Introduction: American Indian Languages in Unexpected Places

Anthony K. Webster and Leighton C. Peterson

This special issue of the American Indian Culture and Research Journal brings together a set of essays that integrate two seemingly disparate intellectual trends in the humanities and social sciences. On the one hand, there is Philip Deloria’s work about American Indians in “unexpected places.” On the other hand, there is the work of linguistic anthropology. Deloria’s writings have been integral to the growing corpus of critical approaches to the study of Native peoples, including the ways in which representational practices of the past continue to resonate and the ways in which (de)colonization of indigenous histories and structural (in)equities are intertwined. We say “seemingly disparate” because this line of scholarship, including Deloria’s work, is concerned with the naturalization of inequalities, the ways in which expectations about Native American peoples have led to a denial of coevalness. However, there is also a tradition in linguistic anthropology that has sought to understand the ways in which linguistic inequalities are naturalized and circulated. Our intervention is to place linguistic anthropology in a meaningful dialogue with contemporary indigenous studies.

Deloria’s Indians in Unexpected Places challenged the representational “expectations” and “anomalies” of American Indians in history and popular culture. Deloria called for examining why certain imageries and practices have been

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considered “unexpected” and how the obscuring stereotypes of American Indian life have helped fashion such representations. Deloria countered this received wisdom at the horizon of American Indians activities during the early twentieth century, showing that the “anomalous” was not anomalous at all and that what was “modern” was a refashioning of modernity. In the articles that compose this issue, we explore how received expectations can be thwarted by understanding historic and contemporary American Indian linguistic practices in relation to popular culture, and especially Native American peoples as producers of verbal art, mediated representations, and social critiques in a variety of genres and in a multitude of codes. Our approach to Indian languages in unexpected places engages the lived realities and multisited locales of Native peoples and communities and the ways in which they discursively challenge such obscuring stereotypes. By focusing on the misrecognition of indigenous linguistic practices as unexpected, and the ways in which Native American languages and their speakers have become invisible and then visible again through scholarship and representation, we tease out the informing assumptions that make such practices “not anomalous.” Thus, we seek to understand the ways in which contemporary American Indian linguistic practices confront the obscuring stereotypes of Indians in unexpected places as well as the ways in which Native American community members negotiate and reframe such expectations.

Since its founding, linguistic anthropology has been intertwined with Native America—sometimes to the detriment of indigenous peoples and sometimes to their benefit. The seminal early figures in linguistic anthropology, including Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, Edward Sapir, Dorothy Lee, Mary Haas, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Gladys Reichard, Harry Hoijer, Carl Voegelin, and Edward Dozier, all worked with and wrote about Native American languages and cultures. We date the foundational moment of Americanist linguistic anthropology to Boas’s “On Alternating Sounds” (1889), a path-breaking article critiquing previous generations of scholars who had claimed that Native American languages were so “primitive” as to be inconsistent in their sound systems. Boas argued that it was not Native American languages that were inconsistent, but rather the scholars who had documented them. The problem was that outsiders tended to understand the sound systems of Native American languages through the phonology of their own colonial languages; the alternation was then not an alternation of production but of perception, an early example of what later became known as “linguistic relativity.” For Boas and his students, a description of indigenous languages must not begin with the assumption that Indo-European was a “natural” model for all languages, in which, for example, Native American languages were seen as deficient or lacking if they organized grammatical features differently than Indo-European languages. As Boas noted, “thus it happens that each language, from the point
of view of another language, may be arbitrary in its classifications,” for example, how English appears arbitrary in its use of gender marking when compared with Navajo. Rather, the descriptions of Native American languages should be understood on their own terms.

