



Rejecting the marginalized status of minority languages: Educational projects pushing back against language endangerment by Ari Sherris and Susan D. Penfield (eds.), *Multilingual Matters*: Bristol, UK, 2019. Pp. 168.

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Here is a ten-chapter book for anyone interested in maintaining the world's minority languages either through teaching or in some other way. Not surprisingly, given this subject, contributors are from many countries and present information about a range of languages, sometimes, but not often, their own. Here is a summary of the authors' starting points, beginning with the country where each of them is currently based and then (in brackets) their languages of interest: Argentina (various indigenous languages), Australia (the languages of Tibet, China and the Himalayas), Finland (Saami), Great Britain (Sakizaya from Taiwan and Manx from the Isle of Man), Hawaii (Hawaiian, and Kamsa from Colombia), New Zealand (Maori), Spain (Catalan), and three from the USA (native American languages, minority languages in general, and a minority language in Ghana). Some readers will have a particular interest in one of these languages, but many will be interested in each article's content since many experiences are paralleled in other parts of the world. Additionally, the range of research methods could be a guide to academics and teachers wanting to explore the status of languages in other parts of the world. To help further in that research process, each chapter has its own list of references. Given the positive actions of the writers, perhaps the next edition could move to a more optimistic opening verb for the title. How about 'Transforming' instead of 'Rejecting'?

In their introduction, Sherris and Penfield make the case for the book's starting point, namely the importance of rejecting the marginalized status of so many "indigenous, tribal and minoritized languages, cultures, bodies and lands" (p. 1). Along with the sadly familiar terms like political exploitation, racism and globalization I learned a new word here: "languacultures". (Incidentally, the fact that my computer wants to reject that term as I type it shows that it has yet to hit the mainstream.)

Attitudes to many minority languages, particularly in the countries where they are spoken, are not always flattering. Teare reports comments made about the Celtic language of the Isle of Man, at the time when it gained official protection in 1985. "Manx? That was never a real language." According to Sherris, the minority languages of Ghana are not even given names in the country's English-language constitution despite the requirement that to be a citizen of that country one must speak and understand one of those languages.

The story behind some of the writers' focus on a particular language makes interesting reading. Teare has already been mentioned in connection with Manx, the language of the island where he was born and brought up. As a child in the 1970s he was never formally taught the language of his ancestors although one teacher did give the children basic tutoring in the lunchtime. He also heard it spoken by his great-grandfather to his sheepdog! McNaught, on the other hand, from the University of London, is an outsider when it comes to the 16 minority languages of Taiwan, which he hopes to help promote as a teacher. In Hawaii, Kahakalau writes as an insider who has spent a quarter of a century in educational projects as well as her role as an activist and composer.

In some countries the status of minority languages has improved for the better over the years. Ka'ai traces attitudes towards the indigenous language of New Zealand, including the establishing of Maori language pre-schools in the early 1980s followed by Maori medium primary schools. It is a similar story in Finland where nine Saami languages are still in use. (They are also spoken in parts of Sweden, Norway and the

Murmansk region of the Russian Federation although this article concentrates on Finland). Pasanen makes the point that political recognition often goes hand in hand with language revitalization. This has happened gradually since the 1960s, but in the 1990s it was legislative changes that worked in favour of those languages. Taiwan's story is far more complicated as illustrated by McNaught's summary of the country's centuries of occupations.

Readers hoping to do their own research into minority languages will be interested to see the varied methods used by each of the researchers. To investigate the use of the Saami language in Finland, Pasanen combined quantitative data (85 responses to a survey) with the qualitative data which form the basis of this chapter, namely results from interviews with teachers of the language. A complication was that the language has three sub-groups but the chapter's extensive graphics, combined with the commentary, make her results easy to follow. In a co-authored chapter from Argentina, Argenter and Unamuno report an interesting investigation into the involvement of schools in language revitalization. The pairs of before and after photographs from stages in producing a children's storybook show how important it was to involve indigenous language speakers in producing the illustrations.

In the final chapter McCarty, from the University of California, writes from her starting point is as Principal Investigator in a U.S. wide study of immersion schooling for indigenous languages. She draws on contributions from all the chapters to wrap up the book's topic.

An interesting reflection after reading the book could be to ask oneself the question, "How many of these languages had I heard of before?". The answer could reinforce the need for the book. Widespread as they are, the contents leave plenty of minority languages waiting for a second edition.