

PRESERVATION STRATEGIES OF THE GARIFUNA LANGUAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF  
GLOBAL ECONOMY IN THE VILLAGE OF COROZAL IN HONDURAS

By

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To my Daughter Naruni N. Ruiz Green, as well as to the great Garifuna leader Lombardo Lacayo  
and the Garifuna people worldwide

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One of the major challenges of this century is the accelerated phenomenon of disappearance of indigenous and less spoken languages on the world. Many scholars have suggested that if the current trend of language endangerment continues, more than half of the 6,000 languages currently spoken in the world will have disappeared in the next two generations, and only 600 of these languages can be considered safe. Among the most important causes of this phenomenon, according to the specialists, are the ‘war against diversity’ and the disruption of the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language from parents to children.

The study in the village of Corozal has proven that language transmission, preservation, and endangerment within the context of an extended family social structure can take a different trend with regard to language transmission and endangerment in a nuclear family structure. Moreover, although parents have stopped passing on the heritage language to their children, by the ages of twelve to fifteen these children not only start to speak Garifuna as the primary language but to also advocate with great pride for the use and preservation of the heritage language.

Consequently, the theoretical framework of the dominant Western social science for the analysis of language endangerment and preservation needs to be re-examined, particularly for the

study of the preservation and endangerment of languages in Garifuna and indigenous settings. Moreover, conceptual categories used in indigenous context could provide new and better analytical tools for the study of sociocultural phenomena such as language endangermentse.

Although this dissertation addresses language endangerment, its primary aims are to contribute to understand how languages are preserved in the Garifuna and indigenous settings.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction**

The objective of our study was to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of language and cultural endangerment in the Garifuna and other indigenous communities of Honduras and worldwide. The work also aims to analyze the level of adequacy of the categories and theoretical framework used by the dominant Western social scientists for the classification and analysis of language endangerment in Garifuna and indigenous contexts.

Finally, the study also explored the possibility that the knowledge, political and cultural practice, and worldview or cosmovision of the Garifuna and indigenous communities can provide new conceptual categories. This will improve the quality and pertinence of the theoretical and analytic approach used by the social scientists to identify, analyze, and solve the phenomenon of language endangerment in Garifuna and indigenous cultural settings.

These objectives will be accessed primarily through the analysis of the threats to the Garifuna language and the strategies developed by the speech community to preserve and develop the heritage language in Corozal, Honduras.

### **Research Working Questions**

To make the assessment, the study raises and addresses some critical questions. The analysis of and responses to those questions will provide us with insights for a better understanding of critical aspects of language endangerment and preservation, particularly relating to indigenous languages and cultures.

- **Research question 1:** Can a better understanding of the historical traditions of resistance of the indigenous people offer new insights into the study of the preservation, revitalization, threats and loss of indigenous languages?
- **Research question 2:** Can analytic categories, such as ‘disruption of the intergenerational transmission’, ‘nuclear family’ and others used by the dominant western social scientists

be adequately applied to the study of language preservation or endangerment in the indigenous and afro-descendant communities?

- **Research question 3:** Can the concept of family, as defined by western social science, be effectively applied to the indigenous ‘family’ social structure and the role played by that unit in the process of language preservation or death be used within an indigenous context?
- **Research question 4:** Are there some specific variables particular to indigenous cosmovision, such as multidimensional horizontal transmission, extended family and others, which are more relevant to the analysis of loss or preservation of indigenous languages?
- **Research question 5:** Is Garifuna an endangered language? Can Garifuna in the village of Corozal be classified as an endangered language?

### **Importance of Study**

This dissertation is important, and even critical, primarily to the Garifuna people and the Indigenous speech communities, in the sense that it provides them with new conceptual elements that may help these communities to have a better understanding of sociocultural phenomena, particularly the state of the heritage languages. Therefore, new methods are made available for these communities to help them create and implement effective public policies, particularly in the area of language planning.

For the academic and scientific communities, this dissertation is particularly important because it provides a critical analysis, from the native Afro-indigenous perspectives, of the conceptual categories and theoretical framework used by dominant Western social scientists to study phenomena such as language shift, revitalization, maintenance, and death, and events that occur within Garifuna and indigenous sociocultural contexts. On the other hand, the study also not only identifies the constraints of the Western social science theoretical framework, but rather offers alternative conceptual categories, based on the Garifuna and indigenous knowledge and worldview that could contribute to maximize the quality and effectiveness of the scientific research on Garifuna and indigenous sociocultural events.

This dissertation is important for the national states and the policymakers, because it gives them the theoretical and scientific bases necessary to design and implement new models for more comprehensive national development programs oriented to promote the inclusion of the Garifuna and indigenous people in the nationwide development strategy.

Some additional aspects on the importance of this dissertation relate to the following areas of concern:

It is important to know the current state of the Garifuna language in order to set the baseline information for whatever effective intervention that the speech community, the government, or any other body may want to make on the language as regards to status or even corpus planning. Well informed actions lead to successful intervention.

It is important to introduce the Garifuna and indigenous community to a correct understanding of the current status of their heritage language, as a critical step toward an adequate knowledge of deeper aspects of the community life.

Asking the question about the state of the Garifuna language is also important because it leads us, almost necessarily, to a relevant theoretical concern regarding the suitability of the categories used by Western social science, and to question whether there are alternative frameworks that could allow us more accurate understanding and assessment of the level of language endangerment in Garifuna and indigenous communities. This aspect becomes one of the most essential parts of the dissertation, in the sense that it offers the opportunity not only to approach the dominant Western social science theoretical categories and framework from a critical perspective, relative to Cartesian methodical doubt *Cogito ergo sum*, but also because it opens the possibility to raise the legitimate question about the possibility of a theoretical and conceptual contribution of the indigenous knowledge, science, and cosmovision to the scientific

inquiry about indigenous problems especially in the sociocultural domain. Most of the literature review in this dissertation addresses in one way or another, a critical analysis of the conceptual categories of Western social science from the hermeneutic perspective of the Garifuna and indigenous knowledge and cosmovision.

Finally, what makes this dissertation relevant is that it starts addressing issues relevant to local community need, in order to address critical theoretical issues related to current Western social science, and it concludes by proposing some alternative conceptual categories and theoretical framework based on the Garifuna and indigenous knowledge, cosmovision, and cultural practice. Finally, the underlying point in this dissertation is a reinforcement of the idea of the legitimacy of a possible indigenous social science.

### **Why Is the Preservation of Garifuna Language and Culture Important?**

The preservation of Garifuna and the indigenous languages is important for the community of speakers, the nation state, and the academy for a variety of critical reasons. First, linguistic and cultural diversity is under serious threat worldwide, and it is in the best interests of society, the state, and the academy to guarantee and promote cultural diversity. The threat to cultural and linguistic diversity is the direct consequence of short-sighted public policies implemented by the dominant socio-cultural and linguistic sectors at both the national and international levels. Therefore, the state must assume responsibility for those public policies. However, the most effective way to avoid such linguistic, cultural and human tragedy is by a joint effort between indigenous communities, nation states (governments), and the academy. Finally, the effort is worthy and urgent because the annihilation of indigenous languages and cultures means also the extermination of peoples' ways of life and even peoples' lives.

