

English with a Navajo Accent:
Language and Ideology in Heritage Language Advocacy

by

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ABSTRACT

Much of the public discourse promoting Navajo (Diné) language revitalization and language programs takes place in English, both on and off the reservation, as in many other indigenous communities whose heritage languages are endangered. Although Navajo language is commonly discussed as being central to the identity of a Navajo person, this ideology may lie in contradiction to the other linguistic and social means Navajos use to construct Navajo identities, which exist within a wide spectrum of demographic categories as well as communities of practice relating to religion, occupation, and other activities (Field, 2009; Baker & Bowie, 2010).

This dissertation examines two sets of data: 1) interviews with eight Navajo individuals whose interests, academic studies, and/or occupations relate to the promotion of Navajo language use in connection with cultural and linguistic revitalization; and 2) public statements made in online forums discussing the language used by Navajos. The interview data gathered consist of ten sociolinguistic (and open-ended conversational) interviews, culminating in over 13 hours of recorded interviews. The findings of this study show enregistered (i.e., imbued with social meaning) features of the dialect of Navajo English as well as insights into the challenges Navajos face while advocating for programs and policies supporting the teaching of their heritage language.

This work is dedicated to my wonderful family.

Seth Schermerhorn, my most avid reader and my greatest ally in this and all work,
thank you for joining me in the lifelong quest to accumulate books.

Zoe and Kirby, thank you for your sense of humor, your patience while “Mama wrote her
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A philosopher and an engineer raised a linguist, and I cannot wait to discover what my
own children will become.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Much of the public discourse promoting Navajo language revitalization and language programs takes place in English, both on and off the reservation, as in many other indigenous communities whose heritage languages are endangered. Although Navajo language is commonly discussed as being central to the identity of a Navajo person, this ideology may lie in contradiction to the other linguistic and social means Navajos use to construct Navajo identities, which exist within a wide spectrum of demographic categories as well as communities of practice relating to religion, occupation, and other activities (Field, 2009; Baker and Bowie, 2010).

The connection of language and identity is increasingly important as fewer and fewer children are learning Navajo as a first language. According to the Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig (Eds.), 2014), the Navajo language is spoken by 169,000 people, with 7,600 monolingual Navajo speakers. However, the shift to English is proceeding rapidly. The language is described as status 6b on a scale of 0 (used in many contexts) to 10 (not used); 6b represents a language being “in trouble”:

Intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation can still use the language so it is possible that revitalization efforts could restore transmission of the language in the home. (<http://www.ethnologue.com/cloud/nav>)

This dissertation examines two sets of data: 1) interviews with eight Navajo individuals whose interests, academic studies, and/or occupations relate to the promotion of Navajo language use in connection with cultural and linguistic revitalization; and 2) public statements made in online forums discussing the language used by Navajos. The

interview data gathered consist of ten sociolinguistic (and open-ended conversational) interviews, culminating in over 13 hours of recorded data. The advocates being interviewed range widely in the ways in which they work on Navajo language advocacy. Two participants are former Miss Navajo winners, one participant is a software developer who created the Navajo Toddler App, and five others were university students or recent graduates studying indigenous rights, culture, or education. Due to the constraints agreed upon with Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board, participants in this study must reside off-reservation; this restriction happens to limit potential participants to individuals who have chosen to pursue educational or occupational opportunities off-reservation and whose attention to language revitalization is notable for their location. Although the sociolinguistic interviews often elicited narrative of events and reported language attitudes from the Navajo reservation, the narratives were produced (and, as in the cases of the former Miss Navajo winners who have told these stories numerous times, *reproduced*) in an off-reservation city and usually in a public or academic location. Other data showing discourses about language use are gathered from publicly available forums such as the Facebook page called "Navajo Language (Diné Bizaad)," in which Facebook users post questions and answers about the Navajo language and discuss language-related topics, the Facebook page for the Office of Miss Navajo Nation, and a YouTube video of a TEDx Phoenix speech given in 2010 by a former Miss Navajo.

The questions this research seeks to answer are manifold, ranging from the broad question, "How do Navajos in this study reconcile the numerous competing ideologies existing in their communities and within their own approaches to Navajo, English, and the dialect(s) of Navajo English?" to the sociophonetic question, "How does it sound

when the participant uses Navajo English (a variety of English whose features have been influenced by the phonology and grammar of the Navajo language), what do the features used mean to the speaker, and how does the speaker imagine the usage to mean to listeners?” In addition, other research questions include the following.

1. How does the discursive juxtaposition of Navajo and English relate to ideologies of prestige, particularly in discourses representing the two languages as being in competition?
2. How are features of Navajo English employed in stancetaking, and to what extent are speakers consciously aware of it?
3. What are the identities associated with Navajo speakers and English speakers, including gendered identities, and how do these associations relate to other constructions of identity participants?
4. How do the generational differences in the use of Navajo and English reproduce ideologies prohibiting the widespread use of Navajo?
5. What features of Navajo English are enregistered, and what do they currently mean to speakers as well as outsiders?
6. How do positive and negative ideologies of Navajo English, or a “rez” accent, relate to ideologies about Navajo identity, including gender?

The following chapters seek to engage these questions with the intention of contributing to a more nuanced understanding of Navajo language shift and the ability of heritage language advocates to promote the Navajo language in a more effective way that is informed by these competing ideologies.

Chapter 2 describes the methodology used in conducting original research for this study, including the background of the study, preparation, participants, materials and design, procedure, data analysis, and especially the ethical considerations and other challenges relating to data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 is a detailed literature review encompassing literature from sociolinguistics, education, cross-cultural communication, dialectology, and other fields in identifying both the previous work on Navajo language revitalization as well as the ethnographic and sociolinguistic studies that shed light on the ideologies at work in communities undergoing language shift.

Chapter 4, entitled “Essentializing a Navajo Identity: Iconicity, Recursivity, and Erasure in Navajo’s Competition with English,” studies the ideologies invoked by Navajos engaged in Navajo language revitalization and education. Following House (2002) and Field (2009) using Irvine and Gal’s (2000) concepts of iconicity, recursivity, and erasure to describe the changing attitudes surrounding Navajo language issues, this chapter employs data from interviews with the eight participants that bolster and expand the understanding of how iconicity, recursivity, and erasure function in emergent Navajo identities of individuals as the process of language shift continues. The iconicity of the Navajo language in holding a Navajo identity is no less problematic than it is ubiquitous. As discussed in the chapter, with multiple competing ideologies about the Navajo language and its use, achieving one essentializing formula of speaking Navajo and therefore being Navajo is impossible for many Navajos today. As House’s (2002) work demonstrates, there is no essentialized Navajo identity, but the standard discourse about

being Navajo perpetuates the myth of stable diglossia (bilingualism) as both the goal and the reality of the linguistic landscape on the Navajo Nation.

Chapter 5, entitled, “Navajo English: Features of the Dialect and Ideologies of Its Use,” identifies some of the ways in which the use of recognizable, enregistered features (Agha, 2003) from different varieties of English are employed in stancetaking, authentication, and identity-formation while discussing Navajo language planning and the political effort to increase Navajo language use. Findings show that the use of English is tied to ideologies of the prestige and symbolic capital associated with English and that conflicting ideologies about the use of Navajo and the Navajo language as conferring Navajo identity were inferred from the stancetaking moves individuals employed in the interviews. This chapter identifies unique features of the Navajo English dialect that have not been identified in previous studies of Navajo English and examines the varied and sometimes contradictory attitudes held simultaneously about speaking English with a Navajo accent, particularly among individuals whose first language is English.

The sixth chapter concludes the analysis of ideologies related to Navajo, English, and Navajo English in heritage language advocacy, adds my evaluation of the impact of the findings and offers suggestions for future research to gauge the enregisterment of Navajo English features for the purposes of education and anti-discrimination efforts.

Chapter 2: Research Methods

Background

This dissertation project began with my interest in the ways in which language ideologies are at play in indigenous people's discourses about identity. Seeking personal experience with language revitalization programs, I chose to investigate Navajo, a nearby community with a residential college as well as a significant population of Navajo students attending my own institution, Arizona State University (ASU). This dissertation research project was conceived and proposed as an examination of Miss Navajo Nation pageant winners' advocacy for cultural and language revitalization, with the intent to collect current data reflecting the language usages and linguistic attitudes of Navajo individuals whose work could ostensibly affect whether the "child-bearing generation" (according to the Ethnologue's description of a 'threatened' language) increases the transmission of Navajo language to Navajo children. I also intended to interview other Navajos, including men connected with the pageant or pageant participants, as well as non-Navajo participants in the Mr. and Ms. Indian ASU pageant.

After applying to Arizona State University's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance for Institutional Review Board approval for the project in 2012, the Principal Investigator, Dr. Karen L. Adams, and I were told that exempt status was granted as long as participation was limited to off-reservation interviews only with individuals who also lived off-reservation. Although these restrictions limited my pool of former Miss Navajos, it also created an opportunity to pursue study of the other kinds of heritage language advocacy taking place off-reservation, such as students working on Navajo language projects and an independent entrepreneur developing software for native groups

seeking accessible language teaching from anywhere in the world. I chose to limit participants to Navajos while seeking to expand my understanding of advocacy to individuals who were not well-known public figures but who were actively supporting the revitalization of Navajo language and culture.

By shifting my focus to off-reservation heritage language advocacy and teaching, rather than just advocacy by Miss Navajos, the interviews themselves often became less like interviews and more like conversations with colleagues and peers. Additionally, the shift in focus resulted in nuanced discussions of the ideologies about Navajo and Navajo identity affecting the choices my participants made that ultimately resulted in them living off-reservation. For the two former Miss Navajos who became participants in my study, the off-reservation interview locations and the focus on multiple kinds of heritage language work also resulted in discussion of language advocacy attitudes and practices, rather than well-practiced narratives describing the Miss Navajo pageant duties as Miss Navajo that they would have often produced in other interviews and public appearances. With all participants, my goal was to focus conversation on both childhood and adulthood narratives describing language use and attitudes, as well as discussion of participants' current work on cultural or language revitalization.

Preparation

I began to lay the groundwork for this research project by taking a trip to the Navajo Nation in the summer of 2009. I started learning the Navajo language at the Navajo Nation's tribal college, Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona, Navajo Nation, while seeing for myself what language instruction looked like and how students and teachers characterized the nature and purpose of language learning at that level. Although I had

anticipated some difficulties in joining the Diné College student body – being a non-Navajo graduate student taking courses at a tribal college – the simple statement that I desired to learn the Navajo language served to justify my presence in most cases. (I was teased a bit by students who would come to be friends, such as with the question, “What’s wrong, you couldn’t get into a real college?”) In interactions with Diné College administrators, instructors, and staff, my focus on language was received as a compliment to them and to the college and I was never required to give a reason for my interest in the language or to justify my choice of Diné College for that instruction. The desire to learn the language at Diné College was taken as a reason in itself and was not interrogated. Furthermore, the dynamics of the language-learning classroom already allowed for non-Navajo students. In addition to me, a graduate student of linguistics, and my husband, a graduate student in American Indian Religious Studies who also shared the desire to study an indigenous language of the Americas, three other white students and a Hopi student also attended the language classes.

During my time at Diné College as a language-learning student, I participated in community college life in a rural area of the Navajo Nation, experiencing firsthand what it was like to be in a second-language classroom learning the heritage language for an indigenous group in the region. I sought to learn how the individuals involved (teachers, students including myself, and others) conceptualized the language learning process and dealt with learning a heritage language in a community college classroom. I found that despite Diné College’s stated dedication to using as much Navajo language as possible as well as traditional Navajo pedagogical and cultural practices in their college classes, the process of language learning was quite consistent with the Dewey-style Western model of

education, with desks facing front and students reciting vocabulary at the teacher's behest in the moments preceding daily spelling quizzes. At the end of each five-week summer course, NAV 101 Navajo as a Second Language I and II, that met for 3-4 hours each day, we students emerged with well-rehearsed self-introductions that listed our four clans, as well as conversational skills.

After taking Navajo language classes at Diné College for the 2009 summer, I returned to my regular course schedule as a graduate student at ASU, with more experience and knowledge of the sociolinguistic context surrounding language shift and loss for the Navajo language. I spent the 2009-2010 year taking courses in various departments studying issues that had been raised during my time in Tsailé: the status of indigenous languages across the world, literacy projects and community work relating to tribal sovereignty, dialectology, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis, and methods of ethnographic research. I also attended the Linguistic Society of America's Linguistic Institute in the summer of 2010 taking four one-credit courses in research methods of language documentation and various topics in sociolinguistics. In the 2010-2011 year, I enrolled in two intermediate Navajo courses at ASU, taught by the former Miss Navajo Jolyana Begay, in order to continue my study of Navajo language revitalization. These classes also fulfilled the language requirement for my Ph.D., thanks to the efforts of faculty in the ASU English department to ensure equal status of less commonly taught languages.

Participants

Since the ASU IRB's official guidelines for recruitment restricted me to off-reservation participants, I was not able to use the extensive network of Miss Navajo

former winners, contestants, judges, and Navajo Nation officials that I developed in my time on the Navajo Nation. The official study commenced with recruitment of eligible participants known to me through my graduate student networks, beginning with Jolyana Begay. Begay is a former Miss Navajo living in Phoenix who at the time of the interview taught beginning and intermediate Navajo language courses at Arizona State University, as well as language, culture, and singing at the Phoenix Indian Center, while simultaneously teaching the third grade. Since I was the sole graduate student in the Intermediate Navajo I course in Fall 2010, Begay and I had an immediate rapport as fellow graduate students, teaching associates, and mothers to young children. Begay helped me to feel comfortable in a classroom in which I was typically the only *bilagáana*, or white person, giving me access to her pedagogical thinking as a teacher and her plans as a heritage language advocate; at the same time, we discussed some aspects of linguistics that she was studying in her graduate program as well as concepts of second language acquisition in pedagogy.

Since Jolyana Begay was aware of my interests and my request to ASU's IRB for approval of this study, she was quite surprised and disappointed that the contacts she had provided to me and the potential participants to whom she had referred me could no longer be considered viable candidates for interview. The 60th anniversary celebration of the Miss Navajo pageant in fall of 2012 was the perfect opportunity for Begay to introduce me to her fellow Miss Navajo winners, particularly those who had sustained their roles as public figures in language and cultural revitalization, but ASU's IRB limitations prevented such networking from having any relation to this research project. (After consideration, I determined it was better to refrain from contacting the individuals

on my resulting list of names and email addresses of women involved with the pageant, lest such contact be considered recruiting residents of the Navajo Nation and thus requiring the Navajo Nation's IRB clearance as well.) The informal meetings and conversations I had with individuals involved in the Miss Navajo pageant of 2012 did not contribute to the data used in this study, though many of the Miss Navajos I met at the 60th anniversary fundraising gala in Tse Bonito, New Mexico, shared excitement about my project and encouraged me to continue researching the ways in which Navajo individuals navigate the ideological connection between language and identity.

Several opportunities for interviews presented themselves in the 2012-2013 academic year as I continued to develop networks outside of Jolyana Begay's Navajo Nation connections by finding individuals off-reservation in the Southwest who were vocal about supporting Navajo linguistic and cultural revitalization. Although the informed consent document all participants signed warns participants that they may be identifiable by their data, the participants are anonymized at times throughout this dissertation. In Chapter 4, three participants are directly identified, while five participants are represented as Speakers 1F, 2F, 3F, 1M, and 2M, to indicate three women and two men, respectively. In Chapter 5, the participants are represented as Speakers A, B, C, D, E, and F in order to obscure identity and gender in the discussions about varieties of English and potentially stigmatized usages.

Materials/Design

For all interviews, I used a Zoom Q3HD digital camera and recorder that generates high-definition video and audio, with some participants choosing to be

videotaped and some participants choosing only audio recordings. All interviews took place off the Navajo Nation at various locations in the Southwest.

As part of the informed consent, participants were given a document to read and sign to agree to a voice recording and to sign a second time if choosing to authorize a video recording. Participants were told that their identities might be inferred from the data, so neither anonymity nor confidentiality could be guaranteed if they wanted to participate in the study. Before recording began, I also gave participants a chance to ask me any clarifying questions; this window of opportunity was usually brief, with some participants asking about my interest in the topic. However, at least three individuals first took a significant amount of time (nearly an hour each) to question me about my interest and my purpose in attempting this research. One participant went so far as to ask whether I believed an outsider – a non-Navajo like me – should even be a part of any kind of study of Navajo language, culture, or identity, particularly after the history of colonization. Since I had already asked myself these questions in the previous years of developing an interest in language revitalization and the ideologies at work in communities undergoing language shift, I had an easy and honest answer: “Language revitalization is obviously important to many indigenous communities, and I want to help. I’m interested in what you have to say about how it works and how it can be improved.” All eight individuals chose to proceed with a formal interview after that point, though others whom I had attempted to recruit never answered my emails. Although the sample is admittedly small, I glean from these pre-interview cross-examinations of the interviewer that the participants were very interested in having these conversations, even with a non-Navajo student of linguistics, and thought their

participation in the study might be productive for them, for me, or for heritage language advocacy.

Although I had prepared a long list of potential questions for Miss Navajos, those questions about the pageant were hardly relevant to the six other participants. I asked all participants about language use in their childhoods, their current language use, and their work and advocacy for the Navajo language. I decided to elicit narrative first, before attempting to elicit explicit attitude and stancetaking, in order to get basic information about participants' language backgrounds and also to hear descriptions of and attitudes toward the people and experiences that participants deemed important to the topics of language and education.

As a beginning question, I planned to ask each participant to introduce him- or herself, hoping that question would lead into a discussion of background and childhood. Navajos are often taught to introduce themselves by giving the names of the four clans associated with their ancestry, the clans of the mother, father, maternal grandfather, and paternal grandfather. This self-introduction sometimes includes parents' and grandparents' names and birthplaces. However, the self-introduction is a genre involving public speaking usually before a group of Navajos, which at least one participant stated is fraught with potential judgment and disapproval from the audience for perceived errors in Navajo language production or the choice to use English. Perhaps due to previous experiences with the genre, when I made a suggestion that the participant introduce him- or herself, the request was sometimes met with a question about the process itself, such as "In English or Navajo?"

In other cases, the suggestion of giving a self-introduction was not even appropriate as a potential ice-breaker; usually when a pre-recording conversation about the goals of the study became lively and personal for the participant, either the participant or I would at some point ask if we should start the recorder. These interviews began with more “shop talk” about language use, variation, and current advocacy, but were not necessarily more productive in terms of producing and examining discourses of language use. I found that as each interview proceeded – with most lasting over an hour due to the participants’ enthusiasm – my interlocutors became more comfortable and more willing to examine and re-examine stated preferences, attitudes, and even linguistic usages in the course of our conversations. I believe the open-ended nature of the interviews, the intentional use of wait-time (rather than filling silences with a new question), and the honest desire to discuss the topics of language use, language variation, education, and language revitalization with an interested colleague resulted in the quantity and, at times, very personal quality of the interview data. Particularly among participants who engaged with me on theoretical and pedagogical matters, my typically unrequited invitation to hold a follow-up interview materialized within a few days, so that we could continue the conversation.

As I had anticipated in the initial proposal interviewing numerous Miss Navajos and public figures, one of the greatest challenges would be to elicit as much naturalistic speech and consciously and unconsciously expressed ideologies about language use. By allowing natural conversation to occur between the participant in each interview and me, I typically elicited both reproduced narratives of the importance of language in preserving Navajo identity at the same time that these explicitly stated stances were complicated,

problematized, contradicted, or called into question by the same speaker later in the same interview. Usually as a result of the passage of time and increased ease with one another as interlocutors, a more naturalistic conversational pattern between colleagues was achieved after approximately 20 minutes, if it had not been established before the informed consent form was signed, the recorder was turned on, and the interview formally began. I believe this approach allowed participants to both utilize and discuss typical discourses relating to language ideologies of Navajo, English, and Navajo English use as they participated in some metalinguistic analysis, such as interrogating typical pedagogical practices or addressing beliefs about the supremacy of each variety for different contexts, generations, and economic opportunities.

Also, although I had planned to ask all participants to record themselves reading a word list, or list of words and phrases deemed salient to elicit features identified as common in the Navajo English variety, I only chose to ask five participants to record themselves reading the word list. In the three other cases, the length of lively conversation left no additional time to ask for the word list recording, and at the time it felt inappropriate and potentially less productive than the interview data that had already been recorded. As I studied some of the features of Navajo English that were prevalent among participants, I also saw that the word list was less relevant than I originally deemed it might be.

Procedure

After each interview, I followed the procedures learned from the research methods of language documentation course at the Linguistic Institute: 1) save the original sound/video files to a dedicated Originals folder; 2) save copies of the files to a

Recordings folder with filenames specifying the participant's initials, date, type of data (e.g., "interview" or "word list"), and file type (.wav, .mov, or .m4a); and 3) enter all information on the interviews and filenames into an Excel document called "Metadata" with a detailed entry for each recording. Later, I changed initials to codes such as 1F in order to anonymize some individuals. Besides participant names (or codes), dates, and filenames of the recordings, the Metadata document also includes information on the locations of the interviews, the presence or absence of other individuals within hearing range, date of transcription completion, and any special notes about the date (e.g., on Codetalkers' Day) or equipment malfunctions. Furthermore, all data are automatically backed up to two separate external hard drives.

I began transcribing immediately after the first interview. Although I had assumed that watching the video footage while transcribing would produce the most accurate recordings (for interviews with a video element), I found that it was far too distracting and extremely slow to stop the video multiple times to transcribe. I purchased a transcription foot pedal and accompanying software to quickly rewind or stop the recording at the touch of a toe. I also purchased software to convert the .mov files to audio-only .wav files in order to transcribe from an audio file. Of course, I returned to the video when available in cases of unclear word use or pronunciation. The transcription is not perfect, nor is it static; since the recordings are the primary data and the transcripts are secondary documents, I typically adjust the manner in which I have transcribed the words each time I revisit a recording.

