Narrative Language Pedagogy and the stabilization of indigenous languages

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ABSTRACT: This paper discusses recent trends in language pedagogy that emphasize movement from a psycholinguistic to a more sociocultural view of language teaching and learning. Nourished primarily by sociocultural theory and Hinton's (2002, 2003) efforts to promote the stabilization of indigenous languages, the author presents Narrative Language Pedagogy, a model for teaching non-dominant languages that centers on authentic conversations as the focus of instruction.

There is a saying in Irish Gaelic: ‘Tir gan teanga, tir gan anam”, which roughly translates “land without its language, land without a soul.” Language is a living thing; it is the very core of our cultural identity. Sensing its power, colonizers have systematically sought to control or even eradicate it among those they colonize, often with great success. Psycholinguistic pedagogies, rooted in Western Rationalist thought, have served as a tool in this process by abstracting and decontextualizing the way we view language teaching and learning to the point that its inherently cultural nature has been minimized, if not excised. The teaching of indigenous languages, as is the case with the teaching of all languages, cannot and should not ever be divorced from its vibrant cultural heritage. As Hinton (2002) states: "learning your language of heritage also means learning about customs, values, and appropriate behavior" (p. 14). Learning a language for its abstract linguistic properties (grammar) to the exclusion of the social contextual particularities of its meaning and usage only exacerbate the devastating work of conquest and colonization. New directions in foreign language learning research recognize and value the social context of language instruction. After distinguishing these new sociocultural perspectives on language pedagogy from dominant psycholinguistic approaches, I will show how the former serves as a vehicle for Narrative Language Pedagogy, which resonates with many of Hinton's (2002, 2003) ideas regarding the preservation of indigenous languages. Rooted in the principles of Sociocultural Theory, NLP centers on a view of language learning as the sharing of autobiographical and traditional stories.

Psycholinguistic vs. sociolinguistic perspectives

Walk into any mainstream Western language classroom, and typically you will find a teacher explaining an abstract grammar rule in the dominant language, which in many cases, is English. Drills and mechanical activities ensure that students can use the rule much in the same

way they would apply some algebraic or geometric formula. Rarely does one find teachers and students engaged in real communication or in exploring the actual cultural context in which the particular grammar point is used. Such practices, associated with mainstream *cognitive* approaches to teaching and learning, are artifacts of what has come to be known as a Rationalist or Formalist perspective. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1993) describe rationalist or formal thinking as a mechanistic worldview centering on cause-effect, hypothetico-deductive reasoning. Unconcerned with questions of power relations and how they structure our consciousness, formal operational thinkers are content with an objectified, unpoliticized way of seeing teaching and learning. In the study of language teaching and learning, Pennycook (1989) traces the origins of Rationalist approaches to the Enlightenment period in Western thought, with its emphasis on “coherent theorizing" and "emphasis on formal and rule-based study” (p. 598). Rationalist or formal thinking is best exemplified by the influential work of Noam Chomsky, the father of modern linguistics. Chomsky and his followers believe that language learning is largely a matter of universal rule-governed processes in the individual mind. Understanding the nature of language, in this psycholinguistic view, is simply a matter of studying the grammatical properties within every written sentence (Lantolf, 2000). While psycholinguistic researchers and methodologists may quibble about the extent to which the grammar of another language needs to be explicitly taught, as opposed to simply allowing the brain to decode the language rules present in messages in another language, they all agree on one point: it's all our heads. In other words, the particularities of the cultural setting in which language happens is largely irrelevant. Since the Seventies, the emerging field of sociolinguistics argued to the contrary, pointing to the important role of social context in shaping the nature of language. Firth and Wagner (1997), for example, have questioned the field of second language acquisition's adherence to an

“individualistic and mechanistic” view of language phenomena, arguing that it “fails to account in a satisfactory way for interactional and social dimensions of language” (p. 285).

