

# WHEN ISLANDS LOSE DIALECTS

The Case of the Ocracoke Brogue

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## Abstract

The transformation of many small islands from isolated, subsistence-based economies into well-known and desired tourist sites is often accompanied by significant language change and recession in ancestral island communities, a growing topic of concern in the field of sociolinguistics. This discussion considers language change and recession on the island of Ocracoke, a small barrier island located off the coast of North Carolina in the US. It demonstrates how language change is related to shifting social and economic factors and intra- and inter-community relationships on the island. In the process, it also challenges the accepted definition of language endangerment in mainstream linguistics and argues on theoretical, historical, and cultural grounds for the inclusion of minority dialects threatened by dominant, mainstream varieties of English in the endangerment canon.

## Keywords

Sociolinguistics, dialect, language endangerment, language change, Ocracoke

## Introduction

Islands are well-known sites for the development of distinct language varieties, ranging from the independent evolution of vernacular varieties to the abrupt reconfiguration of hybrid language varieties resulting from language contact situations. The sociolinguistic literature is replete with descriptions of distinct island language varieties (eg Labov, 1963; Bakker and Mous, 1994; Schreier, 2003; Schneider et al, 2004; Long, 2007) that index the socio-cultural and socio-historical uniqueness of island communities. At the same time, the notion of a static, traditional island language variety is inconsistent with the dynamics of ongoing language change affecting island language varieties as well as other language varieties. Indeed, the twenty-first century perspective on islands — instantly accessible electronically and often more physically accessible than many mainland sites — should challenge the nostalgic notion that their language exists in marginalised, romantic isolation. In fact, the rapid transition of post-insular language varieties represents one of the most critical dimensions of current sociolinguistic description and explanation. What happens when the socio-historical isolation that fostered linguistic divergence is transformed by economic, political, and social factors that make the language a minority variety in its home site? Do island communities reconfigure their varieties to maintain

distinctiveness as their traditional varieties are inundated by speakers from the outside? And what sociolinguistic responses might be adopted by islanders who suffer the loss of an emblematic language variety?

In this paper, I describe the changing language on Ocracoke Island, a barrier island located on the Outer Banks of North Carolina in the US. For the past 15 years a research team from North Carolina State University led by the author (henceforth, “we”) have been documenting the traditional language variety and attempting to understand language change in one of the longest-standing English-speaking island communities in the US (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1997; Wolfram, Hazen, and Schilling-Estes, 1999a). We have conducted interviews with more than 100 ancestral islanders over a 15-year time span, representing approximately a third of the population of native islanders.<sup>2</sup> In the process, we have described the traditional linguistic traits of this unique island variety of English, and examined how and why the island variety has undergone extensive change (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1995; Schilling-Estes and Wolfram, 1999).



Figure 1: Ocracoke Island

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### From Obscurity to Celebration

The recognition of Ocracoke Island as the “Best Beach in the US” (Associated Press, June 8, 2007) marked a symbolic milestone in the transformation of this narrow barrier island on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, completing its emergence from a once-obscure village site based on a marine subsistence economy into a celebrated tourist site. As the national television crews descended on Ocracoke to broadcast the announcement of this prestigious award, the staff of “Dr. Beach” - Florida International University Professor Stephen Leatherman - reported that they “didn't know where to find it on the map” and Dr. Beach himself proclaimed that “It's not the end of the world, but you can see it from here” (Associated Press, June 8, 2007: 1). Although Ocracoke is only accessible by ferry — a 45-minute ride from the end of a connected string of barrier islands to the north and a two-and-a-half hour ride across the Pamlico Sound to the west—it is difficult to imagine tourists gazing towards the end of the world as they stand in a queue for a meal at a fashionable restaurant or anxiously search for a “vacancy” sign in one of the dozens of motels serving tourists during the height of a tourist season that extends from April to November.