Aside from the mass of recorded data requiring months of transcription work, another difficulty in transcribing was choosing how to represent the natural patterns of

speaking in English spontaneously in conversation. In the interest of being fair to the participants and understanding natural intraspeaker variation in language use, I did not generate a careful phonetic transcription of each word that could be considered typical conversational English, such as *walkin'* for *walking*. Instead, I tried to accurately represent filler words, false starts, repeats, and malapropisms, but I usually only noted vernacular pronunciations when I was carefully studying the recordings for dialect features. A final challenge of transcription was the use of Navajo in the recordings, though infrequent. Although I had never explicitly told participants that the interviews would take place in English, the recruitment process and related documentation was in English, the majority of participants expressed a linguistic background involving more facility with English than Navajo, and in the context of the interviews English had already been established as the language of communication with me. Navajo language use was typically reserved for self-introductions by clan, which some individuals chose as the first formal utterance they made once the recorder was on. In the middle of the interviews, however, some participants also used Navajo when making reference to code-switching in their families and typically producing a narrative from the perspective of a confused child trying to understand the term. For Navajo words and phrases that I could not understand or look up, in 2014 I consulted with Jolyana Begay, who was very helpful in explaining and spelling slang words and usages that other participants had tried to describe or explain but lacked perfect memory of the phrase or lacked the literacy in Navajo to spell.

The exact format and length of the transcripts will be finalized in collaboration with the archivists at the Whatcom Museum in Washington as a part of the requirements

of the Jacobs Research Funds grant partially supporting this study. The transcripts as well as the recordings will also be archived at the Labriola National American Indian Data Center, where the data will be most accessible to participants and other language advocates or researchers. Several of the participants have also requested that their data only be archived at the Labriola Center rather than the Whatcom Museum, due to the Labriola Center's focus on Native American topics and its location in the Southwest.

Data Analysis

Methods employed in interpreting the data include methods from the field of critical discourse analysis, in which ideologies are extrapolated from discourse. Discourse utilized in the promotion of heritage language planning and policy initiatives typically adheres to the language ecology metaphor, which conceptualizes language akin to a biological species that can become extinct, or, in a corresponding manner, explicitly links language loss with the tragic threat of loss of language, culture, identity, and even the existence of a people. The related discourses identified in this study are examined based on the context surrounding their production, the attitudes explicitly provided in association and juxtaposition with these discourses, and any alternative discourses (or actual linguistic production) that may compete or directly contradict other discourses. The context under which these discourses have been produced is necessarily tied to their production in conversation with a non-Navajo interviewer seeking to discuss Navajo language revitalization and language use and ideology with diverse participants who share a passion for the subject but who differ widely in their experience in advocacy work and their positions – whether academic as a graduate student or public as a Miss Navajo winner, for example. The discourses produced in a conversation with a non-

Navajo graduate student surely have both similarities and differences to the discourses produced in conversations with the participants' other interlocutors in less interview-like settings.

Ethical Considerations and the Observer's Paradox

A great challenge in understanding a speaker's linguistic choices is the observer's paradox. To what extent does the presence of the researcher, albeit considered at times a peer or colleague but at all times having control of the recorder, shape the choices a speaker makes and therefore skew the data in unknowable ways? While planning interviews, I kept the observer's paradox in mind and built it into the study as a natural part of creating a conversational interview context in which a non-Navajo graduate student who has studied the Navajo language and language revitalization efforts asks another person about experiences with language choices and attitudes, as well as beliefs about the best courses of action in continuing heritage language planning efforts. In my effort to guide the interview at the same time that I remained a conversational partner, I used the following strategies in addition to unconscious, alignment-oriented, elicitation strategies. In my experience both as a teacher and as a researcher, I have found these strategies conducive to prompting discussion, and they were usually successful.

1. Remain silent after the interlocutor's utterance while providing backchanneling signals ("Hmmm... yeah...") that demonstrate listening behavior while leaving the floor to one's interlocutor. The interlocutor often filled the silence with additional narrative, discussion of attitudes, or a topic that he or she stated was related. (Although research suggests varied norms in floor-taking strategies and the reduced use of backchanneling in many native groups (e.g., Scollon &

Scollon, 1981; Philips, 1988), the established use of English combined with a university setting or shared context of university expectations of English-using, academic behavior may have contributed to the pragmatic norms of Anglos (or non-Natives) to have prompted further dialogue in an interview setting.)

2. Remain silent after an utterance while avoiding potentially intimidating eye contact, as a response-inducing strategy known as “wait-time.” These nonverbal cues demonstrate that the researcher will not seize the floor and that more contribution from the interlocutor is expected and welcomed, particularly in communities in which longer pauses are appropriate between turns (Philips, 1988).
3. Ask a naive question with the expectation that an interlocutor with direct experience will explain a concept and give reasons justifying that perspective, from which ideologies can be extrapolated.
4. On the other hand, when an interlocutor ceases speaking after expressing insecurity, introduce a technical term from linguistics to give credence to the phenomenon just described and to legitimize its part in the discussion.
5. Give an example from my experiences at Diné College in order to demonstrate connections to the reservation and to a specific area, possibly eliciting further narrative and stancetaking.
6. Discuss personal experience such as parenting a young child and addressing language learning plans and concerns.

Without controlled testing in a laboratory setting, I cannot attest to the extent to which participants may have adjusted their linguistic behavior in accordance with my

conversational strategies. I do see from the recordings that these six strategies had good success in eliciting more discussion from participants, particularly since they are typical elements in conversations that interlocutors use with the goal of perpetuating mutually beneficial talk. In short, any different researcher would have necessarily ended up with different data.

In accordance with standards of ethical research, I included a clause on the informed consent form that any discussion of illegal activities would result in the recorder being turned off immediately; in practice, the recorder was turned off when discussions became uncomfortably personal or when the participant received a phone call. Particularly in a context that has been actively promoted as a conversation between two interlocutors who are relative strangers but share common interests and can see each other as colleagues, in interviews that evoke narratives of childhood experiences and even memories of language discrimination and insecurity, my primary goal was to treat the participant as a colleague-collaborator rather than as a mere source of data. Emotional reactions in that context were to be expected and embraced for the human contribution they made to a mutual commitment toward language study in general, as well as for the metalinguistic discussions of emotion-laden choices of language adoption, language shift, and language loss.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The Current State of Navajo Language

The Navajo language, which is called *Diné bizaad* in Navajo, is currently undergoing a language shift as more children grow up speaking more and more English rather than their heritage language. In 1998, Krauss classified Navajo as a “Class A” North American indigenous language, meaning the language has “speakers of all generations,” as opposed to “Class D” communities in which the language is “spoken only by a few elderly persons.” As McCarty, Romero-Little, and Zepeda (2006) point out, “Multiple classifications may apply across a single speech community” (p. 662), since

Language vitality is influenced by numerous complicating factors: rural versus urban lifestyles, locally available language education programmes and materials, the number of Native-speaking teachers, and local and regional opportunity structures vis-à-vis the heritage language and culture, to name only a few.

(McCarty, Romero-Little, & Zepeda, 2006, p. 662)

A more recent evaluation of the use of the Navajo language places the language in a less secure position. Using a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 indicating the language is widely used in many contexts and 10 meaning it is not used, the language documentation resource the Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig (Eds.), 2014) uses the 2010 census to classify the language as 6b, or “in trouble.” With approximately 169,000 speakers of Navajo existing currently, language planners on and off the reservation endeavor to enact language programs and policies so that, as the Ethnologue states, “it is possible that revitalization

efforts could restore transmission of the language in the home”

(<http://www.ethnologue.com/cloud/nav>).

This chapter gives an overview of some of the seminal literature in American Indian history as it relates to language policy and planning, as well as ethnographic literature relevant to language revitalization. In later sections, this chapter discusses theoretical approaches to Navajo language and identity and provides an overview of research on the speech variety of Navajo English.

Education and Language Shift

David Wallace Adams’s *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (1995) was among the first widely read, book-length examinations of the traumatic experiences that American Indian children, families, and nations faced with the rise of boarding schools. The subsequent explosion of scholarship on American Indian education documented painful boarding school experiences and, at times, pushed in new directions of scholarship on boarding schools. Brenda J. Child’s *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1990-1940* (2000), for example, gives evidence that boarding school experiences may not have been categorically traumatic and devastating experiences for American Indian students and families, showing that some individuals were able to integrate schools – whether affectionately or at least ambivalently – into their traditional ways of life.

House’s (2002) analysis also demonstrates tensions between the common understanding of the inflicted model of Western education onto Navajos, largely through boarding schools, and the Navajo Nation’s attempt in the latter decades of the 20th

century to indigenize Navajo Nation schools and embrace self-determination in cultural and linguistic educational programs.

Throughout this time, language contact between Navajo and English resulted in significant language shift, with the percentage of first graders with Navajo as their first language being cut in half in the three decades between 1968 and 1998 (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig (Eds.), 2014). Although some language programs such as the widely touted immersion schools in Fort Defiance and Rough Rock have been relatively successful in producing speakers of Navajo, the overall linguistic landscape on the reservation has not produced a stable bilingualism that bodes well for the future of Navajo language fluency among younger speakers (House, 2002).

Many language programs adopt Joshua Fishman's (1991) stages in a program called *Reversing Language Shift*, or Francis and Reyhner's *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education* (2002) which adapts Fishman's 8 stages into 4 broad steps for developing community contexts in which the heritage language can be used increasingly to meet the language planning goals of the indigenous community. These stages are:

Stage 1: Speakers of IL restricted to a few grandparents and elders only.

Stage 2: Most IL speakers are not socially isolated, but are beyond childbearing age.

Stage 3: Language is "alive," active intergenerational transmission.

Stage 4: Intergenerational transmission during early childhood between parents and children in the home. (Reyhner, 2002)

Francis and Reyhner (2002) further adapt Fishman's model to provide research-based solutions at each stage for modulating the language difficulties encountered, such as adopting Leanne Hinton's (1994) "language apprentice" model or developing literacy in the target language.

Other common resources for learning indigenous languages are similarly rooted in literacy, such as the numerous books and resources available for learning the Navajo language. As the Ethnologue states, the Navajo language has plentiful resources with literacy as the medium of instruction, including a New Testament translated into Navajo. (The copy I was given at the Tsaile Community Church, a mission of the Church of God in Tsaile, Arizona, was produced by the American Bible Society in 2000.) Some other resource guides include the following, listed chronologically: Young and Morgan's (1951) *Colloquial Navajo*, Wall and Morgan's (1958) *Navajo-English Dictionary*, Wilson Aronilth Jr.'s *Foundations of Navajo Culture* (1991) and *Diné Bi Bee Óhoo 'aah Bá Silá: An Introduction to Navajo Philosophy* (1994 [1980]), Parnwell & Yellowhair's (1988) *The New Oxford Picture Dictionary*, Goossen's (1995) *Diné Bizaad: Speak, Read, Write Navajo*, Young's (2000) *The Navajo Verb System: An Overview*, Parsons Yazzie and Speas's (2007) widely used textbook *Diné Bizaad Bínáhoo 'aah: Rediscovering the Navajo Language: An Introduction to the Navajo Language*, and the Navajo Language Rosetta Stone.

In addition, Leanne Hinton's (2001) *How to Keep Your Language Alive: Language Revitalization for Families* and (2013) *Bringing Our Language Home: Language Revitalization for Families* serve as practical guides to advising families with diverse language skills and resources in how to inculcate heritage language learning for

all ages within a family group. Hinton and Hale's (2001) *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* also contributes to practical and theoretical language planning endeavors with multiple chapters dedicated to successful language programs such as the Maori language nests and the Fort Defiance and Rough Rock immersion schools.

Theoretical Approaches to Navajo Language and Identity

Deborah House's (2002) work *Language Shift Among the Navajos* has been widely cited for its ethnographic intimacy with the Navajo Nation and its educational institutions, its theoretical underpinnings and proposed solutions to the need for enhanced language revitalization planning, and its dichotomization of the "really-real" state of language use in the Navajo Nation and the discursively popular "wished-for real" of a stable diglossia, or bilingualism. House's work explains this disparity by citing a need to disavow the negative stereotypes about Navajos (and American Indians in general) while employing a strategy of strategic essentialism, the "hyperbolic valorization" (Hill, 2002) that emphasizes the strong, cohesive culture of the Navajo and promotes discourse giving great value to cultural practices and heritage language fluency.

Margaret Field's (2003) review of House's (2002) monograph describes it as a discussion of

discrepancies between public discourse about what it means to be a Navajo person and "undiscussed, yet highly visible, linguistic and behavioral practices" – that is, between conscious, discursive ideology and more unconscious, behavioral ideology as revealed through social practice. She challenges the widespread claim in the Navajo community for the existence of Navajo cultural homogeneity, arguing that although such essentializing discourse may have political, economic,

and spiritual motivations, it is also unrealistic and complicates efforts to reverse language shift. (Field, 2003, p. 118)

In a work preceding her widely touted monograph, House's (1997) dissertation explains her theoretical explanation for the problems Navajos encounter when creating a cohesive Navajo identity, relying on Taussig's concepts of mimesis and alterity to explain the cognitive dissonance that she believes afflicts Navajos today. In fact, House posits that the major challenge for Navajos is their simultaneous adoption of mimetic and alteric behavior or ideology (meaning the attempt to assimilate to the wider national American culture and the desire to resist assimilation, respectively). Rather than showing how conflicting ideologies can be held simultaneously, as my data show many Navajos are quite conscious of when choosing a Navajo identity that is neither assimilative nor reactionary, House (1997) claims the simultaneously held desires to adopt mimesis and alterity cause many of the social problems on the Navajo Nation. In fact, my dissertation shows adaptive strategies Navajo individuals have used to place themselves in an advantageous position to learn their heritage language outside of the contexts on the reservation that constrained them as youths.

House, along with others, has adopted Judith Irvine and Susan Gal's (2000) model of iconicity, recursivity, and erasure evident in discourse on language shift among Navajos. Irvine and Gal's definition of 'iconization' follows:

Iconization involves a transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic features (or varieties) and the social images with which they are linked. Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations

of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence. (2000, p. 37-38)

Irvine and Gal's model continues to demonstrate the "means by which people construct ideological representations of linguistic differences" (2000, p. 37). The second semiotic process is fractal recursivity, which

involves the projection on an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level. For example, intragroup oppositions might be projected outward into intergroup relations, or vice versa. Thus the dichotomizing and partitioning process that was involved in some understood opposition (between groups of linguistic varieties, for example) recurs at other levels, creating either subcategories on each side of a contrast of supercategories that include both sides but oppose them to something else. (p. 38)

Irvine and Gal's third semiotic process is erasure, which employs a process of simplification that only ideologically erases an element of the sociolinguistic context without literally eradicating it.

Erasure is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible. Facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away. So, for example, a social group or a language may be imagined as homogeneous, its internal variation disregarded. Because a linguistic ideology is a totalizing vision, elements that do not fit its interpretive structure – that cannot be seen to fit – must be either ignored or transformed. (p. 39)

In a display of iconization, the individuals in Barbra Meek's (2010) study *We Are Our*

Language of Northern Athabaskan people revitalizing the Kaska language invoke iconization of linguistic identity (as also displayed in Meek's title), prompting the author to cite Irvine and Gal's (2000) model to explain the difficulties inherent in language contact, shift, and revitalization:

Not only do these revitalization practices suppress nonregimented language varieties and play into overall subordination of these languages (even in contexts when they are intended to predominate), but they exacerbate issues of ethnicity and authenticity through the iconization of language and the erasure of linguistic diversity and complexity. (Meek, 2010, p. 134)

Scholarship on Navajo English

Navajo English is a variety of English with a substrate influence from the Navajo language as well as its use amid a community of practice that was, for approximately one to two generations, functionally bilingual. In 1966, Mary Jane Cook and Margaret Amy Sharp documented numerous linguistic features that Navajo children produce when learning English, many of which are still present in Navajo English today in monolingual English speakers' production. In the 1970s and 1980s, as language shift proceeded and more and more children had English as a first language, the field of study of American Indian Englishes emerged. William Leap's (1974) article "Ethnics, Emics and the New Ideology: The Identity Potential of Indian English" argues for the study of Indian English as a singular variety, while Leap's (1976) edited volume of papers *Studies in Southwestern Indian English*, published by Trinity University Press, compares several American Indian Englishes to establish similarities between the varieties that are significantly different than non-Native varieties of English often considered more

standard, such as salient lowering of vowels in Navajo, Hopi, and Mohave speakers (Penfield, 1976).

A second volume from Trinity University Press, *Essays in Native American English* (Bartelt, Penfield-Jasper, & Hoffer (Eds.), 1982), featuring essays by H. Guillermo Bartelt, Susan Penfield-Jasper, and William Leap, argues that study of these varieties of English is necessary to educate teachers with the goal of eliminating discrimination and promoting further research into American Indian Englishes. Specifically, H. Guillermo Bartelt documents features of Navajo English that were previously documented by Cook and Sharp (1966) in students learning English as a second language.

Initially, the claim that Native American Englishes is in fact a field was not easily accepted, as seen in Carl A. Urion's (1984) review of *Essays in Native American English* in which Urion argues there is no good reason to combine, compare, or promote scholarship on the ways in which individuals in different Native American tribes speak English. However, as Regna Darnell and Michael K. Foster argue in the (1988) edited collection of papers *Native North American Interactional Patterns*, comparison of American Indian groups yields important findings in the study of interactional and interethnic communication, such as "the positive functions of silence, the tendency to avoid eye contact, and the use of indirection in requests." Also, Ron Scollon and Suzanne B. K. Scollon's (1981) *Narrative, Literacy, and Face in Interethnic Communication* shows that understanding indigenous communicative norms such as politeness, the distribution of talk, information structure, and content organization are central to establishing "respect for difference and the minimization of power differences" (p. 202).

Similarly, as William Leap states in his 1993 work *American Indian English*, which unites a great deal of the scholarship on American Indian varieties of English from the previous three decades, one goal of documenting vernacular features of various American Indian groups' use of English is to "refute the short-sightedness of those who see nothing unique in Indian English fluency" or who ignore the influence from heritage languages and lump certain constructions in with other vernacular varieties of American English (p. 284). Recognizing the distinctiveness of American Indian speech patterns and communicative norms is essential to understanding language choices of speakers and preventing further stigmatization of American Indian varieties of English.

More recently, Charlotte Schaengold's (2003) paper "The Emergence of Bilingual Navajo: English and Navajo Languages in Contact Regardless of Everyone's Best Intentions" examines the features of what she called "bilingual Navajo" and defined as a "bilingual mixed code" that employs the grammar of the Navajo language and the lexicon of English. Her (2004) doctoral dissertation *Bilingual Navajo: Mixed Codes, Bilingualism, and Language Maintenance* discussed the phonological and grammatical features of bilingual Navajo, many of which had been previously documented by Cook and Sharp, Bartelt, and Leap. Using Schaengold's work, Anthony Webster has published prolifically on Navajo poetry written in English, explaining that he had previously essentialized Navajo poetry as being necessarily written in the Navajo language but changed his mind when he realized he "would have excluded the great majority of poetry currently being written and performed on the Navajo Nation" (2009, p. 2). Furthermore, as poet Esther Belin writes, "I confidently say that English is a tribal language. I give it

the power to be Indian, Navajo, Diné, urban, rez, beat up, knocked down, and never dead” (Belin, 2014, p. 40).

The specific features of Navajo English that appear in my dissertation data are discussed in Chapter 5, in addition to a discussion of the theory of orders of indexicality that examines the social meaning attached to linguistic features and language behaviors when language is employed as a tool of social framing, such as the practice of stancetaking, which demonstrates the speaker’s position toward a subject or situation, and with the social construction of identity.

Stance, Enregisterment, and Navajo English

As Jaffe (2009a) explains, the sociolinguistics of stance analyzes the processes of indexicalization in greater depth than “traditional correlations between linguistic variables and social identities” (p. 13). Since individuals choose to display, or perform, multiple identities in different interpersonal, social, or ideological contexts, the sociolinguistics of stance analytical perspective fleshes out Ochs’ (1990) model of direct and indirect indexicality, based on Silverstein (1976), adding that stance displays and stance uptake are crucial features in how a communicative event builds, repairs, and reshapes these identities.

Stancetaking can be defined as “taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one’s utterance” (Jaffe, 2009a, p. 3) and can be done through the selection, intensity, and frequency of certain linguistic features (Eckert, 2008). Styling is a form of stancetaking because it lays claim to knowledge of the style being used as well as knowledge of rival styles and is chosen for its capacity of differentiating the speech from other styles and the speaker from users of other styles. Furthermore, although stance is

enacted in the immediate conversation or utterance, it also has ramifications beyond the directly interpersonal, portraying what kind of person the speaker is in a social context and how that identity fits in on an ideological level. All three levels – interpersonal, social, and ideological – may be at work in the usage of a single feature (however enregistered) as well as in discourse representing metasociolinguistic stance.

Although not discussed within a framework of the sociolinguistics of stance, Bunte (2009) shows that in the Paiute community she studied, the use of the heritage language does not merely ‘point to’ an identity category but is symbolic of Paiute identity. Clearly, as Jaffe (2009a) explains using Ochs (1996), all linguistic features that index an identity category do so indirectly, and this indirect indexicality is mediated by stance. Ideology about language informs the judgment (on the part of speaker and interlocutor) of what stances help to mediate the indexical link and what identity category is ultimately made prominent. For a feature so deeply enregistered that it becomes a symbol, one who chooses to invoke the symbolic status it confers makes a claim of iconicity between the ability and choice to use the heritage language and the kind of person he or she is – a clear example of how stance mediates the function of indirect indexicality. Similar processes may occur with the selection of a Navajo variety of English; although Navajo identity is iconically tied to Navajo language, Navajo English is an additional language of in-group communication and is indexically linked to authentic Navajo identity for those who choose to embrace it as an identity marker. Like other varieties of English that have significant indexical relationships to place and identity (c.f. Johnstone, Andrus, & Danielson, 2006), the use of American Indian variety

of English can be an indexical marker of group knowledge and authenticity, perhaps just as important to the group as an identity resource as the heritage language (Leap, 1993).