This early work of Boas and his students challenged the expectations that Native American languages were “primitive” or “simple” in some structural sense. For Sapir, and more so for Whorf and Lee, the expectations that Native American languages were primitive and deficient were challenged by arguing that English was just one orientation among many. Both Barbra Meek and Anthony K. Webster develop the theme of structural difference as not entailing deficiencies in their articles, discussing such assumptions in relation to American Indian Englishes. From this early Boasian concern developed a tradition with understanding Native American languages on their own terms, an idea oft-associated with the names of Sapir and Whorf. In essence, Sapir and Whorf tapped into a venerable tradition that noted that languages predispose their speakers to orient to the world in certain habitual ways. Furthermore, at a time when many indigenous languages were actively and violently being suppressed, Whorf, Lee, Hoijer, and others were arguing that “mainstream” American society could learn much from understanding Native languages. Whether it was Whorf’s suggestion that modern physics might do well to attend to Hopi verb morphology or Lee’s argument that attention to Wintu ways of speaking might lead to a more humane way of engaging with the world, the argument was clear: Native American languages had much to teach.

As Whorf noted, “to restrict thinking to the patterns of English, and especially to those patterns which represent the acme of plainness in English, is to lose a power of thought which, once lost, can never be regained. It is the ‘plainest’ English which contains the greatest number of unconscious assumptions about nature.” Whorf’s argument, which continues to resonate, was to challenge an expectation that Native American languages were remnants of an earlier “evolutionary” stage, perpetually premodern and somehow backward or useless in a contemporary modern world, a theme developed in this issue in the articles by Erin Debenport, Leighton Peterson, and Wesley Leonard.

The work of Dell Hymes has also figured prominently in understanding the ways that linguistic and social inequalities have been naturalized. Although earlier understandings of “fashions of speaking” or “ways of speaking” often meant the grammatical structures of a language, Hymes was concerned with the interplay of such grammatical structures with actual language use in context, in actual ways of speaking and writing. Hymes repeatedly called for understanding how Native Americans actually used languages and the ways outside institutions and practices misrecognized, marginalized, and silenced those speakers, an important precursor to much current linguistic
anthropological investigation. The classic work of Susan Philips, for example, applied a Hymesian analysis of the ways of speaking among Warm Springs community members to the manner in which such ways of speaking were misrecognized or devalued in Anglo-dominant education settings. Although the article by Meek directly engages these issues through discourses of First Nations language revitalization, the relationship of linguistic misrecognition to structural inequality is a recurring theme in all of the articles herein. In a related vein, Hymesian ethnopoetics was also meant as a way to show something of the ways Native American storytellers created meaningfulness, uncovering a more “authentic” narrative voice, that is, a glimpse and overt acknowledgment of something of the individual narrator’s poetic achievements.

This recognition of voice was the recognition of the ways in which narrators can actually tell their stories in their own style, using all their preferred expressive options. Narratives collected by a prior generation of linguistic anthropologists, published as block prose under headings such as “The Tonkawa Origin Story,” hid the poetic structuring involved in producing the narrative and—more importantly—the actual identity of the storyteller. For Hymes, it was no longer a matter of a nameless Tonkawa narrator; rather we were forced to acknowledge the individual artistry of John Rush Buffalo. The Hymesian ethnopoetic perspective has had, we believe, an important and beneficial influence on the ways in which Native American verbal art—as well as narrative more generally—is approached in linguistic anthropology. Coupled with the work of Dennis Tedlock about the use of pause structure, prosody, and performance in ethnopoetic research as well as the more recent merging of Hymes’s and Tedlock’s perspective through a discourse-centered approach to language and culture, linguistic anthropologists have attempted to understand the poetic structurings and verbal artistry that are at the core of the individual, language, and culture nexus. In the articles that follow, this Hymesian approach to ethnopoetics and the recognition of voice are most fully articulated in the article by Webster.

During the 1970s, building on the work of Whorf and Hymes, Michael Silverstein brought a concern with “language ideologies” to the forefront. For Silverstein, language ideologies were “any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use.” Paul Kroskrity has more recently defined language ideologies as “beliefs, or feelings, about languages as used in their social world,” and we see Kroskrity’s engagement with the feelings about languages that speakers have as an important addition to what has become a major research agenda in linguistic anthropology. If the Hymesian approach to ways of speaking and ethnopoetics added actual use of the grammatical structurings located by Boasians to linguistic anthropological investigations, these recent perspectives
on language ideologies add the values, beliefs, and feelings that speakers have toward the uses and structurings of languages. That is, where Hymes was concerned with the functions of languages in use, a language-ideological approach investigates the assumptions behind what makes such functions possible. Native American communities (as do all communities) often reflect multiple and competing language ideologies, and linguistic anthropologists have begun to attend to the beliefs, values, and feelings that indigenous peoples have toward their languages. Without this attention to multifaceted linguistic ideologies, as Kroskrity and Margaret Field have noted, we “cannot hope to understand Native American languages and the ways speakers use them, change them, and renew them.”