The most potent counterargument to the individualistic view of language learning naturally came from a collectivistic culture, the Soviet Union. Vygotsky (1986) is regarded by many as the figurehead for a more sociocultural view of how we learn languages. Vygotsky, building on the work of Piaget and other Western theorists, presented a dialogic view of learning in which the human genetic endowment and its dynamic cultural context are in a constant conversation. A major feature of this process is the use of tools, which enable us to shape our environment. Tools, which are responsible for creating the diverse cultural expressions that are all around us, present themselves in two major varieties: physical tools, such as those used for gardening or warfare, and what he called semiotic or psychological tools, such as a string tied around the finger to remember something, or the stock phrases teachers use to conduct a class, the act of figuring out a math problem in one's head, or classifying a particular word or phrase. Of all the psychological tools, language is the most important because it enables us to make meaning of our environment by negotiating, shaping and categorizing physical and psychological reality. Vygotsky, unlike Rationalist thinkers, refused to see our natural mental endowment as independent from its environment: the two are seen as fundamentally inseparable, constantly entwined in the act of making meaning. Think about any word you learned, and how its meaning has changed over the years into an ever-growing conceptual network of associations and uses within a given cultural context. If rationalists main concern is decoding syntax and morphology-the algebra of linguistic forms, sociolinguists following Vygotsky see language in a more dynamic, *semantic* light, as something that is constantly negotiated from the most mundane interactions to the long-term evolution of our cultures. Sociolinguists refuse to decontextualize

Figure 1: Comparison of psycholinguistic and sociocultural views on language learning

Basis of comparison	**Sociocultural**	**Psycholinguistic**
Authors	Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (U.S.S.R.)	Noam Chomsky, Stephen Krashen (U.S.)
Cultural influence	Collectivistic: Marxist social psychology	Individualistic: Western Rationalist discourse
Associated fields	Sociocultural Theory	Second Language Acquisition
Nature vs. nurture	Both nurture and nature	More nature than nurture
Importance of culture	Language is one of many physical and semiotic tools we use to construct cultural meaning	Culture is largely irrelevant; language learning is an innate, individualistic phenomenon.
Approach	Dialogic, holistic	
View of learner	Transformational: learners as active participants in the development of new sociocultural roles, identities.	Passive transference: input to output processors (mechanistic view).

Sources consulted: Firth and Wagner (1997); Kincheloe and Steinberg (1993); Kinginger (2002); Pennycook (1989)

language into the tidiness of the printed sentence, preferring to see it as a living thing that cannot be separated from its actual use in human interactions in a given cultural setting.

Toward sociocultural approaches to indigenous language instruction: Changing metaphors

In framing the preservation of indigenous languages, the choice of psycholinguistic vs. sociolinguistic teaching approaches has important implications for how we conceptualize both teacher and learner. The psycholinguistic teacher's primary concern is with organizing bits of the language around increasing grammatical complexity. Hinton (2002), for example, suggests presenting lots of sentences using verbs, then moving to nouns, for, it is argued by psycholinguists like Krashen (1985) and Lee and VanPatten (1995), this is the way the individual mind processes and acquires language. While psycholinguists have presented a compelling case for some potential universalities in how languages are learned, it is important to remember that they are a product of Western Society, which, as I mentioned previously, is fond of deductive

logic and decontextualization. The learner is hauled out of the particularities of his or her cultural heritage and viewed as a passive, generic, computer-like input-output processor.

Sociocultural Theory offers a much richer metaphor for the language learner. As Hall (2000) states: “language learners of all ages and levels need to be seen as active, creative participants in the learning process” (p. 294). Language learners under the lens of sociocultural theory are seen as active participants in the creation of new cultural and linguistic identities as they negotiate meaning with their teachers and peers. The core of Hinton's advice regarding the teaching and learning of indigenous languages, I would argue, is better situated in this context.

Hinton (2002), for example, in describing the master-apprentice partnership, discusses the importance of agenda setting between an elder, more expert speaker of an indigenous language and a novice ("Both the master and the apprentice should decide what to do, what to teach, and what to learn", p. xi) and reverence ("the apprentice needs to keep in mind that anything the master wants to teach is of great value, even if it is not what you had in mind at the moment, p. 18). Post-mortem processing offers expert and novice a framework for talking about how their session could be more profitable. Rather than being passive in the process, Hinton suggests that apprentices keep a journal and encourages them to seek clarification and guidance through the indigenous language asking questions like "How do you say? and "What's that…?"