The use of English to express stance as a marker of indigenous identity can be a powerful symbol of in-group identity; as Nevins (2013) describes, "people can appropriate, or indigenize, English, or another language imposed by settler colonialism, to their own, culturally defined purposes (see e.g. Field 2001) by incorporating it within local discourse genres" (pp. 107-108). Furthermore, in Teresa L. McCarty's (2012) *Language Planning and Policy in Native America: History, Theory, Praxis*, the author criticizes the U.S. census as perpetuating a fundamental misunderstanding about Native American Englishes:

The census data completely invisibilize speakers of diverse Native American Englishes, creoles and pidgins. As anthropologist Anthony Webster points out with reference to his research on the uses of Englishes among Navajo poets, Native Americans can and do 'own' English (Webster, 2011: 61). (p. 11-12)

In fact, speaking in a Navajo way can involve speaking English. As Webster notes,

I argue that speaking and writing in a Navajo way, what some Navajos sometimes call *Diné'ehjí yálti* ' (he/she is talking the Diné way), does not necessarily presuppose speaking something called "Navajo." (2011, p. 63)

In short, Navajo English is a distinct variety of American English with a substrate influence from the Navajo language – a variety used by Navajos as one way to be Navajo. Although the variety shares several features with other varieties typically perceived as "nonstandard" by Anglo-Americans, Navajo English is a unique variety worthy of further study.

Chapter 4: Essentializing Navajo Identity:

Iconicity, Recursivity, and Erasure in Navajo's Competition with English

This study contributes to the understanding of language ideologies at play in discourse used by Navajos discussing Navajo language revitalization and language use. As House (2002) notes, “Few are asking what Navajos (in the trenches, as it were) believe about even the possibility of Navajo language shift, much less what to do with it” (p. 89). The eight individuals interviewed for this dissertation have been “in the trenches” their whole lives, encountering and producing discourse about language use while growing up in the Navajo Nation as well as living off-reservation in adulthood. The discourses used reveal complex and contradictory ideologies about the role of language in Navajo identities through the processes of iconicity, recursivity, and erasure (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

The data for this study were collected from ten interviews with eight individuals of Navajo descent in the American Southwest. The participants include two Miss Navajo winners, five university students or graduates, and one software developer. Participants were all individuals of Navajo descent living off-reservation who had some interest in heritage language revitalization.

In analyzing the iconicity, recursivity, and erasure inherent in deployment of language ideologies related to Navajo fluency and language shift, the context of the data collection and the salient roles of the interlocutors during data collection are relevant to the analysis. Firstly, the participants formed a relationship with me, their interlocutor and interviewer, either before or during the data collection sessions. This connection produced various options for foregrounded identities during the interview, for in each

conversation a variety of roles were secondary (or perhaps primary) to our roles as interviewer and interviewee. With Jolyana Begay, for example, the roles could be student and teacher, fellow graduate students, fellow teachers, advocates for the study of language, and fellow mothers. With other participants, the level of previous acquaintance varied but always held the same elements of both interviewer-interviewee as well as us being interlocutors passionate about language revitalization. On those two levels, it must be noted that despite common interests, the conversation was also taking place between a white researcher and an individual of Navajo descent. The extent to which this made the interviewee an insider and the interviewer an outsider is debatable, though; the linguistic and cultural insecurity many participants expressed at times demonstrated the multiple and conflicting ideologies that simultaneously create Navajo identity. At any given time, certain discourses of Navajoness are foregrounded in the conversation – including my attempts to gain some small measure of insider status, discussing my time at Diné College, for example – while others necessarily take a backseat. These positionings are explained with quotations and context when relevant.

At times my interlocutors attempted to explain certain highlighted contradictions, such as elders expecting fluency in Navajo from younger speakers but also providing sufficient criticism to suppress language practice among youth; at the same time, other contradictions in language use and attitude remained unaddressed and may have been hidden intentionally or unconsciously. House's (2002) contention that the essentialized Navajo identity is composed of simultaneously held ideologies is applicable for the participants in this study; furthermore, my data expands the analysis in House's study beyond challenging the essentializing discourse. Participants in this study are well aware

of the contradictions inherent in their discourses about language, though their stated contradictions in ideology are sometimes noticed and addressed and at other times suppressed. Navajos can hold multiple ideologies as part of their construction of Navajo identity while focusing on certain ideologies in certain contexts for certain purposes. Irvine and Gal's (2000) model of the processes of iconicity, recursivity, and erasure aids here in understanding the ways in which Navajo language advocates living off-reservation approach Navajo language education and promotion as negotiated in their own lives.

Navajo Language, Identity, and Language Loss

The iconicity of the Navajo language in holding a Navajo identity is ubiquitous but problematic. Multiple competing ideologies about the Navajo language and its use result in the probable impossibility of achieving an essentializing formula of speaking Navajo and therefore being Navajo for many Navajos today. As House's (2002) work demonstrates, there is no essentialized Navajo identity, but the standard discourse about being Navajo promotes a fictional situation of stable diglossia, or sustainable bilingualism, as both the reality and the goal of the linguistic landscape on the Navajo Nation. A related belief is that language shift will be reversed and that current efforts, whether off-reservation revitalization efforts through books and technology or through educational programs on the Navajo Nation, will result in an uncontested bilingualism that is untouched by social realities today. The expectation of language shift reversal is an example of Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of "erasure."

Erasure is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible. Facts

that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away. So, for example, a social group or a language may be imagined as homogeneous, its internal variation disregarded. Because a linguistic ideology is a totalizing vision, elements that do not fit its interpretive structure – that cannot be seen to fit – must be either ignored or transformed. (p. 39)

According to Irvine and Gal (2000), these mechanisms of iconicity, recursivity, and erasure are created in a process of counterhegemonic discourse that rails against “some imagined ‘Other’ – an ‘essentialized and imagined as homogeneous’ oppositional force” (p. 39).

The erasure of abundant language shift to English is common in the ideology House (2002) calls the fiction of stable diglossia.

Stable diglossia, in Fishman’s (1980) sense of two unrelated languages being used within separate, distinct domains (such as home versus school), has never been the case in the Navajo speech community, although this is a common assumption on the part of outsiders and even a fallacy perpetuated by some within the Navajo community who would like it to be true... Rather, in many Navajo homes, uncompartmentalized bilingualism has been the case since approximately World War II, followed by English monolingualism on the part of schoolchildren since approximately 1975. (p. 41)

Furthermore, as highlighted in the currently ongoing Navajo Nation presidential race, which was significantly delayed due to concerns over one candidate’s lack of fluency in Navajo, perhaps the most difficult obstacle for many urban-dwelling Navajos is the discourse essentializing Navajo identity as requiring Navajo fluency. For monolingual

English speakers residing off-reservation, as well as for those residing on the Navajo Nation, such essentializing can result in distressing feelings of distance from culture and one's own heritage and identity as a Navajo.

An example of community essentializing the link between culture and language comes from Speaker 2F, whose decision to run for Miss Navajo stemmed from assumptions about her fluency when she attended a university away from the Navajo Nation that members of her community at home clearly associated with English.

And, uh, many times when I did go back, um, you know, for Christmas breaks or other events, a lot of times the people that I would encounter, um, would assume that I didn't speak Navajo because I was a college student, or I was going to [university] and they would be surprised when I would speak Navajo.

(2f_interview1.1_14aug12_2)

Seeking to defend her Navajo identity when it was challenged, Speaker 2F moved home after graduation and began a campaign as a contestant for Miss Navajo; Speaker 2F had a message to communicate to other Navajos about the links among heritage language fluency, cultural identity, and higher education.

I didn't expect to win, you know, because I went into the Miss Navajo pageant as a way to challenge myself, as a way to, uh, show other stuff. You could go to college and still speak your language. (2f_interview1.2_14aug12_2)

Speaker 2F's narrative employs one discourse of being Navajo that incorporates taking advantage of opportunities off-reservation as well as embracing English as an academic language and succeeding in academic competition with non-Navajos, but also another

discourse intending to defy the often-unstated ideology that fluent Navajo speakers do not attend college off-reservation.

The ubiquity of ideologies connecting language and identity certainly affects choices surrounding college attendance. Navajo Nation president from 1991-1995 and former advisor to Arizona State University's president, Peterson Zah, was a Navajo who was instrumental in creating an environment beneficial to American Indian students and to recruiting potential students. For some participants, attending a school with such a large population of American Indian students and numerous programs relating to Native studies may mitigate some of the ideological discomfort of leaving the reservation. Jessica Antonio, an undergraduate student with a dense and multiplex social network at ASU who worked at the Labriola National American Indian Data Center inside the main Hayden library on the Tempe campus, chose ASU for this purpose.

Then I came out here ASU, instead of the U of A, just because the Native American community was more active and a lot more stronger here than it was at U of A. (ja_interview1.1_18jun13_10a)

At the same time, university is also a site for negotiating the restrictions surrounding identity, particularly at a school like ASU which is placed near several reservations and where local politics are deeply embedded in academics and the social life of students.

One participant, Speaker 1M, is a member of a Southwestern university organization for American Indian students that promotes decolonization rhetoric. This association and other social groups advocate for Native rights, local political issues, and the promotion of Native identity. Groups such as this also reinforce essentializing ideologies of language and identity with discourse emphasizing the need to speak the

heritage language. Participant Jessica Antonio, upon arriving at ASU and socializing with other American Indian students, some of whom were involved in similar groups, found this iconicizing discourse prevalent.

A lot of people were like, well, how can you say you're traditional? How can you say you're Navajo if you don't really speak your language if you really don't do this? I was like, well I know where I'm from and know my grandmas, I know the stories, I know, um, the winter stories, I know the seasons, I plant corn. I do this. They were like, do you really... That whole thing that really stands out when you say culture is your language, and then and then your language when you go back home you're supposed to speak your own language. I was like, if we lose our language then we'd lose our culture in a way, a big chunk of it.

(ja_interview1.1_18jun13_10b)

In fact, the essentializing discourse is so prevalent that it affected Antonio's ability to feel authoritative in speaking about Native issues, saying, "I felt there was a disconnect, um, in how I can say on something if I don't really speak the language"

(ja_interview1.1_18jun13_10a).

The looming threat of language loss is a related, though not always discussed, element of the essentializing discourse. As House notes, a common belief (but certainly not one that is prominently discussed in public forums by advocates like the participants in this study) is that the Navajo language cannot or will not disappear. One of House's collaborators describes it thus:

There is also a traditional teaching that I have heard spoken of several times that says that the language will take care of itself. Anthony Lee, Sr., spoke of this

teaching when I interviewed him: “So I guess we could say that there’s a built in safety mechanism; language protects itself. No matter what, even the Japanese people have not figured out still what that secret code was. They still have not figured even though it was made public. It was held secret a long time. Now they think they know it, but there’s this secrecy. It stays that way. We got no control over it. That’s what I’m talking about” (July 28, 1994). (House, 2002, p. 53)

I will examine the iconicity of secrecy in the section below in the discussion of code talkers and circular logic of secrecy. For present purposes, however, the belief that the language will not actually be lost may be one of the simultaneously held beliefs about the nature and longevity of the heritage language, often perceived to be a Navajo individual’s birthright.

As Antonio stated, many Navajos believe that “if we lose our language then we’d lose our culture.” Fishman (2000) describes the threat as follows: “To abandon the language may be viewed as an abandonment not only of the traditional doings and knowings, but as an abandonment of personal ancestral kin and cultural ancestral heroes *per se*” (p. 5). Speaker 3F agreed, stating, “I think that there’s a whole portion of ourselves that’s not really present because of the language loss” (3f_interview1.1_13apr12_10b). The iconicity of Navajo language as a necessary precursor for Navajo identity has significant repercussions when language shift is underway; individuals who only speak English must simultaneously defend their Navajo identity while also feeling that a part of themselves is missing due to lack of fluency in the heritage language.

The participants in this study, like many who work on language issues, are both exposed to language advocacy rhetoric and are producers of language-loss discourses as advocates of heritage language use and education themselves, including those who comment on *Navajo Times* articles about language choice or bilingualism. Students, as well as their families and social and academic networks, are constantly exposed to essentializing discourse and the hyperbolic valorization of indigenous languages as part of the promotion of educational opportunities and positive attitudes toward the heritage language. Using Hill's (2002) work on rhetoric employed by language activists, Gomez de Garcia, Axelrod, and Lachler (2009) analyze Hill's concept of hyperbolic valorization, or the discourses describing heritage language as a "priceless" "treasure," which is particularly relevant here in a study in which several participants are pursuing degrees based in these discourses.

If this new rhetoric has connections to Native peoples' experience with academics, it is an interesting, perhaps unconscious, accommodation by Native people to the theme of hyperbolic valorization. Although this valorization of language as a treasure may not have originated within indigenous communities, it resonates with the needs and beliefs of community language activists, and they have worked to promote this view within the community. It is important to note here that community language activists, like the ones we work with, lead the discussion on indigenous language policy and planning both within their own communities and in conferences on language revitalization. These leaders have very often received academic degrees and have studied the work of writers like Hinton and Hale, Sapir and Whorf, and others in the college classroom. These

activists, and others in the community as well, have come into contact with statements valorizing Native languages not only within the academic literature but also in applications for language program funding and on Web sites devoted to language revitalization. We surmise that Native American language speakers who have heard, as Hill suggests, linguists' and anthropologists' ways of talking about their languages have adapted the valorization rhetoric in exactly the way that Hill would want from endangered language advocates. (p. 112-113)

Discourse valorizing Navajo and indigenous languages in general is ubiquitous in Navajo public networks as well as in the interviews conducted for this study. A common vehicle for valorization of Navajo is the World War II code talkers, as will be discussed in a later section. Both social and academic contexts in places like Arizona State University with large Native populations function to further disseminate valorizing discourses. For example, Speaker 3F describes her experience with the valorizing discourse of language-as-living-entity at her university:

There's this particular class that I took one, uh, a couple of semesters ago. It's called Actualizing De... Actualizing Decolonization. And in that class, one of the things that we talked about was language and, and this book called *Paradigm Wars*. Um, it's a really good book. Um, we talked... there was a lady in there that spoke about language and how, um, way back in the day I guess, um, how language was used and in there they brought about a really different meaning to me. Um, there was one lady who was talking about language and she was... because she was talking about language as a living entity; as a living being, and, um, as I, you know, read the chapter, she talked about using... and I, I, um... she

talked about how they use language... I forget the tribe. I wish I knew the tribe now that I'm trying to think. But they use language, um... how they're trying to reteach their language is by farming. Is to describe how you plant a seed, on how you take care of the corn fields or the harvest and how you pick the harvest, on how plants grow and how, um... so... and, and that way I could visualize how language is a living being because you use it to describe everything around you and when you're with, um, I guess you would say when you're with nature, you do use it to describe how nature works. (3f_interview2.1_20jun13_7a)

This belief that language is a living being is commonly discussed as being central to Navajo traditional thought (Witherspoon, 1977), which further serves to reinforce and essentialize the iconic connection between language and identity. The social and academic groups associated with decolonization, or the attempt to unshackle American Indians from colonial or Anglo forces, are examples of ways in which discourses valorizing Navajo – particularly in competition, or even battle, with English – are propagated among students and are disseminated throughout their social networks.

Speaker 3F's invocation of language-as-living-entity discourse is particularly notable because it came at the end of the second interview, or after we had conversed about these issues for nearly two and a half hours. When asked what else she would like to say and have on the record, Speaker 3F responded by repeating a discourse gleaned from an academic book assigned in an academic course. Furthermore, Speaker 3F engages with the idea of language as a living entity in order to analyze its relevance for language revitalization, not merely employ it as discourse that represents her conscious ideological presentation.

The indigenous mentality about language is that it is a living entity. It's not, um, I guess you really wouldn't call it a language. You just address it as a living being. You know, um, and... and so when I hear stuff about like language revitalization and language preservation, it really gets me thinking like well, um, what are you trying to revitalize and are you trying to revitalize the sound? The meaning? You know, how it's spoken? You know, how it's used? And when they talk about preservation, I think about, it's just the same kind of questions, what are you trying to preserve? Why are you trying to preserve it? For who are you trying to preserve your language for? And what parts of your language are you trying to preserve? Those are some things that I think about when I hear about these, um, um, Indian nations, thinking of these different programs.

(3f_interview2.1_20jun13_7g)

Here, Speaker 3F attempts to extend the vivification of language to the details of language revitalization that the model entails. In her final words as the subject of an interview, she does not merely repeat a discourse of language-as-living-entity that may resonate with her knowledge of Navajo culture; she interrogates the discourse and the motives that drive its use. Instead, the questions Speaker 3F poses to the framers of the discourse encompass the problem of language revitalization or preservation projects: For whom is this project intended? What will it achieve? Who benefits? What exactly is being preserved?

Speaker 3F's final statement that embraces a certain ideology while simultaneously interrogating it demonstrates the complexity of multiple ideologies at work at the same time within an individual as well as within an academic community. For

Navajo individuals attempting to reconcile Navajo identity amid numerous contradictory ideologies, according to Speaker 3F, it is perhaps more productive to examine who is affected by the desire to revitalize language learning. For the purposes of this study, it is also prudent to consider who is ultimately harmed by the threat of language loss, notwithstanding whether or how a language might “die.” Regardless of one’s opinion about the possibility of language loss, a perceived loss of language would cause hurt for the individuals affected by the loss of a heritage language.

The unseverable ideological connection between language and identity is an essentializing discourse on the reservation, is transportable off the reservation, and is promoted in public discourse and debate as a matter of fact. Possibly due to the transportable nature of ideologies and identities, as well as the fact that ideologies and identities can be held simultaneously and foregrounded at different times during discourse, the internet in general is a rich source of discourse strands revealing the ideologies at work for Navajos located anywhere in the world whose discourse is focused on a common topic. *Navajo Times*’s social media coverage of the Navajo Nation presidential debates in July and August 2014 became a site of negotiation of Navajo identity when the newspaper provided real-time updates on the questions and answers during the debate. Many of the followers of *Navajo Times* on Facebook responded to the updates, posting publicly about the candidates and the coverage itself. These public comments echo the discourses Antonio described above, demonstrating numerous essentializing discourses, the fear of language loss, and the struggle with criticism over language use and its connection with identity. Several discourse strands identified in this data also juxtapose the fear of language loss with the hyperbolic valorization of the

Navajo language's instrumental role in winning World War II. One example pairs valorization of the Navajo language (because of the code talkers) with the impossibility of the language's extinction:

If ur born dine ur language well always be there..Like my grandparents told me..the higher of education u may have and all the degrees u may earn u will always have the language..Navajo is an awesome language and also won our freedom.. (kw_fbnatimes_22sep14)

House's (2002) observation that a common belief decries the possibility of language loss is complicated through the data shown here, as hyperbolic valorization privileges Navajo over English and inverts the dichotomy by representing the Navajo language as unstoppable and valiant in combat.

Language and Prestige: The Linguistic Choices of Navajo Youth

As the participants in this study noted from their experiences growing up on the reservation or in border towns, children quickly and easily see which language holds social cachet. Speaker 2M, whose interview data centered on perceived power relationships between the Navajo and English languages as well as the dialects of Navajo, stated,

I think the youth are often put in the position to choose, and I think, uh, the child knows which language is prestigious and powerful and they often go with the power and prestige over something that's not... doesn't have that power and prestige. (2m_interview1.1_18apr12_6)

Particularly after children reach school age and are exposed to the discourses around language as well as the language(s) of instruction and explanation, they are primed to

align their attitudes with a group holding perceived prestige or the path of less negative social interactions and stereotyping.

Speaker 1F, who spent part of her childhood in a community in which Navajo was dominant, found that not speaking Navajo resulted in her being assigned outsider status.

And you know I think it would be easy for... I mean, I think some Navajos can be so, um verbal, um, in what their beliefs are of like who is Navajo and who isn't Navajo and of course they're all different. And, um, I think I, I remember experiencing that as a kid, just the fact that I didn't speak Navajo, like they you know, I was referenced as "the white kid." Because, obviously I'm not white but because you know we're on this reservation where we don't have any white kids and I don't speak Navajo but I speak English. You know, that was their perception of me as a white kid. (Laughs.) And I know I'm not alone and I know that, um, [a relative] has talked about that a little bit with his experiences too in having to choose, okay do I want to identify myself as being Navajo or you know as a white kid and which language shall I choose? Which one's more appropriate where you know I won't get, um, yelled at or I won't have any negative consequences to, um, to endure after my choice or you know making the wrong choice. (1f_interview1.1_13apr12_15)

The choice of which language to speak is hardly clear-cut, since language learning involves significant interactions using the language in everyday life. However, it is often depicted as a choice driven only by the individual's desires or preferences, not by the restrictions of the linguistic context such as the languages spoken in the family or at school. For example, a young Navajo woman quoted in Lee (2014) stated the following

in a discussion about her heritage language: “If I could speak Navajo, I’d definitely speak it 24/7” (p. 161). Despite the young woman’s intentions, though, the sentiment is almost certainly incorrect; if she were living in a context in which Navajo was regularly spoken and involved her in interactions, she probably would already speak it “24/7.” The hopes of such monolingual English speakers to speak their heritage language demonstrate the impossibility of sudden bilingualism, for in order to achieve these dreams, they would have to become different people. Some people do, in fact, seek to achieve bilingualism through grassroots revitalization efforts, though admittedly with mixed results. Speaker 1M, a participant in this study, worked with his American Indian student organization to host six months of weekly Navajo-only language socials – an off-reservation “immersion program,” as Speaker 1M describes it.

In another example of conscious attempts to privilege Navajo language despite the sociolinguistic context that often privileges English, Jolyana Begay, a former Miss Navajo winner, proudly shared that her younger sister who attends the Fort Defiance Navajo immersion school on the reservation participated in a social group of teenaged girls in which participants intentionally use the Navajo language among themselves in order to foreground their Navajo identity outside of class. Because of this created community, Begay hopes that her sister will continue to hold a positive attitude toward the Navajo language and the cultural importance Begay attaches to the language.