The three centuries of European residency on Ocracoke, following periodic habitation of the island by Native American Algonquian Indians, have not, of course, been without noteworthy historical activity. Roanoke Island, the site of the first North American English-speaking settlement and the infamous Lost Colony in the 1580s, is one of the Outer Banks barrier islands linked to Ocracoke. Furthermore, the Atlantic Ocean by the Outer Banks has become known as the “graveyard of the Atlantic” because of the frequency of shipwrecks caused by the ever-shifting Gulf Stream and the turbulent weather patterns that expose this area to more hurricanes than any other region of the US. And the celebrated pirate Edward Teach, commonly known as Blackbeard, met his untimely death at the hands of the Royal Navy off the shore of Ocracoke in 1718.

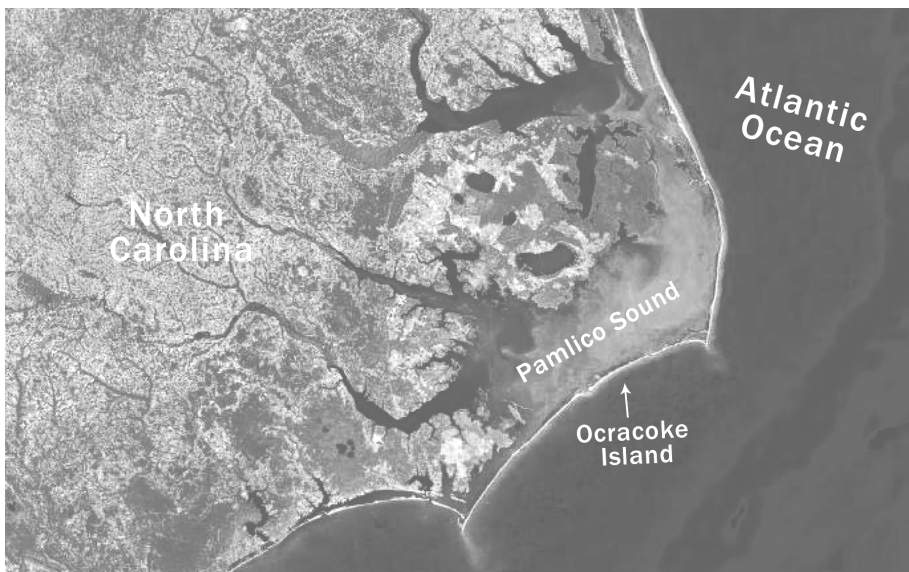


Figure 2: Ocracoke Island (Adapted from Google Satellite Maps)

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Ocracoke Village, located within a square mile toward the southernmost end of the island, is the only inhabited area; the 13 miles of beach north of the village, sometimes separating the Pamlico Sound from the Atlantic Ocean by less than a hundred meters, is protected as a natural preservation area. The island, settled mostly by the British who came by water from Virginia in the first decade of the 1700s, was originally named Pilot Town for the pilots who guided ships through the inlets into the shallow waters of the Pamlico Sound separating the Outer Banks from the mainland US by as much as 20 miles at some points. The British were joined later by some Irish settlers, and there are today several prominent Irish families still living on the island.

The isolation of the island from the mainland for several centuries contributed to the development of a variety of English that is arguably as distinct as any regional dialect of English in the US (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1997). Furthermore, it is one of the few dialects in the US that is still identified as non-American. Even the British do not identify it as North American. At one point in our study of Outer Banks English, the prominent British dialectologist, Peter Trudgill, visited the Outer Banks with our research team. He took back some recorded samples of Outer Banks speech and played them to a group of native speakers of British English in Essex, England, located in East Anglia. The 15 listeners were unanimous in attributing the Outer Banks speech samples to England, with most people “opting for an origin in the ‘West Country’ — that is, southwestern England” (e-mail from Peter Trudgill, 1995). Symbolically, the unique dialect of the Outer Banks, referred to simply as ‘The Brogue’, ‘Hoi Toider Speech’, or ‘Banker Speech’, directly indexes islanders. The important qualification, however, and the sociolinguistic story related to Ocracoke, is the fact that fewer and fewer Ocracoke natives use this distinct variety and its dissipation seems inevitable.