The importance of preserving the Garifuna and other indigenous languages also has to do with the fact that it is not a lost cause, as some proponents of Western social science suggest.

This can be seen in many studies of language endangerment, especially those of Fishman (1991; 2001) and his many followers. On the contrary, Garifuna people in the village of Corozal and many other indigenous communities have demonstrated their stability by historically overcoming the threatening effects of colonialisms (neoliberalism, globalization, etc.) on their languages, cultures, organizations, communities, and their very lives.

The challenge of preserving the Garifuna language, as well as the other indigenous languages, cultures, and peoples in Honduras and in most parts of the world, is important to the state and the academy because such language and cultural threats do not originate from within the Garifuna or the indigenous communities themselves, but rather they are external phenomena caused by multiple sectors. Therefore, the solution must come from a multi-sector effort. Moreover, the devastating impacts damage not only the healthy structure of the sociocultural dynamic of the Garifuna and the indigenous communities, but the national and international communities.

The reasons for preserving Garifuna on the Atlantic coast of Central America are as follows:

1. The current endangerment of Garifuna and indigenous languages and cultures is a socio-political and economically caused phenomenon, rather than a linguistic change *per se*.

Language change, language development, and even language transformation are intrinsic and “normal” processes to languages, particularly when these linguistic processes occur under ‘natural’ language transformations; they are not only healthy but also unavoidable. Moreover, a state of permanent transformation seems to be the most natural condition of human languages, since change occur under circumstances of direct language interaction, as well as in the absence of significant language contacts (McWhorter 2003:11-14). These ‘normal’ changes are healthy for both the language *per se* and for the individual and the community of speakers.

The difficulty, however, surfaces when these changes occur under the disruptive influence of alien and intrusive factors, such as social discrimination and economic exclusion, that force the local speech community to abandon its native language and cultural heritage as means of survival. The effects on the lives of the community of speakers and society at large can be devastating and destructive. These devastating effects are capable of damaging the emotional and psychological health of individuals, but they can also seriously disturb the socio-psychology of the community at large, as well as the social and natural environment.

Therefore, what should concern the academy of social scientists with regards to language change is not the natural process of language transformation, but the violent alteration of linguistic processes under the intrusive effect of socioeconomic and political changes. One of the most evident devastating effects of these abnormal changes is the accelerated phenomenon of language death worldwide. This situation has alarmed hundreds of sociolinguists, anthropologists and most social scientists worldwide (Burns 1998, 2008; Crawford 2001; Fishman 1991, 1997, 2001; Wurm 1991).

The importance of this concern is also grounded in the fact that language does not exist without a speech community; therefore, any changes in language processes must necessarily affect people in one way or another. This becomes even more disturbing when there is important evidence that those regions and communities with higher incidences of language death are the regions and communities with higher rates of socioeconomic dependence. By contrast, those social sectors with more economic power and in control of more resources not only present lower rates of language shift but they also promote language expansion. In that regard, most supporters of language preservation have also expressed concern about the direct connection between societal power relation and language loss. The case of the expansion of the English

language in the last half century is one of the most eloquent expressions of the direct connection between societal economic and political power and language status and policies. English, for instance, has become the primary threat to many languages worldwide, by dominating over critical spheres, such as the economy, technology, entertainment, academia, and communication, even in regions such as China, with strong cultural traditions.

2. There is an intrinsic connection between the Garifuna language shift and social injustice, social exclusion, and discrimination

The global phenomenon of the accelerated process of disappearance of minority languages is the direct consequence of social injustice and an inherently unfair economic international 'order'. As Crawford categorically suggests, "after all, language death does not happen in privileged communities. It happens to the disposed and the disempowered; people who most need their cultural resources to survive" (2001: 63). Moreover, people refuse to identify with their heritage language only when they believe that such identification is detrimental to the pursuit of a dignifying and bright future. Although this is an attitude reproduced in the speech community, its cause comes primarily from external factors such as political suppression, social discrimination, and economic exclusion.

Exploring the possible psychological effects of language loss, Crawford suggests that the loss of culture that comes with language death also results in decline in the sense of self-worth, which limits human potential to solve other problems, such as poverty, family breakdown, school failure, and substance abuse (2001:63). In that regard, pretending to reduce the significance and relevance of the struggle for reversing language shift is like trying to avoid the serious challenges in the area of cultural pluralism confronting modern society.

Addressing the problem of language loss forces us to look at the social causes of most of the devastating threats to humanity, both in the area of individual physical health and in the

domain of sociocultural responsibility. The fundamental source of most of these illnesses, epidemics, and societal issues is the social injustice inherently embedded in the current social structure of socioeconomic power relations.

Because of the many human costs, it is important that society as a whole, and not only those most directly affected, be involved in the effort to avoid language extinction.

3. Each language offers a unique way to understand and analyze the universe, and the loss of linguist diversity affects environmental diversity

The concern about language loss is relevant not only from the social viewpoint, but also from the linguistic perspective. Exploring the linguistic domain, Crawford (2001) proposes at least three reasons why we cannot give up in the effort to reverse language shift: (1) the death of any natural language represents an incalculable loss to the linguistic science, in the sense that with each language that dies, a door to the understanding of human mind is being closed, (2) the loss of linguistic diversity is a loss of intellectual diversity. This is true in the sense that each language offers a unique way to understand and analyze the universe, and it also offers unique tools for individual and groups interactions, (3) a decline in cultural pluralism is also at stake in the phenomenon of language loss. And what is being lost is not only a pluralism in the domain of exchange of ideas, but it extends to the systematic loss of diversity in fauna and flora, as well as in the products of human endeavors (2001:62-63).

So the disregard for linguistic diversity is but one dimension of a broader crisis of modern society.

4. The elimination of linguistic diversity is the eradication of the diversity of ideas and the destruction of the societal potential to meet changing conditions

The elimination of linguistic diversity results in the reduction and eventual mutilation of the diversity of ideas, and that is not a desirable situation for humankind, if it aims to succeed to the next four or five generations. To illuminate how humankind would be in the next two

centuries, if the current trend of language extinction continues, Crawford (2001) establishes a correlation between Darwin's biological analysis and the possible societal circumstances. In that regard, as Schrock is quoted in an article by Crawford:

Evolutionary biologists recognize the great advantages held by species that maintain the greatest possible diversity. Disasters occur when only one strain of wheat or corn, a 'monoculture', is planted everywhere. With no variation, there is no potential to meet changing conditions. In the development of new science concepts, a 'mono-language' holds the same dangers as a monoculture. Because languages partition reality differently, they offer different models of how the world works. There is absolutely no reason why the metaphors provided in English are superior to those of other languages (Crawford 2001:62).