This expert-learner negotiation of meaning, according to Vygotsky (1978), occurs with a **zone of proximal development** or ZPD (‘zo-ped’). The ZPD is measured by the distance between the actual developmental level of the novice with regard to a concept and a next ("proximal") level that may be arrived at through negotiation with an expert other. As Vygotsky puts it, “To introduce a new concept means just to start the process of appropriation” (p. 152). Whether initiated by the teacher or the learner, concept development is an ongoing conversation

between the novice, his expert-other, and cultural influences. Learning within the ZPD helps us navigate and internalize the culturally-determined signs that surround us. Vygotsky described this appropriation process as movement from the interpsychological to intrapsychological realm. Negotiating meaning within the zone of proximal development, in my mind, does more justice to the true richness of the interactions Hinton describes than might a psycholinguistic approach.

In reading Hinton's depictions of the possible conversations that optimally occur between a more proficient elder and a novice speaker of an indigenous language, I realized that the true power of partnerships between masters and apprentices or teachers and learners is fully realized in conversation. In mainstream American education, lost in the abstracted and mechanistic models that are the artifacts of the dominant Rationalist heritage, we have lost sight of the transformative learning that can occur when students engage in real conversation with their teachers. Oakeshotte (1989) is particularly critical of the technical orientation that has taken over mainstream schools, one that stifles a more dynamic view of conversation in educational settings: “Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis. It is unrehearsed intellectual adventure” (p. 13). Oakeshotte (1989) and other philosophers like Alisdair MacIntyre (1984), like Vygotsky (1986), remind us that conversation functions as a tool to enact and connect personal narratives to the larger stories of societies and histories. Whenever a teacher and learner begin a conversation, they engage the dynamic process of (re-) shaping cultural traditions and practices.

All traditions and practices, from schooling to civic engagement to the arts, are driven by conversation. According to MacIntyre (1984), the health of any cultural practice depends on its ability of its participants to collaboratively “respond creatively to problems” (p. 190) in the pursuit of goals that have intrinsic value. A common characteristic of practices is their narrative

nature, full of “autobiographies written in collaboration with the larger narratives of the history of humanity” (MacIntyre, 1984). According to Fuller (1989, on Oakeshotte): “We are born and grow up in a world of ideas already present and understood in various ways by those preceding us on the scene, and we must learn its features, interpret them and appropriate them to ourselves” (p. 6). This view is consistent with MacIntyre’s (1984) and Vygotskyan (1986) views of the learner as an active agent in the process of appropriating the tools and artifacts of the society for herself. MacIntyre posits what I take to be the central goal of learning language: “the self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities” (1984, p. 221).

When Hinton (2002) encourages language apprenticeships to ask masters about their experiences, this is an important reminder to all language teachers that learning language cannot be divorced from the negotiation of cultural identity within what Kramsch (1994) refers to as *intercultural space*, a zone where the learner integrates the tools and signs commonly encountered in the target culture with those internalized from their own culture. The result is a fundamental shift not only in perspective but also identity that exists somewhere between the learner's first and second culture. My father once had a close encounter in intercultural space while visiting an Ojibway school in St. Paul. As the teacher had the students introduce themselves, each did so in the indigenous language using their given Ojibway name. When the circle came around to the last student, he paused and shifted his glance sheepishly, then proclaimed, "I'm the FONZ!, sticking out his thumbs and crooning "Ayyyyyy!" just like the Henry Winkler character on Happy Days. In my limited capacity to imagine conversations between tribal elders and novice indigenous language speakers, I would anticipate that the context of learning indigenous languages presents a unique and poignant dilemma for the learner, and in some cases for the elder as well. As they exchange their personal narratives, both may

find themselves walking in two worlds: the dominant world of Whiteness and English, and the fading world of their linguistic and cultural heritage. There is a Hungarian proverb that goes: "To have a second language is to have a second soul." While mainstream European-descended learners of non-dominant languages often find this experience to be a stimulating discovery of a "second soul", they are not faced with the eradication of their first, as are many Native Americans and non-English speaking immigrants. Adrienne Rich (1993), in her poem, "Prospective Immigrants Please Note" captures this tension that often exists in the intercultural spaces, particularly for members of non-dominant groups:

