

Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization. *Tasaku Tsunoda.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005. xxi + 305 pp.

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This contribution by Tasaku Tsunoda will certainly come to occupy an important position as a general reference book in the growing corpus of language documentation and revitalization literature. Unlike some academic linguists who boarded the language endangerment train after journalists started asking uncomfortable questions about language death and funding for descriptive linguistics became more plentiful, Professor Tsunoda has been working on Australian Aboriginal languages for over 35 years and has a deep commitment to both the speech forms and the communities with whom he has collaborated. Those interested in descriptive linguistics will likely have come across his excellent online bibliography on language endangerment and language revitalization (BibLe) at [http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/BibLe/](http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/BibLE/). In the present book, Tsunoda's aim is to present a "comprehensive overview of issues that concern language endangerment and language revitalization" (p. v) in 13 meticulously structured chapters.

As becomes apparent from both the presentation and heavy referencing, the book is built upon a set of revised and annotated notes from lectures given by the author at the University of Tokyo between 1999 and 2004, and as such is intended as a "textbook for postgraduate and advanced undergraduate students" (p. v). Tsunoda's writing is accessible and the volume is informative, well structured, and replete with references to relevant works by other scholars. When the author writes of his own experiences with Aboriginal language communities, and in particular of his friendship and collaboration with the late Mr. Alf Palmer, the last fluent speaker of Warrangu, the book comes alive. *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization* is dedicated to Mr. Palmer's memory, consistent with the high ethical standards that Tsunoda advocates in language documentation and revitalization campaigns.

The style of the introduction gives the reader an inkling of what is to follow: short subsections, copious cross-referencing to other chapters in the book, and a great reliance on the work of others (the bibliography itself runs to 32 pages). While the author is clearly up to date on contemporary thinking on language endangerment, his citation of Marvin Harris' 1975 *Culture, People, Nature* as a "textbook on general anthropology" (p. 1) is a little behind the times. The second chapter, on degrees of language endangerment, offers constructive thoughts on the viability of speech forms and proposes to classify languages in four categories: (1) healthy, strong; (2) weakening, sick; (3) moribund, dying; and (4) dead, extinct (p. 15).

Chapter 3 takes the reader on a cursory expedition around regions of the world in which endangered speech forms are found. While any such overview is necessarily general, the weighting in this section is somewhat uneven, with a longer section on the Ainu of Japan (§ 3.3) than on the languages of India "and neighbouring regions" (§ 3.13). However, Tsunoda is on firmer ground when he writes about documentation, which he believes to be "the most important thing to do about such [endangered] languages," and the "most urgent task of linguists" (p. 29). While not all linguists will agree with his strongly worded assertion, I happen to be of the same mind, and found his discussion of different approaches to language endangerment in chapter 4, and his presentation of the theories and models of language death in chapter 5, to be helpful and nuanced.

The sixth chapter, on the other hand, which addresses the "external setting" of language endangerment, is overly plodding, with too many bullet points and place holders. At such points, it would have helped to have the author alongside his text, able to flesh out in person

the rather skeletal rubric that he has provided us with in print. At other points, as in chapter 7, when Tsunoda talks of functional domains, his writing is compelling. The differentiation between subordinate and dominant languages shown in Table 7-1 offers an intriguing set of structural oppositions to think with, and his discussion of language shift is equally balanced and will be helpful to students and advanced researchers alike.

One of the longest sections in the book, and certainly the most technical from a linguistic viewpoint, is chapter 8 on the structural changes that languages undergo as they become endangered. Throughout the book, but in this section in particular, the author relies heavily on Robert Malcolm Ward Dixon's impressive Dyrirbal oeuvre. While certainly pertinent and worthy of detailed discussion, as a non-Australianist I would have liked to see a little more areal diversity. For example, in discussing tendencies such as affixes being adopted from the minority language while roots are taken from the dominant language, Tsunoda might have referred to the literature on endangered languages in South Asia where this feature is particularly prominent.

Chapter 10 addresses the politicized topic of linguistic and cultural heritage, and offers the reader a tour of the major concerns as addressed in the literature. I was somewhat disheartened by the author's discussion of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights of 1996. Over a decade after the event, the author is forced to admit that still "no government seems likely to officially endorse the Declaration" (p. 145). Is this not a case of linguistic activists mis-firing and simply preaching to the converted? Rather than focusing on the bureaucratic reluctance to sign, perhaps the concerned community of language professionals could consider constructive ways to engage with governments on these issues.

Different maintenance and revival strategies for endangered languages are dealt with in chapter 11, while chapter 12 addresses the important topic of scholarly ethics and collaboration with speech communities. The final substantive chapter of the book focuses on various methodologies that can be used in language documentation, and how to train fieldworkers. Discussing the "tendency among some linguists to focus on one single topic for research," Tsunoda rightly points out that it is regrettable that so often " 'highly specialized' linguists are considered 'true scholars', while . . . those linguists who have a wide range of interests are regarded as 'not decent' " (p. 248). With such comments, Tsunoda reminds us that the greatest obstacles to practicing holistic, responsible, and ethical linguistics come from practitioners within our own discipline.

In all, then, Tasaku Tsunoda has produced a worthwhile if slightly uneven reference book that represents the state of language endangerment studies in the first years of the 21st century. The volume offers helpful summaries of the main issues and cites most of the relevant literature, even if it reads like an annotated bibliography at times. The very reasonable \$35.95 price tag for the paperback edition will likely encourage students—its core base of users—to purchase this book themselves, while the substantially more expensive hardcover edition should be acquired by any self-respecting university library.

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