### Economic and Cultural Transformation

After two and a half centuries of relative isolation from the mainland US, Ocracoke Island underwent a significant economic and social transformation in the mid-twentieth century. The paving of a road and the establishment of daily ferry service resulted in the development of a tourist industry that has shown unrelenting growth, bounded only by the restriction of development within a square-mile village located at the south end of the island. The economically challenged, marine-based economy was transformed into a vibrant service-based tourist industry that caters to the tourists for up to 8 months of the year, and most islanders now work in the service industry, maintaining the motels, restaurants, tourist shops, and other establishments that serve tourists. Though a few men still fish, none can earn a living exclusively from this occupation, though their involvement in fishing expeditions and other water-related activities for tourists has provided a type of functional substitute for the rapidly disappearing fishing industry.

Currently, Ocracoke Island is home to approximately 700 year-round residents, hosting 4,000-6,000 visitors a day during the height of the tourist season. Slightly less than half of the permanent residents are ancestral islanders, or *O’cockers*, the term used by islanders for those who can trace their family heritage on the island for at least several generations. In fact, many residents maintain detailed genealogies that trace their heritage on the islands back to the 1700s, leaving no doubt about their status as ancestral islanders.

## Characteristics of Traditional Ocracoke Speech

Although a comprehensive description of the linguistic structures associated with the Ocracoke Brogue is beyond the scope of this discussion (see Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1997; Wolfram et al, 1999), it is helpful to offer a brief overview of some of its distinguishing dialect traits. The most distinguishing features of pronunciation are several vowel sounds, although there are a number of other pronunciation differences described by dialectologists (eg, Howren, 1962; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1997; Wolfram et al, 1999). The pronunciation of the long *i* vowel sound in words like *time* and *high*, which sound something like *toim* and *hoi*, is directly indexed in one of the traditional labels for people from the Outer Banks, *Hoi Toiders*, an iconic imitation of this distinctive vowel sound. Although outsiders often caricature the pronunciation as sounding like the *oy* vowel of *boy* or *toy*, the actual production is more like the combination of the *uh* sound of *but* and the *ee* sound of *beet*, so that the Outer Banks pronunciation of *tide* really sounds something like *t-uh-ee-d*. Of course, the Outer Banks is not the only region where this vowel production is found. It is characteristic of particular regions in the British Isles and in the English of Australia and New Zealand, and even in some parts of the US (for example, New York City) though it does not receive anywhere near as much symbolic attention in other locations as it does in coastal North Carolina.

While visitors and some Outer Banks residents focus on the distinctiveness of the *i* sound in *tide*, there are other vowels that are just as distinctive, and perhaps even more distinguishing among American dialects. The production of the vowel in words like *sound* and *brown* is every bit as distinct, but it is not nearly as salient to islanders. The vowel sound of *brown* sounds closer to the vowel of *brain* and the word *round* sounds like *rained* so that outsiders have been known to confuse words like *brown* and *brain* or *round* and *rained*.

Another pronunciation trait is the vowel in words like *caught* and *bought*, which is produced closer to the vowel sound in words like *put* or *book*. This pronunciation is unique among American English dialects and sounds more like its production in many British dialects than it does in most varieties of American English. In fact, it is one of the features that make outsiders think that Outer Banks English is more like British English or Australian English than American English.

There are also noteworthy lexical and grammatical traits. Although many dialect words are associated with Ocracoke, there are actually very few words that are unique to the island; in fact, we found only a few dozen out of the hundreds of dialect words used in this area. Words like *meehonkey* 'hide and seek', or the special meaning of words for outsiders, like *dingbatter* or *touron*, a blend of 'tourist' and 'moron', seem to be among the few newly coined items in these varieties. However, there are also some unique nuances of meanings assigned to Outer Banks dialect words that are shared with other areas as well. For example, the use of the word *mommuck*, an older English word found in the works of William Shakespeare, has developed a meaning on the Outer Banks that sets it apart from both its original meaning as well as the meaning it has developed in other regions. In Shakespeare it refers to 'tearing apart' in a literal sense (eg "Or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and tear it! O, I warrant, how he mammocked it." *Coriolanus*, I.iii.66-67), whereas on the Outer Banks its meaning has been extended to refer to mental or physical harassment (eg *The young' uns were mommucking me*). Lexical items also reinforce an important point about Outer Banks island speech, namely, that it is the combination of the old with the new that defines its current state. For