5. The loss of the Garifuna and indigenous languages and cultures silences the voices and identities of the under-represented social sectors in the nation state

In his work in lowland Yucatan (Mexico) with Yucatecan Maya, Burns observed how the third generation of Yucatecan Mayan were deeply involved and committed to the reconstruction and revitalization of their identity by recovering and honoring the past successes and achievements of their forefathers. One of the pivotal historical moments that is serving as foundation for the identity of the present generation of Yucatecan Mayan is the Caste War (1850-1900), a five-decade period of heroic and successful struggle for self-determination and autonomy, marked by a well structured and organized resistance. In the minds of the third generation of Yucatecan Mayan, this glorious period of self-determination and autonomy represents an unequivocal opportunity for the construction of a solid and grounded identity (1998:377-378).

6. Language revitalization through the school system could be the key to building an inclusive education system

According to Burns, the process of reconstruction and revitalization of the Yucatecan Mayan identity is being conducted under the leadership of Mayan school teachers via a bilingual education and teacher training program. The training program will allow Mayan Yucatecan

teachers to be better prepared for the challenging task of mentoring the fourth generation of Yucatecan Mayan in the formation of their cultural identities (1998:377).

Using the school setting as a resource in the process of identity building is a logical choice, because school has historically played a critical role in identity formation, especially in young children and adolescents. The difference here is that, while the traditional education system has systematically silenced, ignored and many cases ridiculed the historical contribution of the indigenous people to the formation of the Americas and the American identities, these new education programs will push for the inclusion of that extensive untold section of American history and identity. So while the new education system (reformed and based in a more inclusive curriculum) could provide the conceptual basis for a properly informed identity, the language component could provide a critical dimension of the cultural content of the new identity.

A strong identity requires being culturally and historically well informed. The same is valid for the Garifuna identity to arise; it has to be well informed with regard to both the history and culture of the Atlantic Coastal peoples. This is particularly true in the assumption that the destruction of language is part of the destruction of rooted identity (Fishman 1991:4-6).

7. Language preservation, more than a pragmatic exercise, is the exercise of an existential right and need of the human condition

An important conclusion that can be derived from the identity revitalization initiative of the third generation of Yucatecan Mayan (Burns 1998) is confirmation of the theoretical assumption that linguistic identity cannot be classified or analyzed using only pragmatic categories. Otherwise, why would a third generation want to turn back in search for a history, culture, and language that were at their pinnacle almost three generations ago? What is the immediate pragmatic benefit of such a struggle, particularly when the chances of success are very minimal? Why would educated Mayan expend their valuable energy, time, and limited

resources in an enterprise such as ethnolinguistic identity revitalization, if it were not a critical investment to their existence as an ethnically and linguistically differentiated people?

The relevance of the ethnolinguistic variable is the psychological and existential need for a people to make sense of themselves in the world. This is eloquently stated in the public message given by Yucatecan Mayans as recounted in Burns' work on language revitalization:

On occasion of the official 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Caste War, a group of descendants of the combatants of that conflict addressed the congress organized in Mérida to discuss the implications of the uprising. In the message, the descendents of the combatants stated that the official history of Mexico has deliberately not only silenced but even changed the authentic national history, by excluding the contribution of the Mayan ancestors as founding fathers of the spirit of freedom of the Mexican nation. The message also included a statement by the descendents saying that, unless their voices were heard and the contribution of their combatant Mayan ancestors is included in the official national history, the Yucatecan Mayan were ready for more centuries of resistance. With regard to the role of language in Mayan struggles, it was said that the Mayan language, the language of today's Yucatecan, is the language of resistance against the currently existing colonizing powers" (1998:379-380). (The summary and translation are by the present author).

### **Interculturality**

Interculturality refers to legitimacy of a relation of interdependence between different cultural groups, in which the primary rules are fairness toward the other party and respect for oneself and the other group. The concept of interculturality is ontologically linked to the tradition of resistance of indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples to centuries of social exclusion and social injustices, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the concept also appears with high frequency interconnected with bilingualism and education. The interculturality-bilingualism-and-education trilogy revolutionizes the traditional concept of bilingual education, which has frequently been used in education to refer to two-language training programs, in which only languages from Western socioeconomically dominant modern cultures were considered.

In Latin American countries up to the present time, the concept of bilingual education is used to refer particularly to English-Spanish, French-Spanish, German-Spanish language training programs, but the concept has never included the idea of the inclusion of languages of the indigenous people from Africa or the Americas. It is in this context of exclusion that resistance of the indigenous and Afro-descendent people of the Caribbean and Latin America has been moving toward the creation of the new concept of Intercultural Bilingual Education. The concept is based on the trilogy of interculturality-bilingualism-and-education as a means to include the languages and culture of the Latin American and Caribbean indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples in the curriculum of the public education system, starting in Latin America in the last third of the twentieth century.

In Honduras, for instance, the processes of incorporation of the indigenous and Afrohonduran languages in the educational system started in the 1980s and 1990s as community initiatives, but it was not until the early 1990s that the national government officially admitted the possibility of teaching indigenous languages and subject matter in the public school. However, the necessary resources, both human and material, were not ready for the implementation of these programs, because it was not until 2005 that the government provided the necessary funding and qualified and committed people were appointed to lead the process, that the first official school textbooks were produced in the languages of indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples.

At this point (2008), textbooks from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades are ready, and teachers have been trained in the Intercultural Bilingual Education teaching approach. The program was officially inaugurated by the President of Honduras, the Ministry of Education and the National Director of the National Program for the Education of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples of Honduras

(PRONEEAAH for the acronym in Spanish). Yet, not all schools are participating in the program, because the implementation process is going through a piloting stage. PRONEEAAH's strategy is to progressively incorporate more schools, until it reaches full national coverage.

The goal of the exchange is to recognize, appreciate, and value the presence of cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom, in order to guarantee equal access to education particularly among the people of indigenous and African-descents. Historically, these sectors of the constituency have been the most excluded from the benefits of public services, and they have been systematically subject to discrimination at almost every level and social structure in modern society.

