-tech professionals, engineers, scientists, communications and industry administrators and college students abound, but surfers and armed forces personnel are also central to San Diego’s image. In fact, the city boasts the most college graduates and PhD holders in the U.S.A., but this highly visible population could not enjoy its affluent lifestyle without thousands of invisible and underpaid workers, many of whom are immigrants, primarily from Mexico, and often undocumented. While the rich may live in mansions that can cost as much as $67 million dollars, some of the poorest are sheltered only by the brush of canyons. The disparity becomes most obvious in times of crisis, e.g. when the media coverage and political commentary of the fires of 2007 ignored the homelessness of the poor to concentrate on the problems the rich had with hotels and insurance agents.

Other contradictions between the hype and the reality of life in San Diego are the subject of Under the Perfect Sun: the San Diego Tourists Never See (Davis, Mayhew, and Miller 2005). Davis et al paint a picture at odds with the official portrait; they highlight the city’s history of endemic corruption, the labor and economic crises spawned by a weak mayoral system pitted against strong capitalists, and the high rates of depression and
suicide. In their view, “the perennial axes of modern San Diego history” are “war, tourist spectacle, endangered dissent” (Davis, Mayhew, Miller 2005: 2). War and endangered dissent are linked because of the significant military presence in the area; over 110,000 people are on active duty in the local Marine and Navy bases, augmented by many retired career service personnel who support conservative agendas. The strong arm of military might and the powerful impact of tourist propaganda all but obscure the other San Diego, the city indelibly marked by its roots in Spanish and Mexican history, its location 17 miles north of the Mexican border, the largest border crossing point in the world at Tijuana, and its increasingly diverse number of languages and cultures. Mayhew describes the paradox as follows:

With its growing Latino population and waves of immigration from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, contemporary San Diego offers up a paradox in which the “real” city is all but eclipsed by the tourist Mecca. Because many of its communities are isolated from one another by a labyrinth of canyons, freeways, and class divisions, a lot of the city’s own residents don’t know how multifaceted and multicultural San Diego has become. (2003: 272)

The ignorance that plagues most San Diegans about fellow residents exacts a high price. A recent nationwide study found that only 25% of the 300 San Diegans [Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians] who were interviewed trusted “the three other groups” (Putnam 2007). This distrust was not limited to “other groups”; less than half (45%) trusted their neighbors and only 26% trusted their own group. Clearly, a high level of trust in fellow San Diegans is not one of the characteristics of “America’s finest city.” At a time when the backgrounds of San Diegans are more diverse than ever, geographical, racial, and economic barriers exacerbate social distance and feelings of distrust, which become generalized. Of particular importance is the fact that the extensive multilingual heritage of the city has been virtually erased from the official record. The recognition of that history, and support for the efforts of communities to maintain their heritage languages as they develop English fluency, can encourage greater mutual understanding and help reap the benefits of one of the least valued treasures of the city, its multilingual and multiethnic diversity.

This chapter, like the others in this collection, exposes the paradox of the real and the tourist San Diego, underscoring the languages and cultures that have been elided in the narrative of the nation’s finest city, and how those gaps bolster a local and national view of the good ethnic American that makes it difficult to hold onto languages other than English. We contribute to a more complete and accurate portrait of San Diego, highlighting community efforts to make respect for their native languages and English one way to bridge class and cultural divides, and foster trust.

1 Depression era suicides were eclipsed when 39 members of the Heaven’s Gate cult committed suicide in 1997. More recently Espiritu & Wolf (2001) note high rates of suicides among Filipinas.
Monolingualism as a National Ideology

Widespread ignorance of San Diego's ethnolinguistic diversity is consonant with national ideologies of monolingualism and immigrant assimilation. As Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 113) note, in the U.S., “Language assimilation is demanded of foreigners not only for instrumental reasons but for symbolic ones as well ... because the country has few other elements on which to ground a sense of national identity.” The belief that unwavering allegiance to our national identity demands monolingualism in English becomes particularly pronounced whenever the unity of the nation seems threatened. Times of war, increased immigration, and economic downturns have generated fears of foreigners and led to zealous but misguided efforts to preserve the American way of life and the English language, e.g. a rash of anti-immigrant and anti-foreign language measures passed in the wake of WW I (Pavlenko 2002, Molesky 1999). The anti-immigrant fervor that has gripped the nation since the 1980s, which rivals the xenophobia of the 1920s, was triggered because the largest numbers of immigrants came primarily from Latin America and Asia instead of Europe for the first time in U.S. history (Pavlenko 2002), raising concerns about “the browning of America” and the creation of an “alien nation” (Brimelow 1995). In California, where 27% of the population are immigrants (Public Policy Institute of California 2007), those concerns resulted in laws that imposed English as the official language (Prop 63 in 1986), refused medical and educational services for the undocumented (Prop 187 in 1994, later struck down by the courts), turned back affirmative action for women and people of color (Prop 209 in 1996), and virtually eliminated bilingual education (Prop 227 in 1998). Exacerbated by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, fear of immigrants has prompted millions of dollars of investment in more Border Patrol officers and equipment, and in 2,000 miles of fence—partly in the ocean—to separate Mexico from the U.S.A. 2 In San Diego, where some of the September 11, 2001 terrorists were based, and where 30% of the population is of Mexican background, many residents are polarized, pitting those who support and join volunteer vigilantes to patrol the border against those who offer sanctuary to the poor who come searching for work.

Between these extremes, most San Diegans try to live out the Southern California dream, ignoring the contradictions that affect everyone’s chance at a good life. The impact on the children in San Diego's immigrant communities is most distressing, as they are torn between—one hand—the view that worthy San Diegans, and good Americans everywhere, should embrace English at the expense of their home language, and—on the other—their elders’ struggles to maintain a unified and respectful family, which requires communication in the home language. Both of these demands could be satisfied with the encouragement of fluent bi/multi-lingualism, which has proven advantageous for the academic and socio-economic success of many immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2005). Sadly, as the history and present conditions of the ethnolinguistic communities

2 The Global Security webpage advocates building what they refer to as the Great Wall of Mexico because “the sea of illegal aliens provides a cover and an environment in which terrorists can hide, and the tide of in-coming illegal aliens provides terrorists with a reliable means of entry.” http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/systems/mexico-wall.htm.
documented in the chapters of this volume make clear, bilingualism is not fostered widely in San Diego, and language loss is rampant.

**San Diego’s Incomplete Language Timeline**

Linguistic and cultural diversity has been part of the region’s history since its pre-colonial days, but surprisingly little about the multilingual heritage of San Diego has been documented. The San Diego Historical Society provides a Timeline with 366 entries that cover the period between 20,000 BC and 2000, at the following website: [http://www.sandiegohistory.org/timeline/timeline.htm](http://www.sandiegohistory.org/timeline/timeline.htm). Only the following three entries make specific references to language:

1—1000 BC to 1000 AD
“Yuman-speaking peoples intrude and assimilate La Jollan cultural group.”

2—November 12, 1602
“… Indians appear with bows and arrows, but the Spanish offer gifts and communicate with sign language.”

3—1887
“Because of his diplomacy and mastery of English, Ah Quin quickly finds work as a labor contractor for the California Southern Railroad.”