example, words like *mommuck*, *quamish*, (meaning 'upset' as in *quamished in the gut*), and *token of death* (meaning 'an unusual sign of impending death', such as a rooster crowing in the middle of the day) are all words that have been in the English language for centuries. On the other hand, words like *dingbatter* and *touren* for 'outsiders', are relatively new. In fact, our research on the term *dingbatter* shows that it was adopted from the popular 1970s American television sitcom *All in the Family*. Prior to that time, terms like *foreigner* and *stranger* were used for outsiders. The observation that the term *foreigners* might be applied to those from the mainland US along with those from other countries is probably symbolic of the divide that existed between *Hoi Toiders* and those on the mainland. *Bankers* (another common term for residents of the Outer Banks a century ago) simply did not feel very connected with the mainland, particularly with the land-locked regions that did not offer ready access to the sea, the sounds, the rivers, and the marshland found along the coast. There are also numerous dialect words associated with the local marine ecology such as *slick cam* for 'smooth water', *lightering* for an activity in which the heavy cargo from large sailing ships was placed on smaller vessels that were able to navigate in the shallow waters of the Pamlico Sound, and *camelback* for a small rise or hump in the sand along the beach, to say nothing of the local terms for different species of fish (eg *fatback* for 'menhaden').

There are also grammatical differences that typify Ocracoke speech, but only a couple of them are unique. The use of *weren't* where other dialects use *wasn't*, as in *I weren't there* or *It weren't in the house*, is only found in the immediate region, the use of the preposition *to* for *at* as in *She's to the house tonight* is restricted regionally. The use of *-s* on verbs with plural subjects (*The dogs barks every night*) is characteristic of this variety, but it is also found in other historically isolated dialects as well, such as those in Appalachia, as is the use of the *uh* sound of *a-* prefix before verbs in *The dogs was a-huntin' the possum*. The grammar of Ocracoke may not add many novel dialect features to the dialect, but it is certainly part of the overall profile that makes the Ocracoke Brogue what it is. While pronunciation remains the primary topic of conversation for outsiders and residents alike, vocabulary and grammar are essential ingredients of the dialect mix that makes the variety unique.

Although some of the features of the Ocracoke Brogue are retentions of older forms of English that have died out in other contemporary dialects of English - so-called 'relic forms' - it is important to dispel one of the most common language myths about the dialect: that it represents the preservation of Elizabethan or Shakespearean English. This romantic notion is not uncommon, and has been offered to me as the explanation for Ocracoke speech by observers who include some of my colleagues in the English department as well as casual visitors to the Outer Banks. In fact, at one point during a field visit to Ocracoke, a television crew from the British Broadcasting Corporation showed up with the plays of William Shakespeare for the residents to read, intending to record the sounds of the bard through the voices of current Ocracoke residents. The crew seemed disappointed but undeterred by my insistence that this was a romantic myth, and several weeks later I received a number of messages from friends and colleagues around the world informing me that the BBC and CNN International had aired a story claiming that Shakespearean English had been located on the Ocracoke Island in North Carolina. I had not convinced the producers of one of the most foundational truths about language - that all languages are constantly changing - but I also learned a lesson about the strength of preconceived language notions and dialect mythmaking. Ocracoke English certainly has retained some older forms of English, but at the same time it has combined them with innovative items. Thus, a contemporary sentence such as

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*Dingbatters sure do mommuck us during the summer* juxtaposes the relic form *mommuck* with the innovative term *dingbatters* from a modern-day sitcom in a completely natural combination of something old with something new. Such is the natural and ordinary life of everyday language, a constantly changing phenomenon in isolation as well as in densely populated areas.