CHAPTER 2  
AFRO-DESCENDANT PEOPLES OF THE ATLANTIC COAST: THE FIELD SETTING  
AND RESEARCH STRATEGIES

**Historical Context of the Garifuna People: From the Caribbean to Central America**

**Afro-Indigenous Roots of the Garifuna People and the St. Vincent Period**

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the island of Saint Vincent was the site for the emergence of the Garifuna people as a differentiated cultural and linguistic family. This new culture emerged from the encounter and intermarriage of Arawaks and Caribs (Amerindian) with the West African people. The Caribbean element of the Garifuna history is marked by three important events: the arrival of the Arawaks, first inhabitants of the island, around 160 A. D.; the invasion of the Caribs in 1220 A. D. (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997: 9-10); and the arrival of the Africans in 1635 A. D. The first cultural encounter took place in 1220 A. D. between the Arawaks and Caribs, two Amerindian groups both originally from Venezuela. The second cultural encounter was in 1635 between the offspring of the Arawaks-Caribs, also known as Caribs of the Islands, and the African survivors of a shipwreck off the coast of Saint Vincent in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Centuries before Columbus arrived in the Caribbean, the Caribs of the Islands defined themselves culturally as *Callinagu*, which comes from the word Karina or Carinagu (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997). Karina is also the root of the term Karifouna, which is used by the Caribs of Dominica to refer to themselves, as well as the word Garifuna used by the Garinagu in Central America to identify themselves.

The estimated populations of the Caribbean in 1492, when Columbus landed in the islands, range from 250,000 to 6,000,000 (Rogozinski 1999:32). Other authors suggest that there were more than a million Arawaks and Tainos. Nevertheless, four decades later that number was drastically reduced to fewer than one thousand people (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997:13). This

was “due to the cruelties and forced labor meted out by the Spanish and British colonizers, and the result of European diseases such as smallpox and syphilis against which the Arawaks had no immunity” (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997:13).

### **Successful Struggle against Colonialists**

In the early sixteenth century (1520), the Spaniards attacked the Carib Island with the purpose of subduing the population to slavery. However, unlike the Arawak, the Carib fought back to defend their territory and their people. According to Rogozinski (1999), the Spaniards not only gave up to the attempt to take control of Saint Vincent and subdue the inhabitants, but they also decided to distance themselves from the islands: “In the Lesser Antilles the Carib of the Island resisted the Spaniards, who avoided their islands” (Rogozinski 1999:32).

For the two centuries following their victory over the Spaniards, the Carib had to fight against two new enemies: the French and British colonialist forces. Almost a decade after the arrival of both British and French to the region (1625), a Spanish ship loaded with West African people brought to be enslaved in the Americas wrecked off the coast of the Carib island of Saint Vincent (1635). Many survived the shipwreck, thanks to the assistance of the natives of the island, who welcomed them to their community to join the indigenous struggle against the French and British colonialist forces. Salvador Suazo suggests that at least two Spaniard ships wrecked off the coast of the island of Saint Vincent in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century: “...the island of St. Vincent then contained all Indians and some Negroes from loss of two Spanish ships in 1635” (Suazo 1997:19). The West African group not only strengthened the Caribs resistance against the British and the French, but it also constituted the African roots of the Garifuna culture.

Cayetano and Cayetano state that Garifuna resistance against the military forces of the Spanish, French and British conquerors lasted for almost three hundred years from 1500 to 1796

(1997:13). After many unsuccessful attempts to break the resistance of the Carib of the Island and to take control over the island of St. Vincent, the French adopted a new strategy of mutual respect and cessation of attacks, and they agreed to sign the Treaty of 1660 (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997:14). The English, in contrast, intensified their attack for the control of the Island of Saint Vincent. The 18<sup>th</sup> century was particularly characterized by hostilities, attacks, and revenge among British and the inhabitants of St. Vincent.

### **First Attempt of Garifuna Exile: From the King of England**

The escalation of the conflict reached its high point in April 1772, when King Charles III of England sent a formal order to the military forces authorizing them to humiliate and reduce the Garifuna to servitude, and even to remove them, if necessary, in order to stabilize the colony.

In April 1772, orders were issued from England to send two regiments from North America to join such troops as could be spared from the neighbouring Islands, to reduce the Caribs to a due submission, or if that became impracticable through their obstinacy, they were to transport them to such a place, as should be deemed by the Governor and Council, most convenient for their reception, and best calculated to secure the tranquility of the Colony (Shephard 1997:29).

According to this reference, the British military forces received official authorization to exile the Garifuna from the island more than two decades before they actually were able to accomplish it. Nonetheless, such a mission was to be very costly in terms of human lives to the Garifuna people, and especially to the British military forces.

The North American regiments, numbering 688 men, arrived at St. Vincent in September 1772, under the order of the General Dalrymple. However, in January 1773, only four months later, the result of the war was an absolute humiliation to the British Armed Forces. Based on Shephard's report, "the British loss on this expedition, one hundred and fifty were killed and wounded, one hundred and ten died of disease, and four hundred and twenty eight were in the hospital" (1997:35).

In February, 1773, the British Crown sent a new official document ordering the immediate suspension of any kind of hostilities against the Garinagu and asked for a negotiation on reasonable terms with them. The important Treaty of Peace of 24 articles was signed between the representatives of Charles III and the Garifuna Chiefs, led by Joseph Chatuyer, on February 27, 1773. It is important to realize that the Garifuna struggle against the British to maintain their independence and freedom took place at the same time that United States was also in a war for independence from England. Therefore, Garifuna resistance and rebelliousness was not isolated and was not caused by 'warlike people,' as the European authors would later attempt to label them. In contrast, Garifuna fighters responded to their great respect for their own human dignity and their unbreakable spirit of freedom.

### **The Golden Decade of the Garifuna People**

The ten-year period following the 1773 Peace Treaty was the only decade when the Garifuna people in St. Vincent did not have to worry much about the security of their territory and their people. Thus, they could dedicate most of their time, energy, and resources to productive and economic activities. These years of peace witnessed enormous social and economic successes for the Garifuna community. Most of the men were fluent in French and English, in addition to their highly respected native language. They were also excellent in nautical activities, and they could challenge the high water to make transactions via cruises miles away from the islands. Based on the account of Sir Young during his visit to St. Vincent, he was impressed by the elegant dress and the luxurious life style of the Garifuna women, particularly the women of the chiefs. He said that the Garifuna were living in great comfort during the time of his fieldwork among them (de Coelho 1995:42). Therefore, there is strong historical evidence to define the almost twelve years from 1773 and 1784 as the *Golden Decade* of the Garifuna people in St. Vincent.

The Golden Decade was followed by the most difficult moment in the Garifuna history. This new stage started in 1779, after the Garifuna responded favorably to the request of the French settlers to overthrow the British (Shephard 1997:39). However, in 1784, a year after the Peace of Versailles, the French evacuated the island in response to the postulates of the French Revolution. With the departure of the French, the Garifuna loss an important ally against the British, but they did not surrender.

### **Death of the Chatuyer and the Garifuna Exile**

On March 10, 1795, the Garifuna Paramount and Chief, Joseph Chatuyer, proclaimed his adhesion to the French revolutionary principals of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. With this he began the final and definitive war to free the land of his Father from the presence of oppressors and intrusion by British forces. Four days later, on March 14, 1795, Chatuyer and several other Garinagu, as well as some French, died in battle (Franzone 1995:71). By November 1795, the fighting was significantly reduced, and on December 15 some Garifuna chiefs proposed reconciliation with the British on the condition that they retain their rightful lands (Franzone 1995: 73-81).

