Can Latin America's endangered indigenous languages be saved? Explore this question with reference to scholarly research on language endangerment and language revitalisation.

RESEARCH


Language Maintenance and Revitalization Strategies (p299)

- 'Intervention can be handled at a regional, state, or national level and can be channeled [sic] through educational or technological means.' (299)
- 'As one would expect, many language programs are handled through schools, but there can be a danger that the Indigenous community will think that schools can handle the "problem" (Maffi 2003, p. 73). (300)
- 'Within schools, should the Indigenous language be treated like any other school subject (geography, history, science) (Hinton 2001b, p.7)? If it is, then there will be insufficient time to gain fluency unless it is supplemented with other, nonschool-based activity. Too often language revitalization efforts end up with minimal knowledge of the language.' (300)

  > 'One response is to enrich the language for advanced learners and users: Just as some second language learners of English need to acquire an academic register, some Indigenous language programs are consciously seeking to achieve this goal, for instance academic Navajo abilities (Arviso & Holm, 2001, p.205) (see also Slate 2001).' (300)

- 'More generally, Indigenous people have gained training in a range of suitable skills for language revitalization.' (300)
- 'More generally again, some communities have gone through a careful planning process to meet Indigenous needs (Patterson 2002) (see also Linn et al. 2002)' (300)
- 'regional or national language policy can play a role (Grenoble & Whaley 1999, Spolsky & Shohamy 2000). (300)
- 'some strategies/practices can be divisive and self-defeating' (300)

  > 'Too often, resources developed for a tiny language community will not be shared with a neighboring Indigenous language community using the "same" language.' (300)

There are also shaming practices: A misplaced expectation about the competence of younger speakers can trigger criticism from older speakers, the end result being that those younger speakers are reluctant to use their language (Hill 2001). (300)

- 'it is a major commitment to learn a language from scratch as an adult and achieve passable fluency. There is little wonder then that some Indigenous people defer active language learning.' (300)