These entries suggest the role of language in inter-indigenous conflict, in Spanish efforts to reach out to the natives, and in the employment success of an immigrant due to his “mastery of English”. The themes in these entries are reminiscent of major arguments made against bilingual education and in favor of English-only laws, i.e., that multilingualism breeds conflict and/or impedes communication, and that English guarantees economic advancement, both of which have been proven false (Zentella 1988). But the strongest message of the Timeline is the lack of importance given to the languages and cultures of the groups who founded and built San Diego in the past, and those who live and work in San Diego today.³ A handful of references point indirectly to the diversity that is not mentioned explicitly, e.g. “1975: Vietnamese refugees temporarily housed at Camp Pendleton,” notes the beginning of the influx of Vietnamese helped by the U.S. government after the fall of Saigon. In this entry and most others, either no mention is made of language or the reader is left with the impression that national or ethnic groups were/are linguistically homogenous, e.g. “the Vietnamese,” “the Spanish,” “the Indians,” “the Mexicans,” thus underscoring a one nation=one language ideology. English is the unmarked linguistic norm, the one that goes without saying, and it too is portrayed as homogenous. The many dialects of English that diversified the region’s landscape are not distinguished; these would include what was spoken by the African American ex-slaves.

³ My $50.00 check and request for information about the history of the city’s ethnolinguistic communities were returned by the San Diego Historical Society, with a letter from Asst. Archivist S. Stewart, stating: “I have found nothing in our archives that records or documents the information you are seeking. … The history of ethnic groups in San Diego is one area where I wish our collections were stronger” (Oct 5, 2006).
who founded Julian, the gold seekers from across the country who remained when the mines petered out, the “Oakies” who escaped the famine of the dust bowl, etc. An accurate history of San Diego must take note of the complexity of the ways of speaking that have always been present, albeit not in a balanced way, and of the political and economic policies and pressures that create waves of linguistic upheavals. We cannot do justice to that complex history here, but we offer an overview of San Diego’s multilingual heritage that sets the stage for the chapters that document contemporary communities’ language struggles. For “Chicano San Diego’s” history, consult Griswold del Castillo (2007).

**Indigenous Languages and Colonization by Spanish Speakers**

Diversity has been a hallmark of the linguistic history of San Diego for thousands of years. The members of the eight villages of “Stone Age” tribes that have been discovered in San Diego were believed to be linguistically related, although “these groups differed so widely from village to village that they often could not understand one another” (Baker 2007: 7). A permanent exhibit in the Museum of San Diego History recognizes the Kumeyaay as the “first residents” of San Diego, 12,000 years ago. Today, 13 groups of Kumeyaay live in San Diego, and the exhibit states that, “By preserving their culture and history, these tribes have maintained a sense of identity through an ever changing San Diego.” But no mention is made of their language, which is spoken by less than 350 Kumeyaay descendants, mainly in Mexico, and is in danger of extinction (Smith 2005, and chapter by Philips, this volume). The extermination of many native languages in Southern California was due to the military, economic, and religious power of the Spanish speaking colonizers who ruled for 77 years, first under Spain and later under Mexico, and of the Anglo settlers who displaced them.

When the first Europeans sailed into what is now San Diego Bay in 1542, three natives used sign language to tell Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo and his crew that other men dressed and armed like them had been brutal (Baker 2007: 9). Cabrillo left no linguistic or cultural impact because he moved on after a week, nor did Vizcaino, who stayed for 10 days in 1602, except for the fact that he named the bay San Diego de Alcalá. The Spanish did not establish a viable settlement in California for another 167 years, until Gaspar de Portolá arrived in 1769. Fray Junípero Serra, a member of Portolá’s party, established the first of 21 missions in California at San Diego. Five years later, violent abuse of the Indians by the nearby Presidio’s soldiers led to moving the mission to its present site. San Diego was the largest mission, and in the 1790s most of its 1,523 inhabitants were Indians.

Building on the work of various historians, Moyna & Decker’s seminal research (2005) points out that even in its early years, San Diego was multilingual and multidialectal, as were all the Spanish settlements, including the much smaller presidios, or garrisons, that protected them. Castilian was not the linguistic norm because the majority (55/89) of the officials and missionaries in San Diego between 1769 and 1822 came from the new power centers of the north, northwest, and eastern provinces of Spain; only five were from New

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4 Baker (p.9) wonders if the Indians were passing on stories they had heard about Vásquez de Coronado in New Mexico.
Spain, where Castilian predominated. Catalán was also spoken by some administrators, and the common settlers contributed regional dialects from the Mexican colonies (Moyna and Decker 2005). The linguistic diversity among the native populations was even greater; according to Blanco (1971), indigenous languages spoken at the California settlements included 22 language families and 138 dialects or varieties. Therefore, the first 50 years of Spanish colonization in San Diego was a period of extraordinary linguistic richness. And because the approximately 1500 Indians greatly outnumbered the approximately 200 Spanish speakers, rampant language loss would have been unlikely. But the treatment of the natives at the Spanish missions was harsh, and conditions were unhealthy. Many Indians were converted in Spanish and in their native languages, but almost an equal number were killed by the infectious diseases introduced by the Europeans: “Although the San Diego Mission recorded a total of 1,567 converts by 1803, an alarming 1,322 deaths had also been recorded” (Baker: 18). Population loss paved the way for language death.

After half a century of Spanish rule (1769–1821) during which a multilingual indigenous majority was dominated by a Spanish speaking minority, San Diego was subjected to another 27 years (1821–1848) of Spanish speaking administrators from newly independent Mexico. During this period, however, the dominant group of Mexicans, known as Californios, also constituted the majority of the population, so that the minority of Indians and Anglo/Europeans were assimilated. The Anglo/Europeans, who constituted one third of California by 1848, converted to Catholicism, married Mexicans, became citizens, and acquired property. Presumably, the assimilated Anglos and Europeans, mainly merchants, learned Spanish, but the maintenance of Spanish did not have crucial educational support under Spain or Mexico. The local public school was closed under Spanish rule from 1800–1828, after which Mexico secularized the missions, where most teaching of language had taken place via religious instruction; their dismantling preceded an era of disorganization and violence. When Mexico took over in 1821, San Diego consisted of a large mission, a small presidio, and 450 settlers, predominantly Spanish speakers. By 1840 only 150 remained (Baker: 200). More changes in population, education, religion, and language took place under American rule, a few years after the U.S. declared war on Mexico in 1846 and took possession of San Diego.

The Anglo/English Gold Rush and U.S. Annexation

The Gold Rush of 1848 caused a twelve-fold increase in California’s population in four years, attracting English speaking settlers from across the U.S.A. Even though San Diego was not as popular or prosperous as northern cities closer to the gold fields, its population jumped from 150 in 1840 to 650 by 1850, the year California became a state, and more than tripled, to 2,300, by 1870.5 Most were squatters who took the Californios’ lands despite the guarantees written into the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty that ended the U.S. war with Mexico (Baker: 200, Moyna & Decker 2005). The rapid shift in language and culture that these settlers set

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5 The population of San Diego County in 1850 was 798, and in 1870 it was 4,951. These data are from the San Diego Historical Society population table, based on the U.S. Census. http://www.sandiegohistory.org/links/sandiegopopulation.htm.
in motion becomes clear when we consider the change in the ethnicity of the families that were registered as living in Old Town, the original center of San Diego, between 1850–1870 (see Table A). In 1850, when California became the nation's 31st state, the majority of most families in Old Town were headed by Mexicans. If we add the number of “mixed” families, because we assume that the children are also learning Spanish from their Mexican mother, Spanish speakers accounted for 68% of the residents of Old Town.