The first group of Garinagu surrendered on June 10, 1796, after Chatuyer's son called on his people to make them aware of the difficulty of the situation and the lack of human and material resources to continue the resistance. Although he ordered the first group of surrenders, he did not join them. Instead, he continued the resistance with about 300 men (Shephard 1997:163-165). Finally, starvation and the disease forced the remaining Garifuna to surrender to the British (Franzone 1995:82).

### **Exile from St. Vincent to Balliceaux**

The surrender was based on terms and conditions established by the Garifuna resistance, that children, women, and elders were to be transported safely by the British to the small island

of Balliceaux. Once that was guaranteed, men were to be transported in two different groups and in a secure manner to Balliceaux. After those demands were fulfilled, the final group of Garifuna would give up their arms and ammunition, and put an end to their centuries of armed resistance. Nevertheless, not everyone in the last stronghold surrendered to the British, many preferring to abandon Saint Vincent and escape to the neighboring islands during the last four months of resistance, especially after the women, children, and elderly had been removed to Balliceaux.

In that regard, on July 20, 1796, a group of 280 Garinagu men were transported to the island of Balliceaux. But it was not until October 26 that Chief Marin Pedre and other chiefs, including Duvalle and the son of Chatuyer, surrendered. By that time, the number of surrendered, including women and children totaled 5,080 Garinagu (Shephard 1997:171-172).

According to Shephard, Balliceaux was planned to be just a temporary station of the exile. The stay lasted from five months, for the last exiled group from Saint Vincent, to eight months, for the first group to be exiled. From what was supposed to be a temporary station, Balliceaux became a concentration camp for the Garifuna people, not only because of the length of the stay, but also because the desert-like landscape made the cay into a maximum security prison of torture, where there were no rivers, trees, or food, much less a roof to shelter from the sun and the rain.

Therefore, by the time the British removed them from Balliceaux to Roatan in Honduras, almost 3000 of the Garinagu had died. They died from fever (Cayetano 1997:14), which was aggravated by starvation, dehydration, powerlessness, anger, and sadness, because they had finally given away their motherland after more than two centuries of strong, intelligent, brave, and successful resistance. Now they were in the middle of the sea left to their own devices, while the enemies were finally settled and enjoying the fruits of the sacred land of the Garifuna

forefathers, where thousands of Garinagu of that generation had given their lives in defense of their holy territory, their freedom, and their dignity.

### **Exile to the Island of Roatan in Honduras**

On February 25, 1797, Captain Barret arrived in Balliceaux with ships to transport the Garifuna to Roatan (Shephard 1997:172). On March 3, the remaining 2,248 were loaded onto eight ships and transported to Roatan. After a short stop in Jamaica, they arrived in Roatan on April 11, 1797. During the journey to Roatan several hundred died; therefore, only about 2,080 reached the final destination. At the time they arrived at the island of Roatan, Honduras was a colony of Spain. Upon landing in Roatan they found a small Spanish fort and garrison, but the Garifuna offered no resistance (Gonzalez 1988:39), even though they were supplied with ammunition and firearms (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997:17).

Mr. Rossi-Rubi was commissioned by the colonial administrators to evaluate the situation in Roatan after the arrival of the Garinagu. After talking to some of the leaders of the group, and realizing that they had neither political nor military plans against the colonial interests, he allowed them to stay in the Roatan under the agreement that they would return the island (of Roatan) to the administrative authorities of the colony. The encounter was peaceful to the extent that almost 200 Garinagu wanted to join him in his trip back to the mainland. He could not take them, but he promised to send a larger boat, so that they could move to the mainland (Suazo 1997:156-157).

Shortly after arriving in Trujillo on the Honduras mainland, the Garifuna established new villages and manioc cassava fields, and they built their canoes. Now, 200 years after their arrival in Honduras, the Garifuna have migrated to Guatemala, Nicaragua, Belize, and the U.S.A.

## **Circum-Caribbean Basin: Afro-Descendent Peoples and Their Territory**

The Garifuna, Bay Islanders, and the Miskito: The Atlantic Coast of Honduras has a geographic extension of 600 kilometers, geopolitically divided into four departments: Cortes, Atlantida, Colon, and Gracias a Dios. These four and the department of Islas de la Bahia are the five departments where the Afro-descendants originally established and where most of the Afro-descendent populations in Honduras are still primarily located. Garifuna is the only community with a presence in all five departments, while Afro-Islanders are predominantly located in the Islas de la Bahia, with a small number in Atlantida. The Miskito people, on the other hand, are mainly concentrated in the eastern department of Gracias a Dios, a region that is also known as La Mosquitia. Significant numbers of the Afro-descendent and Miskito people have migrated to San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, the industrial and the political capitals of Honduras, respectively.

The department of Islas de la Bahia (Bay Island) includes the world-famous archipelago of the Bay Islands, located around 20 miles north of the Honduran mainland. The Bay Islands have a total extension of approximately 260.5 kilometers, comprised by five major islands: Roatan, Guanaja, Utila, Santa Elena, and Barbareta, and about seventy cays and small islands. These lands are home to the English-speaking Afro-descendants and some Garifuna communities.

### **Demographic Profile**

The available national data on the indigenous and Afro-descendent population in Honduras are not reliable (Herranz 2000:462), since they are mainly estimates. These include official estimates provided by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) including those in the 2001 national census. The uncertainty of the official national statistics on the indigenous and Afro-descendent populations is caused by a variety of reasons, in particular the long tradition to exclude, make invisible, and erase the languages, cultures and even the very existence of the

indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples from the national life. This xenophobic attitude of the Honduran ladino/mestizo dominant culture does not preclude diversity per se, but it is aimed at indigenous and Afro-descendant cultures and people. The dominant sectors in Honduras welcome the languages and cultures of their post-colonizer European countries, and act toward them with great deference and even with a spirit of subjugation and defeat. These types of behavior are defined by Crawford (2001) as preemptive war against indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples.

### **Estimates on the Garifuna Population**

The Organization for Ethnic and Community Development (ODECO for its acronym in Spanish), one of the most important Garifuna Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Honduras, published in 2002 the book “La Comunidad Garifuna y sus Desafíos en el Siglo XXI” [Garifuna Communities and their Challenges in the XXI Century], which states that the estimate of the Garifuna population is 300,000 people, even though they mention in the following paragraph that 98,000 is also a well accepted population estimate (2002:14).

The government’s Ministry of Planning estimated the national Garifuna population at 300,000 people in 1993. Herranz (2000:461) notes that Valencia offered an estimate of 90,000 people in 1986, but the National Statistic on Population and Housing provided official data that estimated the Garifuna speech community at 22,020 in 1988. Lara (2002:16) states that Rivas in 1993 suggested an estimate of 98,000 people, but he included the Garifuna population worldwide, including Guatemala, Belize, Nicaragua, and the United States, while Roger Isaula provided an estimate of 250,000 Garifuna people in Honduras in 1995, not counting those in Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, the Caribbean, and the United States. Nancie Gonzalez (1988:180) estimated the number of Garifuna people in the United States alone at almost 100,000 people in 1988. Gonzalez’ (1988) estimates were based on official data from the U. S.

National Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1984. Salvador Suazo (2001:9) offered an estimate of 110,000 Garifuna people in Honduras.

In the 2001 national census, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) included the question: What population group do you belong to? According to this official source, only 7.2 percent of the 6.6 million people in Honduras identified themselves with one of the indigenous or Afro-descendent populations, of which fewer than 50,000 identified themselves as members of the Garifuna community.

Unfortunately, the official statistic is the most unreliable among the recent estimates of the Garifuna population of Honduras. On one side, these 'official statistics' present serious contradictions, in the sense that there is an enormous difference between 22,000 and 300,000 people. The National Statistics of Population in 1986 estimated the Garifuna population in Honduras at 22,020 people. Seven years later (1993), the Ministry of Planning estimated the Garifuna population at 300,000 (SECPLAN 1993), and in 2001 the INE estimated the Garifuna people in Honduras at 46,000 people (INE 2001).

Even though, these data are inconsistent and even contradictory, the Honduran government has been using them as the official statistics for purposes such as national urban planning and the design and implementation of national public policies. In that regard, the national statistics become an official instrument for the exclusion and deletion of the Garifuna people from the official and national demographic.

This is an issue of human rights violation, in the sense that there is no way to address the particular needs and to guarantee the inclusion of the Garifuna people in the national agenda, much less to promote the development and implementation of comprehensive public policies to benefit Garifuna communities. It is imperative that the Garifuna people develop effective

strategies in order to conduct, in coordination with the government, a new census that can provide consistent and dependable statistical data on the Garifuna national population.

### **Bay Islands' English-Speaking African Descendents**

The Caribbean English speaking Afro-descendent population of Honduras, including those in Bay Islands and elsewhere, is estimated to total 28,387 people (Lara 2002:17-19). The National Institute of Statistics (2001) estimates the English-speaking African-descendent population of the Bay Islands at 13,303 people. Even though these data are more coherent than those on the Garifuna people, there is still an obvious problem of inconsistency between the figures.

The English-speaking people of the Bay Islands are ethnoculturally and linguistically diverse. They originally came mainly from Great Cayman and Jamaica in the XVIII century. Most of the population is concentrated in the Bay Islands, but they now are also settled in Atlantida, Colon, Cortes, and the USA, especially in New York and New Orleans. The movement to the USA started in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, initially to work for the banana companies.

### **Mosquitia Geography and Demographics**

The Mosquitia is situated in the northeastern department of Gracias a Dios and has an area of approximately 16,630 square kilometers. In 1996, the population was estimated to total 46,762 people by the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) in the Human Development Annual Report. The Mosquitia is also home to other ethnic groups including the Tawahka, Garifuna, and more recently the Ladinos. The great biosphere of Rio Platano is situated in this region.

Linguistically, Miskito belongs to the Misumalpa language family (Salamanca 2000:11). Miskitos are also having an important presence on the other side of the border along the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast. The Miskito language is very much preserved in Honduras, even

though there is a growing migration of Ladinos to the area. Belen and Brus Laguna are the two northwestern Miskito villages which border with the Garifuna community of Blagriba (Plaplaya in Spanish), inhabited by around 800 people. Due to the high level of ethnic intermarriage, Blagriba is one of the few trilingual Garifuna communities, where people, including children, speak Garifuna, Miskito, and Spanish.

### **Afro-Descendants of Belize: Demographics and Geography**

Belize has an area of 22,960 square kilometers, and it shares borders with Guatemala and Mexico. Although, Belize is considered a Central American country, culturally and commercially it is more tied to the Caribbean region, in particular to the English-speaking Caribbean. It has only been in the last decade that Belize has begun to establish real commercial relationships with the Central American countries. It is estimated that Belize has a population of 249,180 people divided into six ethnic groups: Mestizos 44.1 percent, Creole 31percent, Maya 9.2 percent, Garifuna 6.2 percent, and others 9.5 percent (zhenghe.tripod.com 2000). As compared to 1997 estimates (postcolonialweb.org), the Belize population increased from 224,663 in 1997 to 249,180 in 2000.

The first report of Garifuna presence in Belize occurred in 1802, even though the most representative number of Garifuna people arrived in Dangriga-Belize on November 19, 1832. The group of 28 adults and 12 children that left Roatan-Honduras in two doreys heading to Belize under the leadership of Mr. Alejo Beni was escaping the atrocities and persecution by the Honduran Ladinos, because of the support given by the Garinagu to the Royalist forces during the 1821 fight for independence (Cayetano and Cayetano1997:22).

The most representative organization of the Garifuna people in Belize is the National Garifuna Council of Belize (NGC), originally founded in 1981 with the fundamental objective to coordinate the social, cultural, and economic enhancement of the Garifuna people in the different

areas of the country. The NGC was officially registered on 1988 (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997:74-75).

Among the most important achievements of the NGC, we can mention the Proclamation of Garifuna Language, Dance, and Music as Masterpiece of the Oral Intangible Heritage of the Humanity in May 2001 by UNESCO ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)) as well as the large number of globally recognized Garifuna poets, artists, woodworkers, musicians, writers, and even entrepreneurs. Most Garifuna artists and musicians of Belize are well known nationally and internationally.

### **Characterization of Research Site**

The Garifuna village of Corozal in Honduras was selected as the main dissertation research site due to its important sociolinguistic, historic, demographic, and geographic characteristics. Some of these characteristics will be described in the following pages.

#### **Geography**

The village of Corozal is situated on the northeastern Atlantic coast of Honduras, one of the 46 Garifuna villages situated on the Atlantic coast. Corozal borders on the North with the Atlantic Ocean, on the South with the mountain of Nombre de Dios, to the East with the Rio Platano and to the West with Rio Maria. These data are based on Carlos Castillo's 1980 "Informacion General de Corozal" [General Historic Report on Corozal] and Carlos Ramirez's 2000 "Breve Reseña Historica del Institute Mariano García Arzú" [A Brief History of the High School Mariano Garcia Arzu]. Both authors are community leaders, the first acting as President of the Patronato, and the second as the first Principal of the High School of Corozal at the time the initial stage of this dissertation research was being conducted.