> Either you will
> go through this door
> or you will not go through.
>
> If you go through
> there is always risk
> of remembering your name.
>
> Things look at you doubly
> and you must look back
> and let them happen.
>
> If you do not go through
> it is possible
> to live worthily
>
> to maintain your attitudes
> to hold your position
> to die bravely
>
> but much will blind you,
> much will evade you,
> at what cost who knows?
>
> The door itself
> makes no promises.
> It is only a door.

As the poem suggests, the intercultural spaces that open up in teacher learner conversations should be approached with great care. As Hinton (2002) argues, cultural tools have been appropriated and re-fashioned in both directions: from dominant to non-dominant groups and vice-versa. Simon says, as she illustrates, becomes "Coyote says". Regardless of the directionality, conversation emerges as a means of “finding a way to be at home in the world” (Burton, 1989, p. 16). In the learning of second languages, conversations in another language help us find a way to be at home in a multiplicity of worlds.

Introducing Narrative language pedagogy

Teachers and learners in conversation about their experiences represents the focus of what I am advancing as Narrative Language Pedagogy. The use of stories and narratives as teaching tools is not a new concept. It is, in fact, a time-honored context of teaching and learning that has faded with the advent of formal schooling. The idea came to me in my work with Esther Sehnalek (Sehnalek & Warford, 2005). Esther, a Colombian native and gifted writer, had written a series of short semi-autobiographical accounts of her childhood in the rainforests of Colombia. The stories, which were written for her US-born children as a way of communicating their heritage, were rich with idioms and sayings, and presented an excellent source for the construction of unit plans for use in mainstream K-12 Spanish classrooms. The approach, which is influenced by Vygotskyan pedagogy, the philosophical notion of the conversation, and my reading of Hinton's (2002, 2003) work in the preservation of indigenous languages, is fairly straightforward, but it demands a fundamental shift in the way teachers and learners view their roles. While the focus is always on ongoing conversations between teachers and learners, the central mission for both parties is a sort of anthropological adventure, one of exploring and appropriating linguistic and cultural practices. For this reason, there are essentially two major

concerns to address: 1) setting up the communication structure of the lessons, and 2) selecting authentic materials that complement the topics that come up in the instructional conversation. Like Breen's (1986) notion of the classroom as a coral garden, NLP is always authentic and organic, connected and every-growing.

Setting up the communication structure

In talking about establishing the context of indigenous language learning, Hinton (2002) states: "Live your daily life together. Don't think of this time together as outside your normal patterns of living". It has often been said that the ideal language class should flow naturally, like a good conversation. The instructional setting of a NLP class should strive for virtual representation of the customs and tools of the language and culture that is being taught, including the classroom procedures selected by the participants. Hinton (2002) makes the case that everyday teacher talk, can be carefully varied in order to maximize the provision of indigenous language samples learners can use for acquisition. In addition to offering opportunities to interpret and negotiate meaning in the indigenous language, the most common instructional activities, from introductions and greetings and roll calls, to discussing directions and rules, transitioning, and explaining aspects of the indigenous culture, serve to educate the learner regarding culturally-accepted practices. While the activity structure should be open to negotiation between experts and learners, the emphasis should be on re-creating insofar as it is possible, the ways physical and semiotic tools are used by native speakers of the indigenous language. Because NLP centers on rich conversation, there should be a lot of opportunity for open, extended communication about things going on in the participants' lives. Hinton (2002) refers to this as classroom patter. Rapport-building in the language that is being taught is essential because it breaks down distance, revealing the second language as responsive to their

lived experiences and interests. From the very beginning, teachers and learners should share personal backgrounds, beginning with the basic information and eventually leading to stories from lived experiences. The teacher might begin by introducing him or herself with an artifact, such as a ceremonial attire, that expresses who they are or by teaching students their clan name and introducing members of the family.