Table A. Background of Families in Old Town San Diego 1850–1870

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background/Head of household</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1870</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo¹</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed²</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of families</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Includes European born.
² Anglo husband with Mexican spouse
Source: modified from Griswold del Castillo 2007 in Moyna & Decker 2007:150

The precarious situation of Spanish during the 1850s was reflected in several educational ventures, namely a short-lived bilingual public school and Catholic colleges for the children of Californios. The public school closed its doors in six months and earned opprobrium for its founder, W.P. Toler, who was accused “of being un-American by those who opposed his teaching in a language other than English” (Moyna & Decker 2005: fn 4, 151). Two Catholic colleges, one for boys (Santa Clara) and one for girls (Notre Dame), had some classes in Spanish, but they were designed to prepare students for an English-only system. In 1855, California’s State Bureau of Instruction stipulated teaching in English-only, and children began to be punished regularly for speaking Spanish in school. The expense of the private schools, the punishments of the public schools, the insistence on English, the maligning of educators who attempted to incorporate the majority language, and the fact that schooling was not compulsory until 1874, meant that few children had a solid formal education. By the end of the decade (1860), Spanish was further eroded in the community because Mexican families were no longer in the majority, although adding the number of mixed families brings the total to 62%. But by 1870,
these two groups were reduced to 27% of the population, and English speaking Anglos and Europeans dominated Old Town to an extent that Mexicans never had, accounting for 73% of the population. The percentage of Mexicans continued to decrease (it was under 10% by 1880) as the percentage of Anglos increased. The population boom that hit San Diego between 1880 and 1890, when the city grew from 2,637 to 16,159 and the county expanded from 8,618 to 34,987 (http://www.sandiegohistory.org/links/sandiegopopulation.htm), was heavily Anglo and English speaking. It was not until the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) and WWII, with the institution of the federal Bracero (“laborer”) program (1942–1964) which brought four million agricultural laborers to U.S. fields, that Mexicans, and their Spanish, revived in San Diego. By that time, the supremacy of English was solidly established. But linguistic and racial prejudice was widespread, as revealed in one landmark moment in San Diego history in the 1930s, triggered by “The Lemon Grove Incident.”

**The Lemon Grove Incident**

The Supreme Court decision of Brown v Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 is widely heralded for its landmark desegregation of the public schools, but the Spanish speaking families of Lemon Grove, San Diego had fought and won an earlier attack against educational segregation. In 1931, 23 years before the Brown case, the Lemon Grove school board tried to force the children of Mexican background to attend school in a separate and inferior building, on the grounds that their English skills needed improvement and this could best be accomplished by physically separating them from the Anglo students, although most students of Mexican origin, like one of the young plaintiffs, Roberto Alvarez, Sr., spoke English very well (Alvarez 1996). The parents and children of Lemon Grove organized a protest that ultimately led to an out of court settlement and the return of the children to the school where they had always studied with Anglos. This dramatic “incident” and its historical importance are recorded in the San Diego Historical Society’s Timeline as follows:

January 5, 1931
Lemon Grove Grammar School principal Jerome Green, acting under instructions from school trustees, turns away Mexican children at the schoolhouse door. The landmark lawsuit resulting from the “Lemon Grove Incident” becomes the first successful school desegregation court decision in the history of the United States.

(http://www.sandiegohistory.org/timeline/timeline.htm)

The “Lemon Grove Incident” is particularly significant because it is a clear example of how race is remapped onto language, i.e., the school board purportedly based its decision on the language proficiency of the students in order to mask their clearly racial objective of physically separating students on the basis of race. As Urciuoli (1996) points out, race has been remapped from biology onto language in the U.S.A. because public racist remarks are censored. Instead, comments about the unsuitability and/or unintelligibility of regional, class, and racial dialects of English and other languages substitute for abusive
remarks about color, hair, lips, noses, and body parts—with the same effect. “Incorrect” ways of speaking mark the speakers as inherently inferior, with an added injury not inflicted by racial comparisons, i.e., no one expects you to be able to change your color, but you are expected to change the way you speak in order to earn respect. Foreign languages are viewed as intrusive, an invasion of “white public space” (Hill 1999). When the speakers of foreign languages are poor immigrants, especially those defined as non-white, their voices are heard as signaling an unwillingness to assimilate, and taken as evidence of their unsuitability, i.e., not fit to be counted as Americans. These attitudes are communicated in everyday conversations and promoted by the media and public institutions, rooted in misconceptions about the threat to English posed by immigrant languages in the U.S.A.

In fact, the supremacy of English in San Diego, already established by the end of the 19th century, was reaffirmed by all of its educational and political institutions throughout the first half of the 20th century. Even when four million Braceros were brought to work in U.S. agriculture (1942–1964), the contracts “were written in English, and many braceros would sign them without understanding the rights they were giving away, nor the terms of the employment.” When the need for cheap labor lessened, the Bracero program ended, and the Mexican community looked to the public schools for a way out of the poverty and discrimination they endured, but found them wanting. In the 1960s, led in large part by African Americans and Mexican Americans who hoped to realize the dream of equal educational opportunity promised by the Brown decision, civil rights unrest inflamed the nation. Forced to confront the damaging repercussions of poverty and mis-education, the government instituted several programs, including the War on Poverty. And in 1968, in recognition of the fact that many students who could not speak English were doomed to failure in English-only classrooms, Congress passed Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provided funds for staff and materials development as well as parent involvement for students with limited English skills. There was no requirement for schools to use non-English languages, but San Diego was an early leader in the progressive educational movement to teach children bilingually, just as it was a key target in its virtual demise in 1998.

**Bilingual Education in San Diego**

Years before California required bilingual education for all English learners in 1980, San Diego and the South Bay were part of a Title VII consortium, Project Frontier, which was among the first to address the educational and linguistic needs of the children of immigrants in the U.S.A. Most of its bilingual education programs served Spanish speaking children, although programs in Portuguese and Tagalog also existed; all were transitional in nature, i.e., they stressed the acquisition of English and allowed instruction in the home

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7 Unfortunately, no official history of bilingual education in San Diego is available, but some key participants remain active locally. I am grateful to Adel Nadeau (former teacher at Nelson School and Longfellow Elementary, and principal of Linda Vista), and especially to Tim Allen, Director of the Second Language Department, San Diego Unified School District (1983–1998), for their helpful information.
language as a temporary support. One innovative school, however, was ahead of its time, and very successful; in 1969 the Nestor School instituted a two-way bilingual program that combined English and Spanish speakers, teaching each group the other's language as well as reinforcing each group's native language. Another far-sighted attempt to foster bilingualism in San Diego took the form of foreign language immersion programs; between 1975 and 1980 several elementary schools had classes that immersed English monolinguals in Spanish or French, without hampering their English development. Students in the early grades (Kindergarten–3rd grade) spent 90% of their day learning in the foreign language, and 10% in English, but classes in the 4th and 5th grades were equally divided, i.e., 50% English, 50% foreign language. These programs were designed along the lines of successful programs in Canada, and leading scholars were involved in the training of teachers and administrators. Some limited English proficient children were enrolled in these classes, but the focus was one-way foreign language immersion education for native English speakers, not bilingualism for English language learners.

