

Language Attitudes, Perceptions and Identity: Some Haida and Cree Data

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Abstract

Data were collected on self-reported language use, attitudes, vitality perceptions, contact and identifications from 155 adults and teenagers in two Aboriginal communities: the Haida in Haida Gwaii (British Columbia) and the Cree in Fisher River (Manitoba). The findings suggest that despite the poor current 'health' status of Aboriginal languages in these communities, and that formal ingroup language acquisition in these contexts may have some subtractive elements, there are grounds for a more optimistic outlook. In particular, results showed high levels of ethnolinguistic identification, high value of ingroup language to identity, and high perceived illegitimacy of the current status of the ingroup language. According to current social psychological theory, this is likely to provide the necessary platform for language revitalisation in these communities.

Our elders are almost gone,
And our language is just
becoming part of history.
It only takes one seed,
To start the growth of a forest.

Shawna Zettergreen (quoted in Kirkness, 1992, p. 67)

You should be talking to me in Haida and I should be answering these questions in Haida.

Haida parent to researcher (quoted in Bell, Burton, Funk & White, 1995, p. 29)

Introduction

Studies focusing on Aboriginal languages in Canada have shown a dramatic and recent decline in language use and retention (e.g. Jarvis & Heaton, 1989; AFN, 1990; Sachdev, 1995; RCAP, 1996). More than 90% of Aboriginal Peoples had Aboriginal languages as mother tongues in 1941, but by 1991 the percentage of adults who had *never* spoken an Aboriginal language had increased to 55% (Barsh, 1994; also see RCAP, 1996). Moreover, children were found

less likely than adults to be proficient in Aboriginal languages, or to use them at home. The major factor responsible for this dramatic demise involves inter-group contact with colonising Europeans, who employed a variety of cruel and concerted means to assimilate Aboriginal Peoples (e.g. Perley, 1993; Gardner & Jimmie, 1989; Sachdev, 1995; RCAP, 1996). Since the late 1960s, there has been a reversal in government policies from overtly suppressing Aboriginal languages to those where Aboriginal languages and cultures are “valued, encouraged and assisted” (see Gardner & Jimmie, 1989; RCAP, 1996).

Such policy reversals have had some impact on helping to revitalize Aboriginal languages. However, educational, financial and political constraints imposed by federal and provincial governments have severely impeded change, and reinforced the low status of Aboriginal languages (e.g. Gardner & Jimmie, 1989; AFN, 1990; Sachdev, 1995; RCAP, 1996). For instance, in a survey of 593 First Nations communities, covering a population of about half a million people, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN, 1990) found Aboriginal language instruction was available to less than half of all First Nations students. This instruction was generally not available in provincial school systems (except a few bilingual programmes in Ontario and immersion programmes in Quebec) even though almost half of all First Nations students were enrolled in provincial school systems (also see Maurais, 1996; RCAP, 1996). The survey also found Aboriginal language instruction was largely reserve based, with instruction averaging only two hours per week; was a curriculum subject and not a medium; and it was mostly confined to the lower elementary grades. According to AFN (1990), the low status of Aboriginal languages was clearly reflected in the discrepancy between federal spending on ‘official’ languages (ie. English and French) and on Aboriginal languages. It was estimated that the federal government spent only 2 million Canadian dollars on 262 language retention programmes for over fifty Aboriginal languages between 1983–87, but a massive 626 million Canadian dollars promoting official bilingualism and minority language rights for English and French speakers in 1989–90.

“Objective ethnolinguistic vitality” factors, which encompass the myriad of political, demographic, economic and historical dimensions discussed above, are thought to underlie observed patterns of language retention and survival (see Harwood, Giles & Bourhis, 1994; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1993). However, analyses promoting the primacy of such ‘objective’, non-psychological factors ignore the significance of language survival being “effected through the minds and acts of individuals” (Giles, Leets & Coupland, 1990). They neglect the important effects of social psychological variables such as perceptions, attitudes and identities. For instance, while acknowledging the predictive