One way to think about Deloria’s concern with “expectations” is to see those expectations as articulations of Western-language ideologies, and much linguistic anthropological research into language ideologies has sought to understand the often-conflicting assumptions about the nature and use of “languages” between colonizers and colonized subjects. For example, Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs have described the development of a modernist Western ideology of language, through John Locke, that sees languages as an abstract system, primarily about reference, and largely homogenous, as being complicit in the reproduction of inequalities. Another Western-language ideology, this time through Johann Herder, sees an isomorphic mapping of one language on one people. In both cases, actual linguistic practices—and individuals—are erased. Here, for example, the Kaska who speaks English and not Kaska is seen as anomalous (it is assumed that real Kaska speak Kaska and not English), and the non-mainstream English that that Kaska speaks, influenced by Kaska, is seen as dysfluent and as violating a “homogenous” or monoglot view of language. Although Hymes long ago noted this problem of conflating languages with “tribes,” the conventional image, found in language maps for example, of language equaling bounded lands and identities persists. The article by Lisa Philips in this issue reveals such oft-misrecognized multilingualism among First Nations and Native American speakers in historical context, and all of the articles—in one way or another—engage this question of the relationship between the Western-language ideologies and actual heteroglossic linguistic practices discussed below. Assumptions of homogenous-language ideologies should be as suspect as expectations about homogenous languages.

Building on concerns regarding Western-language ideologies, Jane Hill has initiated an important research agenda that seeks to understand the ways racism is reproduced through everyday discursive practices. For Hill, racism means the reproduction of structures of inequality, which posit some groups as unmarked and others as marked and, hence, as “suspect,” and the languages of
minorities are always, to invoke Bonnie Urciuoli’s felicitous phrasing, “objects of scrutiny.” Hill’s research has focused on routine parodies of Spanish, African American English, and Native American Englishes that simultaneously maintain “white virtue” and stigmatize and marginalize minority ways of speaking and writing. As Meek notes in this issue, such routine forms of discursive racism can then “pass” as mere “expectations,” as though they are not created and reproduced by the dominant society but are merely normative (that is, commonsense) assumptions about “what others [insert minority here] do.” This is not to say, however, that indigenous peoples have not resisted such ethnocentric linguistic displays, which is well illustrated by Keith Basso’s classic examination of the ways in which Western Apache peoples have used forms of English as emblematic displays of improper behavior. However, the Western Apache portraits differ significantly from the kinds of examples described by Hill; in the Apache case, such forms are used as critiques of the dominant Anglo society and challenge and reframe the naturalness of inequality. Nonetheless, understanding the ways that such expectations of Native American languages are created, and the various discursive, institutional, and everyday practices that reproduce social inequalities through assumptions licensed by such expectations, is a crucial nexus for understanding Native American languages in unexpected places.