She’ll be able to, hopefully, hang onto it and when she realizes its importance kind of the way I did, she’s not, like, uh, struggling. Do you know what I mean? Because, remember, there was a point in my life when I thought, “Oh, I don’t

need it and I didn't want to speak it." And then I didn't speak it and I almost lost it. (jb_interview1.1_12jul12_2)

As Begay admitted, the trend for many Navajos like her is to find English more appealing despite taking classes in Navajo. It appears clear from the rates of language shift to English and the experiences of the participants in this study that this is not uncommon; most students, even those enrolled in a Navajo language school such as the Fort Defiance immersion school, find social cachet in speaking English in social contexts.

One missing link in attracting youth to a heritage language and reassigning prestige is connecting the language to prestigious activities and identities. In my personal conversations with sociolinguist Penelope Eckert at the 2011 Linguistic Institute, we discussed what we called the "fun factor" of language revitalization – the idea that the language has to be naturalized as the language of the popular activities in order for students to choose the schools (and teams or groups) that promote language revitalization. This model is everything but simple, though, as it would require a critical mass of young students and their families and communities to value both the activities and the target language in which the activities would be conducted. Although Eckert's example was of a football team, the sport of basketball is much more popular on the Navajo Nation, so I will adapt our model accordingly: an effective Navajo immersion school would require a successful basketball team, a community that privileges the sport of basketball, and the involvement of fluent Navajo speakers in the administration of the team and the promotion of the sporting events to those who might attend practices and games. In this extracurricular model of local language revitalization, the "fun factor" that is missing from many educational programs may piggyback from "fun" sports and

activities. Ensuring that the language revitalization is “fun” for the community as well would be essential to the success of the program.

Unfortunately, the reality of school life typically lacks this “fun factor.” As several of the participants in this study have noted, Navajo lacks many vocabulary words for modern technology as well as subjects in school (e.g., calculus), so the typical practice is to borrow the words from English. Few widespread jargons exist in Navajo for the language of a common sport or activity that would attract interest, with the possible exception of the popular events in rodeo or basketball in some communities.

Navajo Language in Discursive Competition with English

The most common ideological representation of language loss identified in this study was the depiction of language shift as a zero sum game: Navajo is lost to English and, conversely, standard or non-“broken” English is lost to those who speak Navajo. In this investigation of language ideologies surrounding Navajo, English, and Navajo English, linguistic insecurity was the norm and few self-representations from the participants in this study included narratives describing success in being bilingual or bidialectal. Although those who grew up speaking Navajo, such as former Miss Navajo Speaker 2F, are proud to have retained their language, they worry about correctness in attempting to speak standard English. Furthermore, each language and variety points toward identity in different ways for different individuals. In every interview conducted for this study, however, Navajo and English are clearly being placed in competition with one another at various points throughout many Navajo people’s lives.

The very environment of a home off-reservation can invoke discourses placing English and Navajo in competition with one another simply due to the ubiquity of

English in commonly accessible technologies and child-focused products. As Speaker 2F described, making generalizations as well as discussing her young child's environment, children's lives are not conducted in Navajo.

As well as toys, you know we have toys that you push the button and the English language A, B, C or um, it's talking to you in English. So that's why our kids are not learning because, we're trying our best to teach our children the language but they're constantly being bombarded by other, um, other pop culture and, um, you know non-Navajo concepts. (2f_interview1.2_14aug12_6b)

Social gatherings, as well as typical day-to-day interactions in family life, also reduce the likelihood of inculcating Navajo fluency in a child, despite the fluency and desire of one parent. When I mentioned to Speaker 2F that some families attempting to raise bilingual children strictly relegate one language to interaction with one parent and another language to the other parent, e.g., Hinton's (2013) "One parent, one language" strategy of restricting interaction with one parent to a heritage language, Speaker 2F bemoaned that this could eliminate the opportunity for parents to talk to one another! Presumably, this strategy would also foreclose communication in other social and family situations as well.

Faced with the difficulties of conducting social life and raising children, many parents have chosen to promote English rather than attempt to raise bilingual or monolingual Navajo children. In particular, the participants in this study, as well as the Navajo individuals quoted in other studies on language shift and the public online commenters on political and linguistic issues, emphasize the need for English for economic success of both individuals and the entire Navajo Nation.

English Language Provides Opportunity

The potential problem of parents being fluent in Navajo but choosing not to use Navajo as the language of the home has been described as “language suicide” (Denison, 1977). Beck and Lam (2009) describe “linguistic suicide” as the situation “in which speakers of a minority language perceive, rightly or wrongly, that the shift to the dominant language is in the short-term best interests of the next generation” (p. 16). Despite this controversial term that implies individual and community intent to do away with the heritage language, the concept may be applicable to the case of Navajo language shift due to the fact that so many Navajos with bilingual parents decry their lost opportunity to have become bilingual themselves. Several participants in this study, as well as their parents, intentionally chose English in an effort to provide benefits to their children. Speaker 1M explains his interpretation of his family’s linguistic history as his grandmother’s choice to withhold Navajo:

My grandmother was in the boarding school, um, and she didn’t teach [Navajo to me]. She taught my mom, and my mom... but my mom didn’t teach me simply because of this negative idea that she’s, um, to be Navajo or to teach Navajo is going to hold me back. (1m_interview1.1_25jun13_6a)

The reasons for using English as the functional language of the family, social world, and school life is summed up simply by Jessica Antonio: “You can get by on English, you can get by in the city” (ja_interview1.1_18jun13_8b). This pervasive sentiment is discussed further in public commentary on the *Navajo Times* Facebook page when the newspaper asked commenters to comment on the 2014 presidential candidates’ use of English, Navajo, or a mixture of the two. One commenter writes,

That's what working in the city and going home to the rez gets you... going to Washington and back to Window Rock can also do as well as learning English and being Navajo. Mixing it up is common to me. (ao_fbnavtimes_21jul14)

Another commenter also invokes the need for a politician to work with the U.S. government, asking,

What language is spoken to communicate in White House Government Offices???

We receive federal funding in certain capacities so a more fluent & articulate candidate is ideal. We should be asking the same on those candidates who speak broken English when communicating with nonNatives. (vs_fbnavtimes_21jul14)

In terms of actively targeting youth, one commenter takes the side of one language:

English. Especially over the radio. All economically competitive peoples have learned to communicate in the trade language. The reason the younger generation are not interested in Navajo politics is because they can't understand.

(jj_fbnavtimes_21jul14)

Discourses promoting English for opportunity can also intersect with discourses relating to the mechanism by which language is taught and who is responsible. Not unexpectedly, in informal writing commenting in social media, these discourses can become tangled and reveal multiple ideologies at work.

We need to be mindful of the younger generation (gen x, y, z) if we want them to be involved with the NN. We have a huge population baby boomers who are able to comprehend both languages. A small percentage of navajo speaking only population. Language is learned within the first 3 years of life, parents are responsible for teaching their offsprings. (nk_navtimes_21jul14)

Here, the commenter prioritizes both languages but only gives an explanation for why English is necessary for younger generations of potential voters. The writer clearly delineates between the perceived generations, marking the younger ones as English-speaking, the middle-aged as bilingual, and the elders monolingual Navajo. Tacking on a statement implicitly advocating that parents rectify this easy categorization and attempt to teach their children Navajo is contradictory to the system already delineated; parents of the younger generation have not taught their children Navajo (and their children are no longer within 3 years of age), and those becoming parents or soon to be of reproductive age have been raised largely monolingual English speakers. The admonition to parents to teach their children Navajo is common in discourse identifying parental involvement as the vehicle for language learning, but the decree is more an admission that this model is not being followed and parents are gradually losing the chance to produce fluent speakers in young children. In part, this is because of the attitudes toward English as a language capable of reaching the young.

In a *Navajo Times* post updating readers on the presidential forum on August 18, 2014, a popular post informed followers that one presidential candidate had responded entirely in Navajo. A commenter takes issue with this choice, invoking both the age-delineation of language use and even diversity rhetoric against monolingual Navajo orientations.

And literally alienates the younger generation. Given some know the language, even more do not. This is 2014, respond in both languages. Diversity is a good virtue. (ad_fbnatimes_18aug14)

The association of English to the younger voters also seems to resound iconically with younger candidates as well as voters. Our pronouncements about political candidates who should not be allowed to run for Navajo Nation president promote Navajo fluency as a qualification of authenticity and dedication to the community, but strictly limit the kinds of participation possible for candidates who are younger and are less fluent in the Navajo language. In fact, a grievance filed in September 2014 against one of the two winners of the presidential primary, Chris Deschene, disqualified Deschene from the election due to his lack of fluency in Navajo. Of course, Deschene's relative youth, success as a lawyer, and mastery of English are part of his appeal for some voters, particularly when juxtaposed with the alleged corruption of a much older candidate who has already served as Navajo Nation president. The case remains highly debated in some forums and the legal entanglements delayed the final election until April 21, 2015. The candidate who came in a distant third place in the primary, Russell Begaye, won the election by a landslide, perhaps in because many of Deschene's previous supporters united against the frontrunner and Deschene's opponent, Joe Shirley, Jr.

The Deschene case prompted much discussion for Navajos reacting to the discursive competition between Navajo and English fluencies. Another commenter in this thread privileges English as a political tool at the same time that its functionality also demonizes English and valorizes Navajo.

Having the ability to communicate in the Dine' & English language are a must for N.N. Prez. The Navajo Rez. is a sacred place for the peaceful talks; the white tongue is best used for the evil corporate world. (gjsc_fbnavtimes_18aug14)

As with American politics, politicians are generally mistrusted, and obviously for some the English language is the way necessarily corrupt politicians “get along in the city” working with the white American government – in collusion with the colonizers.

A concept that emerges frequently from discussions of which language is appropriate in which context is that Navajo is useful even for those who may not speak it. Although the language competencies of the following commenter is uncertain, the discourse has been used even for those whose best Navajo performance is limited to a self-introduction or a few words of greeting. The commenter advises,

Have a translator. I have two languages. Use them in facebook. One is my own language, one is the one I communicate with. (ieb_fbnvtimes_18aug14)

Clearly, the language of communication is English, but Navajo is a much more personal possession, or birthright, even for Navajos who have never learned the language.

The language of communication is also represented as the language of opportunity, as many participants commented. Speaker 1F explained that her grandmother’s choice not to teach her daughter the Navajo language was in order to divorce her daughter’s experience from Speaker 1F’s grandmother’s own negative experiences of knowing Navajo while attending boarding school and having the stigma of Navajo and the traumatic imposition of English. Speaker 1F continued to explain the result of her mother’s choice (and inability) to teach Speaker 1F and her siblings Navajo: conflicting feelings of regretting the opportunity for linguistic and cultural connection while also internalizing the ideology that English is in fact the best choice for economic and educational success.

I think, um, over time I, I had my conflicts and my struggles of accepting it and I, you know, kind of wonder how it really felt for my mother and her siblings but you know, um, and I feel like my mom probably had the same, was coming from the same idea because I mean she pretty much did that to me too but more so because she didn't really know the language. Um, but I think there's just the combination of issues there. Personally, I think that if I were to, if it were to be the other way where she enforced Navajo, it's really hard to say where I would be now. Um, I think that, uh, knowing the English language did, um, have its advantages, um, as far as being where we are now as a family, um, in our careers and, um, where we are academically. (1f_interview1.1_13apr12_10a)

This extends beyond language to the iconically off-reservation spaces linked to the English languages. When I asked Speaker 1F why she thinks the attitude exists that it is better for kids to be off the reservation, she responded by explaining the attitudes “trickling down” through the women in her family.

My best thought would be that where my grandmother is coming from. Um, just knowing where we are as a society in general and you know you want your child to be successful in that society, contemporary society and you know that's probably where it's coming from and that's where my grandmother is coming from a long time ago with her kids, which unfortunately trickled down to me, not knowing my, not knowing a lot about my own culture and my own language but, um, but yes, I would. (1f_interview1.1_13apr12_5)

It is important to note here that Speaker 1F said she hoped to move back to the reservation after finishing her studies. However, as of the time of the interview, she

studied, worked, and lived off-reservation, and was not anywhere near fluent in Navajo. These attitudes she discussed might have, perhaps, trickled down to her as well.

Navajo Identity: Denigrated and Demonized

“I know this generation has also spawned a lot of Navajo Navajo haters.”

(aw_fbnatimes_18aug14)

Although growing up on the Navajo Nation lends authenticity to Navajo individuals alongside other iconic alignments and behaviors such as speaking the Navajo language, great stigma is also attached to being “too rez” or “too rural”; for males, this designation earns the label of “Jáan” (spelling provided by Diné College Navajo language teacher Martha Jackson in 2009). In the interviews conducted for this study, I should not have been surprised that all three male participants brought up the topic of Jáans, or having been called a Jáan for linguistic reasons – speaking Navajo or having a discernable Navajo accent in English speech – as well as for other reasons, particularly poverty, rurality, or experiencing difficult social conditions. Speaker 2M shared that the prejudice against perceived Jáans extends into adulthood and is significantly enregistered (Agha, 2003), or consciously aware and associated with social identity, for a bilingual speaker.

And I think a lot of that has to do with colonization too, and I think uh, the Navajo Indians they adopted a lot of alcoholic behavior. I think they associate that dialect with that. You know, if you’re, if you speak that dialect, you’re a drunk, you’re uneducated, you’re a Jáan, you’re, you’re, to some degree not quite full human, and that’s, that’s, that’s unfortunate it’s like that. In, in the past, I never used to be conscious of it, I would just say ‘Yá’át’ééh’ if I knew they were a Navajo. Now,

I'm like change my behavior because, huh, I, you know, if I don't know that person I just say 'hello' or something like that, greeting's going to happen in English. To guys, a little bit different, I'm more open to saying hello, but that, my behavior changed because the way they were responding, so it's, it's, it's unfortunate. But, I prefer to really greet in my own language, but if you're gonna be classified as, as a somebody who's a drunk, uneducated, a Jáan – a Jáan really means drunk uneducated in Navajo, with barbaric behaviors, habits and behaviors – it, it, it just it seems like they, they just come out and judge you too quickly.

(2m_interview1.1_18apr12_12d)

Speaker 2M believed that if he foregrounds his Navajo fluency as part of his presentation of face, his use of Navajo – even a simple greeting – is sufficiently enregistered for all Navajos that he indexes the negative stereotype of some Navajo males. For Speaker 2M, the Jáan discourse invokes other negative stereotypes of Navajo males and is indexed by any sign of Navajo speech.

This discourse, as well as the negative stereotypes about Navajo males and social problems on the reservation, is shared by other participants who also used avoidance strategies in order to distance themselves from the negative stereotypes. Speaker 1M's experiences growing up overwhelmed him with exemplars of the negative Navajo stereotype.

But, on my side, um, um, I saw Navajo, being Navajo, speaking Navajo, as a negative. Um, in school and in just general public you've, for myself, was to say that. Uh, you know, I was taught that being Indian was something wrong, you know. Like they were in the way of civilization. They were in the way of all the

stuff, a way, uh... They were just not... they were the savages.

(1m_interview1.1_25jun13_6c)

Speaker 1M's perception of the discourses from school and external public about the need for American Indians to be civilized led him to struggle with sharing an identity with what he thinks the public believes to be "savages." He includes his family home life as providing confirmation of this designation:

So, in that context, I also learned that Indians were bad. They were savages, blah-blah-blah. As a kid, I learned that. But then at home, I would see my dad, my mom both speaking Navajo, being Navajo, but also alcoholics and violent towards one another that I made the connection between what I was taught at home, at school, at home, and saying I don't wanna do that. I do not want to speak Navajo. I do not want to be Navajo because this is what it is. So, for me, language or Navajo, 'I do not desire being Navajo' was kind of tied to this idea.

(1m_interview1.1_25jun13_6e)

Isreal Shortman also dealt with these issues in his home life and believes a successful strategy for promoting Navajo language learning would be to create a more positive social context on the reservation.

There needs to be a lot of this positive reinforcement and we're so down about it as far as going to the reservation, when somebody gets... when something happens or something that they don't agree with, they turn to alcohol. They turn to violence. There's a lot of this going on. It's still going on to this day. And it's been going on for so many years, so many years and that cycle has not been broken. That cycle needs to break. I mean, here you feel like... from my

perspective, I think *we're still a third world* because of that. I mean, as far as the cultures and customs, I mean, that's... I love them but at the same time, it's just all alcohol and violence. That's the one thing that as a child, that um... when I really think about it, it really discourages me to come from that kind of background. (is_interview1.1_13apr12_24, emphasis added)

Shortman's representation of Navajos as being backward is both gendered and defensive; to avoid being labeled a Jáan, it seems, he lives off-reservation and also works to create technology, like the Navajo Toddler App, that allows on- and off-reservation children and adults to learn some Navajo language wherever they reside or travel. Shortman's company also develops apps teaching the heritage languages of other American Indian tribes, including the Lakota language.

Unlike the term 'Jáan' for males, no direct equivalent exists for females. The derogatory word for American Indian women, 'squaw' can be heard both on- and off-reservation, albeit in different ways. Along with its sexual connotations, it may index a rural Navajo, though, perhaps through its association with the traditional "Nidáá" (Enemy Way ceremony) often called a 'Squaw Dance.' Also, House (2002, p. 25; 1997, p. 87) describes a male cross-dressing basketball game known as "Squaw basketball." I have no evidence from this study showing that 'squaw' is an in-group label used by Navajos toward Navajo women in the same manner as 'Jáan,' however.

In addition to Navajo language indexing a Jáan-like or backward Navajo identity for males, other cues in addition to language use or fluency index Navajo identity in a negative way for women. In her TEDx talk in 2010, Begay noted that even while attending the Fort Defiance Immersion Program, where the Navajo language was

promoted academically, embracing Navajo language, dress, and hairstyle indexed poverty.

My parents and my grandparents were very active in our traditional way of life. We attended many ceremonies since I was very small, and I was surrounded by language. I knew what people were saying to me. I could understand prayers. I could understand the songs that they would sing. I also had the opportunity to attend Fort Defiance Immersion Program. This immersion program allowed me to read, write and speak my own native Diné language. At the time that I was young, however, on our reservation, for a crazy reason, if you speak Navajo, if you wear your traditional Navajo attire, if you put your hair in the Navajo hair bun just like mine is, people considered you to be poor. You were considered rural, and children my age at my school made fun of me and called me names because I was able to speak, read and write. (jb_tedxphoenix_6nov10_1)

Interestingly, Begay's statement in this TEDx talk in 2010 came nine years after the beginning of her reign as Miss Navajo, in which she traveled both on and off the reservation promoting linguistic and cultural pride among Navajo youth. Although during her reign it would probably have been disrespectful and potentially offensive to describe the complexity of her experience at the Fort Defiance Immersion school due to competing language ideologies about prestige and social identity, she was able to embrace the contradictions in a 2010 public TEDx talk before a largely non-Native audience.

The problem of educational institutions not necessarily producing fluent speakers is partly explained by the lack of social value and prestige placed on the heritage

language being taught in a school, as discussed earlier in my conversation with Eckert. House's (2002) analysis of Navajo educational institutions is deeply critical of the discourses of functionality and stable diglossia circulated about Navajo language programs in schools, in which Navajos may ignore the lack of positive results such as a lack of increase in the percentage of fluent speakers of Navajo. This erasure, according to House, reinstills colonial values and other features of Anglo institutions.

One of the weaknesses inherent in many of the past and present language programs on the Navajo Reservation that teach either Navajo or English or both, and also with programs that purport to work toward the maintenance of the Navajo language, is that they are predicated on an ideology that holds one language (either Navajo or English) and one culture to be obviously superior to the other in almost every possible way. (House 2002, p. 85)

Some participants describe being able to avoid negative stereotypes about Navajo culture by not speaking English. As one of the strategies I used to invite discussion of stereotypes in participants' childhood experiences, I showed several participants an excerpt from Begay's 2010 TEDx talk that described her struggles with being stereotyped; my intent was to elicit narrative and metalinguistic stances from participants to see how participants aligned or disaligned themselves with her stance and whether they compared or contrasted their experiences. Speaker 1F's response to Begay's talk invited her to hypothesize about how Speaker 1F's English use, despite it resulting in her being called the "white kid," might be perceived as advantageous.

So, I think, I think he [a relative] felt more of that conflict because he was at the time, more, um, he could speak both languages, you know, he could choose.

Whereas for me, I couldn't, you know, like it was just my one path of speaking English and I didn't have a choice. I didn't have that kind of conflict. It was more like, "Okay. I know. You know, how I'm perceived." But, I mean, it wasn't, it didn't impact me, um, too negatively because, um, I remember hearing, um, seeing Jolyana speak on TEDx about, um, her perception of or how her classmates perceived her as a student who spoke Navajo and who did come to class with a Navajo bun or maybe wearing you know the traditional attire. And she said that her classmates thought of her as being, um, living in poverty and you know more of a second-class person. Um, so, in some ways, I think I can kind of see that that rang true, you know, when I was a kid too and the fact that I didn't speak Navajo wasn't totally bad in that respect because, you know, and I mean, and I know it's conflicting of each other but you know it's just it's weird how it happened that way. (1f_interview1.1_13apr12_16a)

The struggle against being assigned a stereotypical and, at times, gendered Navajo identity extends past childhood, as shown in my interviews with eight participants who could all be labeled "urban Indians," or even individuals who have in some way participated in diaspora. This label is used variably as positive or negative, though is often avoided as a term these individuals use for themselves. In our conversation about the singularity of racialized American Indian identity in some contexts, I asked Speaker 3F "What do you think is the perception of the people around you about the way you speak? Or how Navajo you are?" Speaker 3F responded,

I don't really identify as being an urban Indian because, um, a lot of my values are still like, I guess, home... homebound and, um, I think just because of the location

that I'm in, um, they... I think that they do think I'm, uh, urban. But, um, one time I asked my sister. I forget how it happened, but I was called an urban Indian. I forget who called me. I can't really remember who called me, um, urban Indian, and it somewhat hurts. Like when you... I guess when you're called an urban Indian, especially since I'm originally not from here.

