

Language Activism and Language Revitalization

Susan D. Penfield (University of Arizona)

Language activism is an often overlooked but critical element in revitalization work. This paper presents a framework for understanding language activism in the context of endangered language communities, specifies two levels of language activism, reviews activities undertaken by language activists and argues for training specifically in language activism. Examples of training possibilities are drawn from the presenters own fieldwork with US Indigenous communities and from the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI) where she is a frequent instructor. The central argument is that without increasing the role of language activism, revitalization is difficult to initiate or sustain. In sum, language activism is defined here to be something to actively pursue, to specifically train for and not to passively assume.