power of 'objective' vitality, Bourhis, Giles and Rosenthal (1981) argued that group members' 'subjective' assessments of own-group ('ingroup') and other group ('outgroup') vitality may be as important in determining sociolinguistic behaviour as the group's 'objective' vitality. Allard and Landry (1986) extended this further by proposing that the predictive power of 'subjective' vitality would be greatly increased were it considered a belief system that reflects individual predispositions and orientations about vitality. Their findings showed that 'ego-centric' beliefs (e.g. identification, personal goals) were more predictive of linguistic behaviour than 'exo-centric' beliefs about vitality (e.g. estimates of current general ingroup vitality and normative beliefs about 'what should be' the ingroup vitality, Landry & Allard, 1994). Additionally, Landry and Allard (1994) incorporated the important variable of group contact (Hewstone & Brown, 1986) in their models by arguing that the development of ethnolinguistic identities and other cognitive-affective dispositions (e.g. beliefs about vitality, attitudes), like the development of linguistic competencies, is rooted firmly in contact variables. Sachdev (1998) has argued that the relationship between variables of contact and identity is likely to be one of mutual causality, and that ethnolinguistic identity and vitality perceptions may directly (and reciprocally) affect the quantity, quality and composition of contact networks.

Social psychological research suggests that ingroup identification and positive language attitudes are important precursors of language maintenance, learning and revitalisation (e.g. Gardner, 1985; Giles & Coupland, 1991). However, few studies have examined how social psychological variables (e.g. attitudes, identities, etc) affect linguistic behaviour amongst members of Aboriginal communities in Canada (for exceptions, see Hoover & Kanien'kehaka Roatitiohkwa Cultural Center, 1992; Taylor, Wright, Ruggiero & Aitchison, 1993). Consequently, the present study has examined social psychological and language data collected from members of two communities: the Cree (from Fisher River, Manitoba) and the Haida (from Haida-Gwaii, British Columbia). Preliminary analyses of data from Fisher River has already been reported (see Sachdev, 1998). In the present paper, the data from Fisher River were combined with new data collected from the Haida community to provide a stronger test of social psychological theory.

In order to understand the social psychological processes underlying the complexities of language and identity phenomena, Giles and his colleagues proposed a theory of "Ethnolinguistic Identity". It has received wide support in the non-Aboriginal languages literature (see Giles & Johnson, 1981; Giles & Coupland, 1991; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1990). This theory proposes

that intergroup social comparisons occur when individuals define themselves as group members. Social comparisons are made on dimensions such as language which group members perceive as important. Group members attempt to establish favourable comparisons in order to fulfill positive ingroup identity needs. When ingroup identity is salient, and language is perceived to be an important dimension of that identity, ingroup members are likely to adopt various strategies of “psycholinguistic distinctiveness”, such as accentuating their speech styles, switching to their ingroup language, and using the ingroup language to a greater extent. The salience of ethnolinguistic identification is heightened by high perceived ingroup vitality, perceptions of cognitive alternatives to the existing status quo, and by the perceived “hardness” (impermeability) of intergroup boundaries. It should be noted that empirical testing of this theory suggests that language use and identity are related reciprocally: language use influences the formation of group identity, and group identity influences patterns of language attitudes and usage (see Giles & Coupland, 1991; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1990).

In preliminary analyses of the Fisher River Cree community in Manitoba, Sachdev (1998) obtained evidence supportive of ethnolinguistic identity theory. Specifically, ethnolinguistic identification, value of ingroup language to identity, and the perceived illegitimacy of the current status of the ingroup language, were predictive of language use and attitudes. An examination of intergenerational differences in this analysis showed that relative to teenagers, adults reported higher Cree proficiency, Cree use, and more favourable attitudes about the use of Cree. These findings matched data obtained at a national level which showed a generational difference in Aboriginal language proficiency (Statistics Canada, 1993; also see RCAP, 1996).