(3f_interview2.1_20jun13_1a)

Perhaps an opposite to the insult associated with being called a Jáan, the use of the term “urban Indian” to describe Speaker 3F was a harmful threat to Speaker 3F's self-construction of herself as a Navajo, and may have been exacerbated by any existing relationship issues with the unnamed family member who called her this name. As Speaker 2F described above, going away to college can be a time of identity assignment and negotiation as family members, community members, and others use the designation of ‘college student’ or resident of a large city to make judgments and assumptions about the absent member. Speaker 3F continues to explain,

For... to me it hurts. Like, um, and I really don't identify as being urban Indian. I just, um... so I talked to my sister about it and then she just said that, um, she doesn't really think that I'm an urban Indian just because I don't really value, um, you know, I'm not at the mall all the time or I'm not, um... I don't really do... I don't really value materialistic things and, um, and I don't really... I guess I don't really do, like, I don't go to the movies all the time and so I don't, yeah. Like I don't go do a lot of shopping or anything like that so she... and then I, I still feel really connected to where I, you know, where I'm from on the reservation. And a lot of my values, they're... and beliefs, they're like, you know, they're, they're

connected to, um, where I'm from and so it's like I guess being... I guess perceived as urban Indian, to me somewhat of an insult.

(3f_interview2.1_20jun13_1b)

Clearly, one ideology – which Speaker 3F embraces – of American Indians living off-reservation in a city such as Los Angeles, Phoenix, or Albuquerque is of being materialistic, spending time shopping or going to movies, and holding values divorced from the reservation (and implicitly, values of the “white” culture). Speaker 3F went on to imply who she means specifically who would think of her as an “urban Indian” holding these values, and reveals that her attire and language usage (whether from learning academic jargon in her graduate program or adopting more English): family back home on the reservation.

It's an insult and it's kind of offensive and, um... but I think that's what they think of me just because I, uh, sound different or I look different. Um, but I... and it's only like a, you know, like a once... I try not... I try not to take it so badly nowadays just because, um... especially at work. You know I only meet those people every so often and, um, so I just kind of let it, let it be. Like I don't really let it bother me. Um, and, um, but I think that's what they think. Or, um... I forget. I think one of my own family members, um, I guess they just feel like I've... because I don't, you know, really go home a lot is that, um, they feel like I'm somewhat disconnected to... I guess my, um, cultural identity as being Navajo. (3f_interview2.1_20jun13_1c)

Despite being used popularly in some literature and in news stories, the term ‘urban Indian’ is used as a weapon toward individuals who leave the reservation, much as ‘Jáan’

is used for those whose behaviors, language, or residence index a less prestigious Navajo identity.

It is notable that Speaker 3F changed the conversation from the rare event of being identified as Navajo by an American Indian family visiting her place of employment to discussing how her family on the reservation perceives her is notable. Rather than focusing on how she imagined people in her city perceived her, as I asked, she responded with a label that she had heard from home, which perhaps was on her mind frequently in her restaurant work. Speaker 3F is also a mother of a small child, and some of our conversation before, during, and after the interview centered on parenting, language teaching, and maintaining certain values and connections even while being away from family while living in a city. This priority is shared by many Navajos and is expressed beautifully in Tohe's (2005) poem "Over Here": "I prefer the rim of the canyon, where I am free to roam and not let the sparkling lights of the city catch me the way they do Coyote" (p. 41).

As Speaker 3F continued in her relatively lengthy response, she tried to reconcile with this term of 'urban Indian' due to what constitutes day-to-day Navajo behaviors, both agreeing with what her family at home thinks of urbanity but also fiercely protecting the iconic relationship frequently seen in discourses connecting Navajo identity and the land, or the reservation.

And, um, I can see why they say that. You know, it's because I don't really participate in a lot of ceremonies as I used to when... you know, just because I'm out here. And, uh, I don't do a lot of... I... you know the, um, like the daily Navajo life ways. Like I don't get up at five in the morning to go run. So I can... I can see

where they're coming from with that, like my cultural identity. I would say that, yes, you know, it's a little bit, um, I could... I could be more, you know, better at those things, but as far as, um, identifying as Navajo I wouldn't say that I'm urban. I would say that I'm still very much rooted, you know, back at my home.

(3f_interview2.1_20jun13_1d)

Although Jolyana Begay avoids the term 'urban Indian' in her various contexts – while teaching Navajo language at ASU and at the Phoenix Indian Center, in her interview for this study, and in the TEDx talks – she addressed the issue in our interview when explaining her journey toward running for Miss Navajo. It is relevant to note that this story has undoubtedly been told and retold many times before this moment, approximately 11 years after she would have begun her campaign for Miss Navajo.

And then, um, (clears throat) so, since I was a child, I... I think I... I wanted to, to one day become Miss Navajo, and then I moved away from the reservation right out of high school and kind of forgot about my little dream. Um, moved here to Phoenix right out of high school, like, literally, the day after graduation I moved, and enrolled at Phoenix College and w-was going to school. Um, and it was there that I, I think I had the, the self-realization about who I was as a Navajo person in an urban setting. Missed my grandma. Missed my mom. Tortillas. All that, the rez life, I guess. I was really, I was missing so much. (jb_interview1.1_12jul12_3b)

Caught between being stereotyped as poor as a child due to her traditional upbringing and feeling disconnected from her culture in an urban environment at college, Begay's narratives foreground many of the contradictions inherent in being and becoming a cultural icon and leader.

Begay also discussed her strategies when traveling as Miss Navajo with the platform of reaching youth, reaching out to children to help them change or better negotiate the stereotypes surrounding Navajo language use. When describing her favorite memories and her recollections, she said,

I like the smaller ones. The, like, classroom ones where it's a little bit more personal as opposed to a big, you know, whole group, but there were students that really... some spoke after, like, "I really liked your message and, um, you know, sometimes I'm ashamed to speak Navajo, too, and I don't want to be like that." Or, "I want to be Miss Navajo one day." It's really nice when you get those and I felt like, "Oh, OK, mission accomplished," kind of. I could... I was... I could relate to a lot of them and... they could relate to me and just listen to my story.

(jb_interview1.1_12jul12_8)

Finalizing her narrative of being Miss Navajo and attempting her mission of ideological shift, Begay exhibits pride in getting students to adopt a discourse of pride for being Navajo rather than ashamed.

And then, reaching out to the students and getting their response... responses about... I kind of went through the same thing that you're going through, or sometimes my friends make fun of me, and this type of thing, but I've got... I got quite a few of them. There were even letters that some students had wrote to me, um, so I think in that way, that was an accomplishment for me because that was my platform, was to really try and reach our youth and help them feel proud of who they were and to let them know that they're not the only ones feeling that way, because there was a point where I thought that I was the only one that felt

that way. Like, should I be proud or not really, because, oh, I'm tired of, you know, other students making fun of me, or I just want to be in the norm, and the norm is to not know. Um, but that shouldn't be the norm, I think was what I was trying to share. And, so, reaching out to them and really, um, having them respond to what I had to share, I think, was also an accomplishment.

(jb_interview1.1_12jul12_9)

The desire to change dominant ideologies by adjusting the discourses children use and attend to in regards to language use and identity is shared among all participants in this study, and certainly among many other Navajos and indigenous heritage language advocates throughout the world. A significant stumbling block in this mission, at least according to a common discourse invoked as a reason many Navajos avoid practicing the Navajo language sufficiently to become fluent, is the criticism that younger speakers perceive from older speakers.

Criticism from Elders

In the 2014 Navajo Nation presidential election, commenters on *Navajo Times's* online coverage of the election were frequently critical of politicians in general and especially the older or more established candidates, some of whom were accused of corruption. Addressing the controversy over allowing a practiced politician, Joe Shirley, Jr., to contend for a 3rd term as president, one commenter wrote,

Our generation is ready to share ideas, to get involved and break that mold of what a NN President should be.... of what the Navajo Nation itself is. We want to help build up our people & save our youth that are hurting and need guidance. We have ideas and are not afraid to work for them. Our parents told us "Go to college,

get an education, come back and help your people.” But we can’t. We come home with degrees in hand only to be discouraged by a system that is set its ways. To be bullied by Navajo staff because we don’t speak Navajo fluently. To have eyes rolled and attitude when we try to share a new way of doing things. If we really want things to change, we have to stop pushing the young and educated away. You don’t have to implement every idea we propose but I think it is time to start letting the younger generation have a say. Not to be disrespectful to our Elders, but simply to allow us to join the conversation. Because speaking from personal experience, we’re not taken seriously. And our degrees, right now, are not seen by Navajo people as an advantage.... they’re seen as a threat to their own jobs. We’re bullied, gossiped about and this is why we are all leaving to work off the reservation. You want to change the face of the Navajo Nation?? Then let us help. Quit shutting us out. (mc_fbnatimes_18aug14)

In many contexts, the complaint is frequent that young Navajos are both encouraged to gain skills they can bring back to the reservation but are at the same time criticized and prevented from full participation. The resentful commenter above seems to blame older individuals in many levels of the Navajo reservation, from parents to co-workers and, implicitly due to the context of the comment, politicians.

Researchers have found numerous examples connecting the critical discourses of elders in the community that stunt young speakers’ language learning (McCarty, Romero, & Little, 2006; Reynolds, 2009; House, 2002). House describes this perception of elders’ practice of criticism on the Navajo Nation:

My students have told me that there are many people (particularly the elderly) who do not want to talk to the youth, who criticize and condemn their less than fluent performances in the Navajo language and who push them away because they don't measure up to past standards of Navajo-ness. Perhaps these individuals do not see the urgency because the presence of language and culture is something they take for granted; it has always been there, and they were taught that it always would be. Perhaps it is as Fishman (1996) said: the elders take pride in belonging to an exclusive club – the last really fluent speakers of an old and less changed variety of their native language. Whatever the reason, the very individuals who are the best speakers of the language are, more often than one would think, the least willing to tolerate or cooperate with young Navajo students of the language. (pp. 54-55)

The perception that elders may be keeping their linguistic knowledge to be exclusively shared with those they deem worthy relates to Field's (2009) discussion of "elder speaker purism," or the ideology that elders' language is pure and is, therefore, functionally inaccessible to younger learners.

Irvine and Gal's notion of recursivity is seen in the clustering of oppositions across activities or social roles (albeit all of them Navajo) such as age, religion, lived experience, and social class. Thus, to the degree that an opposition is perceived between historically wealthy and well-connected Navajos and those who are disenfranchised in Navajo terms, this opposition is reinforced by oppositions in religion (Christian versus traditionalist) and attitudes toward the Navajo language. At the same time, this recursivity is cross-cut and further

complicated by ideologies that vary (and cluster) across age groups. For example, “elder speaker purism” (regardless of religious affiliation) is linked to powerful feelings concerning Navajo identity and group solidarity and is in direct opposition to a variety of language ideologies on the part of younger Navajos, be it linguistic insecurity, an emergent identity as speakers of “Navlish,” or rejection of Navajo language entirely on the part of very young children. (Field, 2009, p. 44)

Given the pervasiveness of younger generations’ defensiveness against elders’ criticism, it is notable that many contexts exist informally and even among strangers for asking other speakers for advice and help learning the language. The Facebook page called “Navajo Language (Diné Bizaad)” is advertised as a place for Navajos to discuss the Navajo language and learn from one another. The site administrator and other males, clearly middle-aged or older, are the most frequent participants, who answer queries about how to translate phrases, spell or pronounce words, address cultural issues such as stories appropriate to be told outside of winter, or to post mini-lessons or interesting phrases or quotations. Some of these frequent posters call themselves “elders” and defend the decision because they are being addressed for help and guidance as elders can and should be. The criticism from self-identified elders, though, can have the effect of dissuading participation among those less comfortable in their fluency in the Navajo language.

For example, on the “Navajo Language (Diné Bizaad)” page, a woman posted a picture of a Native American in traditional dress combined with the accompanying message, “Yá’át’ée’h abíní t’áá ánóltso, shík’a’í dóo shídíné’é!”

(ncb_fbnavajolang_4sep14_1). The message means roughly, “Good morning everyone, my relatives and my Diné people!” The first responder was a frequent commenter who is fluent in Navajo; the commenter was very friendly and kind, with “Aoo’ yá’át’ée’h” (“Yes hello”) as a greeting and “Have an awesome day!” as a closing; however; he also mentioned that “shík’a’í” as she had written it means maternal aunt, so she probably meant “shík’éeí,” the word for “my relations” (ij_fbnavajolang_4sep14). The original poster’s response was jovial, joking that surely there are some of her maternal aunt’s family “out there” reading her post, and the two had a friendly exchange about who was “correcting” her, with her commenter admitting, “I make mistakes too, so learn all you can while you can.” In the ensuing hour, other commenters weighed in on issues of regional variation, supporting one or another side in an increasingly irrelevant debate that also included posts entirely in the Navajo language (usually by the other frequent commenters identifying as elders). By the end, despite multiple people stating both “no offense” and “I am not offended,” the original poster weighed in one more time:

Maybe this is why our young people don’t use our language... the south side says they are right or the west side disagrees and so forth. I got this off a Navajo webpage... Hmm ??? I’m going to delete my post.

(ncb_fbnavajolang_4sep14_2)

Despite the moderator of the page quickly asking her not to delete the discussion, she did delete it, presumably because her happy “Good morning” post in Navajo had become a debate on “correctness” in which she felt uncomfortable as a non-fluent learner of Navajo. She also linked the current discussion with well-known debates between

speakers in various regions of the Navajo Nation who disagree about the correctness or validity of one another's regional varieties.

Some of the attitudes toward fluent speakers and their potentially exclusive and critical treatment of non-speakers emerge in relatively hostile terms, as with this statement answering *Navajo Times*'s request for comments about which language should be spoken by presidential candidates.

Until our language is learned by each of us WITHOUT any criticism from those who are already fluent, there shouldn't be a problem. (smj_fbnatimes_21sep14)

Other statements by Jolyana Begay, a former Miss Navajo, demonstrate the conflicting perspectives on criticism received from elders, particularly for a young public figure placed under scrutiny for presentation of the quintessential Navajo female identity – the embodiment of White Shell Woman, Miss Navajo. Begay discussed the difficulties of her time as Miss Navajo and, eleven years later, attempted to reconcile the frequent criticism with the reasons they may have had to criticize her self-presentation.

It was... it was tiresome and it was hard. You know, other... the Navajo people can... can, um, be real critical. And elders can... can seem like they're really harsh in their words. Um, they could take the way I spoke, the way I dressed, um, sometimes the length of time I spoke or maybe the type of song I sang. Um, the way I addressed the people. All types of, you know, comments that I received throughout the year made me, I guess, a stronger person in a way and it ma... it really made me, I guess, open my perspective, like, okay, this is maybe the way that their family, um, sees things and they're just trying to help, so they're sharing, you know. (jb_interview1.1_12jul12_7)

In my experiences observing Miss Navajo pageant events, as well as in my monitoring of social media (public Facebook pages for the current Miss Navajo, YouTube, *Navajo Times*) during of the competition, the crowd is extremely critical of the contestants for their Navajo language fluency, performance of traditional skills, and ability to pair the two seamlessly, particularly during the sheep butchering competition. During the 2014 pageant, *Navajo Times* published an article describing the difficulties of the sheep-butchering section of the pageant, which made a biased and erroneous claim when linking vocabulary skills to the knowledge of anatomical parts of the sheep and representing that failure in knowledge as lack of fluency in Navajo and lack of straightforwardness before a crowd (Bitsoi, 2014). The article claimed that Ronda Joe, a contestant who was asked to describe the “ákíz” (a sheep’s backbone and ribs), responded “in her limited Navajo” and “deflected the question by telling jokes in an effort to generate public applause. *Navajo Times* quoted her “laughing” response as “Dooshíbaahazindá,” which Jolyana Begay, ASU’s instructor in Navajo language, explains would be more correctly represented as “Doo shił bééhózin da,” meaning “I don’t know.” However, the misrepresentation of a Navajo phrase in print in *Navajo Times* and the explanation of Ronda Joe’s “telling jokes” as a strategy of a nonfluent speaker deflecting a question in “limited Navajo” is a telling example of the bias linking traditional knowledge to language ability. Furthermore, the reported laughing response of the crowd may have demonstrated disapproval rather than a response to an effective joke.

Jolyana Begay recalls a similar situation of being on display during her sheep-butchering contest:

And elders are there and they're all watching and critiquing and then judges are asking you questions when you're trying to get through this and you've got to go as fast as you can, and I think it's hard. It's really a hard, hard competition. I think that was the hardest. Like, I didn't like... I didn't like that day at all. I don't even like to butcher to this day because of that. (jb_interview1.1_12jul12_12)

In addition to being intimidating and exacting in their quest for correctness, as the discourse of critical elder purism goes, elders *and their language itself* is indexed as more forceful and demanding than English, as Isreal Shortman explains.

Growing up when I was younger, I remember just hearing the language, it was very... it's all like, uh, it was, uh, it was very forceful. And as far as like somebody telling what to do, it felt like a command as opposed to English. English was a little bit different where you could kind of tone it down a bit like, "Could you please wash the dishes for me," as opposed to saying it in Navajo. Navajo is like, "Do the dishes." And I do see that as far as um, as far as like certain elders. Not all elders are like that. But there are certain elders, as far as like my mother, she's very forceful when she would talk to you in Navajo. It seems more command-like and I do see, as far as linguistically you're talking about, as far as like they have the children do not really agree. Not agree but you're just still uncomfortable hearing that language.

(is_interview1.1_13apr12_11)

In some cases, as with the situation Shortman described of perceiving Navajo (or perhaps the users of Navajo) as being more forceful than English, children may feel that they do not fit in with such a hierarchical system, and sense that without equal linguistic

resources and power, they cannot win. Alternative discourses that intentionally provide youth with few resources to avoid learning the heritage language may reinforce this feeling of powerlessness among younger learners. An example of the totalizing discourse of “no excuses” is provided by one of the frequent posters on the “Navajo Language (Diné Bizaad)” Facebook page, invoking the perceived success of other tribes’ language revitalization efforts in order to behoove Navajos to learn their language in a deceptively complex charge. This commenter writes,

In Northeastern Oklahoma, the Cherokees have been doing a lot to revitalize their language. Despite the destructive legacy of boarding schools, Christian missionaries, compulsory English schooling, pop-culture, and the loss of beloved elders, the Cherokee language is still alive! Diné young people are truly fortunate they have so many opportunities to learn Diné Bizaad, so learn your language and be proud of it, you have no excuse! (lj_fbnavtimes_5sep14)

This attitude representing younger learners as having “no excuse” for not learning the Navajo language, despite all of the factors making language shift the overwhelming inevitability, may be harmful to achieving fluency in the long term but can be potentially helpful in the short term. One strategy that has developed out of the need to present oneself as Navajo is the genre of the self-introduction, in which a Navajo individual presents the four clans from which he or she is descended. At Diné College as well as at Arizona State University’s language class, some suggested that these clans should be presented even before the individual introduces him- or her-self by name, as “Shí éi [name here] yinishyé.” The genre of self-introduction might be conceived of as a kind of bookending, with Navajo language encircling the beginning and end of each public

presentation by a Navajo individual. The confidence and supposed fluency of these self-introductions aid in the acceptance of the message and the authenticity of the presenter. I have heard evaluations of Navajo individuals as “fluent” based solely on their self-introductions, despite evidence that the individuals strongly prefer English and struggle with Navajo in interactional dialogue. Speaker 2F also distinguished between the formal and everyday uses of Navajo, using “formal” to represent a presentational style that did not in fact equal fluency in the Navajo language.

So um, so I think that’s one way that we can continue on the language and it being part of our everyday life, not just you know a performance since, seeing a Navajo or, you know, standing up in front of a crowd and introducing yourself in Navajo. That’s a formal way of uh, a formal and very um, performed and rehearsed use of our language. It needs to be uh, used in everyday, everyday activities: going to the store, buying a pair of jeans, um, cooking. (2f_interview1.2_14aug12_6c)

In this discussion of the essentially interactional nature of language learning, Speaker 2F described as “formal” the non-interactive genre of the self-introduction of clan ancestry that many Navajos can produce as a matter of training in basic Navajo language courses. The ability to introduce oneself allows for bookending of a public statement with the performance of an essentialized Navajo identity, which can simultaneously provide evidence of a Navajo persona at the same time that it has the potential to invite criticism from elders.

Jessica Antonio’s example of being challenged for her lack of fluency during a chapter meeting in which she asked for support is an illustrative example of how the genre of self-introduction is used as a tool for in-group status but can be abruptly turned

against the speaker. Antonio introduced herself as is customary in the performance register of Navajo, naming her four clans and her grandparents, but was quickly criticized when she switched to English.

I was in there, I was just like, I said my introduction in Navajo, I said it in English, and I started speaking in English and everyone was like, why is she speaking in English? That's when they were laughing and writing notes, and I was like, well, how do you talk to people, you know, that just speak Navajo in this room, but when you're out there, in the community and you're talking about allotment, and land, and politics and laws, they're not all written in Navajo and they're not all talked in Navajo. You order KFC, they are not all in Navajo. I was like, so these people purposely knew English, but were making fun of me because I didn't know Navajo. So, I was like dang, this is really weird. I was like, you know English, you know what I'm saying in English, but you're judging me because I, because I'm not saying it in Navajo just because it's in a chapter meeting in the setting. So, I thought it was really inappropriate that these people could be so above age, but so disrespectful. (ja_interview1.1_18jun13_22b)

After that experience, Antonio vowed to improve her public speaking abilities and her fluency in Navajo for the purposes of representing herself and her own political views in a manner that would be deemed authentically Navajo, using the Navajo language in public and political spheres. As will be discussed next, however, the elders have explanations of their own for why Navajo use should be carefully guarded and policed as well as lauded and even mandated in public forums.

The Code Talkers Didn't Talk About It, So Don't Talk about It

Irvine and Gal's (2000) model of iconicity, recursivity, and erasure aid in understanding why the "elder speaker purism" and the phenomenon of ubiquitous criticism by elders of those seeking to practice their Navajo language skills are prohibitive forces for language learners. The experience of elders policing language practice can be explained through the system of valorization that Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of recursivity promotes at multiple levels of intra-individual variation and simultaneous adoption of multiple ideologies. Field's (2009) discussion of the need for hyperbolic valorization of the heritage language, turning on its head the advantages and disadvantages of the use of the Navajo language, inverts the dichotomy of English holding prestige over Navajo, which may be the goal of elders whose tactics employ frequent criticism of improper usage as well as the injunction of "don't talk about it," or use the language in unsanctioned contexts.