The San Diego School Board was skeptical of bilingual education for immigrant children because they misunderstood its objectives and methods, and because of the dearth of appropriate materials and teachers. But in 1972, AB 2284 provided funds to districts that wanted to develop bilingual programs, and in 1976, AB 1329 (also known as the Chacon-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act) “mandated school districts to provide language minority students with equal educational opportunities” and “proclaimed bilingual education a right of English language learners” (Witt 1998). By 1977, “there were some fifty-five elementary schools within the county with state or federally supported bilingual programs” in approximately 70 classrooms (Farmer 1978: 950). All of these bilingual classrooms were supposed to include a mix of limited English proficient speakers (2/3) and proficient English speakers (1/3)—the latter received classes in Spanish as a second language. But when bilingual education was mandated for all English learners in 1980 (AB 507), only students who did not pass state approved English tests were placed in the program, if one was available in their school. District administrators found it hard to comply with the testing, training, and staffing requirements, and by 1983, they were threatened with the loss of $24 million dollars because of compliance failures. Many students who should have been offered bilingual education did not receive it, and some schools that did offer the program were plagued by staffing problems. But a new superintendent (Payzant) and a re-organized Second Language Department, under the direction of Tim Allen, tackled a multitude of problems successfully. Many students flourished in San Diego's bilingual programs, where they learned to read and write both Spanish and English as well as perform on grade level in academic subjects.

Unfortunately, the diversity of districts, schools, and programs as well as relying on the number of students who were reclassified as English proficient and ignoring other measures, made it difficult to present data on the success of the programs in ways that could be understood easily by the public. Between 1984 and the early 1990s only two thirds of San Diego's English language learners were receiving some kind of primary language support (approximately 75% of them in Spanish), and many of those programs did not offer true bilingual education, with instruction in reading and writing in both languages.
Nevertheless, the number of students who were not reclassified as English proficient was often blamed on bilingual education. In 1987, Governor Deukmejian did not reauthorize the previous legislative mandate for bilingual education in California. Ten years later, only 33% of the district’s English learners were in bilingual classes (Gao 2004). The decimation of the programs in the 1990s, and an increasingly anti-minority climate that spawned Prop 187 in 1994 and Prop 209 in 1996, paved the way for the success of Prop 227 in 1998, against bilingual education. Astutely promoted by millionaire Ron Unz as “English for the children,” Prop 227 received 61% of the vote. An analysis of the voting record and three exit polls attributes this result to “racial/ethnic divisiveness and partisan/ideological competition”; Latinos voted against Prop 227, but Whites, Blacks, and Asians supported it (Alvarez 1999: 15). Voters whose children were not in bilingual classes did not have a clear idea of the goals and success of the program, and efforts to reach voters with positive facts were hampered by a lack of funds, amidst changes in the administration of the district. The San Diego School Board, which had changed its opinion about bilingual education once they got to know it better, passed a proclamation against Prop 227, but the San Diego Union Tribune and a leading radio station, KSDO, endorsed it. Although the programs in the district boasted many successes, anti bilingual education advocates across the state proved more powerful, by converting a “debate about pedagogy” into a “debate about politics,” namely, immigration and national identity (Linton and Franklin 2008: 4).

Prop 227 virtually eliminated bilingual education in San Diego because, although it included a complicated procedure that allowed parents to petition for a bilingual class in certain cases, those procedures were, and continue to be, often violated. San Diego County was actually ahead of other districts in helping bilingual educators deal with 227 at first, including teaching about waivers, but they came under fire for this, and so violations continued. Between 2002 and 2004, over 100 parents and educators, claiming to speak for 300 people, lodged formal complaints, contending that “the district denies parents’ requests for waiver forms, fails to inform parents of their right to appeal waiver denials, and does not adequately publicize mandatory meetings where forms are given” (Gao 2004: 1). Linton and Franklin point out that “These issues are still unresolved” (2008: 13). The debate about the value of bilingual education versus English immersion continues heatedly in San Diego and elsewhere in the nation, although most leading researchers, including Russell Rumberger, the director of the UC Linguistic Minority Research Institute, and Harvard researchers Nonie Lesaux and Amy Crosson, all agree that “both immersion and bilingual programs can work if they are designed and taught well” (Gao 2004: 3). But only one approach, bilingual education, provides the early grounding in oral and literate skills in two languages that the local and global economy requires. Regrettably, the anti-bilingual education movement was strengthened by the testing and progress standards.

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8 Alan Bersin, the former “Border Czar,” became the new superintendent a month after Prop 227 was decided in 1998. His initial support for bilingual education was undermined by administrators he hired from other districts, including Tony Alvarado from NYC, who insisted on devoting 90 minutes a day to English reading, and provided no time for dual language development.
imposed by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001) which insist on English only; schools that do not comply can be restructured or taken over. Despite these obstacles, a few administrators and schools in San Diego have remained committed to a bilingual pedagogy, and some of the most successful programs are two-way or dual bilingual education programs that promote bilingual proficiency for all their students. One of the oldest, The Language Academy, a magnet school, survived the challenge of Prop 227 by supplying waivers to parents eager to sign them because the school consistently scores “above district and state averages on standardized tests” (Linton and Franklin 2008: 14). Students who are English speaking monolinguals and students who speak a language other than English at home [usually Spanish] study together, and both groups not only benefit from learning each other’s language, they also perform well academically. The Language Academy is not an exception; extensive research on dual language programs, the bulk of which are in California, documents many important benefits, including enhancing “cognitive, linguistic, and cross cultural skills” and developing “positive self-identities, both in terms of race and ethnicity and as learners,” thus holding “great promise as a strategy for closing the achievement gap between low and high SES students in general, and Latino and white students in particular” (Linton and Franklin 2008: 1).

In their analysis of twelve school districts in California and Massachusetts, Linton and Franklin (2008) found that an increasing number of districts in California have promoted dual language programs successfully, in part by avoiding the stigmatized and polarizing concept of “bilingual education” linked only to minorities. Unfortunately, districts without the requisite number of English speaking monolinguals who are willing to participate in dual language programs are left out of this promising effort, unless bilingual instruction is offered to all Spanish-speaking students, including those who are more dominant in English. San Diego has many heavily Spanish-speaking districts whose students would benefit from a strengthened and expanded bilingual education program, in addition to dual language programs.

**Unwarranted Fears of English-only Advocates:**

**Bilingual Communities in San Diego**

The unwillingness to establish educational programs that have proved successful is, in part, linked to fears about the need to protect English, based on the erroneous notion that the national language is in jeopardy. These fears are most evident in the legislative efforts to make English the official language of California (passed in 1986), and of the United States. An official English amendment to the constitution was first proposed in 1983 by California’s Senator Hayakawa, but neither it nor any of the more recent versions has ever been approved. The amendment is unnecessary because, although English is not the *de jure* official language of the U.S.A., it has been the *de facto* language of the nation since its founding. Nevertheless, in 2006 English was declared the “national language” of the government, with the following stipulations: “no person has a right, entitlement, or claim to have the Government of the United States or any of its officials or representatives act, communicate, perform or provide services, or provide materials in any language other than English” (S.2611). In separate
legislation, the Senate declared that “statements of national unity, including the National Anthem, should be recited or sung in English” (S.RES.458). This spate of restrictive proposals was passed in response to the massive April 2006 Immigrants’ Rights marches that took place throughout the U.S.A., and the release of a recording of the National Anthem in Spanish. But how well founded are the fears that English is in jeopardy?