As Hinton (2002) warns, one of the struggles in the early stages will be sticking to the indigenous language. With the help of props, gestures, facial expressions, and active clarification seeking by the learners, the use of English can be minimized. English, which may for many indigenous language learners, represent their base language of literacy, has already been ingrained as a tool for making meaning (Brooks & Donato, 1994). Until the learner has acquired enough of the indigenous language to seek clarification in the language he or she is learning, its removal from classroom discourse only hampers the learning process. This does not mean, however, that the teacher necessarily has to fall back on English. In discourse analysis of foreign language classrooms, a common pattern of teacher-learner interaction centers on the student's asking questions in English and the teacher responding in the target language.

As students begin to comprehend messages from the teacher in the indigenous language about who they are, they will naturally want to share similar information with peers and teacher. As the conversation expands, related topics will present themselves for further exploration in successive lessons. Cultural artifacts and practices, and their meaning to the teacher should always be the engine of curriculum, but the learners' curiosity should be the gearbox that steers that engine, so they should be taught early on the stock phrases that will help them express their curiosity and help them appropriate their own stamp on using the cultural and linguistic tools that the teacher presents. Hinton (2002, 2003) suggests the following topics as frameworks for

linguistic and cultural exploration: attending ceremonies, visiting another speaker, craft construction, ceremonial garb, clan names, exploring the physical environment, prayers, and sweathouse discourse. Such activity not only offers opportunities for learners to unlock the linguistic code (Hinton, 2002), it offers vital material for negotiating personal and cultural meaning in the indigenous language.

Selecting and adapting authentic content for learning activities

Classroom conversations openly constructed around personal narratives will naturally gravitate toward the gathering and study of a variety of authentic cultural products and practices. Rather than depending on the teacher or anthropological experts, students should be encouraged to themselves be anthropologists. Kramsch (2003) refers to authentic texts as *literacy events* that offer glimpses into how native speakers of the target language use their language as a tool to mediate meaning. As students bring in their artifacts, be they photos, stories, or crafts, the conversations should turn to how the culture is expressed. Depending on the age and level of the students, the following dimensions might be explored:

1. Events depicted?
2. Target audience?
3. Purpose?
4. Register (i.e. formal, informal)?
5. A stance or tone (serious, ironic, enthusiastic)?
6. Prior text (relationship to a particular discourse)?
7. Setting/perspective?

In selecting authentic materials for classroom use, Kramsch (2003) distinguishes between literate and orate traditions. While literacy centers on print media, oracy is less fixed and subject

to re-telling and re-shaping. Hinton (2002) reminds us that not all indigenous languages have a printed form. In such instances, audio-visual media may be of particular importance.

Every culture has rich oral traditions. They often take the form of stories, either told, sung, acted out, or some combination of the previous. These stories are at the heart of the language and its cultural code. In French-speaking Africa, there is the tradition of the griot, the tribal storyteller who carries the wisdom of the ancestors (an example of a griot tale used for pedagogical purposes can be found in Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002). In the Spanish-speaking world, we find in Puerto Rico, the plena, an African-European song tradition that sets important historical events and figures to African rhythms. In Irish Gaelic, there is the tradition of the recitation. At public house or pub gatherings where traditional tunes are being played, someone will occasionally spell the musicians with an ancient song in Irish that tells of people and events that are a source of national identity and pride. Some recitations are spoken, others are sung in the *sean nos* unaccompanied style of traditional Irish singing. Storytelling, because of its spontaneity, is often rich with stock phrases, regionalisms, and is more accessible than literary counterparts that may be somewhat constrained by abstraction and formality. According to Hinton (2002), there are indigenous cultures that have rules regarding the appropriate times for storytelling (winter), so such traditions, as would be the case with any teaching and learning tradition constructed around NLP, should be respected and observed. The ideal presentation of stories should be as they were originally intended: with a teller, ideally the teacher, and an audience. The disadvantage to taped stories is that the interaction between the story-teller and audience, which is important in order to tailor the delivery for maximum comprehensibility, is short-circuited. Figure 2 details the main features of orate vs. literate content.