The crux of competing ideologies can be seen in the ubiquitous valorization of the Navajo code talkers in World War II occurring consistently even while the community is undergoing language shift away from that valorized heritage language. The mystery and difficulty of the Navajo language for outsiders – one factor in the language shift away from Navajo and the difficulty schools face in producing Navajo fluency in young speakers – finds iconicity in the development of an uncrackable code that is widely touted as having "won the war" and having "saved the nation." In addition to the iconicity of a complicated language becoming a secret code, the very secrecy of the code talkers' mission until its declassification in 1968 is used to further iconicize and valorize Navajo. Isreal Shortman's explanation of this process demonstrates a naturalized, circular logic of

begging the question that argues language is sacred because it was secret and therefore should not be discussed or used in the wrong contexts in front of outsiders.

Let's say Navajos do not speak their language outside of the reservation is because of the code talker. It's a sacred language. It's a secret language and I think that needs to change as well where that was a long time ago and today's today. This is where we're at today because of this. It's not, you know, it's not the number one thing but it's one of the contributing factors to where we're at today, as far as the language perspective. I mean, because I hear a lot of, um, before I even started this project, I mean, there was a lot of things where I tried to speak Navajo in public outside of the reservation and some of the elders would tell me not to speak it because they shouldn't have that Anglos hear your language.

(is_interview1.1_13apr12_2)

The pervasive ideology surrounding the veneration of code talkers results in multiple and sometimes competing discourse strands. Widely held myths about the code talkers include:

1. Navajos were the only Native American group whose heritage languages were used for the codes;
2. The longtime secrecy around code talkers (since the code was only declassified in 1968) indicates a need for continued secrecy; and
3. Code talkers saved the country, if not the whole world, by winning World War II.

Invoking the tradition of Navajo code talkers can lead to competing discourse strands such as the need to keep the language limited only to Navajos and the opposite belief that sharing the language with non-Navajos is acceptable and appropriate.

Obviously, a socially marginalized group that has suffered from broken treaties, forced relocations, genocidal violence, discriminatory employment and social policies, and significant language shift might understandably defend the group's value in hyperbolic ways. Furthermore, the contributions of code talkers are difficult to measure. The constant need to pay homage to code talkers in public, by public figures such as in Jolyana Begay's TEDx talk, and in more local contexts such as Diné College Navajo language courses, demonstrates an emotional attachment to these heroes that empowers Navajos to think of Navajo as a personal strength regardless of whether the individuals are themselves fluent. This pride is frequently demonstrated to outsiders as well and competes with negative stereotypes about reservation Indians suffering from poverty, violence, and substance abuse. It also negates a stereotype of the "vanishing Indian," whose presence is not consistently felt in mainstream American politics or in discussions about race.

One potential problem of using the Navajo language, as Shortman and others suggest, is that the social proscriptions around the use of Navajo (whether due to the context, such as not in front of "Anglos," or due to the quality of the language produced, with elders criticizing other speakers) limits the language from being a public language. Navajo is promoted publicly with code talker discourse strands of heroism as well as linguistic complexity, but the discourse strands invoking Navajo as nearly impossible to learn due to its polysynthetic morphology and tonal phonology serve to limit it to just native speakers.

If Navajo is not the language of explanation, as Jaffe (2009b) shows is effective in stance uptake in educational environments, it is unlikely to be the language chosen for

most activities, as would be necessary for successful Navajo language teaching or Navajo language immersion programs. If Navajo is not the basketball team's language, or a barista's language, or the language of a professor teaching at a college or university, or perhaps the language for how to set up your new smartphone, then it may be relegated to being a language of the past. Language shift causes this isolation of the language; discourse promoting the historic secrecy of the language, the sacred nature of the secret code, and the sacred nature of the language itself all entail the continuing secrecy of the Navajo language, with significant effects on those who do not currently speak the language fluently. Furthermore, as is discussed in Chapter 5, without a unifying language of Navajo community, culture, and identity, the variety of Navajo English can in many cases index a Navajo identity without the use of Navajo.

Chapter 5: The Variety of Navajo English: Characteristic Features and Ideologies of Use

The previous chapter's focus on the ideological associations of Navajo and English languages, as well as the perceived competition between the two, leads directly to a discussion of varieties of Navajo English for an important reason: much of the discourse surrounding the use of either Navajo or English takes place in Navajo English. All participants in this study employ features of Navajo English as described in existing literature on the variety, albeit to varying extents. However, the metalinguistic awareness of Navajo English as a distinct variety varies according to the context of the conversation and the level of consciousness of the use of certain features – the enregisterment, or attribution of social meaning, of the features (Agha, 2003).

Navajo English can be considered globally as a variety of English affected by speakers' proximity to the Navajo language speakers, to bilingual speakers of both English and Navajo, and to other speakers of Navajo English. All of the participants in the study spoke some form of Navajo English in their interviews in the off-reservation sites of Phoenix and Tucson. Some participants were raised with bilingual parents or stepparents, some were raised with monolingual English parents, and some had parents who spoke a small amount of Navajo and were primarily English speakers. The participants' fluency in Navajo depended mainly on the amount of Navajo used in their home environments before attending boarding school as children or moving off-reservation with their families. The participants' use of identifiable features of Navajo English cannot be similarly generalized in relation to fluency in Navajo, however: the

speakers using the most Navajo English variants in their speech were not necessarily the individuals who were fluent in the Navajo language as children.

The use of Navajo English in constructing a Navajo identity – with or without fluency in the Navajo language – demonstrates the enregisterment of many of the variety’s features beyond the level of first-order indexicals, which are linguistic features characteristic of a specific group (Silverstein, 2003). Examples of first-order indexicals in Navajo English are those variants that are found in Standard English speech as well as in other vernacular varieties of English – word-final nasal alveolarization and consonant cluster reduction.

Other speech features function as second-order indexicals as speakers become somewhat conscious of the feature and its vernacularity, sometimes choosing to style-shift away from the usage. One example from Navajo English is the deletion of the onglide in a word like ‘particularly,’ pronounced in Navajo English as [pəːtɪkʌləli] without the onglide in the third syllable as in a more standard pronunciation, [pəːtɪkjʊləli]. In one case, as described below, a speaker first produced the variant without an onglide and quickly repaired the pronunciation to the version with the onglide [ju] in the third syllable.

A third-order indexical, which Labov (1972) referred to as a “stereotype,” occurs when the variant has been enregistered, or imbued with social meaning, in “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms” (Agha, 2003, p. 231). Although speakers may not be consciously aware of each token produced with the enregistered feature, others easily single it out as an example of speaking in the manner of the specific group. A common

stereotype of Navajo English speech is the imitation of elders giving directions, pointing with their lips while saying “over der” ([owvəɪ dəɪ]) with a fricative [ð] being produced as a stop [d]. Another example, also a multi-part construction emphasizing the stereotypical nature of the feature, is the phrase ‘broken English,’ often represented in writing as “broken Inlish,” with the common Navajo alveolarization of velar nasal [ŋ] in ‘English’ ([əŋɡlɚʃ] to [ənɪlɚʃ]). The addition of the adjective “broken” demonstrates enregistered negative attitudes toward Navajo English as a “broken” language or an insufficient, nonfluent version of the English language.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, perhaps the most interesting element of Navajo English is that many do not believe it to exist as a distinct variety. Since only some features of Navajo English are enregistered, many participants avoided talking about Navajo English, or a “rez accent,” even when asked. Instead, several participants discussed code-switching between Navajo and English as a sign of being “rez” or decried the lack of Navajo language in common usage rather than discussing any varieties of Navajo English. When discussing sounding “rez,” some participants narrated an experience of not knowing the word for something in Navajo and being confused when relatives code-switched with Navajo vocabulary.

Code-switching between Navajo and English is prescriptively regarded as demonstrating deficit in both languages. In a March 9, 2015 article in *Indian Country Today*’s online edition entitled, “‘Navalish’: The Shifting World of the Navajo Language,” the author defines the common term “Navalish” as describing code-switching, explaining how code-switching is especially helpful when discussing new technologies, but warns that “the trend may have serious implications for a tribal nation

battling decreasing interest in the language and questions of fluency among leaders” (Landry, 2015). The author then cites Evangeline Parsons-Yazzie, coauthor of the Navajo language textbook used at Diné College and ASU and professor emeritus at Northern Arizona University explaining that code-switching is a “higher-level skill,” but Landry also paraphrases Yazzie as cautioning that “the bigger concern might be children growing up semi-lingual, or fluent in neither Navajo nor English.” The fear of code-switching as a strategy forestalling actual fluency is pervasive, as one discourse strand related to the ideology that vernacular English is also necessarily inadequate English, or “broken English.”

Furthermore, the connection between the ideology of broken English and the ubiquity of code-switching among Navajos can be connected to the negative stereotypes of Navajo speakers as Jáans (or Johns), perhaps males in particular, as Speaker 2M discussed in Chapter 4. To avoid being perceived as a “Jáan,” Speaker 2M discussed avoiding the Navajo language when greeting other Navajos; similarly, Webster (2012) described Navajos intentionally self-censoring in certain environments such as border towns in order to avoid being perceived as a John. One commenter on *Navajo Times*’s Facebook page during the July 21, 2014 presidential debate brings together code-switching and the stereotype of a “Jáan,” proposing the term “Johnglish” in response to the question about candidates using Navajo, English, or both languages:

‘Code switchers’

Soon to be dubbed ‘Johnglish’ (dka_fbnavtimes_21jul14)

Even though most candidates at the debate who used both Navajo and English did not code-switch, and instead used one language before translating their answers into the other

language, even the juxtaposition of both languages caused a commenter to invoke a negative stereotype connecting the use of both languages to an implied lack of general fluency in either language, a characteristic stereotypically distinguishing Jáans.

The discursive connection between bilingualism (even when perceived as deficient fluency in both languages) and code-switching may be rooted in a generation that was more bilingual than present Navajo youth. In describing the result of Navajos' language contact with English, Schaengold (2004) posits a variety of Navajo she calls "Bilingual Navajo," or a bilingual mixed code with the grammar of Navajo and the lexicon of English. This variety of Navajo is partly defined as code-switching, with borrowing vocabulary from English, and more accurately describes the more bilingual generation preceding today's English-dominant youth. Field's (2009) similar description of "Navlish," a mixed code (not to be confused with "Navalish," a term some use to describe code-switching), also offers the following analysis of Navlish's use: those who speak Navlish are specifically speaking something other than Navajo. Amid language shift, young speakers who have ability in both languages use the changing language features and constructions as semiotic resources for affiliation, dissimulation, and creativity.

Instead of a bilingual mixed code combining elements of two languages, many Navajos today speak a discernible dialect of Navajo English characterized by features of several other vernacular dialects of English as well as features unique to the linguistic context of language shift from Navajo to English. Therefore, this language shift has accomplished the creation of a dialect of English that has as its substrate the Navajo language even for speakers who are not fluent in Navajo. This is not an uncommon

occurrence in situations of language shift; Chicano English, for example, also has many features attributable to Spanish but also several that do not relate to Spanish. Just as with Chicano English, speakers do not need to be bilingual to employ Navajo English. Thus, the variety of Navajo English in general contains features attributable to the substrate language of Navajo but also contains features of many other vernacular dialects of English in the United States. Here, “substrate language” is defined as the language of the community at the time it shifted to English, leaving many features of Navajo to “color” or influence the morphology, phonology, syntax, and lexicon of English.

Likely a result of a bilingual mixed code, today’s Navajo English (and the varieties thereof) is employed as a first language for many – despite discourses describing it as “broken” – and also offers an alternative to Navajo. Citing Kroskrity and Field (2009), Webster notes that “Navajo English is a site of ideological struggle among Navajo” (2012, p. 405). The common caveat that this variety is equivalent to “broken English” spoken by a certain type of Navajo demonstrates the difficulty of eliciting metalinguistic discussion of the variety other than a few stereotypes. However, the features can be examined to show the current state of Navajo English as produced by one speaker, which comprises the majority of the following section on features of Navajo English. The third section of the chapter will analyze the ideologies at work in metalinguistic discussions of Navajo English and its features.

Features of Navajo English

As Mulder (1982) argues, “in language shift, interference affects all domains of the ‘winning’ language, from the phonemic system to the syntax, as well as the lexicon” (p. 96). Therefore, even if English is the primary language of a speaker with Navajo

ancestry, exposure to Navajo speakers and Navajo English speakers can result in interference affecting the speaker's production. Some scholars call this phenomenon "interlanguage," which relies on input from two languages, and "Whether the standard English or Native American language input dominates may depend on individual degrees of bilingualism" (Bartelt, 1981, p. 383). This section examines the result of interference and interlanguage that led to the unique variety of Navajo English, which has also changed by existing as a variety of English spoken as a first language.

The primary data for the analysis of Navajo English features comes from interview data. Some participants produced similar features at times in their interviews, in spontaneous, conversational speech and narrative. The data set is composed of a large frequency of recognizable tokens that coincide with the existing literature on Navajo English. None of the speakers is explicitly named in this chapter; despite signing an informed consent document that warned that identities could not be kept confidential, consideration of the potential stigma that can be imposed on this data outweighs any benefits from identifying the speakers, and the analysis of the vernacular features is still informative. Gender is important in this analysis, too, since some male participants in this study tied a Navajo-speaking Navajo identity to alcoholism, violence, and shame, while some female participants discussed Navajo language as indexing poverty. English, on the other hand, was at times in their childhoods and adulthoods embraced for strategic reasons as a naturalized alternative within a dichotomy that allowed for minimizing stigma. However, a simultaneously held ideology that Navajo English is typically "broken English" placed Speaker A in a difficult position of feeling non-fluent in the language that the individual had used as a primary language for decades. In describing

childhood acquisition of English that changed Speaker A's primary language from Navajo to English as a young child beginning school, Speaker A minimized the resulting English fluency, saying, "I speak some of it."

The analysis begins with the easily identifiable features of Navajo English, many of which are phonological, and then moves on to syntax, morphology, and lexical features, particularly those that are enregistered in the minds of Navajos as second- or third-order indexicals. It is important to note that many of the vernacular features of Navajo English are also common in other vernacular varieties of English, particularly African American English and Chicano English; furthermore, several features exist as variants common in so-called standard English speech, which might only be defined by lack of systemic stigmatization of enregistered terms and of the speaker him- or herself. Some other features, like alveolarization of nasals other than in the inflectional morpheme *-ing*, seem unique in certain positions to Navajo English as influenced by Navajo phonology. In the example below, the Navajo English usages are compared with one or more usages that I have identified as ideologically standard as a result of my training in both prescriptivist and descriptivist English usage. In cases in which the phonological environment makes these "standard" pronunciations less likely to be produced, I attempt to provide an alternative that reflects variation by speakers that I deem less consciously enregistered as vernacular. Other options are bound to be considered "standard" depending on the context. The phonetic representation of the usages is also limited to my judgment; I listened to each token multiple times, sometimes slowing the recording to half the rate of speech, in order to decide on a phonetic

representation. Any errors in accuracy are certainly due to my listening and any unconscious assumptions I may have had about what was being produced.

1) Alveolarized Nasals Word-Medially

Although some features of Navajo English are quite similar to other vernacular varieties of English, Navajo English as a distinct variety also shares many similarities with other American Indian varieties of English – mostly morphological and syntactic (as discussed in Leap, 1993). Certain other features of Navajo English are unique, however, when they are related to the phonological system of Navajo. An example of a unique feature is the frequent use of alveolar nasals when the standard form is the velar nasal. This feature is common both in casual standard English speech and in vernacular varieties of English when it occurs word-finally in *-ing* suffixes, but in Navajo English and in Speaker A’s speech, nasals are often alveolarized word-medially. The following examples of word-medial nasal alveolarization are consistent with the influence of Navajo phonology on Navajo English, since as Schaengold (2004) notes, the Navajo language lacks a velar nasal phoneme. In these examples, rather than assimilating to the place of articulation for the velar [g], the nasal dissimilates and is produced as an alveolar.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘language’	[leɪŋgwɪdʒ]	[læŋgwɪdʒ]
‘linguistic’	[lɪŋgwɪstək]	[lɪŋgwɪstək]
‘younger’	[yʌŋgəɪ]	[yʌŋgəɪ]

In a similar example of alveolarization and non-assimilation, another participant produced the word ‘wrong’ as [ɹaŋg], with the nasal alveolarized and the /g/ pronounced, sounding close to [ɹaŋgə].

2) Word-Final Alveolar Nasals

The speakers produced several examples of this feature, even while speaking carefully and slowly.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘nothing’	[nʌθɪŋ]	[nʌθɪn]
‘embracing’	[ɛmbreɪsɪŋ]	[ɛmbreɪsɪn]
‘living’	[lɪvɪŋ]	[lɪvɪn]
‘praying’	[praɪɪŋ]	[praɪɪn]
‘something’	[sʌmθɪŋ]	[sʌmθɪn]
‘marrying’	[mæɹɪɪŋ]	[mæɹɪn]

Schaengold (2004) notes that alveolarizing nasals is ubiquitous in most vernacular, including American Indian, varieties of English – particularly with the inflectional morpheme *-ing*. In Navajo English, though, the alveolar nasal is used even in words such as “young.”

Several interesting exceptions to word-final *-ing* nasal alveolarization appear in Speaker A’s data. In the following examples, Speaker A maintains a velar nasal in the *-ing* ending, despite widespread nasal alveolarization in other words ending in *-ing*.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘documenting’	[dʌkjʊmɛntɪŋ]/[dʌkjʊmɛntɪ]	[dʌkjʊmɛntɪ]
‘writing’	[ɹaɪtɪŋ]	[ɹaɪtɪ]

‘things’	[θɪŋz]	[θɪŋ]
‘rebranding’	[.ɹiˈbrændəŋ]	[.ɹɪb.ræ:ndəŋ]
‘ending’	[ɛndəŋ]	[ɪndəŋ]

3) Nasal Deletion

Navajo English also features deletion in word-final consonant clusters, as in the following example, possibly as part of the common consonant-cluster reduction pattern in mainstream spoken English and vernacular varieties of English. One token in my data features nasal deletion.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘blank’	[blæŋk]	[blɪk]

This occurrence is not necessarily reflective of Navajo English as documented and as my research shows. It may, however, be a result of the process of nasalization and reduction in which the following processes occur in order (Odden, 1994).

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Nasalization of the previous vowel | [blɪŋk] |
| 2. Deletion of the nasal | [blɪk] |
| 3. Denasalization | [blɪk] |

4) Nasalization and Reduction

The process of nasalization and deletion is more common for one of the speakers, which are also very common in Navajo English. In these cases, nasalization of the previous vowel occurs, combined with either deletion of the nasal or complete reduction or deletion of the following syllable.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘different’	[dɪfɪnt̚]	[dɪfɪnt̚]

‘documenting’	[dakjʉmɛnrɛŋ]/[dakjʉmɛnɛŋ] [dakumɛ̃rɛŋ]	
‘they don’t’	[ðɛjdonʔ]	[ðɛjðʔ]
‘you know’	[yɔ now]	[yɔ̃ðw]

The Navajo English production of the word ‘different’ shows the process of nasalization and reduction that also occurs in other varieties.

5) Glottalization and Deletion of Final Stop

The process of 1) glottalization of a word-final stop and 2) deletion of the word-final stop leaves the glottal stop [ʔ] as the final consonant. Although glottalized and deleted final stops can occur in rapid standard English speech, the glottalized final stop in Navajo English is used even in slow speech, as I have observed in other interviews and contexts and as is documented in Cook and Sharp (1966). Place names are some of the most salient examples of glottalized final stops, as in the pronunciation of ‘Rough Rock.’ Another well-known example is the pronunciation of the town of “Shiprock” as [ʃip.ɾaʔ] (Schaengold, 2004).

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘Rough Rock’	[rʌf rak]	[rʌfrɑʔ]
‘barbaric’	[bɑ:bɛ.ɾɪk]	[bɑ:bɛ.ɾɪʔ]

6) Word-Final Consonant Cluster Reduction

More common in many varieties and contexts is consonant cluster reduction word-finally, through 1) glottalization, 2) deletion of the final stop, and 3) a remaining glottal stop.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘standard’	[stændə.ɾɪd]	[stændərʔ]

Word-final consonant cluster reduction can also be achieved through the process of 1) glottalization and 2) deletion, as with the examples below.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘difficult’	[dɪfəkəlʔ]	[dɪfəkəlʔ]/[dɪfəkəl]
‘child’	[tʃajld]	[tʃajl]
‘old’	[owld]	[owl]
‘told’	[told]	[tol]
‘cold’	[kold]	[kol]
‘fact’	[fækt]	[fæk]
‘dialect’	[dajələkt]	[dajələk]
‘reflect’	[rɛflɛkt]	[rɛflɛk]
‘aspect’	[æspɛkt]	[æspɛk]
‘last’	[læst]	[læs]
‘least’	[liɛst]	[liɛs]
‘husband’	[hʌzbənd]/[hʌsbən]	[hʌsbən]
‘commend’	[kəmənd]	[kəməɳ]
‘mind’	[majnd]	[majn]
‘end’	[ɛnd]	[ɛɳ]
‘knowledge’	[nəlɪdʒ]	[na:lɪd]

The voiced palatal affricate reduction is notable here, as Cook and Sharp note that in Navajo English the consonant cluster becomes unvoiced in words such as “judge.” One speaker has a consonant cluster reduction without devoicing in ‘knowledge’ ([na:lɪd]), but no such reduction takes place in other environments; [dʒ] remains in the same

speaker's pronunciation of 'language,' 'educating,' 'allegiance,' and 'Jáan,' showing intraspeaker variation.

Two other participants reliably reduced word-final consonant clusters as well, in ways matching other typical vernacular varieties of English as well as rapid speech in standard English, rather than the relatively rare feature noted above of reducing [dʒ] to [d] in the word 'knowledge.'