The national data also revealed a generational difference in the manner in which Aboriginal languages were acquired. Specifically, children were more likely to have learnt Aboriginal languages at school than adults (Statistics Canada, 1993). There is a concern that formal schooled knowledge about Aboriginal languages is replacing the linguistic and communicative competence acquired by direct transmission, and the everyday use of languages (Barsh, 1994; RCAP, 1996). Since there is little systematic empirical data on the impact of formal language learning in Aboriginal communities, this study also explored how formal (e.g. schooled), as opposed to informal (non-schooled), acquisition of Aboriginal languages affects self-reported language proficiency, use and attitudes.

Preparatory research suggested the Fisher River Cree in Manitoba and the Haida in Haida Gwaii were comparable in terms of demographic size and levels of Aboriginal language knowledge. For instance, both communities have small populations, (between 1500–2500); regard fishing and hunting as central to culture and identity; only have a small group of fluent speakers of Aboriginal languages (elders mainly); and Cree and Haida are taught (only as subjects) at schools in these communities (Fisher River Band Council Register, 1996; Sinclair, 1993; Broadhead, 1995). The Fisher River community is located on one ‘reservation’ in the Interlake region in Central Manitoba, and is populated overwhelmingly by Cree peoples. The Haida community is mainly in two settlements (Skidegate and Old Massett) on different parts of Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands), off the coast of British Columbia. Haida Gwaii also has large settlements of non-Haidas (living off-reserve, e.g. in Queen Charlotte City, Massett) who form the majority of the population in the islands as a whole (see Broadhead, 1995). Unlike Fisher River where the school is on-reserve, pupils of Haida ancestry attend schools that are off-reserve, where they constitute substantially less than half of the enrolled school population (Bell et al., 1995).

The past lack of institutional support and status for Aboriginal languages in these two communities is slowly changing. For instance, Sachdev (1998) found that the use of Cree in some contexts (e.g. church, Personal Care Home, Healing Centre) is being encouraged in Fisher River today. The formal teaching of Cree in Fisher River and of Haida in Haida Gwaii has also been introduced into the school curriculum, though it takes place mainly in the early school years. These languages are taught as subjects, and school curricula are evolving amidst shortages of suitably qualified and trained staff, teaching materials, and large class sizes (e.g. Bell et al., 1995).

Small-scale qualitative surveys in these two communities had revealed strong support for programmes of Aboriginal culture and language revitalization (Sinclair, 1993; Bell et al, 1995). For instance, in an excellent qualitative interview study conducted in Haida Gwaii, Bell et al (1995) found support for Haida Culture and Language programmes amongst Haida people of all ages (see Sachdev, 1998, for Fisher River Cree research). The main focus of these studies was on the Aboriginal cultural revival programmes with a minor focus on ingroup languages. Furthermore these studies did not obtain data on attitudes and perceptions about psychologically relevant non-Aboriginal groups (e.g. White people) and the languages associated with them (e.g. English). In the present study the adoption of a quantitative social comparison approach, focussing specifically on language, was used. This permitted a systematic ex-

ploration of intergroup factors involved in patterns of ethnolinguistic behaviour and attitudes (see Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Harwood et al, 1994; Sachdev, 1998).

It was expected that intergroup contact and variables identified by ethnolinguistic identity theory (e.g. identity, vitality, impermeability of group boundaries) would be positively related to patterns of language proficiency, use and attitudes. The mode of language learning reported by participants (e.g. formal, informal, never) was treated as an independent variable in analyses to explore how different ways of acquiring Aboriginal languages affect ethnolinguistic behaviour, identity and perceptions. Historical analyses of Aboriginal languages in Canada suggest that age is expected to covary with mode of learning.

Method

Participants: 155 participants (77 Haida, 78 Cree) were recruited randomly from schools and the communities in Fisher River (Manitoba) and Haida Gwaii (British Columbia). 80 participants reported their age as being between 13–18 years, while 72 participants reported being over 18 years old (3 did not reveal their ages). 70 reported themselves as male and 79 as female (6 did not respond to this question).