In investigating orality and other discourse practices in the language under study, Judd

Figure 2: Distinctions between oral and written production (Kramsch, 2003)

Category:	Printed situations (literacy)	Verbal situations (orality)
Permanence	*Permanent*	*Impermanent*
Cooperative/ hierarchical	Hierarchical, self-constructed for distant audience	Additive, mutually-reinforcing, co-construction
Spontaneous/ formal	Abstract, logical reasoning	Facilitated by stock phrases
Redundant/ focused	Benefit of time and organization to structure focused message	Need to recycle, paraphrase
Grammar and lexus	Grammatically structured, lexically precise, dense	Grammaticality is loose, lexus is slack (like, and stuff, 'know what I mean...?)
Focus	On topic	On people
Context	...rich, embedded	...dependent, -reduced; need for interlocutor to co-construct context
Relation to global politics	Literate cultures enjoy power and privilege over orate cultures	Literacy is a powerful tool. In a world ruled by literature cultures, orate cultures are at a disadvantage/

(1999) offers the following guidelines for selecting speech acts for classroom exploration:

1. In what situations, if any, will my students employ or encounter the pattern (at work, at home, at play...?)
2. With whom will the pattern be used (native or nonnative speakers of English, friends, associates, acquaintances, teachers, bosses, etc.)?
3. What is the social status of each speaker (equal, superior, inferior)?
4. Are there other factors involved when the speech act will be used (age, gender, etc.)?
5. What topics will be discussed when the speech act is used (clothing, work habits, personal behavior, etc.)?

Generally, language teachers have looked at authentic sources primarily for their ability to deliver examples of a particular grammar point. Remember that grammar is incidental, not central. Some psycholinguistic methodologists have even suggested adapting authentic text by infusing examples of a particular linguistic form. To do so compromises the integrity of the

source as a window into the way language is viewed from inside the culture. Authentic sources should be treated as sacred. Adulterating them is tantamount to linguistic colonization.

In setting up lessons around a particular authentic text, pre-reading, viewing, or listening activity will serve to activate the learners' background knowledge related to the source content. The teacher should also help students identify and understand unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases. As the selection is presented, the emphasis should always be on comprehension, not grammar, and processing should always be dialogic, with the learners actively stating hypotheses and asking questions about the meaning of the words and the story presented.

An intermediary, but not necessary, step in the reading comprehension phase borrows from VanPatten's (2003) model of input processing. To accompany the reading, the teacher may prepare a true false or fill-in-the blank exercises that test comprehension while simultaneously training learners' attention to a particular form. For example, if it is a story, the teacher might pose some simple alternate response questions (true/false? this person/that person?) about things that happened. Though there is no explicit discussion of the past tense or how to form it, it's there for the learners to use for acquisition. Learners, rather than assuming the conventional computer-processor mode forced on them by similar psycholinguistic approaches, may naturally inquire about the language forms to appear and what they mean. In Vygotskyan terms, this would put the past tense forms on their developmental radar, making them valuable material for negotiation within the zone of proximal development.

More central to the exploration of the text, is to stay within the questions presented earlier in relation to making meaning of literacy events in the indigenous language. Following the reading, depending on the level of the students, there are a variety of extension activities that will flow naturally from processing the authentic source. Corcoran and Evans (1987) have posited a

variety of ways to make meaning of text. Rather than the traditional book report, the teacher might have the students re-tell the story from another person's perspective or write their own ending, or prepare their own personalized version. Hinton (2002), for example, suggests that, after processing an elder's story, students prepare a play adaptation. This kind of play offers the learners ample opportunity to appropriate the linguistic and cultural meanings they have encountered for themselves. Multiplying meanings is the key. The experience should be personalized, and all participants should feel safe sharing their responses to what they read without criticism or judgment.