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
'kept'	[kɛpt]	[kɛp]
'next'	[nɛkst]	[nɛks]

7) *Past Tense Morpheme Deletion*

Word-final consonant cluster reduction also occurs for the morpheme *-ed*, which is well-documented as a feature of not just Navajo English and American Indian Englishes (Leap, 1993), but also other vernacular varieties of English. For Navajo English, Cook and Sharp (1966) explain that the inflectional morphemes *-es* and *-ed* (though incorrectly including *-ing*) may be omitted because word final consonants do not exist in Navajo. Of course, past-tense morpheme deletion can also be a result of the phonological process of word-final consonant cluster reduction and deletion.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
'standardized'	[stændəɹdajzd]	[stændəɹdajz]
'embedded'	[ɛmbɛdɛd]	[ɪmbɛdɛʔ]
'followed'	[fəlowd]	[fəlowʔ]
'conceived'	[kənsivd]	[kənsiv]
'called'	[kɔld]	[kɔl]

‘acquired’	[əkwaɪɹɪd]	[əkwaɪɹɪʔ]
‘erased’	[əɹeɪsɪd]	[əɹeɪsɪ]
‘embraced’	[ɛmbreɪst]	[ɛmbɹeɪsɪ]

8) Careful Pronunciation

Although Speaker A, for example, typically reduced clusters with the past tense morpheme *-ed*, the word ‘connected’ was the only token produced with the allomorph [əd] that showed careful pronunciation of [d] in “connected” rather than glottalizing an *-ed* final consonant as in the word ‘embedded,’ transcribed above.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘connected’	[kənɛkrɛʔ]	[kənɛkrɛd]
‘writing’	[ɹaɪɹɛŋ]	[ɹaɪ:dɛŋ]
‘often’	[afən]/[afɹən]/[ɔfən]/[ɔftən]	[afɹən]

In ‘writing,’ the flap is pronounced as [d] after a lengthened vowel (diphthong). Long vowels are common in Navajo, and other tokens Speaker A produced demonstrate the influence of Navajo vowel phonology on Navajo English speech. It must be noted that all speech reflects intraspeaker variation. The word ‘often’ is a common variant in standard English, though some prescriptivists argue against pronouncing [t]. A discussion of the allophones of [t] as produced in perceptions and repetitions of the word ‘identity’ will follow in a subsequent section that will also discuss slow speech.

9) Word-Medial Consonant Cluster Reduction

Another common type of consonant cluster reduction occurs word-medially, though I have observed that these reductions are indexical of Navajo speech (as they are

in other vernacular varieties, of course). In the following examples, stops [t] and [d] are deleted, as well as [ɹ] before a nasal [m].

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘groundwork’	[graʊndwəɹk]/[graʊnwəɹk]	[graʊnwəɹk]
‘World War II’	[wəɹldwɔɹtu]	[wəɹlwɔɹtu]
‘captain’	[kæptən]	[kæpən]
‘software’	[saftwɛɹ]/[safwɛɹ]	[safwɛɹ]
‘directly’	[dəɹektliɹ]/[dəɹekliɹ]	[dəɹekliɹ]
‘information’	[ɪnfəɹmeɹjən]	[ɪnfɹmeɹjən]

10) Final Consonant Aspiration

Although one of the speakers produced only one example of an aspirated final consonant, the pronunciation of ‘took’ is similar to the pattern Cook and Sharp (1996) note in devoicing final consonants. Their example of pronouncing ‘dog’ as [dak] is fairly common in Navajo English, and the Navajo language has more aspiration (a large positive voice onset time, according to Ladefoged and Johnson, 2011) than standard English.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘took’	[tɔk]	[tɔk ^h]

11) On glide Deletion

As with all the speakers, reduced syllables occurred most commonly with words that had already been phonologically reduced. For example, several of the following pronunciations underwent a phonological reduction of a deletion of the on glide, also called initial /j/ cluster reduction (Bailey & Thomas, 1998).

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘particularly’	[pəˈtɪkjʊləliːj]	[pəˈtɪkʌli]
‘particular’	[pəˈtɪkjʊləɪ]	[pəˈtɪkʌləɪ]
‘curriculum’	[kəˈrɪkjʊləm]	[kəˈrɪkələm]
‘documenting’	[dɒkjʊmɛnrɛŋ]/[dɒkjʊmɛnɛŋ]	[dɒkʊmɛrɛŋ]
‘documentation’	[dɒkjʊmɛntɛjʃən]	[dɒkʊmɛntɛjʃən]
‘documentary’	[dɒkjʊmɛntəri]	[dɒkʊmɛntəri]
‘popular’	[pɒpjʊləɪ]	[pɒpʊləɪ]
‘value’	[væljuː]	[væliː]
‘ceremonial’	[sɛrɪmɒniəl]	[sɛrɪmɒnəl]
‘marrying’	[mæriːjɛŋ]	[mæɪrɛn]

The words “particularly,” “particular,” and “curriculum” appear frequently in this data set (perhaps due to the topic being discussed) and always feature initial /j/ cluster reduction in one participant’s speech. Other participants in my dissertation research also occasionally deleted the onglide in “particular” or “particularly” but not in the other words listed here. Initial /j/ cluster reduction may be a higher order index of Navajo English; another participant, Speaker B, said “particularly” without the onglide but quickly repaired and produced the standard. From this evidence, I can speculate about the enregisterment of onglide deletion as a second-order indexical into and out of which a speaker might style-shift if aware of the feature’s association with Navajo English and perhaps avoiding stigma.

12) Reduced Forms

Reduction in general is quite common in casual varieties of standard English speech as well as in vernacular dialects. Speaker A's reduction of words and phrases matches common reductions in many varieties of English. Reducing 'going to' to 'gonna' is a common reduction, though Speaker A notably nasalized another token of the phrase 'you know,' as previously discussed in relation to feature 4. The reduction in the words 'particularly,' 'probably,' and 'especially' are common in casual speech in many varieties of English, though as noted earlier with feature 11, the Navajo English production of 'particularly' lacks the onglide /j/. The phrases 'praying,' 'something,' and 'they don't' are particularly salient in the speech of one speaker as they are significantly reduced.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
'particularly'	[pəˈtɪkjʊləˌliːj]/[pəˈtɪkjʌli]	[pəˈtɪkʌli]
'cultural'	[kʌltʃəˌrəl]	[kʌltəɪ]
'usually'	[juːzuəli]/[yuzəli]	[yuzi]
'gonna'	[ɡʌnə]	[ɡʌnə]
'you know'	[jə nəʊ]	[yəʊw], [yɔ̃ʊw]
'probably'	[prɒbəbʌli]/ [prɒbʌli]	[prɒbʌli]
'especially'	[əˈspeʃəli]/ [əspəʃli]	[əspəʃli]
'praying'	[preɪjəŋ]	[preɪjŋ]
'something'	[sʌmθəŋ]/[sʌmʔŋ]	[sʌmʔ]
'they don't'	[ðejdɒnʔ]	[ðejðʔ]

13) Interdental Fricative Consonant to a Stop

As Cook and Sharp (1966) note, interdental fricatives become stops in Navajo English word-initially, word-medially, and word-finally. In one of the speaker's usages, this feature occurred in every examined token beginning with an interdental fricative, but the voiced interdental fricative remained in the phrase 'other' word-medially. In this data set, no tokens had the potential for an interdental fricative word-finally.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
'the' (1)	[ðə]	[dij]
'the' (2)	[ðə]	[də]
'they'	[ðej]	[dəj]
'their'	[ðeɪ]	[dɛɪ]
'there's'	[ðeɪz]	[dɛɪs]
'that's'	[ðæɪz]	[dæɪz]
'that'	[ðæt]	[dæt]
'other'	[ʌðə]	[ɔwðə]

14) Plural and Possessive Morpheme Deletion

Leap (1993) adds to Cook and Sharp's (1966) observation that the plural and possessive -s are omitted in Navajo English, showing that the plural -s is often used in mass nouns rather than plural nouns – the opposite of the standard English pattern. Schaengold (2004) notes that the omission of final -s in the case of possessives also reflects the fact that in Navajo, possession is marked on the object of possession rather than the possessor.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘females’	[fimejɫz]	[fimeɪ]
‘things’	[θɪŋz]	[θɪŋ]

The inclusion of the velar nasal [ŋ] here is notable, given the above discussion.

15) Final /s/ Phoneme Deletion

Similar to the pattern of word-final consonant cluster reduction discussed above in several conditions, the final [s] sound is also omitted in examples found here. I have not been able to discern a regular pattern of [s]-deletion in consonant cluster reduction in any of the participants’ data. The usage could be constrained to speakers’ idiolects or regional variety or could be part of a regularized word-final consonant cluster reduction pattern.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘allegiance’	[əɫɪdʒəns]	[əɫɪdʒən]

16) Consonant Devoicing

Speakers occasionally devoice consonants word-initially, word-medially, and word-finally. Some devoicing is common in standard English, such as [hʌsbən] for “husband,” but devoicings in the other three tokens are indicators of Navajo English speech.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘husband’	[hʌzbənd]/[hʌzbən]	[hʌsbən]
‘of’	[əv]	[ʌf]
‘Gallup’	[gæləp]	[kæləp]
‘there’s’	[ðeɪz]	[dɛɪs]

17) *Intrusive Consonants ([f], [ɹ], and [b])*

Three tokens in my data showed intrusive consonants, though the previous literature on Navajo English does not link intrusive consonants to Navajo phonology aside from intrusive nasals. It is unclear whether the intrusive [f] in ‘orthography’ or the intrusive [b] in ‘memory’ are common features in Navajo English; however, the pronunciation of “familiar” with intrusive [ɹ] is certainly common in other varieties of English.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘orthography’	[ɔɹθagɹəfi]	[ɔɹfθagɹəfi]
‘memory’	[mɛmɹi]/[mɛməɹi]	[mɛmbɹi]
‘familiar’	[fəmiɹliɹ]	[fəmiɹlyɹ]

18) *Stress*

In English, most words have trochaic stress, with emphasis placed on the first syllable (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2014). The placement of stress in Navajo, however, depends on factors such as syllable weight and tone (Kidder, 2008). The examples in this section show three words with stress on the first syllable when the stress in mainstream English usage would be elsewhere. This pattern is common in standard and vernacular varieties of English, as well as idiolect (e.g., inverting the standard stress patterns between noun and verb forms of “insure,” or “contract”). The intonation of “World War II” is also a common occurrence when two words are linked together as a compound, often with names of places such as “Rough Rock” or shows like *The West Wing* ([ˈwestwɪŋ] or [ˈwɛswɪŋ]).

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘rebranding’	[riˈb.rændəŋ]	[ˈri.b.ræ:ndəŋ]
‘World War II’	[ˈwɜːl.dwɔːr.tu]	[ˈwɜːl.wɔːɪ.tu]
‘Rough Rock’	[ˈrʌf ˈræk]/[ˈrʌf ˈræk]	[ˈrʌfraʔ]

19) Navajo Vowels

The examples below may show influence from Navajo phonology on pronunciation of vernacular English words in Navajo English. The word “hogans” is pronounced with the vowel and stress of the Navajo word “hooghan” ([ˈho:ɣan]) but the voiced palatal fricative [ɣ] is pronounced as the stop, [g], from English phonology. In this way, although the word retains some of its Navajo phonology, it is more of a borrowing from Navajo that incorporates phonology of Navajo English. Retaining the long vowel also occurs in the words ‘knowledge,’ ‘Jáan,’ and ‘writing,’ though ‘Jáan’ is interesting on its own as a long Navajo vowel being used to pronounce the word “John” (“Jáan”) in a way that is enregistered in Navajo consciousness to mean a rural, unsophisticated “rez” person. The fact that the *bilagáana* (white) name ‘John’ is used in a derogatory fashion with Navajo orthography and pronunciation certainly demonstrates the social contradictions that develop with language and cultural contact.

In the word ‘value,’ the initial /j/ cluster reduction also seems to aid the unstressed syllable’s vowel in changing from [u] to [i], a common sound in Navajo phonology. The word ‘ending’ shows the [ɪ]/[ɛ] merger that Cook and Sharp (1966) document as a major part of Navajo English, as it is in many varieties of English.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘hogans’	N/A	[ˈho:ganz]

‘value’	[væljʊw]	[vælij]
‘knowledge’	[nalɪdʒ]	[na:lɪd]
‘other’	[ʌðəɪ]	[ɔwðəɪ]
‘Jáan’	N/A	[dʒa:n]
‘ending’	[ɛndəŋ]	[ɪndəŋ]
‘writing’	[ɹajrəŋ]	[ɹaj:dəŋ]

20) *Features Similar to the Standard*

Despite common patterns of vernacular Navajo English pronunciations with fricatives becoming stops, consonant cluster reduction, and other features documented in the literature and identifiable in the data, it is essential to recognize the significant intraspeaker variation shown in the data. The following example highlights the ways in which much of the language of a speaker of a vernacular dialect actually adheres to the norms of standard English production, certainly in informal standard English, yet many of the other 19 features discussed above are stigmatized and therefore noticeable as vernacular, or “rez.” The following lexical item shows consonant glottalization and deletion as part of a natural phonological process, but this item is not enregistered as vernacular English.

<i>Phrase/Item</i>	<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Navajo English</i>
‘it’	[ɪt̚]	[ɪt̚]

Therefore, the data in this study suggest that many features demonstrate typical phonological processes of language reduction, such as glottalization of a final consonant in a cluster, while others seem likely to be a result of the influence of the heritage language and a dialect developed by bilingual speakers in a community undergoing

language shift. However, those who might comment on certain features as a stereotype of Navajo English – as discussed at the end of the chapter – might seize these normal reductions as evidence of the ill-formedness or see the feature as an index of Navajo English as “broken English.”

21) *Other Phonological Features*

Several other phonological features of Navajo English have been discussed in the literature (e.g., Schaengold, 2004) but are not discussed at length here, particularly the salient features that would make a speaker sound heavily accented in English and potentially nonfluent. Examples include /v/ becoming /b/ or /f/ in word initial position and a pronunciation of all allophones of [l] as “dark” [l]. Although some conversations I have heard make reference to these features as examples of “broken English” of older family members, the formally collected data in this study do not seem to contain these features. Released /t/ was a feature observed frequently in all participants, but without a quantitative study of the data, I cannot demonstrate that it is more frequent in Navajo English than other forms of English.

22) *Syntactic Features*

Leap’s (1993) discussion of American Indian Englishes lists the necessity to avoid stating necessity or obligation with the word “must”; therefore, a sentence like “I must go there” might be stated in varieties of Indian English as *It is only good that I shall go there* (p. 79, citing Young in Fletcher, 1983, p. 9). Similarly, “I make the horse run” would be stated as *The horse is running for me* (p. 80, citing Young in Fletcher, 1983, p. 9). In my conversations with Navajo individuals, I did get the subjective sense that “must” and other forceful terms are typically avoided, as are overt evaluations.

In Navajo, a speaker might express that his or her car is running well by saying,
Shichídí shil yá 'át' ééh

'My car with me is good' or 'is doing well'

The following construction produced by Speaker C avoids evaluation, focuses attention on the subjective speaker (as *shil*, or "with me," would do), and uses a different adjectival suffix than the standard when saying, "That was very understandable with me." In standard English, this construction could be translated as "This made sense to me," or "I was able to understand this well." Its similarities to Navajo syntax are striking, particularly with the prepositional phrase "with me" resembling the Navajo *shil*.

Before I brought up the past construction, Speaker C was reporting not having an accent, according to self-perception and what others say about Speaker C's speech, so I asked about word order, which Speaker C had previously mentioned in our conversation. Speaker C volunteered that sometimes in rapid speech the syntax changes, as does the syntax of Speaker C's mother.

I haven't done that in a while, but um, it's like putting, it's like, "come here" instead of "come here" it's like, um, "you over there here" or something like that. It's just like, it's broken up, like it's all in English, it's all sudden English, but the placement of the words, it's kind of mixed up. So they just look at me like, what did you say? I was like, I'm sorry, I mixed it up. I need to say it correctly. Especially if I'm talking fast I have a, a chance I flip it up. My mom does it really a lot. She'll be, um, saying sentences and she'll be like, um, what does she say? She was in the truck when she said it. She'll be like, you know, the sentence is

supposed to be like, “Call grandpa at this number,” and then she’ll be like,
“Grandpa call.”

It is notable that in Speaker C’s perception of these constructions, the syntax in English is “mixed up” or “flipped up.” In fact, after I brought up the sentence “That was very understandable with me” more than two years after I heard Speaker C use the construction in class, Speaker C was self-deprecatory about Speaker C’s own speech.

C: Yeah. I think it’s interesting though. You taught me something
 about myself I didn’t know, um, that I speak like that, so...

MM: Your English has a lot of Navajo, not just an accent kind of way.

C: Mm-hmm, but it’s just structure.

MM: Yeah.

C: Either that or I don’t know how to speak English. (Laughs.)

MM: No, no, trust me, trust me. It’s an actual dialect of English and it’s
 just as valid as any other, you know? So, um, so I think, I think
 more research on it is needed.

C: Yeah, I think it’s pretty cool, that is pretty cool.

As stated earlier, many phonological features of Navajo English do not rise to the level of higher order indexes of Navajo speech, or at least they are not conscious to participants in a manner that participants could articulate or felt comfortable sharing in an interview.

Discussion of syntactic difference, though, elicited discussion of consciously available features as well as negative evaluation of these features in one’s own speech.

23) *Lexical Items*

Other features that are enregistered as Navajo English and are used quite consciously to index Navajo identity while speaking English are interjections and lexical items indicating stance toward the topic at hand. A common example is *jini* (“it is said”), which is used in Navajo at the end of any lesson, moral, story, or saying in order to show deference to an authority that is not the speaker. *Jini* can serve as a powerful punch line to a joke or can merely append a Facebook comment sharing the admission prices for the Navajo Nation Fair. In my experience speaking with Navajos as a white, non-Navajo, 20-something interlocutor, individuals who end an utterance with *jini* tend to be older males. I could speculate about the demographics of the usage of *jini*, particularly according to race, age, or gender, but perhaps the enregistered associations of its use in conversation with me would relate to both the nature of the interview context and to me as the non-Navajo interviewer, regardless of my professed interest in Navajo and displayed knowledge of many of its features and usages.

The most stigmatized feature found in this data is the interchangeability of feminine and masculine pronouns (Bartelt, 1981, from Cook & Sharp, 1966), which occurred frequently in one instance when a speaker was describing a relative.

She... I mean, he only went to like second or third grade. [...] Because her aunt... his aunt, um... she's still carryin' him and raised... raised my [relative]. [...] He just made a... a job so he can work on her own really.

Although as an interlocutor this interchangeability in pronouns occasionally confused meaning for me, it did not obscure meaning in discussions of most topics. This feature would be clearly enregistered as a stereotype of “rez” or “rural” English, and

might be even more stigmatized when listeners are not aware of its relationship to Navajo English (or any dialect of English) and instead interpret the interchangeability as the failure of the speaker to be able to determine gender correctly.

Another lexical item that is clearly enregistered (to the point that speakers discuss its usage) is “wah.” “Wah” is used frequently by Navajos code-switching between Navajo and English. Just like with crossing, one might argue that the use of “wah” is a direct index of being Navajo, regardless of whether the speaker uses English or Navajo in the rest of the utterance or conversation. The definition of “wah” is tenuous, but it seems to relate to many other interjections in English, such as “gah” (in surprise or exasperation) or “oh” (in acknowledgement, surprise, and contemplation). Speaker C shared that although perceived not to have a Navajo accent, Speaker C uses plenty of enregistered Navajo English borrowings from Navajo such as “wah,” despite being told it should not be used off the reservation.

Then it’s just like, it breaks out that um, that rezness so it will be like, “jini” you know. It’s just rez. It’s just interesting to say. Like, for me, I’ll say “wah” and people are like, why you saying “wah,” you’re not even on the rez, only say “wah” when you’re on the rez.

Another term that has debatable provenance and meaning is the phrase “is it.” Speaker C and Speaker D considered this a Navajo English phrase that is clearly enregistered as indexing Navajo identity, with the only question being what does it actually mean. To some extent, the phrase is a tag question without a tag-question construction (such as “It’s good, isn’t it?” or “It’s good, is it?”), but as Speaker C

explains, it can be used as a stance marker (à la Jaffe, 2009b) that shows a questionable or ironic relationship with the topic at hand.

When you speak Navajo, you really use your tongue, and you use your vowels, long vowels, short vowels, and you really practice a lot with, um, your facial muscles, but when you're on the rez it's like, "iss iiiit" ([ɪs ɛ:ʔ]) and you really, you really enunciate those vowels stay with you.

Speaker D describes "is it" as meaning something more like "come again" or being sarcastic, offering an opposite interpretation of what else has been said. After seeing numerous tokens of "iss" (with varying numbers of Ss in the spelling) posted on Facebook and other online forums dominated by Navajo commenters, I was sure that "iss" did not mean "I'm so sorry," as Urban Dictionary and social media-savvy colleagues of mine suggested; instead, "iss" was being used at the end of sarcastic statements in the manner Speaker C and Speaker D described about the usage of "is it." In a follow-up communication, Speaker D confirmed that "iss" is definitely related to "is it" and was a discernible Navajo phrase (in English) that connoted a sarcastic or questioning stance toward the topic at hand. (Clearly, resources such as Urban Dictionary that profess to be authoritative sources on vernacular, colloquial, or online usages are hardly authoritative on usages common in Indian Englishes, and probably on other less-known dialects of English as well. The meaning of "iss" is probably related to the tag question, "It's good, isn't it?" or its variant "It's good, is it?" with a falling intonation pattern and phonological reduction.)

In conclusion, the degree to which these features are enregistered is debatable. My approach to analyzing Navajo English in this study consisted of first listening to its

usage, asking questions about the speaker's consciousness of Navajo English, and then attempting to discuss the examples they bring up. As noted in the discussion of methods, this approach was designed to yield the kind of information participants wanted to share, so it was necessarily vetted and censored as deemed appropriate to the volunteering individual. The next section features a discussion of how enregistered Navajo English interacts with participants' definitions of Navajo identity.