The U.S. Census and every study conducted on language in the U.S.A. over the last few decades prove that English is in no danger of being replaced by any other language, in San Diego or the nation (Zentella 1988, Crawford 2000). At present, approximately two thirds of the nearly three million residents of San Diego County (65.3%) speak only English at home, and of the 35% that speak a language other than English at home, more than 75% also speak English well or very well. As Table I in the Appendix makes clear, the English proficiency of speakers of the top ten foreign languages in San Diego in 2000 was very high, ranging from a low of 67% in the Vietnamese community to a high of 97% for German speakers; these figures reflect the speakers’ number of years of residence in the U.S.A. and/or their level of education. Even in the largest group, Spanish speakers, almost three-quarters (74%) of those who speak Spanish at home also speak English well or very well.

Most of San Diego is unaware of the rich bilingual diversity that exists in the city, although at least eight languages in addition to Spanish had 10,000 or more speakers in 2000: Tagalog, Vietnamese, Chinese (including Cantonese and Mandarin), German, Japanese, French, Persian, and Arabic (Table I). There is a tendency to assume that Spanish is the only other language in the region, which is understandable, given the fact that Spanish speakers constitute the bulk (68%) of those who speak a language other than English at home, but the range of linguistic families, writing scripts, and national origins make San Diego more of an international city than is usually recognized. A variety of Indo-European, Scandinavian, Slavic, West Germanic, Indic, and African languages are among the 29 languages with more than 1,000 speakers in San Diego as of 2004 (see Appendix, Table II). The numbers and diversity of languages continue to grow and change.10 Unfortunately, all of these languages are plagued by loss across the generations. Contrary to popular belief, English is not in danger in San Diego, but other languages are, including Spanish, as children embrace English at the expense of their parents’ first language. A recent major study of language attitudes and proficiency among several dozen nationalities, the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), confirmed that San Diego is a “graveyard for languages.” The authors maintain that “English has never been seriously threatened as the dominant language of the United States and—with well over 200 million monolingual speakers—it is certainly not threatened today, not even in Southern California. What is endangered instead is the survival of non-English

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9 Senators and Representatives ignored the fact that earlier versions of the Anthem in Spanish and other foreign languages were written at the turn of the 20th century, and promoted as a way of integrating immigrants into the nation (Zentella 2006).
10 Between 2000 and 2007, Korean made the most dramatic jump, from 10th to 5th place. Arabic languages, which were 15th in 2004, moved into 10th place in 2007. Two languages moved down in the top ten languages between 2000 and 2007: German went from 5th to 9th place, and Arabic is no longer among the top ten (Tables II and III, Appendix).
languages that immigrants bring with them to the United States” (Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006: 458–9).

On the basis of an in-depth study that began with 2,400 students in 9th and 10th grades and followed them for 10 years, until they were 23–27 years old (n=1,502), Rumbaut, Massey & Bean concluded that “no mother tongue can be expected to survive beyond the third generation” (op cit: 457). Spanish is no exception, despite the continued influx of immigrants: “after at least 50 years of continuous Mexican migration into Southern California, Spanish appears to draw its last breath in the third generation” (op cit: 459). These facts may be heartening to those who insist that English-only should be the law of the land, but they ignore the damaging cost to the individuals, families, city, and nation that the rampant loss of heritage languages represents.

The San Diego youth who participated in the CILS study, which included youngsters of Mexican, Filipino, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian backgrounds, paid a high price for the rapid loss of parental languages. Negative consequences included “poor self-esteem and a more common sense of shame at their parents’ culture” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 133). And because intergenerational communication suffered, there was more conflict at home than in the homes of fluent bilinguals. The researchers found that “fluent bilinguals are the least embarrassed by their parents, have the least conflictive relationship with them, and are most prone to maintain friendships with co-ethnic children” (134). Given the significant benefits of bilingualism for the children of immigrants, it is important to understand and withstand the pressures that militate against the maintenance of the home language accompanied by fluency in English. These pressures are rooted in the specific lived reality of each community, the result of powerful forces that determine the nature of inter-ethnic relations in a community and that often work against a family’s fervent desire to pass on its heritage language.

**Determining the Ethnolinguistic Vitality of a Community**

Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) provide a helpful framework for “a theory of language in ethnic group relations,” one that recognizes that “relations between ethnolinguistic groups do not occur in a vacuum and they are influenced by a host of situational and structural variables which often dictate the sociopsychological climate in which such relations occur” (op cit: 308). The authors underscore the impact of those variables on the “ethnolinguistic vitality” of a community and its language(s), and they list three major categories of structural variables that determine whether the vitality of a language in a given community is being eroded or supported: Status, Demography, and Institutional Support:

The Status variables are those which pertain to a configuration of prestige variables of the linguistic group in the intergroup context. The more status a linguistic group is recognized to have, the more vitality it can be said to possess as a collective entity. The Demographic variables are those related to the sheer numbers of group members and their distribution throughout the territory. Ethnolinguistic groups whose demographic trends are favorable are more likely to have vitality as distinctive groups than those whose demographic trends are unfavorable and not conducive to group survival. Institutional support variables refer
to the extent to which a language group receives formal and informal representation in the various institutions of a nation, region, or community (op cit: 309).

The three major variables encompass nineteen sub-variables, as outlined in Figure I below:

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**Figure I.**

![Taxonomy of structural variables affecting sociolinguistic vitality (from Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977: 509).](image)

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Based on this model, we have estimated the strength of the Status, Demographic, and Institutional Support Variables in the nine bilingual communities that are the subjects of the chapters in this book: Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, Japanese, Hebrew, Italian, Russian, Mixteco, and Kumeyaay (Table B). An overall estimation places them at different points along the linguistic vitality continuum, from Mid (Spanish) to Low-near death (Kumeyaay).

However, the designers of this taxonomy recognized that the factors they list are not “in any sense exhaustive” (op cit: 310), and García (1996) has pointed out its inability to incorporate the changes that a community language's vitality may undergo over time. The readers of this volume will find that Table B suffers from at least four other serious limitations:

1. the lack of objective measures for determining the strength of many factors, including the extent of "mixed marriages" (exogamy), social status, immigration/emigration, and formal/informal support in industry,
### Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Bilingual Communities in San Diego (n=9)

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the difficulty of determining the relative weight of some factors vs. others, e.g., is population density more important than economic or social status?

3. the lack of homogeneity in most groups, e.g., first generation lower working class Mexican immigrants differ from second generation Mexican American students at UCSD,

4. the absence of significant factors, e.g., under Status, what is the impact of a group’s race, and its legal status, e.g. citizenship, residency, undocumented, refugee? And where, under Institutional Support, is the impact of a group’s political power in legislative bodies vs. local community organizations?