The Mingo tale of a friendship gone bad (Figure 3 below), Teyaknyatkánye'skwa' (McElwain, 2006), lends itself to a NLP lesson centering on the experience of coming into awareness of racial prejudice. It would most likely be appropriate for middle school-age learners, since this is the age we typically begin to develop curiosity around issues of race. I use this example to illustrate that, contrary to mainstream classrooms, NLP lessons would openly embrace issues of cultural identity. I also selected it to illustrate that narrative does not have to be reserved for older, more advanced students. In terms of size, it is relatively brief; nonetheless, in a short time, and with a manageable set of language to comprehend, it raises many important questions about the experience of racism.

A lesson using this text might begin with the teacher asking students in the target language about the first time they felt they were treated differently because of their race. He or she may help them understand the question by sharing a personal story using props, miming, gestures, and acting out the incidents. The students may need to respond in English, but the teacher can coach them in the indigenous language along the way so that they see how their story might be constructed in that language. In preparing students for the story, the teacher might first

go over new terms with them or teach them Total Physical Response Storytelling gestures to help them remember the meanings (i.e. miming people arguing with the hands to remember "argue").

In processing the story, the teacher might ask students alternate response questions like "Who was Ricky Bass? Was he Mingo or White?". Always wait before offering the alternate response just in case a student is able to answer without the prompt. A variety of literacy event-related questions could also be posed here: Who is telling this story? What is the feeling of this story? Why do you think Ricky sprayed the children by riding his bike through the mud puddle? These could lead to more reader response questions like: How would you respond to Ricky?

After constructing an understanding of the story, the teacher might help students construct the major incidents surrounding their first experience with prejudice. If that's too tender for some students to process, you might offer the option of writing a letter to Ricky's father.

Certainly, the lesson will produce some profound conversations, which in turn, will lead to new topics and new explorations, ad infinitum.

Conclusion

The struggle to preserve indigenous language has a lot to teach the wider milieu of language teaching. Nothing engenders more value for the pursuit of a second soul than a deeper awareness of what it is like to have your first one threatened with extinction. Under such circumstances, it is impossible to lose sight of the vital interdependence between language and culture. It is equally impossible to remain indifferent to the dominant psycholinguistic view of language learning, its connection to the ways of colonizing societies, and the clear advantage of sociocultural approaches, in terms of their respect for the central role social context plays in shaping our language and thinking. Narrative Language Pedagogy, with its emphasis on language learning as an authentic conversation, is a natural application of a social view of

Figure 3: Sample story for NLP lesson: *Teyaknyatkánye'skwa'* (McElwain, 2006).

Tuskëö nae työkwanöhsút thë'tyôtak ne Ricky Bass.	*Ricky Bass lived near our house.*
Ne' wai ne wêtö ti'kwa teyaknyatkánye'skwa'.	*Sometimes we used to play together.*
Ne' n-únë te'akashææ'ö të'ë kúwá u'tyakniiwakéha'.	*I don't remember what caused us to argue.*
Ukwényô íwí ne hu'ni waë' ne' te'aö ëyaknyatkányé' kës.	*I think it may have been that his father told him he couldn't play with me.*
Nö'yönishe't ta'teyaknyatkánye'skwa'.	*Then we didn't play for a long time.*
Ta unë nö'ôwë uka'stææ'ke akwatkánye'skwa' shô, ne' únë waa'se' teka'sehta' teka'niskææyë' ne'hu huikê uka'stææ'ke.	*One day some of us children were playing in a mud-puddle, and then he rode his bicycle through the puddle.*
Akwaksa'shö'ö kakwékö nae wa'akwatya'tatkit.	*All of us children got dirty.*
Akhistö wai ne teka'niskææyë' waeya'tyénët ne Ricky.	*I pushed his bicycle over and Ricky fell down.*
Waastaë' waahtêti' shô.	*He started crying and went home.*
Hatínyö'ö.	*They were White people.*

language instruction. Though the model may not repair centuries of linguistic colonization, it may serve to open spaces for deeper levels of linguistic and cultural proficiency that give equal weight to non-Western ways of speaking and knowing, one classroom at a time.

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