Another pervasive expectation that Deloria challenged regarding Native American peoples was that they were “technologically incompetent.” This expectation of technological incompetence also played into Western-language ideologies that conflated alphabetic writing, civilization, and rationality. Because linguistic anthropology (or anthropological linguistics) was often imagined as work with “the languages of peoples who have no writing,” as Hoijer noted, there has been a persistent trend of “documenting” (that is, writing down) Native American languages. “Writing” was here narrowly and exclusively understood as “alphabetic writing.” Such beliefs about writing actively erased indigenous inscriptive practices from Tohono O’odham calendar sticks to Lakhota winter counts, as well as such emergent literacy practices of Sequoyah and the Cherokee or Parker McKenzie’s Kiowa alphabet, or Silas John Edwards and the Holy Ground Movement among the Western Apache and Mescalero Apache. Communicative technologies are not limited to literacy; Bennie Klain, Peterson, and Lisa Philips Valentine have shown that radio has played an important role in Native communities, especially as it relates to issues concerning language vitality, lifeways transformations, and ways of speaking. David Samuels’s work on the Western Apache’s feelingful engagements with rock ‘n’ roll and country music, including the kinds of musical instruments, amplifiers, and public-address systems used in performance, foreground the role of technology in contemporary Western Apache
music.39 Imagining Native people as uninterested in or incompetent with literacy, emergent media, and technology is to deny Native peoples coevalness, and a number of articles in this issue challenge the view of Native Americans as technologically incompetent. Webster takes up the issue of writing in his article, while Peterson, Debenport, and Leonard describe Native American engagements with media from film to instant messaging.40

Today, many Native American languages are often described as “endangered languages” or “threatened languages,” and the venerable tradition of documentation seems to have come full circle. The tradition of documenting Native languages has often been seen as useful for Native communities; the early Boasian concern with “documenting” Native place-names has become a useful resource for Native communities in debates concerning land claims.41 However, the neutrality of the term documenting languages, that is, writing and recording languages, has also been seen as problematic in some Native communities, especially as orthography and dictionary development has often been intertwined with colonial agendas.42 Although Walter Ong may have suggested that putative “oral cultures” (and we are suspicious of this term) are everywhere and always eager to achieve “literacy,” this reflects a particular Western-language ideology that again conflates writing with permanence, rationality, and civilization.43 Writing, as by now it should be clear, is intertwined with Western- and Native American—language ideologies. That, for example, poetry can be written in the Navajo orthography, but poetry is less common in the Cherokee syllabary developed by Sequoyah, reflects different historical trajectories and language ideologies about the role of certain writing systems as the medium for creativity.44 Some communities have been or have become reluctant to write down or record Native languages or specific genres in Native languages for language-ideological reasons.45 The question of which orthography is to be used in language programs is often deeply implicated in the language ideologies of outside linguists, local-language activists, and Native American community members.46 Linguistic anthropologists have done much to challenge such received expectations about writing and literacy—or of cameras and computers—as mere “technologies,” in order to encourage people to see them, instead, as fully entangled in often-competitive language ideologies.47

The trope of the “vanishing Native American language” has, today, replaced the earlier trope of the “vanishing Indian.” It has become a pervasive expectation by which to understand indigenous languages, and a growing literature of publications by linguists decrying the loss of Native American languages exists.48 Normally, the rhetoric of “endangered languages” means that the traditionally understood indigenous language is not being spoken by young people at a rate that will ensure its continued “viability,” which is reckoned in terms of notions of “fluency.” The articles in this issue do not dispute the structural and
physical violence that has led to the marginalization, stigmatization, and loss of lexical-grammatical codes (that is, languages). However, we are also interested in languages as sets of practices, or ways of speaking, writing, and communicating.\textsuperscript{49} The biological metaphors of “language death” or an “extinct language” seem to reproduce expectations of the vanishing Native American: once they are gone, they are gone.\textsuperscript{50} The use of metaphors such as \textit{vanishing} also naturalizes the process of language shift, mystifying what are actually complex human activities, activities that are linked with colonialism and the structural and physical violence associated with colonialism and racism. Linguistic anthropologists have begun to critique such discourses about “language endangerment.”\textsuperscript{51} Kroskrity has urged scholars and language activists to engage in “ideological clarification” about their own tacit assumptions regarding language and language ideologies in “language renewal activities” and about how—or whether—language-vitality programs should be engaged.\textsuperscript{52} Leonard’s article reminds us that many Native peoples might prefer other metaphors (sleeping languages) and might have other expectations about the processes of language shift and renewal, asking more fundamental questions about what it means for Miami peoples to have a language such as \textit{myaamia}.\textsuperscript{53}