Procedure: Participants were asked to fill in an anonymous language survey in English which began with an attitudinal item asking how much they would have preferred the questionnaire to be in their ingroup language if they were as fluent in that language as they were in English. Other items on the questionnaire assessed self-reported language proficiency, language use and attitudes about language use in various public and private contexts (e.g. home, school, work, religious contexts, etc). Participants were also asked about the degree to which they mixed English and their Aboriginal language in communication. Perceptions about the 'hardness' of group boundaries, group vitality, amount of linguistic and group contact, group identity and value of Aboriginal language to group identity were also obtained. In addition, participants were asked to provide other information (e.g. age, gender, etc). Participants responded to most items on 5 point Likert scales.

Results & Discussion

Preliminary analyses of the data had indicated that there were no significant gender differences. Two other sets of analyses were conducted on the data:

(i) Difference analyses to specifically assess the impact of mode of learning Aboriginal languages on language proficiency, use, attitudes, perceptions and identifications. (ii) Correlational analyses to assess the overall predictive value of variables identified by previous research.

A significant relationship between age and mode of learning was revealed by the statistical analyses ($\chi^2 = 25.7$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). 48% of participants reported having learnt their Aboriginal Language in a formal setting, with children constituting the majority (74%) of these. 27% reported having learnt it informally, of whom a majority (66%) were adults. 25% reported never having learnt it at all, of whom a majority (68%) were adults. These findings match the national profiles showing that Aboriginal languages were not learnt by at least one generation who are now young-middle aged adults, tend to be learned out-of-school by a generation of older adults, but in school by those who are teenagers today (Barsh, 1994; Sachdev, 1995).

Analyses of covariance (ANCOVA), with age as the covariate and mode of learning as the grouping variable, were subsequently conducted to statistically control for the significant correlation between age and mode of learning. The effect of mode of learning (3 levels—formal, informal and never) could thus be assessed more accurately. Dependent measures were group identifications (Aboriginal and White), self-reported linguistic proficiency, overall language use, overall language attitudes, vitality beliefs (general and normative), perceived personal importance of language (Aboriginal language and English) to Aboriginal identity, and perceived ‘hardness’ of group boundaries.

1 Difference Analyses

1.1 Self-reported Linguistic Proficiency

Age, as expected, was a significant covariate in analyses of oral proficiency ($B = .38$, $\text{Beta} = .35$, $\text{Std. Error} = .09$, $t = 4.24$, $p < .001$), suggesting that older participants reported greater proficiency than younger participants. Additionally, for both oracy and literacy measures, analyses yielded significant ANCOVA interaction effects for mode of learning by language being rated: (a) for oracy, $F(2, 146) = 17.68$, $p < .001$; (b) for literacy, $F(2, 132) = 8.30$, $p < .001$. Significant main effects for language being rated were also obtained on these measures: (a) for oracy, $F(1, 146) = 789.61$, $p < .001$; (b) for literacy, $F(1, 132) = 843.23$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 1, all groups reported higher oracy and literacy in English and much lower proficiency in the Aboriginal language. Although overall levels of proficiency in Aboriginal language were

low, those who reported having learnt the Aboriginal language (formally or informally) reported significantly higher proficiency in it. Interestingly, as with other measures reported below, findings also revealed that those who learnt the Aboriginal language informally also reported the highest levels of proficiency in it.

1.2 Self-reported Language Use and Language Attitudes

Given the low level of fluency in Aboriginal languages, participants had also been asked about the degree to which they mixed (and their attitudes towards) English and the Aboriginal language. Although individual questions were asked about language use and attitudes in different private and public contexts (e.g. home, school, work), preliminary analyses suggested extremely low use of the Aboriginal languages across all contexts. Internal Consistency analyses of responses across different contexts yielded high alpha coefficients (all above .90) suggesting that language use and attitude items could be combined across contexts. ANCOVA (with age as a covariate) were therefore conducted on the overall combined language use and attitude measures. Age was only a significant covariate for the attitude measures and is discussed in the context of regression analyses reported below.