Multilingual San Diego

When all of these complications are taken into account, it becomes obvious that determining the linguistic vitality of a community is more complex than filling in a chart. Accordingly, the question marks in the last Overall line of Table B indicate that the assessments of ethnolinguistic vitality are incomplete, and probably unreliable. Each community and its subgroups is a unique configuration of variables, subject to change over time, which make community members eager or reluctant to maintain the heritage language, but very little of that history is known. The chapters in this book offer insights into the linguistic reality that Table B obscures. Additional vignettes provide a short overview of Arabic and Somali, Persian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and French and German communities, but many others also deserve to be studied. This volume is the first to document the contemporary diversity that has been a hallmark of the linguistic history of San Diego for thousands of years, beginning with the many indigenous languages of the area’s original settlers, the varieties of Spanish imposed by the colonizers in the 18th century, the many dialects of English and other languages spoken by those who came searching for gold after 1848, and the rich mix of immigrant languages that marked the 20th century and continue today. Surprisingly, the extensive multilingual heritage of “the nation’s finest city” has been virtually erased from the official record, including the linguistic diversity of Old Town—the original center of San Diego, the founding of Chinatown and Little Italy, the city’s leading role in challenging separate and unequal education, its pioneering bilingual education programs, and many present-day revitalization efforts.

Gaps in the linguistic record are linked to a local and national English-only ideology which makes it difficult for communities to hold onto their heritage languages because it sends a message, often unintended, that non English speakers and those with accented English are “un-American,” unworthy residents who are accused of refusing to participate in the national language and culture. Many children of immigrants, hoping to avoid that stigma, adopt English at the expense of their parents’ language. All of the authors in this volume combat this damaging ideology and the hierarchy of linguistic capital that it reflects, by detailing the overwhelming dominance of English in San Diego’s ethnic communities, the rampant loss of heritage languages, how community members view that loss and what, if anything, they are doing to revitalize their heritage language as they develop English fluency.
Multilingual San Diego presents the facts about San Diego’s multilingual history and the benefits of multilingualism—both individual and societal—in the hope of removing the stigma that results in linguistic death and contributes to intergenerational friction and academic failure, supporting instead the efforts of communities to maintain their heritage languages and become fluent bi-/multi-linguals. At risk is the healthy development of the children of immigrants and the destruction of one of San Diego's most valuable and ignored treasures, its multilingual and multi-ethnic diversity.
Part One
Demography
Chapter 1: The Contemporary Kumeyaay Warrior: Language and Indigenous Cultural Survival in San Diego

Maxx Phillips

The Kumeyaay Nation extends from San Diego and Imperial Counties in California to 60 miles south of the Mexican border. The original language of the Kumeyaay is 'Iipay aa, part of the Yuman language branch of the Hokan group. There used to be at least
18 distinct dialects of ‘Iipay aa, but now only two remain, and only 40–50 speakers who grew up with the language are left. Members may recite the hundreds of verses of birdsongs that have been part of their culture for centuries, but the language in the songs is archaic, and the singers have committed them to memory with only a general knowledge of what they mean. As a result of rampant language loss, part of the damaging legacy of colonialism, members of the Kumeyaay nation have banded together in an effort to revitalize the language that is so integral to their cultural traditions. The cultural center at Barona, supported by casino funds, has developed language classes as well as a mastership/apprentice program that pairs one of the elders who speaks the language with a younger member who is trying to learn it. These efforts are commendable and are working on a small scale despite the formidable challenges of the lack of status, demographic concentration, or institutional support for the oldest living language in San Diego.

Since the colonization of the Americas by Europeans, the Native population has been oppressed, marginalized and subjected to genocide. Sadder still is that most of the American population is blind to and/or ignorant of the diversity of groups that make up the Indigenous American (Native American) population and the contemporary issues that are of importance to them, many of which are a direct result of U.S. policy and history. Among the most pressing contemporary issues facing Native Americans is the retention of culture by their tribal members, because culture is central to group survival. As a result of over three centuries of oppression and marginalization, many tribes have become extinct, and many more face the danger of the same fate. So how can these rich and vibrant cultures be saved? For Native Americans, one key part of the answer is simple: learn the native language. Because indigenous peoples are heir to a rich legacy of oral traditions, they view language as the most important agent for cultural survival; it is the vehicle through which everyone understands and communicates with the world; in particular, it allows for communication with elders and fosters a sense of identification with a people’s history and culture.

This essay focuses on the little known Native people of San Diego—the Kumeyaay Indians—and the result of their attempts to revitalize their language through the classroom approach and the mastership/apprenticeship program. Kumeyaay efforts demonstrate why it is imperative for the general public to relinquish the popular notion of the “vanishing Indian” myth and to comprehend why many Native American peoples find themselves in a state of anomie, and how this affects every facet of their lives. This chapter discusses the challenges that confront all native communities today, in an attempt to help Americans recognize how each culture lost is a consequence of American ideology, history, and policy, and why one culture’s loss constitutes a loss for the entire nation.

**The Impact of Colonization and Subjugation**

The Kumeyaay experience is a painful but little known chapter in San Diego’s history. The problems that the Kumeyaay and other indigenous peoples confront are rooted in a
history that has backed them into the corners of our society, leaving them decimated and ignored. European colonization of the Americas altered the lives of Native Americans in every possible way. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, native populations were ravaged by disease, displacement, enslavement, warfare and genocide. Disease, especially, proved to be a terribly efficient instrument in the decimation of Native Americans. For instance, epidemics of small pox and measles—diseases that Native Americans had little immunity against but were rarely fatal amongst Europeans—inflicted terrific fatalities among the Natives. Epidemics often followed European exploration immediately, even destroying entire villages. Some historians estimate that up to 80% of some Native populations might have died due to exposure to disease (Wilson, 1998). In San Diego, many Kumeyaay were lost to disease during the early years of contact. As Zentella notes in this volume, citing Baker, “Although the San Diego Mission recorded a total of 1,567 converts by 1803, an alarming 1,322 deaths had also been recorded (Baker 2007: 18). Population loss paved the way for language death.”

Spanish missionaries and the military personnel they accompanied carried out the earliest form of institutionalized cultural and physical genocide against Native American peoples. Much like future U.S. policies, the activities of the Spanish missions were undertaken as “civilizing missions.” The padres of the missions needed bodies to build their missions, plant crops, and be their servants/slaves; for all these purposes Native American bodies were appropriated. Indian peoples were forced into labor camps, subjected to physical abuse, disease, and eventual death. Both sexual and physical abuses were inflicted on the bodies of native women. California’s Indian population was estimated to be in excess of 300,000 prior to the founding of the first Spanish settlement in San Diego in 1769; by the early 1840s, the numbers had dwindled to approximately 100,000. Baja California witnessed a similar reduction in population due to Spanish colonization.

Atrocities against Native Americans continued throughout the formation of the U.S., beginning in the eastern part of the new nation. During the American Revolutionary War, the newly declared United States competed with the British for the allegiance of Native American nations east of the Mississippi River. Many native communities were divided over which side to support, yet most Native Americans who joined the struggle sided with the British, hoping to use the war to halt colonial expansion onto American Indian lands. Unfortunately, once the United States won the war, the country turned its attention to obtaining all the Indian land available and assimilating the peoples who lived there. By the 19th century, the incessant westward expansion of the United States compelled large numbers of Native Americans to resettle further west, and many were forcibly relocated. Under President Andrew Jackson, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which authorized the President to execute treaties with Native Americans that enabled the exchange of land east of the Mississippi River for land in the West. As many as 100,000 American Indians eventually relocated in the West as a result of the policy. Theoretically, this relocation was to be voluntary, but in effect the removals were executed through coercion. On January 31, 1876, the United States decreed that all Native Americans were required to move into closely guarded reservations.