Another persistent dominant expectation is that “authentic” Native people speak “authentic” Native languages, the Herderian conceit—often linked to misinterpretations of the work of Sapir and Whorf—that lashes identity to language, and only pure languages and pure identities at that.\textsuperscript{54} All of the articles in this issue ask questions about what is to be counted as a Native American language and what such ideologically loaded counting practices may mean to indigenous identities, and the expectations about the American Indian Englishes that many Native communities now speak and write are brought to the fore in articles by Meek, Webster, Leonard, and Peterson.\textsuperscript{55} “English” and Native American Englishes are important ways of speaking and writing for many Native communities.\textsuperscript{56} These do not just include communities in which the traditionally understood Native language is no longer spoken, but also communities like Kaska and Navajo, in which traditionally understood Native languages are spoken alongside of—or in conjunction with—Navajo English or Kaska English. Contemporary Native American communities are immersed within heteroglossia. As Hill notes, “we should assume speakers confront ‘heteroglossia,’ which is not necessarily sorted out into a clearly delineated system of codes.”\textsuperscript{57} Not only do the expectations about Native peoples imagine them as technologically incompetent, but also such racist expectations imagine Native people as “linguistically incompetent,” or unable to maintain heritage languages, speak multiple languages, or speak correctly in colonial languages. Native Englishes are often devalued or stigmatized by way of “standard language ideologies” as “failures” of English.\textsuperscript{58}
Such heteroglossia found in contemporary Native communities could be read as a recent phenomenon. Here too, however, is a rather pervasive expectation, echoes of the Herderian legacy that imagines the “natural” state of the world as bounded monolingual territories. Contemporary language maps reproduce such monoglot-centric views of Native Americans, in which the blue shading on the map equals Navajo, green shading equals Lakhota, and pink shading equals Hopi. Such maps erase the multisited locales of indigenous communities, plurilingualism, and multilingualism, including, for example, Navajo speakers living in Phoenix or Afghanistan, or a lingua franca such as Plains Indian Sign Talk, or among those in the Village of Tewa, who live on the Hopi Reservation and speak or spoke not just Tewa but also the unrelated languages of Hopi, Navajo, Spanish, and English. Philips's careful analysis of Native American multilingualism in the British and American borderlands during the 1780s through the 1850s should remind us that such heteroglossia, multilingualism, and fluid geographies are not recent issues for Native communities. As Silverstein has noted, basic assumptions about “stable, language-bounded, one-language cultural units” is a persistent form of the misrecognition of Native speech communities as language communities. That such cultural units have then been conflated with contemporary indigenous communities and identities also needs to be recognized and reevaluated.

For example, nothing unexpected exists in seeing the Navajo protagonist of Navajo and Pueblo author A. A. Carr’s novel *Eye Killers* speak Navajo, English, and Keres; a Pueblo man speak Navajo in Navajo poet Laura Tohe’s poem “Sometimes Those Pueblo Men Sure Be Coyotes”; or Navajo actors speaking Navajo, Navajo English, and Apache in Norman Patrick Brown’s feature film *The Rainbow Boy*. In these cases, Native American multilingualism is the norm, and the Western-language ideology of monolingualism is found wanting. To see such multilingualism and plurilingualism as unexpected is to confirm historian Jennifer Nez Denetdale’s point that “Navajos continue to be understood within Western frameworks, thereby contributing to the ongoing distortion of the realities of Native lives, cultures . . . histories” and, we would add, languages. The in-depth analyses of specific discursive practices in contexts that our contributors put forth directly engage and explore something of the linguistic realities of Native lives, cultures, histories, and ways of speaking and how those realities have been either misrecognized or erased. Here we clearly see our work as in dialogue with the indigenous scholarship of Denetdale, Deloria, and others who have sought to highlight the ways that inequalities toward indigenous peoples have been naturalized through racist and colonizing expectations. It is our hope that these articles suggest ways that the methods and theories of linguistic anthropology, which has a long history
of investigating inequalities, may be of some use in destabilizing those persistent racist and colonizing expectations.