For language use measures analyses yielded a significant ANCOVA interaction effect for mode of learning by language being rated, $F(4, 284) = 8.60$, $p < .001$, and a significant main effect for language being rated, $F(2, 284) = 255.29$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 1, and as expected, all groups reported the highest use of English, but much lower use of the Aboriginal language and the mixture. There was also an overall tendency to use a mixture of languages slightly more than the Aboriginal language. Although levels of Aboriginal language use and mix use are low, findings clearly show that those who reported having learnt the Aboriginal language (formally and informally), reported significantly higher use of both the Aboriginal language and the mix, than those who reported never having learnt it (cf. Jarvis & Heaton, 1989). Interestingly, as with the proficiency measures reported above, those who had learnt the Aboriginal language informally also reported the highest levels of use of the Aboriginal language and mix.

ANCOVA of attitudinal ratings yielded a significant ANCOVA interaction effect for mode of learning by language being rated, $F(4, 282) = 4.35$, $p < .01$, and a significant main effect for language being rated, $F(2, 282) = 13.93$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 1, attitudinal ratings towards the use of Aboriginal languages were generally positive and equivalent to English for all partici-

pants except those who reported learning Aboriginal languages in formal settings. The latter were less favourable about the use of Aboriginal languages than English. Participants were least favourable about the use of a mixture of languages (see Table 1).

1.3 Identification, Group Boundaries, and Importance of Language to Identity

ANCOVA analyses of identification as Aboriginal and White revealed marginal effects for mode of learning: (a) for identification as Aboriginal, $F(2, 127) = 2.43$, $p = .091$; (b) for identification as White, $F(2, 127) = 2.80$, $p = .065$. A significant main effect for mode of learning was also obtained on the measure of perceived 'hardness' of intergroup boundaries, $F(2, 127) = 3.64$, $p < .05$. Age was not significant as a covariate in these analyses. As shown in Table 1, identification was uniformly high with the Aboriginal ingroup, but uniformly low with the White outgroup. The 'hardest' (i.e. most impermeable) group boundaries and highest ingroup identifications tended to be reported by those who learnt their ingroup language informally. In contrast, the 'softest' group boundaries, and the smallest difference in favour of ingroup (over outgroup) identification, was reported by those who learnt the Aboriginal language formally. Such findings indicate that the formal language learning context is having some subtractive effects (e.g. Hamers & Blanc, 1989).

ANCOVA of the importance of language to group identity revealed a main effect for repeated measures of language being rated, $F(1, 142) = 65.64$, $p < .001$. Participants in both Aboriginal communities felt that their Aboriginal language ($m = 4.0$) was more important than English ($m = 3.0$) to Aboriginal identity. Age was not a significant covariate in this analysis.

1.4 Vitality Perceptions and Beliefs

ANCOVA on overall general vitality perceptions yielded one main effect for the repeated measures factor of language being rated, $F(1, 134) = 576.19$, $P < .001$; a 2-way interaction effect between the repeated measures factor and Aboriginal group, $F(1, 134) = 19.50$, $P < .001$; a 2-way interaction effect between the repeated measures factor and mode of learning, $F(2, 134) = 8.58$, $p < .001$; and a three way-interaction between all variables, $F(2, 134) = 3.89$, $p < .05$. ANCOVA on normative vitality beliefs only yielded a main effect for the repeated measures factor of language being rated, $F(1, 139) = 33.15$, $p < .001$. Age was not a significant covariate in either of these analyses.

Variable (V)	Mode of Learning			Overall Mean
	Formal	Informal	Never	
Proficiency:				
Oracy in Aboriginal Language	1.9	2.6	1.3	1.9
Oracy in English	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.6
Literacy in Aboriginal Language	1.8	2.0	1.1	1.7
Literacy in English	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.4
Language Use:				
Aboriginal Language	2.0	2.5	1.6	2.1
English	4.6	4.3	4.7	4.6
Mix	2.2	2.7	1.9	2.3
Attitudes to:				
Aboriginal Language	3.2	3.7	3.7	3.5
English	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.9
Mix	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.4
Identification as Aboriginal	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.5
Identification as White	2.7	2.4	2.1	2.4
'Hardness' of Intergroup Boundaries	3.4	3.6	3.2	3.4

Table 1. Means of self-reported proficiency, use, attitudes and identification by mode of learning (scale is on 1–5 points where higher numbers indicate higher ratings)