In addition to rapacious land acquisition practices, the U.S. also executed its “civilizing mission” through cultural disciplining, and language was a particular focus. In the late
nineteenth century, for instance, reformers adopted the practice of educating native children in Indian boarding schools. These schools, run primarily by Christians, taught Christianity, forbade indigenous religions, and enforced, in numerous other ways, the erasure of indigenous identity and culture, especially by prohibiting the use of indigenous languages amongst their students. Many former boarding school students recall having their mouths washed out with soap if they spoke their native tongue. There are also numerous documented incidents of sexual, physical and mental abuses at the schools. Students were beaten into thinking that everything Indian was sinful, including Indian languages (Wilson 1998). These injustices were aggravated by the fact that when children grew older and moved back to their homes, they knew precious little about their culture, language, and history, and were not much interested in learning about them. Even those who had secretly kept alive a love for their culture had become unfamiliar with their language. Consequently, their ability to communicate with tribal elders was severely restricted, and knowledge that had originally passed along through the oral tradition became severely diminished over generations.

The Impact of U.S. Language Ideology

Not only does the history of American Indians help explain contemporary issues of cultural and language loss, it is also important to recognize the impact of federal language policy and the ideology that drives it. The U.S. was settled by immigrants who spoke a plethora of languages, but tolerance for language diversity dwindled around the 1880’s once newer immigrants, who were racially and culturally distinct from the early waves of northern European stock, began to arrive. During World War I, xenophobia was especially high and linguistic discrimination led to intolerant practices, from banning sign language to burning books in languages other than English. American policy became especially anti-“foreign” language partly as result of the war, but the English-only view was rooted in a long history. Beginning as far back as the Federalist Papers, John Jay had characterized the nation as “one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion … very similar in their manners and customs” (emphasis added) (Federalist No 2, 1787). These words reflected an idealized image of the United States, i.e., an America that was prosperous and homogenous, an English-speaking elite. This image was increasingly reinforced during World War I, and the exclusionary ideology it reflected used language as a catalyst to “otherize” minorities, based on their heritage language (Ricento 1996).

This ideology of “we have room for but one language here,” asserted by Theodore Roosevelt in 1919, has persisted in the United States unto the present day (Pavlenko 2002). Schools and other institutions perpetuate the idea that the only route to success is to give-up one’s native language in favor of English. U.S. language policies normativize “whiteness” through English-only ideologies, dividing languages into “good” and “bad,” often in racially linked ways. This racialization of language is evident in debates against bilingual education, where Anglo English is the only “good language” that deserves public support, and the minority language is blamed for hampering the academic and economic success of “non-white” immigrants. Since “minority communities” often have limited access to economic and linguistic resources that might enable the acquisition of “good language” skills, negative
stereotypes of ethnic communities as linguistically incompetent and unwilling to learn English are perpetuated. Moreover, since language unity is viewed as essential to national unity, proper citizenship and patriotism are judged on the basis of language skills. As Leanne Hilton argues, “Symbolically, language is seen as a factor in unification and separation. Linguistic minorities see their languages as a symbol of their identity; so does a nation. A language may become a symbol of patriotism, and minority languages are therefore seen as antipatriotic, a sign of divided loyalties” (Hinton 2001). Thus, ethnic communities learn that giving-up their language in favor of English becomes a powerful, even if culturally detrimental, means of demonstrating their commitment to the U.S.A. Native Americans and immigrant minorities suffer similar repercussions of U.S. language ideology.

Settler missions, boarding schools, and reservation life all served to sever indigenous peoples from their languages, in favor of English, resulting in a wide-spread loss of Native culture. The situation in California is dire: “With its 98 languages, California is one of the most linguistically diverse places in the world. Of the 98, 45 have no fluent speakers, seventeen have only between one and five, and thirty-six have only elder speakers” (Hinton 1998). The case of the Kumeyaay in California demonstrates one of the most endangered language group’s attempts to preserve its language as an agent for cultural survival.

‘Iipay aa: The Kumeyaay Language in Southern California

The Kumeyaay Nation extends from San Diego and Imperial Counties in California to 60 miles south of the Mexican border. In fact, the campus of the University of California San Diego in La Jolla is built upon land once occupied by a Kumeyaay village. The Kumeyaay are members of the Yuman language branch of the Hokan group and are indigenous to Southern California, although connected to more inland tribes through language. However, the Kumeyaay have their own distinct culture and language, a distinctness that is erased when notions of “pan-Indian” identity are invoked. Even among the Kumeyaay, there are marked variations within the ‘Iipay aa language (the language of the Kumeyaay Indians). The Kumeyaay once boasted eighteen dialects of ‘Iipay aa, a number that has sadly dwindled down to two. Only twelve of San Diego County’s seventeen federally recognized tribes now speak some variation of the ‘Iipay aa language (San Diego Union Tribune, 29 April 2008). Predictably, the overall number of language speakers has dwindled substantially over time. There is some debate in the community as to how many people still speak the language, but the numbers are very low. The most optimistic reports claim that there may be forty to fifty speakers, perhaps more, because some elders are hesitant to reveal such personal information. Others, like Cheryl Hinton, director and curator of the museum on the Barona Indian Reservation, place the number at around ten. Clearly, the language of the Kumeyaay is almost extinct.

Consequently, the issue of language loss has been central to the cultural mission of Kumeyaay tribes. On the Barona Reservation, the economic gains arising from the establishment of the Barona Casino have allowed the tribal council to set-up a community center and tribal museum that provide language education for the reservation population. The center operates a language class where students can learn the basic elements of language in an informal setting. By teaching language, the Barona cultural center hopes to provide
opportunities for cultural immersion. Because of the inextricability of language and culture, language classes are always cultural classes also. For example, Table I provides the names of the months of the year in Kumeyaay, with an explanation of the cultural differences between the Kumeyaay and Western/European calendar.

The Barona Center has also set-up a mastership/apprenticeship program for more advanced training. This program pairs a learner of Kumeyaay with a fluent speaker, usually an elder, who teaches the language in informal ways, based on everyday activities. Since there is no comprehensive dictionary for the 'Iipay aa language, and it contains numerous sounds that are not replicable in English, this advanced program is crucial to developing skilled language speakers. In 1988, however, Barona did compile a short 48 page dictionary, which was updated in the fall of 2008 (San Diego Union Tribune, 29 April 2008). Because the mastership/apprenticeship program uses a more engaged, personal approach to language learning, this program not only benefits new speakers, it also provides a comfortable space for elders who often find it difficult to speak the language due to the emotional stress borne from years of oppression.