Theoretical Approaches to Navajo English

As linguistic anthropologists have increasingly realized, language ideologies within a speech community as well as within a single individual are typically complex, heterogeneous, and sometimes contradictory (Irvine and Gal 2000; Kroskrity 1998, 2000c; Woolard 1998). (Field, 2009, p. 39)

The previous chapter added to the literature on iconicity, recursivity, and erasure (Irvine & Gal, 2000) in tracing common discourse strands and simultaneously held competing ideologies about the dichotomy between Navajo and English. This chapter also uses Irvine and Gal's (2000) tripartite system but extends the concepts to Navajo English and variation in English to examine the competing ideologies about the use of Navajo English in various contexts of daily life for my participants and in their language advocacy work.

One of the most difficult barriers to cross in the interviews I conducted was the ubiquity of what Hill (2002) has called the "hyperbolic valorization" of the indigenous language and anything associated with it. As Lee notes, a positive attitude toward a heritage language does not necessarily result in a resurgence in fluency in the heritage language in question. The hyperbolic valorization of the Navajos' heritage language is

typically professed using Navajo English and often employs competing and contradictory ideologies about the importance of Navajo language to Navajo identity.

Theoretically, the typical hyperbolic valorization iconicizes Navajo language as a necessary part of Navajo identity, as I discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, when focusing on Navajo English, the iconicity of the Navajo language may be extended to the use of enregistered Navajo English features when discussing issues of Navajo language revitalization. Navajo English, with its phonological, syntactic, morphological, and lexical features (discussed in the previous section) is recognizable as distinctively Navajo and is employed in much public rhetoric about language revitalization and language policy. Speaking Navajo English in context is a balancing act: employing the right kind and right number of features of Navajo English and in the right space or location (e.g., using ‘wah’ in the right context) is key to sounding Navajo (but not sounding like a Jáan). Participants in this study, as well as commenters making public statements about language use, demonstrate a range of attitudes toward Navajo English but almost always a negative association with certain usages, particularly those that sound Jáan or rural. It is worth noting that for youth, the Navajo language can be associated with “rurality, poverty, and lack of ‘cool’” (Holm & Holm, 1995, pp. 154-155), but as Field notes,

This language ideology is not shared by most Navajo adults. In fact, it is often the exact opposite: rurality may be associated with a low annual household income, but it also often coincides with traditional religious practice, a high degree of Navajo language retention, social class differences, and, as discussed in Levy and Kunitz (1974), access to resources on the Navajo reservation. (2009, p. 43)

I contend that for younger speakers, the use of enregistered features of Navajo English holds similar associations with rurality, poverty, and lack of “cool,” while these associations may not be shared with older generations. Furthermore, the associations can be held at different times and in different contexts.

Irvine and Gal’s notion of recursivity is seen in the clustering of oppositions across activities or social roles (albeit all of them Navajo) such as age, religion, and social class... At the same time, this recursivity is cross-cut and further complicated by ideologies that vary (and cluster) across age groups. (Field, 2009, p. 44)

Finally, for Navajo English speakers, Irvine and Gal’s concept of “erasure” is also seen in the “disregard for internal variation” as used in House (2002) but applied to just one variety: Navajo English. The following section examines ideologies of Navajo English usage and the variation in metalinguistic analysis within and among participants in this study.

Ideologies of Navajo English Usage

The greatest difficulty in examining attitudes toward Navajo English came in asking participants about it. This is likely due to the factors discussed above: avoiding negative evaluation of others, knowledge of the interlocutor as an outsider studying the speakers and their statements, as well as heightened consciousness (that faded over the course of the interview) of the interview context in which their words would be recorded and archived. As I watched my interlocutors grapple with the numerous ideologies their discourse was expected to represent, contradictions and simultaneously held ideologies

were distinct. For example, when asked outright about the use of a “rez” accent, Speaker B responded,

Um, but I think it’s great if that’s the way that young pe-people can feel more connected to their language, um. So I don't think it’s a bad thing.

However, just a few minutes before the conversational expectations required direct positive or negative evaluation, Speaker B shared the experience of the variety of Navajo English holding quite negative associations:

So in my experience, I.... Growing up it was looked down upon to have a Navajo accent. So people would make fun of you or they say, "Oh, you said it this way," and they’ll, you know copy you and make you feel bad about it.

Several other participants had negative experiences due to their variety of English, even if they did not have the kind of Navajo accent against which teachers and students discriminated. Recall Speaker C, who self-describes as not having a Navajo accent but whose syntax and enregistered lexical choices such as “is it” are easily identifiable aspects of Navajo English. In a narrative about going to stay with a monolingual Navajo-speaking grandmother “on the mountain,” Speaker C’s reference to the poor academic performance of the siblings of the family, due to negative evaluations of their speaking ability in their first language, English, is striking.

She’s telling us to do stuff and we don’t know what she’s saying because we’re so little and we’re kind of confused on, you know, we know how to speak English, but we barely passed that in the city, and um, next thing you know this whole language is just being thrown at us and my mom wasn’t there. I couldn’t ask for her to translate, I couldn’t ask for help.

Speaker C's experience is hardly unique when it comes to others' attitudes to Navajo English; many speakers of vernacular dialects of English (Chicano English, African-American English) are deemed less than fluent by prejudiced teachers and biased language tests. It is interesting here that as Speaker C is discussing a difficult moment metalinguistically, recalling the experience of being a child who cannot communicate, Speaker C also refers to difficulty with and negative evaluation of the language in which Speaker C has always been fluent.

The distinction between having a perceptible Navajo accent and speaking standard, or academic, English, was implicit in several of my interviews. In an interview about Navajo language revitalization and language ideologies, participants were aware that their language abilities would be discussed; notably, self-deprecatory references to incompetence or poor language ability were frequently made as a matter of course – for speakers' competence in English. Speaker B, a former Miss Navajo, shared having conscious attention to speaking standard English in a professional role.

And so, um, I, I try my best to uh, speak proper English. [...] I don't think the way that I talk defines who I am and the moment I speak Navajo, you know a fluent Navajo can easily understand me and... it... it... it's something that I can do, switching between Navajo and English. And I know many people can do that, they speak good English and then the next minute they're speaking perfect Navajo in perfect accents. [...] I do my best to present well and to speak well.

Speaker B further justifies attention to standard English speech by saying it will be helpful linguistically to students.

So they might be even, not even using proper English, but I think that if you're teaching Navajo and you speak English, I think you should use it properly 'cause, um, your students will learn better, if they're already speaking English and they can translate that over to Navajo. It's linguistics, right? Haha.

Speaker B's implication here, though, displays a stance that Navajo English is not "proper" English and, in saying that skills in "proper" English can be translated to producing well-formed Navajo, Speaker B implies that Navajo English is ill-formed and a detriment to students linguistically – in all languages.

Speaker B's choice to privilege standard English whenever possible, holding ideologies connecting the prestige of standard English with the linguistic well-formedness of standard English as opposed to other Englishes, is a common choice that disseminates ideology through metasociolinguistic stance, as Jaffe (2009b) explains.

The stances that teachers take are sociolinguistic because they involve both the taking of social positions *through* language choices that are already loaded with sociolinguistic meaning as well as the taking of positions on the status and relationship between the two languages and on the salience of language choice for identity and cultural membership (what I have called a "metasociolinguistic" stance...). (p. 119)

Although Speaker B is not herself a Navajo language teacher, Speaker B believes Navajo language teachers should use standard English in class. Were Speaker B a Navajo language teacher, the chosen stance toward academic English in an academic environment would easily be communicated to students and would perpetuate the cycle of the privileging of standard English and negative attitudes and evaluations of vernacular

varieties of English. However, another way to look at Speaker B's statement is that it expresses a discourse that one feels expected to reproduce, perhaps because of Speaker B's own past experience with language teachers; for Speaker B personally, though, it is also important to style-shift with Navajo students specifically.

No I don't, I don't speak differently to either group, but if I were to speak with a Navajo student I probably would speak differently because I feel like they're from home and they're my relative and I don't have to put up, um, a presentation or to think, um, before I say something. It... it's much more comfortable to talk to somebody from home.

Speaker B's focus on the importance of Navajo teachers speaking standard English may also relate to her own experiences as a bilingual speaker expected to have impeccable language skills in both languages while Miss Navajo. In fact, Speaker B shared that she is typically self-conscious about her English usage.

I've always been very subconscious about the way I talk and even when I went to [university] I, my vocabulary in English wasn't as extensive as students that went to prep school and I carried a lot of... I carried an English dictionary with me at times and I spent a lot of time um, I spent a lot of time uh, refining my English and refining my... my writing skills.

Speaker B is hardly the only participant self-conscious about his or her English usage. In our discussion about attitudes toward the Navajo English, Speaker E immediately switched to discussing accents, or Navajo English.

I think that, um, the current perception of speaking Navajo is... is, um, well, I guess it would be different for different people but just, just, you know,

referencing my friends and there's the (laughs) you can be cool as a kid sometimes and some of my friends would, um, mock some of the accents that you're referring to and make fun of it. And I didn't really personally know anyone who spoke, you know, every day on a daily basis with that accent, and you know it was just how they talk. But there are people out there who do, you know, talk like that, have the accents where, um, people find it funny and I can see where they would take offense and... um, but the same time I can see on the other side where it is funny. But, um, I didn't really consciously acknowledge different types of Navajo English then. But, um, I guess even maybe, maybe I might even speak a version of it myself and not really know it but (laughs)...

It was interesting in many interviews that participants often turned a discussion of perceptions of Navajo speech to discussions of Navajo speakers, and therefore to Navajo-accented speech in English.

T-Release and Correctness

This section features an analysis of one word and the perceptions and associations coming from its pronunciation. The word, 'identity,' was repeated by participant Speaker F after watching part of a video of Jolyana Begay's TEDx Phoenix talk. The video selection featured Begay, dressed in traditional Navajo attire, introducing herself in Navajo and then translating what she said into English and discussing why Navajos introduce themselves with their four clans. After showing the video selection, I asked Speaker F what made Begay sound Navajo in her usage of English.

I noticed that she's very articulate. Like that was the first thing that I noticed is she's very articulate with her words.

Speaker F then chose to discuss Begay's Navajo speech.

Like that's the other thing I noticed is, um, even when she was, um, introducing herself in Navajo, she's still really articulate. She's clear, loud and the pronunciation of her words is, um, it's, it's, it's clear. It's really clear. Even that part of like where, um, even although she was like speaking really fast, it's like she pronounced every word. She didn't like it sloppy and cut off some words or, you know, um, kind of like joined words together. She's very clear with all her words. That's the one thing I noticed when she was introducing herself, is that although she was speaking really fast, I could still make out the words she was saying.

The evaluation of Navajo as being slow and methodical is a common discourse about the differences between Navajo and English speech, and the concept of "slowness" is sometimes extended to Navajo speakers themselves. Here, Begay's speech is evaluated as "really fast" but "very clear"; this is probably due to Begay's significant practice with public presentations of this kind, having performed many times as Miss Navajo, a Navajo language teacher, and the leader of a Navajo singing group.

Finally, Speaker F moves on to discuss the content of Begay's presentation and brings up the word 'identity' that Speaker F thought Begay used.

So I think she did a really good job explaining, um, the clan system; why we use those four clans and, um, who they belong to and I really liked how she used the word 'identity' ([ajdentəti]). Um, um, how the four clans make up her identity ([ajdentəti]). So I think she did a really good job. I guess translating, um, from

Navajo to English, um. Because I know that's really difficult. That is a difficult thing to do, so that's one thing I noticed, um, in her little intro.

In fact, after her self-introduction in Navajo, Begay never used the word 'identity,' instead repeatedly saying 'identify.'

What I have shared with you is my name, which is Jolyana Begay-Bitsuie, and the four clans that I use to identify myself as a Navajo woman. The first clan belongs to my mother's clan, and they are the Red Running into the Water People. The second clan belongs to my fathers, and they are the Black Streak Wood People clan. The third clan I use to identify myself belonged to my maternal grandfathers, my cheiis. And they are the Red Bottom Cheek people clan. And finally, the fourth clan belongs to my paternal grandfathers, and they are the Giant People of the Red Running into the Water People clan. As a young child, my parents had stressed to me, "Any time you get on stage, any time you meet someone new for the first time, it is absolutely crucial that you identify yourself using your four clans." And so that's what I shared with you today.

(jb_tedxphoenix_6nov10_2)

Probably due to the subject matter – talking about talking about identity – I did not notice Speaker F's replacement of the verb 'identify' with the noun 'identity' until later analyzing this passage in Speaker F's interview and looking for the word in the TEDx video. In fact, Begay does not say the word 'identity' at all in the TEDx talk, nor in her interview. She does, however, pronounce 'identify' ([ajdentəfaj]) with the same released /t/ that Speaker F uses in 'identity' ([ajdentəti]) when discussing what Speaker F thought Begay said.

Grateful that a participant had engaged in direct evaluation and had focused on a specific word, I asked Speaker F more about the pronunciation of ‘identity’ as I thought I remembered Begay pronouncing the word.

MM: Um, do you think you say the word ‘identity’ ([ajdɛntəri]) the same way she did?

F: Um, ‘identity’ ([ajdɛntəri])? I mean as far as like pronouncing it or...?

MM: Yeah.

F: Oh, okay. Um, no. I think she was more clear with...

MM: What do you mean by clear?

F: Now that I’m thinking how she said ‘identity’ ([ajdɛntəti]). ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛntəti]). Hmm. I think mine kind of... seemed kind of lazy with that word.

MM: I, I’m so curious; what parts do you think are lazy?

F: The, um, T-I, T-Y

MM: Okay.

F: Like I don’t...

MM: ‘T-’, ‘t-’

F: Yeah, like it... I kind of shorten my ‘ti’ within the T-I ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛntəti]). Yeah, see like it drags, ‘identity.’ ‘Identity.’ She was... she said ‘identity’ ([ajdɛntəri]). Yeah, she’s more clear with hers. Mine is different. Yeah.

This time, Speaker F assigned the double released-/t/ pronunciation to Speaker F’s own pronunciation and produced Begay’s pronunciation with a flap for the second /t/ ([ajdɛntəri]). Interestingly, Speaker F stated that Begay’s pronunciation with a flap is

“clear” while the pronunciation releasing both /t/s “drags.” A study of Navajo perceptions of released /t/ would be important future research.

In an attempt to distinguish among varieties of English in this discussion of variation, I gave Speaker F my own pronunciation of ‘identity,’ which contained no released /t/.

MM: So, what about... or at least in my perception, um, standard English that you would hear and of course I’m using my own experience just around many people I know who would, um, very often be white would say identity and not pronounce those ‘ti’s.

F: Oh, okay.

MM: So saying it slowly: ‘identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]).

F: ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]).

MM: Yeah, ‘identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]).

F: Oh! Interesting.

MM: Does that sound strange to you? ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛnəri])?

F: ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]). It does.

MM: Is that a form you would use?

F: No. Even though I like... I kind of like the ‘ti’. (Laughs)

MM: (Laughs).

F: ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛntəti]). ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]).

MM: ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛntəti]).

F: Yeah. ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]). Yeah, that sounds weird without pronouncing the T.

MM: ‘Identity’ ([ajdɛnəri])?

F: Yeah. I... ‘identity’ ([ajdɛntəti]). Yeah, I don’t know, like ‘identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]), ‘identity’ ([ajdɛntəti]). So ‘identity’ ([ajdɛnəri]) is the proper way to say it?

Speaker F agrees that my “white” pronunciation “sounds strange” and notes that it “sounds weird” without pronouncing the /t/. Most notably, though, is not the mild evaluation of singularity in another social group’s pronunciation but the association of correctness with that social group’s pronunciation. In a conversation with a white student of linguistics who shares her own pronunciation and links it to race, Speaker F seems pressed to ask or assume that my way “is the proper way to say it.” (Of course, we spent some time discussing dialect variation and I tried to communicate that my pronunciation wasn’t “right,” just different.) As discussed previously, though, experience may have taught Speaker F that social factors disseminating prestige and stigma do not merely allow for un-valued “difference.”

Studies of /t/-release have noted its association with female adolescent “nerds” (Bucholtz, 1995, 2001), Jews (Benor, 2004), a gay lawyer (Podesva, 2007), and others. Normal intra-individual variation gives rise to released /t/ in some contexts but not others, though in various recent studies in sociophonetics /t/ release has been found to be more common in some social groups. In the case of Navajo English, /t/-release was observed numerous times in this. Speaker F, by far the most eager participant to discuss features of Navajo English, offered more examples of /t/-release in the discussion that followed our conversation about the word ‘identity,’ since Speaker F’s mother, in a quest to produce mainstream English, taught Speaker F to emphasize /t/.

Um, she wanted me... you know, she put an emphasis like on the Ts, like, um... because I, I couldn't say 'can't' [kænt]). I just, I guess I would not say the T. I don't know.

In other cases, some words are enregistered according to their lack of /t/-release; such as Speaker F's description of pronouncing 'perfect' and 'correct.'

I've heard 'perfectly' [pəɪfəkli] you know, um, my mother has this thing about how to fix a bed and she always used to say, um, to crease the lines, so it would be like 'perfect' [pəɪfək].

Speaker F even associated /t/-release in the word 'correct' with sarcasm, showing that at times /t/-release can connote sarcasm or a stance opposite to an utterance's literal meaning.

Yeah, it's like 'correct'... even if you say it right, um, they don't try and put an emphasis if you're not trying... I think if you're not trying to be sarcastic, you just say 'correc' instead of going like 'correct,' you know.

This may have relevance to other studies on released /t/, including perhaps the common association among the social groups discussed above: the perception of prestige or elitism (even if perceived in a negative way to outsiders). Striving to be correct with released /t/ is certainly an enregistered feature of current Navajo English. As I have discussed, it was often difficult to elicit features of Navajo English in my interviews, but Speaker B offered /t/-release with no prior guidance when I asked about her linguistic choices as Miss Navajo speaking English.

MM: “I wonder if you have any recollections about during your time as Miss Navajo or in other contexts, how did you want your English to sound in order to be persuasive?”

B: “Mmm. I think when you’re talking to the community there, I think inherently you begin to bring, um, just like an accent. Certain ways that you uh, speak English become more prominent. So like saying “T” prominent or uh, try... you know trying to relate to the people in that way and, and speaking slow... more slowly and um, feeling more connected to the people by not sounding like a white person, essentially.”

Again, the features of /t/-release and slow speech are part of an enregistered Navajo English variety that Speaker F identified as appropriate to “feeling more connected to the people by not sounding like a white person.” Perhaps using released /t/ in a pattern opposite from the pattern used in standard English is the manner in which released /t/ or unreleased /t/ produces the accent required to speak with or in front of other Navajos.

These patterns are diverse and not standardized, with plenty of variation within individuals as well as communities of practice. At the same time that a focus on “correctness” also corresponds with producing a noticeably vernacular utterance, stereotypes about language usage in a variety become apparent. For example, in a post on the Facebook page “You Know You’re Navajo When...”, a commenter writes,

LMJAO! I just heard a Navajo doot say, “Check it out on da innernet on PBR.con” in broken inlish. PBR.con iss (shde_fbyouknowwhen_8jul14)

The above statement begins with “Laughing my jumping ass off” and employs several enregistered features of Navajo English from Cook and Sharp (Bartelt, 1981, from Cook

& Sharp, 1966), such as devoicing the final consonant in “dude”, [ð] becoming [d] in “da,” alveolarizing the nasal in word-final position in “PBR.con,” representing the velar nasal as an alveolar nasal /n/ in “inlish” (Schaengold, 2004), and “iss” meaning something like “Really?” with sarcasm or laughter. The spelled pronunciations (or “eye dialect”) in this Facebook comment highlight Navajo English features and stereotypes about Navajo interests, such as rodeo (PBR.com is the site for Professional Bull Riding), and speech (“broken inlish” and non-released /t/ in “innernet”). The fact that standard English pronunciation also typically deletes the first /t/ in ‘internet’ seems not to be noticed by this speaker. The enregistered usages – even those that are common in standard English speech – demonstrate third-level indexicality for these specific features of Navajo English and the stigma these stereotypes establish.

As this chapter shows, current speakers of Navajo English use more features than already represented in the literature about Navajo English or Indian Englishes, and speaker awareness of these features varies significantly. Future research would quantify more of these features and more carefully measure the attitudes toward these features to gauge the enregisterment of Navajo English features for the purposes of education and anti-discrimination efforts.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In her (1997) book *English with an Accent*, from which this dissertation adapts its title, Rosina Lippi-Green asserts: “There is something deeply inequitable and unacceptable about the practice of excluding the few from the privileges of the many on the basis not of what they have to say, but of how they say it” (p. xv). Sadly, several of the Navajo individuals interviewed for this study related occasions on which they had been excluded from privileges or social groups, laughed at, and even told that their language was ill-formed or “broken.” This project emerged from that very discourse describing discrimination when I was in the introductory Navajo language course at Diné College, in which several students introduced themselves and their family members as speaking “broken English.” Students of the Arizona State University Navajo language courses frequently did the same.

In addition to being troubled by the ubiquity of the “broken English” designation when referring to the well-formed variety of Navajo English, I remain unsettled by the associations connecting the Navajo language, “broken English,” and a “Jáan” identity (speaking a code-mixing “Johnglish,” as one individual characterized the variety of Navajo English). Clearly, the persecution of Navajo individuals for their fluency in either Navajo or Navajo English has caused great harm to children and families, and has affected their educations and the choices they make about living on- or off-reservation for the rest of their lives.

The issue of Navajo language revitalization is not just timely while the rates of children learning Navajo as a first language decrease rapidly; the ongoing controversy surrounding Navajo Nation presidential eligibility demonstrates the conflicting ideologies

of the ideal Navajoness that represents a Nation, whether it be fluency in Navajo language or success in education and business. Finally, as a human rights issue, the importance of recognizing Navajo English as a valid variety of English and a marker of identity cannot be diminished. As Webster and Peterson (2011) note, “‘English’ and Native American Englishes are important ways of speaking and writing for many Native communities” (p. 8). Furthermore, as Webster and Belin agree, “It is time to understand Navajo English as a Navajo (Diné) language” (Webster, 2011, p. 80).

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