Based on the most recent official community land title extended by the National Agrarian Institute (INA), the extension of Corozal's territory is 348.60 hectares. A comprehensive study of

community land property and use in Corozal is needed, similar to the 2002-2003 diagnostic conducted by Karen Vargas (2007) in coordination with the Caribbean and Central American Research Council in Sambo Creek, San Antonio and other Garifuna villages. The information is necessary to assess the correspondence between the dimensions of today's Corozal community territory and the Ejidal land title obtained by communities from the national Governments in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **History**

Corozal was founded in 1864 by Mr. Manuel Cayetano, a young Garifuna man, who at the age of 26 decided to leave his home village of San Antonio in the Trujillo area and travel in his canoe to the town of El Porvenir, in the department of Atlantida, in search of a brighter future. But he soon realized that El Porvenir had not much to offer him, and he decided to return home. On his way home, however, he still held to the primary purpose and inspiration of his initial journey, which was not precisely the search for employment, but rather the search for better opportunities for himself and his family. On his way back home, he discovered the fertile and virgin costal land, where he ended up founding the new Garifuna settlement of Corozal (Castillo 1980; Ramirez 2000).

According to Castillo (2000), when Manuel Cayetano was returning back to his home village of San Antonio, after canoeing some five miles from El Porvenir to the northeast, he decided to land in order to rest. However, the lush vegetation of the area attracted his attention. He explored the entire area until he reached the river Juana Leandra, where he met a ladino explorer living in the area, who convinced Cayetano to stay and develop a territory for himself in what was, at that moment, a land densely overgrown with tropical vegetation. Cayetano worked the land, built a wooden base house for himself, and a few days later travelled back to San Antonio, now with the purpose of bringing his family, relatives, and friends to the new territory.

Due to the abundance of Corozo (in Spanish), a variety of palm tree, in the area, they decided to name the village Corozal, which means abundance of palm tree (Castillo 1980). Cayetano died on June 24, 1910 at the age of 72, after witnessing the growth and development of the area he had founded 50 years earlier (Castillo 1980).

Cayetano's original hometown of San Antonio is a Garifuna village situated on the Atlantic coast, about five miles west of the city of Trujillo, the first capital of Honduras. San Antonio, Rio Negro, Cristales, Santa Fe, and Guadalupe were among the very first Garifuna settlements in Central America. These communities were established in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, almost a quarter century before Honduras was created as an independent nation state. According to Vargas, the Garifuna settlements of Rio Negro and Cristales were founded in the very first year of the Garifuna exile to Honduras in 1797. The village of San Antonio was founded in 1803 by a Garifuna woman originally from the Garifuna settlement of Rio Negro, just six years after the Garifuna exile to Honduras (2007:159-163). Based on this report, it is reasonable to suggest that San Antonio was probably founded by one of the Garifuna women exiled from Saint Vincent.

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Trujillo city was under constant and serious attacks by pirates. Therefore, the presence of the Garifuna men and women was more than welcomed by the colonial authorities, due to the Garifuna military expertise in defense against the attacks of British, Spanish and French military forces, as well as their linguistic knowledge and excellent command of Garifuna, French, English, and Spanish.

In 1882, the Garifuna initiated the process to obtain legal rights to their community properties, particularly in the villages of San Antonio, Santa Fe, and Guadalupe, after more than eighty years of cultivating the land and militarily defending the national territory. They started

the process of trying to purchase land from the government. Although the government was willing to do so, the process could not go forward due to the lack of a legal framework to support such actions. It was only in December 1885, during the administration of President Lu s Bogr n, three years after initiating the process, that the Garifuna could obtain the legal documents from the national government. The land adjudication under the figure of *Titulo Ejidal* entitled the Garifuna communities to the right to use and possess the lands where they had been settled and producing for more than eighty years.

Under that first legal transaction with the national government, the Garifuna communities of Rio Negro and Cristales were assigned an extension of 5,000 hectares; San Antonio was assigned 625 cuerdas, and Santa Fe de los Icacos 624 cuerdas (Vargas 2007). The Garifuna villages of Cristales and Rio Negro are now two of the most important neighborhoods in the city of Trujillo, the first capital city of Honduras.

As it turned out, Mr. Cayetano, the founder of Corozal, left his home village just twenty years before the San Antonio village obtained the legal documentation to use and possess the community land. Considering that extended family ties are strongly kept through the years in the Garifuna culture, it may be assumed that the first inhabitants of Corozal travelled frequently by canoe to San Antonio, to visit families and friends and to exchange products and information, including knowledge of legal land use and possession. Traveling long distances to visit families and friends is an important practice among Garifuna people even to this day, especially on the weekends. So it is almost certain that Corozal and San Antonio were involved in this cultural practice.

### **Sociolinguistic Characteristics**

The dominant language in Corozal, especially among young adults and adults, is the heritage Garifuna language, even though the villagers have been living for almost 1.5 centuries

in very close and permanent cultural, economic, and linguistic contact and negotiation with La Ceiba, the third-largest urban center of Honduras, where Spanish is dominant. The current population of Corozal is today around 3,000 people, not counting those who have migrated, primarily to the USA and to a lesser extent to other urban centers of Honduras. Most of these migrants have, however, built beautiful houses in Corozal, mainly for retirement purposes, and they visit the village at least one or two times a year.

Around 60 percent of the total Corozal population speaks Garifuna fluently and 20 percent more understand the language, while the remaining 20 percent do not speak the heritage language. A fraction of this last figure are children whose parents have decided not to teach them the Garifuna native language until they finish high school, in order to avoid being purportedly victims of harassment and racist abuse by teachers and ladino peers at school. However, since the primary language of the adults among themselves is Garifuna, by the age 18 these same teenagers and youth start to speak the heritage language.

At the time this dissertation research was being conducted, most of the strong advocates for the promotion, preservation, and development of the Garifuna language in Corozal and Honduras were the same teenagers and young adults who did not have the opportunity to acquire the Garifuna as their mother language or who know it only as passive language speakers. Unless the sociolinguistic situation changes dramatically with regards to heritage language preservation and development, the disappearance of the Garifuna language in Corozal does not seem evident in the foreseeable future.

### **Importance of Corozal as Research Site: In Summary**

Corozal village is a relevant site for the study of the phenomenon of endangerment of Indigenous languages and the preservation strategies developed by the community of speakers in order to maintain their heritage language. Reasons include the following:

1. It is an historically Garifuna community, with more than 90 percent of the current population Garifuna.
2. In the last three generations, it has seen permanent and intensive social, cultural and linguistic negotiation with the dominant Spanish-speaking ladino/mestizo society of the third major urban center of the country.
3. In the last two generations, the basis of the village's cash income began to depend heavily on the remittances from urban centers, particularly from the United States of America.
4. The community has extended family structures, with a particular approach to language transmission and preservation.
5. Under the leadership of the new generation of youth, the community is active in regards to the preservation of Garifuna, the heritage language.
6. The traditional territory of the community has been drastically affected by changes in national land property and use policies, which do not take into consideration the cosmovision of Garifuna and indigenous people.
7. There have been recent efforts, especially in the last decade, to include cultural heritage contents in the school curricula and to use the native Garifuna as language of instruction in the official educational system, via implementation of a bilingual and intercultural education program.
8. Micro-entrepreneurial initiatives have been developed by native community members.
9. Regarding the primary researcher, previous informal visits and two formal research experiences have formed the basis for a strong social network in the village, making it possible to gather relevant information on the sociolinguist situation of the community.
10. Based on preliminary results, Corozal was classified as a bilingual Garifuna community (Garifuna-Spanish speaking), as a result of more than 144 years of socioeconomic and cultural contact with the dominant society. In that regard, the situation in Corozal represents almost 70 percent of the current Garifuna communities and the remaining 30 percent in the near future.