Participants perceived English vitality ($m = 4.2$) to be higher than Aboriginal language vitality ($m = 2.6$), but felt that Aboriginal vitality ($m = 4.0$) ought to be greater than English vitality ($m = 3.6$). Examination of the means (see Table 2) to interpret the ANCOVA interaction effects on the general vitality measure suggested that although the learning of Aboriginal language tended to reduce the perceived difference favouring English vitality amongst members of both communities, Haida participants perceived a greater difference in favour of English vitality than Cree participants, with the exception of those who had learnt Haida formally. These findings may not only reflect the higher local demographic vitality of the Fisher River Cree relative to the Haida (Haida peoples are in a minority on the islands), but also suggest that formal Haida language acquisition programmes followed by Haida participants have significantly increased perceptions of relative Haida vitality (also see Bell et al., 1995).

1.4 Linguistic Contact and Group Contact

ANCOVA for the amount of contact with Aboriginal and White people, and with Aboriginal and English language speakers, yielded main effects for the repeated measures factors of language/group being rated for both sets of measures, $F(1, 142) = 9.51, p < .01$; and $F(1, 143) = 153.4, p < .001$, respectively. Age was not a significant covariate in either of these analyses. Although participants reported more contact with Aboriginal than with White people (4.1 vs. 3.8), they reported more contact with English than Aboriginal language speakers (4.4 vs. 3.1).

Mode of Learning	Haida			Cree		
	Formal	Informal	Never	Formal	Informal	Never
Aboriginal	2.7	2.3	2.1	2.9	2.7	2.6
English/White	4.1	4.3	4.6	4.2	4.0	4.1

Table 2. Means of perceived ethnolinguistic vitality by Aboriginal group and mode of learning (all means are on a 1–5 point scale, with higher numbers indicating higher scores)

2 Correlational Analyses

The analyses reported above were informative about specific differences in language use, attitudes and perceptions as a function of mode of learning but were less revealing about the predictive utility of variables proposed in ethnolinguistic identity theory (Giles & Coupland, 1991; Landry & Allard, 1994). Since a multiple regression approach was thought to be more suitable for this purpose (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989), two further operations were performed on the data before conducting multiple regression analyses.

First, to reflect the comparative nature of intergroup processes (see Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Harwood et al, 1994; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1993), relative difference scores between ingroup (i.e. Aboriginal group or language) and outgroup (i.e. White or English) were calculated for: general and normative vitality beliefs; intergroup contact and linguistic contact; importance of language to group identity; and degree of identification with the ingroup and the outgroup. Second, following Tabachnick and Fidell's (1989) recommendations about the benefits of uncorrelated predictor variables in multiple regression, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the relative difference measures, age and perceived 'hardness' of intergroup boundaries.

The factor solution yielded 4 orthogonal factors (eigenvalues > 1) accounting for 71% of the total variance. Following Comrey (1973), only loadings above 0.5 were interpreted as meaningful and are provided in parentheses during the description of each factor. The first factor, labelled the Ethnolinguistic Identity factor, explained 27.5% of the total variance, and received significant loadings from the normative vitality beliefs (.87), importance of language to identity (.71), and group identification (.52). Perceptions of normative vitality, considered by Landry and Allard (1994) as exo-centric vitality beliefs, actually focused on what 'should' be the status of Aboriginal languages. Previous theory has suggested that such perceptions of status illegitimacy are related to the salience of ethnolinguistic identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Giles & Johnson, 1981), and thus would load on the same factor as identity measures. Factor 2, explaining 16.7% of the variance may be labelled as the Contact factor since the significant loadings comprised the difference in contact between Aboriginal and White groups (.83), and the difference in contact between Aboriginal language and English speakers (.82). Factor 3, explaining 14.3% of the variance, may be labelled the Social Structural factor as it received high loadings from relative vitality (.81), and the perceived 'hardness' of group boundaries (.71). Factor 4, explaining 12.6% of the total variance, was labelled the Age factor as age was the only significant loading on this factor (.90).

