Native California Languages and Intersecting Identities

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Native California
Native California Languages

California Tribal Linguistic Groups

- Athapaskan
- Algonquian
- Hokan
- Penutian
- Uto-Aztecan
- Yukian

California Indian Library Collections
Deploying linguistic resources

• Cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991)
• Performativity (Butler 1990)
• Language socialization (Ochs 2000; Garret and Baquedano-Lopez 2002)
• Linguistic community/Speech community (Silverstein 1998)
Language revitalization in California

- Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program
- Breath of Life Language Restoration Program
- Language classes in public schools
- Bilingual education programs
Native California languages as framing devices

• Code-switching in public contexts
  – marks community membership,
  – frames the speech event as a Native event,
  – primes audience response.

• Language use, regardless of speaker fluency or hearer comprehension, is cultural capital, and is understood as such by members of other Tribes, and by outsiders
Gender in discourse

• Silence
  – As a means of controlling discourse;
  – As a reflection of traditional divisions of conversational space.

• Interpretations of silence:
  – As powerful, appropriate, tied to traditional cultural practice;
  – As powerless, as a form of restriction.
Conclusions
Or, further questions

• California:
  – Site for implementation of policies with effects on Tribal sovereignty, languages, and cultures;
  – Site for the development of a broader Native Californian identity.
• Language use in performance of these multiple identities is complex, creative, powerful.
• How is this use of language to engage simultaneously in both inward- and outward-facing identity work paralleled in other language communities in the state?