Collaborative efforts at language revitalization span across various tribes. For instance, in 2008, the Barona Indian Reservation hosted the 6th Annual Yuman Family Language Summit titled “Sixteen Languages, One Family.” This summit brought together 15 Yuman Tribes to exchange information about Native American linguistics, and teaching and learning techniques. The link to the website lists the participants and activities: (www.californiaindianeducation.org/events/yuman_language_2008.html). In addition to such annual events, Birdsginer gatherings also expose the Kumeyaay peoples to their culture and

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Months of the Kumeyaay Calendar</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Halakwol</strong> – September (New Year)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Halanyimcep</strong> – October</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Halatai</strong> – November</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Halapisu</strong> – December</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Halamrtinya</strong> – January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Halanitca</strong> – February</td>
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The names of the months repeat after six months. This is similar to the way we repeat hours on our clocks with twelve hours repeated after noon. The months are not exactly the same as the calendar most of us use today; months would follow the phases of the moon, with adjustments made by the appearance of certain constellations. *Source: Connolly, 2007.*
language. Birdsingers are Kumeyaay singers who narrate Kumeyaay history, beliefs, and folklore through a long and elaborate cycle of brief songs sung in 'Iipay aa. Unfortunately, some members may recite the hundreds of verses of birdsongs that have been part of their culture for centuries, but the language in the songs is archaic, and the singers have committed them to memory with only a general knowledge of what they mean.

Survival and Revitalization

The strategies of language revitalization that the Kumeyaay are pursuing have enabled them to recover stolen and silenced histories, and have helped re-imbue the oral traditions with new vitality. While the number of Kumeyaay speakers has not grown massively, the strides made towards language education and dissemination have had a significant and visible impact on the community across generations. The cultural center has been facilitating a collaborative effort between tribal elders and linguistic scholars to develop language resources using new technology and mass media. For example, CDs are distributed among students in order to facilitate convenient language learning, on one's own time schedule. These CDs employ not only classic language learning tools such as word lists and grammar rules; they also contain narratives recorded by Kumeyaay elders in 'Iipay aa. Teaching tools such as this highlight the integral link between language and culture, one that is especially crucial to indigenous communities due to the historical and cultural importance of oral traditions.

The task of revitalization is formidable, and Native American language loss is rampant. Per some estimates, there were over 400, perhaps close to 600 indigenous languages spoken in the Americas around the time of European contact (Goddard 1996). Other estimates cite lower numbers, from about 250 (Silver and Miller 1997) to 300 (Krauss 1998). Despite the debate about precisely how many languages existed, there is little debate about the fact that the numbers have shrunk substantially since colonization. A language study conducted in 1997 reported that there are only 211 languages remaining, 175 of which are also spoken in the U.S. Yet, this number is somewhat deceptive as regards the health of the languages. Krauss divided the 175 languages in the U.S. into four groups, based on the status of each (Krauss 1998). Languages in Class A are those that have a healthy proportion of speakers across all generations, including young children. Only 20 of the 175 languages (about 11%) belonged to class A. Class B, which consisted of languages spoken only by the parental generation and higher, contained 30 languages (about 17%). Class C, made-up of languages spoken only by the grandparents’ generation and older, had 70 languages (40%). Finally, Class D, made-up of languages spoken only by a handful of community elders, generally fewer than 10, i.e., languages on the verge of extinction, consisted of 55 languages (31%). It is evident from this language distribution that very few languages have a healthy, secure future. As Yamamoto and Zepeda assert in regard to Native American languages, “only twenty languages (thirty-two when we include Canada) are being adequately acquired by children. These languages will be relatively safe. Over 70 percent (Class C and D) of the Native American languages in the U.S.A., however, are in extreme danger of extinction” (2004). Kumeyaay is among the latter.
Native American languages have confronted serious obstacles and oppression due to several generations of violence in the form of military conquest, slavery, confinement on reservations and forced cultural assimilation, the outlawing of native languages and the language termination policies of the 1950s and 60s. Until 1970, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was still actively pursuing a policy of “assimilation,” a policy dating back at least to the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. The goal of assimilation was to eliminate reservations and steer Indians into the U.S. mainstream. As recently as July 2000, the Washington state GOP (Republican Party) adopted a resolution to terminate tribal governments. All these forms of sociopolitical, cultural and linguistic oppression have severely affected the mental and physical health of Native Americans, causing problems such as drug and alcohol addiction, anomie, poverty, and New World Syndrome, which consists of a set of diseases like diabetes, heart disease and obesity, caused by the consumption of unhealthy new foods. Consequently, the issue of language retention among minority groups cannot be viewed as a case of survival of the fittest, which argues that only those languages that manage to thrive are worthy of support. Over 400 years of violence and oppression cannot be rendered irrelevant.

Congress has been slow to recognize this truth, and revitalization measures to date have been insufficient. The preservation efforts on behalf of Native American languages received a slight boost with the passage of the Native American Language Act in 1992, which authorized funds for community-based programs. While this Act has created greater awareness regarding the detrimental repercussions of language loss, it does not deal with the issue of language revitalization aggressively enough. The grant allows a maximum of $50,000 per language, an amount that can hardly provide sufficient support for language preservation, whether in terms of human resources or teaching aides. The Native American Language Act represents a very small step in the right direction, but it is imperative that the U.S.—its government and its people—urgently awake from its collective historical amnesia and make a commitment to more extensive revitalization efforts.

Thanks to the work of scholars such as Leanne Hinton, Nancy Richardson, and Margaret Langdon there is a growing awareness of new techniques to ensure language survival. Unless these techniques are adopted by communities facing language and cultural loss, to breathe new life into what Cheryl Hinton calls “sleeping languages,” the languages are almost certain to become extinct. Moreover, in order for a language to survive it must not be allowed to stagnate, i.e., it must evolve over time to develop and incorporate new words and phrases, a task that can be achieved only through continuous usage across a broad spectrum of the community. Yet, as has already been indicated, for many “sleeping languages” there is very little information and very few teachers are available to encourage the growth of new speakers. The Kumeyaay community recognizes that it faces an uphill struggle, and many of the obstacles are intensely emotional, as the Director of Barona’s museum explains:

One of the greatest challenges in the language class is not only to find a speaker who’s a fluent speaker, but then to find a speaker who’s a fluent speaker who can be a teacher. And then to find a fluent speaker who can be a teacher who is comfortable coordinating a lesson plan as a linguist. And also I think there’s a lot of emotional baggage with it too, when you have people who their whole life have
been told they are dumb because they speak a different language. The effects of the boarding school era are so large and most of the people who are in their fifties and sixties today are people who were told they shouldn't speak their language at all. Their grandparents or their parents were punished for it, they were beaten in school, and they were humiliated.

—(Cheryl Hinton, Personal Interview)

Hinton’s comments make clear precisely why governmental support is so central to a community’s ability to revitalize its language. The nation, as a larger community, can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the historical conditions that generated language and cultural extinction; it must recognize the obstacles that many communities face in their efforts at revitalization, especially indigenous communities, and support those efforts. While many pessimists believe otherwise, it is never too late to undertake an effort to revive a language, because it is not only crucial to the language group’s cultural survival, it also constitutes a unique contribution to understanding the way different cultural groups think and act.

This essay is meant to highlight the situation of loss and obstacles to survival of Native American languages, but more importantly to encourage the hopeful efforts being made to turn the tide of language and cultural extinction. For over 400 years, Native Americans have been stripped not only of their land but of their cultural and linguistic dignity. San Diego’s Kumeyaay nation is home to some of the most innovative programs to revive the language of the “first residents” of San Diego. All San Diegans should be grateful for Kumeyaay attempts to bring their language back from the brink of death because of the historic significance of Kumeyaay and the cultural significance of the world view encapsulated in the language.