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variables				Total Variance Explained
	Age	Contact	Ethnolinguistic Identity	Social Structural	
Aboriginal Oracy	23%	4%	-	6%	34%
Aboriginal Literacy	-	4%	-	11%	16%
Use of Aboriginal Language (AL)	-	10%	5%	7%	24%
Attitude to AL use	10%	-	23%	-	35%
Preference for Questionnaire in AL	-	-	6%	8%	15%

Table 3. Summary results of Multiple Regression Analyses showing percentage variance accounted by predictor variables (all figures shown in the table are statistically significant at least at $p < .05$)

Orthogonal factors derived above were subsequently employed in Standard Multiple Regression analyses to predict Aboriginal language proficiency, use, attitudes and participation in traditional activities. In all cases the regression equations were significant. Table 3 presents the results of the regression analyses in summary form because of the large number of variables. It shows the

significant predictor variables and the percentage variance that they account for (worked out by squaring the semipartial correlations).

In the significant regression analyses, the total variance explained by the full set of orthogonal variables ranged from 15% (preference for language of questionnaire) to 35% (attitude to the use of own Aboriginal languages). Though the total amounts of total variance explained seemed moderate, statistical analyses revealed significant and systematic patterns. As expected, Age positively predicted oral proficiency in the Aboriginal language, and attitudes about the use of Aboriginal languages. This implied that older participants reported greater proficiency in, and more favourable attitudes about, Aboriginal languages than younger participants.

The results also revealed that Aboriginal linguistic proficiency was significantly and positively predicted by Contact and Social Structural factors. In other words, the greater the reported ingroup contact, and the greater the perceived ingroup vitality and 'hardness' of intergroup boundaries, the higher the proficiency in the ingroup language. These findings are in accordance with some findings of previous research (e.g Landry & Allard, 1994), although the lack of a statistical association between ethnolinguistic identity and language proficiency is somewhat problematic. Statistically, this is likely due to the lack of sufficient variation in both the high degree of ingroup identification and the very low proficiency reported by participants in this study. Although participants from the Haida Gwaii and Fisher River communities have had to endure an extremely large absolute loss in ingroup 'linguistic capital' (Landry, Allard & Henry, 1996) due to the severely oppressive policies of European colonisers of North America, they have maintained high levels of Aboriginal identification (see Table 1) which are likely to provide a strong platform for linguistic revitalisation efforts.

In accordance with previous literature (see Giles & Coupland, 1991; Landry & Allard, 1994), language use was significantly predicted by Contact, Ethnolinguistic Identity and Social Structural factors (Table 3). Interestingly, attitudes to ingroup language use were predicted mainly by the Ethnolinguistic Identity factor, underlining the previously reported close relationship between ethnolinguistic identity and language attitudes (Giles & Johnson, 1981; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1990). The lack of predictive power of language group contact and perceived social structural strength for language attitudes is, in all likelihood, a function of the very low 'objective' ethnolinguistic vitality of Aboriginal communities under investigation (cf. Landry et al., 1996). Overall, these findings are generally consistent with an ethnolinguistic identity and vitality approach

to language behaviour and attitudes (Giles & Johnson, 1981; Landry & Allard, 1994).

General Discussion

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) identified several communities, including the Haida, where “so few people speak some languages that the languages appear to be in critical condition” (p. 606, vol. 3). Landry et al (1996) suggest the linguistic capital accumulated in such communities is not sufficient for providing individual networks of ingroup linguistic contact for language revival. Consistent with this analysis, the present study found the frequency of contacts with ingroup language speakers was profoundly reduced, and was related to the patterns of low ingroup language proficiency and use among the Cree and Haida participants.