### The Changing Brogue

When social and historical circumstances dramatically change a community and an isolated language variety becomes a minority language within the very community where it evolved, it becomes highly vulnerable to change. The tourists and new residents who bring much-needed money to the island also pose a threat to the traditional Ocracoke way of life. The threat to the traditional dialect is very real, and the dialect seems to be dissipating within several generations. In fact, most of our sociolinguistic descriptions (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1995; Schilling-Estes and Wolfram, 1999) have focused on how the traditional dialect has been receding. At the same time, there are patterns of dialect shift that indicate its essential social role in changing community life. Some of the patterns, for example, indicate symbolic shifts that are sensitive to gender and to social divisions and groups within Ocracoke. For example, speakers born before World War II do not show significant differentiation between men and women in their use of traditional dialect features such as the vowel in *tide* (more like *toïd*) and the fronting of the vowel glide in *brown* (more like *brain*). At that point, men served as primary breadwinners, engaging in fishing and other maritime-related activities while women were confined to the domestic sphere. For those born in the generations during the rapid transformation of the island (1950s through 1970s), there is a decline in the use of traditional dialect features that is sensitive to gender and social group. During this period, women began to participate in the tourist-based economy as men relinquished traditional male occupations in order to participate in the new economy. An analysis of the use of the traditional *tide* vowel by gender and social group (Schilling-Estes, 1999) showed a clear-cut pattern in which middle-aged men who belonged to a male-exclusive group labeled the 'Poker Game Network' (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1995) had the highest incidence of this iconic island vowel; in fact, this group showed more extensive use of this vowel than men or women in the previous generation. The members of the so-called "Poker Game Network" project a highly (traditionally) masculine image and pride themselves on speaking the authentic Ocracoke Brogue. By the same token, the lowest incidence of the traditional vowel pronunciation was found among a middle-aged group of gay men for whom this vowel had little symbolic significance. Among adolescent speakers, women were much less likely to use this traditional vowel, since there is little real or symbolic capital for younger women.

We thus see that the traditional Ocracoke dialect may indeed be tied to notions of 'islander identity'; however, the islander identity that it symbolises is only one type of identity, captured in the image of the rugged fisherman that has traditionally dominated written and visual portrayals of island life and that has captured the imaginations of tourists, and even researchers, who travel to islands in search of 'authentic' watermen. This image is not one that is embraced by all Ocracoke men, and it is not even available to women, since they cannot project physical toughness if they also hope to project some measure of traditional feminine identity. Because women suffer little affront to personal identity as the traditional way of life represented by the traditional language variety recedes, women are free to relinquish the traditional dialect as they come into

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contact with other language varieties. In fact, women may willingly embrace non-traditional language variants, including non-traditional variants of the *hoi toid* vowel, since such variants represent the demise of traditional, oppressive gender roles and definitions on the island.

The description above underscores an essential point about dialect recession in island communities, namely, that it is constructed in terms of the social dynamics, inter-relationships, and social capital of the community undergoing change. Language change on island communities is no different from change elsewhere; accordingly, it should be interpreted in terms of its social meaning. Further, it is important to understand that there is more than one path to dialect loss in islands. For example, our in-depth comparison of Ocracoke on the Outer Banks with Smith Island, an island in the Chesapeake Bay area of Maryland, shows radically different responses to dialect endangerment - from the rapid decline of a longstanding dialect within a couple of generations to the intensification of dialectal distinctiveness (Schilling-Estes and Wolfram, 1999). Thus, while some dialect areas of the Outer Banks in North Carolina are rapidly losing most of their traditional dialect features, residents of Smith Island, Maryland, in the Chesapeake Bay, are actually intensifying their use of distinguishing dialect features, including the *hoi toid* vowel and the vowel of *brown* and *mound* (Schilling-Estes, 1997). As the traditional maritime trade in Smith Island declines, more and more islanders are moving to the mainland, but those who stay intensify their use of traditional dialect features. Even though the dialect is intensifying rather than weakening, it is in danger of dying out through sheer population loss. Most likely, this intensification is due to an increasing sense of solidarity as fewer and fewer islanders remain to follow the traditional Smith Island way of life. While research tends to favour the dissipation model of language recession rather than the intensification model (Wolfram, 2002), there may be particular groups of islanders who intensify their dialect as a symbol of islander identity against the rising tide of those who now inundate these islands as tourist sites (Labov, 1963; Shores, 2001).