We begin this issue with Lisa Philips and her detailed analysis of “Unexpected Languages: Multilingualism and Contact in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century North America,” an analysis of cultural contact and multilingualism in First Nations and Native American communities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This investigation starts with assumptions of almost universal multilingualism, moving beyond typical political, militaristic, or economic explanations for cultural contact and heteroglossia, and revealing how a multitude of (unexpected) languages have been found in circulation for a very long time. Next, Meek puts forth a series of episodes in her article “Failing American Indian Languages” that highlight discursive representations of mythical speech across a range of media which engage misconceptions of First Nations linguistic practices as dysfluent failures. Meek invokes the work of Deloria and Hill in examining how such perceptions recombine racism and other structural inequalities, and how these discourses come to be embedded and encoded in a range of aboriginal language-renewal activities. Webster continues this theme of dysfluent Englishes in his article, “‘Please Read Loose’: Intimate Grammars and Unexpected Languages in Contemporary Navajo Literature,” with a Hymesian ethnopoetic analysis of Navajo writer Blackhorse Mitchell’s poetry and introductory materials about his acclaimed novel *Miracle Hill: The Story of a Navajo Boy* (1967). Webster pays close attention to the performances and discourses surrounding Mitchell’s work and his tenuous “collaboration” with his former teacher, clearly showing how Mitchell’s English was misrecognized and the ways in which Mitchell reasserts authorship of the novel through his use of Navajo English aspect marking.

Debenport takes the theme of mediated representations further in “As the Rez Turns: Anomalies within and beyond the Boundaries of a Pueblo Community,” exploring how youth from the fictional Tiwa-speaking San Antonio Pueblo negotiate and reframe intratribal expectations of linguistic practices and ideologies. Debenport invokes the work of Silverstein and Bauman on intertextuality and genre to show how language students utilize associated “anomalies” as discursive resources in order to assert rights to socially controlled linguistic and cultural resources in a new medium through pedagogical and popular cultural forms. Peterson continues this engagement with indigenous peoples as cultural producers, building on the work of Deloria, Kroskrity, and Faye Ginsburg in his analysis of “‘Reel Navajo’: The Linguistic Creation of Indigenous Screen Memories.” Here Peterson explores the language ideologies and representational practices involved as Navajo filmmakers create “screen memories” in Navajo; that is, as Navajo filmmakers engage the filmic resignification of Navajo histories and ways of speaking,
creating intimacy with local audiences by representing and negotiating a range of linguistic ideologies and realities. Finally, Leonard’s article, “Challenging ‘Extinction’ through Modern Miami Language Practices,” deftly confronts a range of Western-language ideologies and expectations about indigenous languages and peoples by examining how contemporary myaamia speakers maintain core Miami values in second-language, bilingual contexts. Leonard reminds us that the expectations of indigenous communities may counter those of linguists and anthropologists. Kroskryty (“All Intimate Grammars Leak: Reflections on ‘Indian Languages in Unexpected Places’”) and Deloria (“On Leaking Languages and Categorical Imperatives”) then provide useful commentary about the articles and point toward new directions of research.

This is an opportune time to engage wider debates regarding Native American representational practices, histories, and self-representation through the lens of linguistic anthropology, bridging studies of indigenous languages, histories, peoples, and practices. Just as important is the hope that broader debates on postcolonial histories, indigenous studies, and (self-)representational practices can inform work on language ideologies, linguistic vitality, and emergent communicative practices in postcolonial contexts. Ultimately, the recognition of Native American languages in unexpected places—which are, in the end, not terribly unexpected in the communities in which they occur—reveals the obscuring and racist stereotypes of a dominant and dominating society. All the articles in this issue attend to upending such commonsense expectations of Native American languages that have led to various nefarious structuring inequalities and to the ways in which indigenous peoples continue to counter and reframe such expectations.

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Notes


On (de)colonization, see, e.g., Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Jennifer Nez Denetdale, Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Margaret Kovach, Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).