Despite the extreme struggles facing these communities, they, like many other communities, have begun the task of re-accumulating the linguistic resources that were taken away from them by colonising powers (see RCAP, 1996). Several empirical findings from this study augur well for the reclamation of the communities’ linguistic heritage. First, participants from both communities consensually reported high levels of identification with the Aboriginal ingroup, felt that Aboriginal languages were more important than English to ingroup identity, and that Aboriginal languages should receive greater sociostructural support than English in the future. These findings reinforce and extend those obtained by Bell et al. (1995) in Haida Gwaii, and by Sinclair (1993) in Fisher River. Second, 85% of teenagers, and 64% of adults, reported having engaged in learning their ingroup language at some point in time. The learning of ingroup Aboriginal languages in both communities had a positive impact on perceived vitality. Those who had learned the Aboriginal language perceived their ingroup to have higher vitality than those who had never learnt that language. Thirdly, 68% of teenagers reported having learnt the ingroup language formally compared to only 26% of adults—a finding that is matched in the national data (Barsh, 1994). This reflects a striking change from the ‘English only’ educational policies of the past (Gardner & Jimmie, 1989; Bell et al., 1995; Sachdev, 1995).

Bell et al. (1995) and Sinclair (1993) focused on the role of formal school language programmes in language revitalisation in Haida Gwaii and Fisher River, respectively. They found substantial support for such programmes, and that community members expected these programmes to be effective. The results of our study show that the formal learning of Haida is indeed associated

with an attenuation of the perceived difference in vitality between English and Haida. The Haida Language and Culture program is successful in having the desired impact on perceived vitality. This success has to be qualified; some of the results in our study suggested a less encouraging outcome of formal Aboriginal language learning (also see RCAP, 1996).

Specifically, it was found that formal language learning was associated with lower ingroup language proficiency and language use (statistically controlling for age as in all other analyses). Those who had reported learning Aboriginal languages formally were more positive about the use of English than about Aboriginal languages. Formal language learners also tended to show decreases in ingroup identification and increases in outgroup identification. Overall these findings suggested that the learning of the Aboriginal language in a formal context appears to be having a 'subtractive' impact on students (Lambert, 1977; Hamers & Blanc, 1989).

A variety of factors may underlie these findings including large class sizes, meagre financial resources, insufficient curriculum development, little time spent learning Aboriginal languages, inadequate teacher training, insufficient community and elder involvement in school programmes (Kirkness, 1989; AFN, 1990; RCAP, 1996). European cultural assumptions and practices, underlying formal study and language programmes, are also implicated in the failure of Aboriginal Peoples in such contexts. European cultures emphasize a "transmission-orientation", with a focus on literacy and knowledge *about* languages (Perley, 1993). In contrast, Aboriginal cultures give primacy to active community participation, oral traditions, informal language learning, and to the actual use of languages for everyday purposes (RCAP, 1996). Such incompatibilities impede linguistic and educational progress, and are compounded by the failure of schools to counteract the power relations that exist in the broader society (Cummins, 1986; RCAP, 1996). As has been proposed, promoting and valorising the linguistic and cultural talents of students (and their communities), actively encouraging community participation in student development, and intergenerational transmission will lead to "reversing language shift" (Fishman, 1990; also see Hamers & Blanc, 1989; RCAP, 1996). Sachdev (1995) also argued that an explicit constitutional recognition of Aboriginal linguistic rights would increase the ethnolinguistic vitality of Aboriginal communities by making available greater resources for language protection and revival.

Our study employed self-report data to assess the applicability of social psychological theory to language behaviour. Self-reported measures of proficien-

cy have been shown to correlate with independent (“objective”) measures of proficiency (e.g. Gardner, 1985), but they may also reflect the self-confidence speakers have with the language (Clement, 1986). Similarly, despite preventative measures (e.g. by preserving the anonymity of participants), self-reported attitudes may be related to issues of social desirability and impression formation, rather than with privately held attitudes. Future research that includes measures of self-confidence, independent measures of proficiency, and indirect measures of language attitudes, may help define the generalisability of the present research.

Our analysis is based on the history of Aboriginal languages in Canada and current models of language behaviour (e.g. Giles & Johnson, 1981; Landry & Allard, 1994; Sachdev, 1995). Our findings confirm that patterns of reported ingroup language use and attitudes can be predicted by variables of contact, identification and perceived vitality. Our findings of positive attitudes to ingroup languages and high ingroup identification, which are considered to be important precursors of language learning and language use (e.g. Gardner, 1985; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1990; Giles & Coupland, 1991), augur well for Aboriginal language revival in these communities.

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