The fact that different communities indicate such different responses to moribund dialect status underscores the need to examine ecological, demographic, economic, and socio-cultural factors in examining the course of language change in island communities. These situations also raise cautions about predicting the fate of dialects in a given community, since there are so many different intersecting factors that come into play, ranging from the nature of linguistic structures to the socio-psychological disposition of the community with respect to its lifestyle, including its language.

### Challenging the Endangerment Canon

The classification of *Hoi Toider* speech as an 'endangered dialect' has sometimes caught the fancy of the media; headline stories such as 'Ebb Tide on Hoi Toid' have been circulated by the Associated Press in prominent regional newspapers (eg *The News & Observer*, *The Virginian-Pilot*, *The Washington Post*), and National Public Radio has done special features on the dying brogue. Is this simply media hype to call attention to the changing status of this traditional dialect or is an endangered dialect a significant cultural and scientific threat?

First of all, the threat to the brogue is very real, as some of the once-common dialect traits are vanishing rapidly. In some families, the grandparents may still retain many traditional speech characteristics of the dialect, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and



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grammar; the children, however, show a significant reduction in the use of the forms, and the grandchildren have virtually none of these features. So the dialect could, in fact, vanish within several generations. This pattern of dialect erosion is evident in a number of families our team of researchers has interviewed over the past decade.

Certainly, dialectologists and linguists worry about the disappearance of the brogue, and liken language loss to the extinction of biological species. People may argue that it is not the same, arguing that speakers don't give up talking when a language dies; they just use another one. In fact, some people would applaud language death and say that the reduction of the world's languages to just a few would make international communication much more efficient. It is also true that manufacturing would be much more efficient if we all wore the same style and the same size of dress apparel, but where would that leave us in terms of the expression of individual and cultural identity?

Dialectologists argue that science, culture, and history are lost when a language or a dialect of a language is lost. In our quest to understand the general nature of language, we learn from diversity, just as we learn about the general nature of life from biological diversity. Thus, studying varieties of the English language helps us understand the nature of the English language and language in general - a worthy scientific justification.

As it turns out, our classification of the Ocracoke Brogue as an endangered language variety has challenged the established canon of endangerment in linguistics. After several invitations to speak at language endangerment conferences early in our studies where we presented the case for labeling the Ocracoke Brogue as an endangered language variety, we have now been excluded from conferences and workshops on this topic, reflecting the marginalisation of English dialects in terms of the language endangerment canon. In fact, after one of my presentations at a national conference on language endangerment, a colleague congratulated me on the presentation only to follow up with the comment, "Do you think anyone takes you seriously when you argue that isolated dialects of American English should be considered as endangered?" I would like to challenge the exclusion of dialects from the endangerment canon on several bases. Indeed, it seems like the endangerment canon is based on some questionable assumptions about the nature of language variation.

The first assumption is that the distinction between a language and dialect is sufficiently well-defined to make principled decisions about which varieties of language should and should not be included in the endangerment canon. In fact, linguists maintain that the precise difference between a dialect and a language is impossible to determine on structural grounds, or even in terms of mutual intelligibility. Instead, linguists maintain that the definition of a language is based on political factors rather than linguistic ones (Dixon, 2002: 7). Thus, Swedish and Norwegian are mutually intelligible language varieties but considered to be separate languages because of a political boundary, whereas Mandarin, Cantonese, and Min are not mutually intelligible but are considered dialects because of the national political boundary of China. If, in fact, there is no principled way of determining the distinction between language and dialect, then how can we exclude a variety of a language on the basis that it is a dialect rather than a language? Clearly, there is another factor at play in excluding varieties like Ocracoke English from the endangerment canon. As it turns out, dialects of languages have indeed been treated as endangered, but only when the language variety exists in a bilingual context rather than a bidialectal one. Thus, King (1989) considers a Newfoundland dialect of French to be endangered by the surrounding English language and Tsitsipis (1989) describes an