8. Ibid., 22.


16. For Hymes's work in ethnopoetics, see *In Vain, Reading Takelma Texts*, and *Now I Know*.

17. For useful discussions of the notion of “voice” in Hymes’s work and his concern with inequality in his ethnopoetic work, see Jan Blommaert, "Ethnography and Democracy: Hymes's Political Theory


23. For orientating literature concerning language ideologies and issues of inequality, see Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity, Language Ideologies; Paul Kroskrity, Regimes of Language (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2000); Miki Makihara and Bambi Scheffelin, Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For specific case studies relating to First Nations/Native American languages and communities, see Kroskrity and Field, Native American Language Ideologies and Kroskrity, Telling Stories.


34. Deloria, Unexpected Places, 4.

35. See Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy (London: Routledge, 1982) for the prototypical example of this conflation.


It should also be noted that Hoijer actually documented several Holy Ground texts among the Mescalero Apache. So the Mescalero, with whom Hoijer worked during the 1930s, actually had an
indigenous form of writing while he was doing fieldwork, but it did not match Hoijer’s expectation of “writing.” It should also be noted that the Silas John writing system was to be used only within the confines of the Holy Ground. Samuel E. Kenoi, who was also one of Hoijer’s Chiricahua Apache language consultants, wrote numerous letters during the 1930s to various US government officials challenging the treatment of the Chiricahua Apache. These were the peoples that Hoijer worked with, and they clearly did not “lack” writing. Yet, it appears, Hoijer could not see beyond certain received expectations. On Samuel E. Kenoi, see Anthony K. Webster, “Sam Kenoi’s Coyote Stories: Poetics and Rhetoric in Some Chiricahua Apache Narratives,” American Indian Culture and Research Journal 23, no. 1 (1999): 137–63; and Anthony K. Webster, “Samuel E. Kenoi’s Portraits of White Men,” in Inside Dazzling Mountains, ed. David Kozak (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, in press), 211–35.


39. Samuels, Putting a Song.

40. For a recent discussions on these issues, see Leighton C. Peterson, Technology, Ideology and Emergent Communicative Practices among the Navajo (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2006); and Patrick Moore and Kate Hennessy, “New Technologies and Contested Ideologies: The Tagish First Voices Project,” American Indian Quarterly 30 (2006): 119–37. The theme of Native peoples as technologically incompetent is to imagine the recurring trope of Native peoples in the “past tense.” As Navajo poet Sherwin Bitsui told Webster in 2001, “I’m tired of being written about in the past tense.”


43. Ong, Orality and Literacy. One reason to be suspicious of “oral cultures,” and there are many, is to recognize the myriad sign languages that Native Americans employed. See, e.g., Brenda Farnell, Do You See What I Mean: Plains Indian Sign Talk and the Embodiment of Action (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); and Jeffrey Davis, Hand Talk: Sign Language among American Indian Nations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On the ways “oral cultures” are ideological achievements, see Morgan, Bearer of This Letter.

44. On the use of the Cherokee syllabary for poetry, see Bender, Signs of Cherokee, 155. On Navajo poetry, see Webster, Explorations.

45. See, again, Kroskrity, Language, History and “Narrative Reproductions”; Debenport, “Potential Complexity”; and Innes, “Ethical Problems.”

47. For a useful overview of these issues that also touches on Tolowa concerns with literacy, see James Collins and Richard Blot, Literacy and Literacies: Text, Power, and Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For an ethnographic and ethnohistorical investigation of the role of literacy and competing language ideologies among the Fort Belknap community, see Morgan, Bearer of This Letter.

48. For a general sampling of this literature and to get a sense of the kinds of titles that are used in this literature, see Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley, Endangered Languages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, Vanishing Voices (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); David K. Harrison, When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World’s Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge (London: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Nicholas Evans, Dying Words: Endangered Languages and What They Have to Tell Us (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).


54. On Herder, see Bauman and Briggs, Voices of Modernity. On a useful introduction to concerns with “purity” see Pauline Turner Strong and Barrik Van Winkle, “Indian Blood: Reflections on the


60. On Navajo, see Peterson, *Technology, Ideology*; on Plains Indian Sign Talk, see Farnell, *Do You See What I Mean*; and on the Village of Tewa, see Kroskrity, *Language, History*.


64. Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 19.