endangered dialect of Albanian surrounded by Greek. The inclusion of varieties threatened by other languages while excluding those threatened by dominant varieties of the same language obviously assumes that the death of a language variety in a bilingual context is a loss more significant than the death of a language variety in a bidialectal one. Again, this seems like an arbitrary and questionable assumption.

There is another assumption of the endangerment canon that minimises the examination of a variety like Ocracoke English as a worthy object of consideration, namely, the assumption that intra-language variation is less significant than inter-language variation for understanding the interplay of diversity and universality in the organisation of language. One of the scientific arguments for documenting endangered languages is the significance of examining the ways in which languages can differ structurally. While we have much to gain about universality and diversity in language from the examination of inter-language variability, we have just as much to learn about the details of language variability from the examination of the structural details of intra-language variation. I would challenge the assumption that intra-language dialect loss is less significant for developing models of language change and attrition than language loss in inter-language contexts.

Finally, the endangerment canon seems to assume that the loss of cultural identity and intellectual diversity involved in dialect loss is not nearly as significant as that involved in the loss of a language. One of the important arguments for examining endangered dialects is the fact that a part of human knowledge and culture die along with it. Again, this is a disputed assumption. In reality, some varieties of a language may have stronger iconic status in terms of their symbolic identity of a variety than a separate language. For example, the symbolic significance of the unique variety of English used by the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina in the US (Wolfram et al, 2002), who lost their ancestral language centuries ago, is as significant as any other cultural artifact or Native American language. In fact, their dialect was explicitly recognised as one of the distinctive attributes that marked them as Lumbee Indians in the Congressional Act of Congress in which they were federally recognised (Congressional Act, 1956).

## Conclusion

When a language or dialect is lost, there is also an essential and unique part of a human knowledge and culture that dies with it. At the same time, even as we may mourn the seemingly inevitable passing of traditional dialect, we can be assured that people and their dialects are dynamic and resilient, and that communities desiring to assert their uniqueness will find a way to do it - culturally and linguistically. We know, for example, of cases where communities have changed their overall ways of speaking but chosen new features of speech to continue to set them apart from others. For example, it may be that a couple of features of Ocracoke speech might be kept and redefined in terms of their symbolic significance or that new features or words will be created to maintain dialect and community distinctiveness. Dialect distinctiveness in its traditional form is not a realistic option, but new creations or the selective retention of a couple of the traditional features could perpetuate dialect distinctiveness. In fact, some of our studies over the past 15 years suggest that a couple of structures of Ocracoke English have actually been reinforced by some younger speakers (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2003).

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One thing seems to be certain about the Ocracoke Brogue. It has been an essential part of Ocracoke culture and people in the community and students in the schools need to know about it if they have any desire of staying in touch with the legacy that has made the island a unique place. The dialect heritage, including its past and present development, deserves to be indelibly documented and preserved — for *Hoi Toiders*, for new residents, and for tourists who wish to understand the past and present status of the island. That is why our activities on the Outer Banks over the last 15 years have involved conducting extensive recorded interviews with many different islanders of all ages for documentation and preservation, writing a school-based curriculum for students to learn about their dialect heritage (Wolfram, Schilling-Estes and Hazen, 1996), writing trade books for popular audiences (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1997), producing video documentaries (Blanton and Waters, 1996), compiling audio compact discs (Childs and Cloud, 2000), and developing museum exhibits that highlight the past and present dialect.

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### Endnotes:

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<sup>2</sup> The term "ancestral islander" is used here to refer to a people who can trace their lineage on the island for at least several generations. This label is different from someone who is born on the island and therefore might be a "native islander."

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