Conclusively, considering its socioeconomic and linguistic challenges and focusing especially on the successful strategies implemented by the speech community to preserve their heritage language, Corozal village is the site to conduct this research dissertation study. The capability to learn from Corozal's successful experiences and share these with other Garifuna communities, the indigenous world, and the other social scientists, makes this dissertation research critical for the world of today and tomorrow.



Figure 2-1. View of the village of Corozal, taken in 2005 during the fieldwork



Figure 2-2. Old railroad, the primary means of communication between Corozal and La Ceiba



Figure 2-3. Oldest person in the village, 104 years old, and a youth leader team member



Figure 2-4. Public transportation system from Corozal to La Ceiba, 2004



Figure 2-5. HONDUTEL (Public telecommunication building in Corozal 2004)



Figure 2-6. Main entrance to Corozal and highway to La Ceiba, 2004

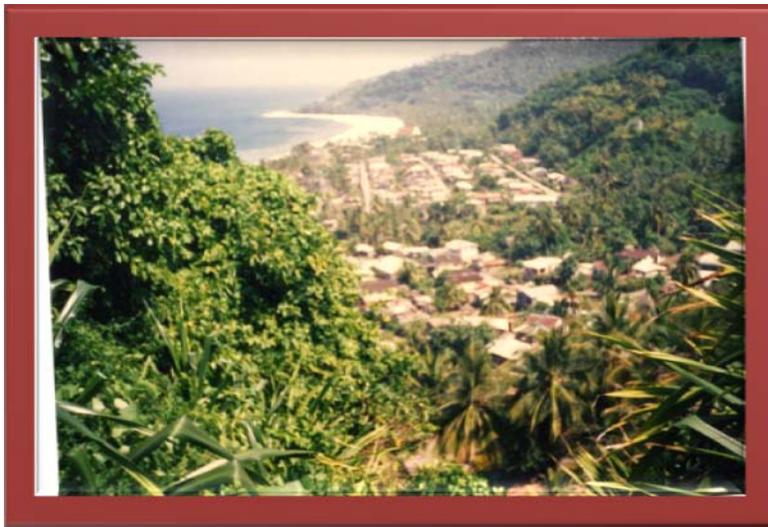


Figure 2-7. Departure site of the Garifuna exile from Saint Vincent, July 1796

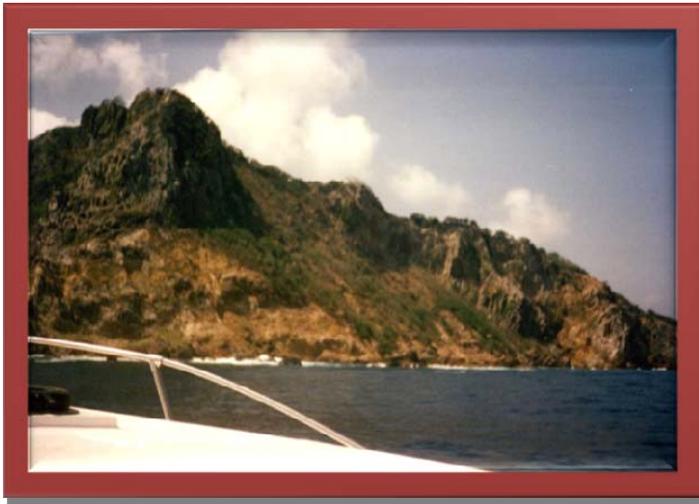


Figure 2-8. Balliceaux, first Garifuna temporary station in the exile from Saint Vincent, July 1796-February 1797



Figure 2-9. Balliceaux, first Garifuna temporary station in the exile from Saint Vincent, July 1796-February 1797



Figure 2-10. Monument to Joseph Chatuyer the Garifuna chief. The text says “Obelisk in honor of Joseph Chatuyer first national hero, died 14<sup>th</sup> March 1795, sponsored by national youth council”. The picture was taken in summer 1995 in Saint Vincent during the celebration of the 200 anniversary of Chatuyer’s death and the Garifuna diaspora homecoming from the exile

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

The last half of the 20th century has been characterized by growing concern among social scientists regarding alarming threats to the indigenous languages worldwide. According to these scholars, if the current trends continue, more than 1,500 of the existing 6,000 world languages will disappear in the present generation, within 50 years.

This trend, however, is approached by the community of social scientists from two basic perspectives: those who believe that it is a somehow 'natural' and unavoidable sociolinguistic event, against which we should struggle and try, at least, to slow its impacts on the indigenous and the economic minority sectors (Fishman 1991; 2001), and those who understand the phenomenon as socio-historically caused and, therefore, an avoidable situation (Burns 1998; Crawford 2001; Crystal 2002; England 1998; Grenoble and Whaley 1998; Hornberger 2001; and; Wurm 1996). In this second group, however, the approaches vary from those that are somehow pessimistic to those that are more optimistic on the possibility of success in the struggle against language endangerment. The theoretical perspective of this dissertation is based on the perspective of the second group of social scientists and scholars, with special emphasis toward the optimistic and more determined approaches of Burns (1998), Crawford (2001), and Hornberger (2001).

The aim of the study is to contribute to the analysis of the phenomenon of endangerment of the indigenous and minority languages of the world through the study of Garifuna, the only surviving indigenous language of the Caribbean.

Because this work approaches the current threats to the indigenous languages as a socio-historically caused incident, the focus is not on the threats per se, but rather on the community

responses and the strategies developed by the speech community to preserve the Garifuna language.

In order to make the assessment, some critical questions are raised and addressed in the study. These questions include:

1. Can a better understanding of the historical traditions of resistance of the indigenous peoples offer new insight into the study of preservation, revitalization, threats and loss of indigenous languages?
2. Do analytic categories such as ‘disruption of the intergenerational transmission’, ‘nuclear family’ and others used by the dominant Western social scientists be adequately applied to the study of language preservation and/or endangerment in the indigenous and Afro-descendent communities?
3. Can the concept of family, as defined by Western social science, be effectively applied to the indigenous ‘family’ social structure and the role played by that unit in the process of language preservation or death?
4. Are there some specific variables particular to indigenous cosmivision, such as multidimensional horizontal transmission, extended family, *uguchuhana* (similar to “second mother”), etc., that are more relevant to the analysis of loss or preservation of the Garifuna and indigenous languages?

The analysis and responses to these questions will provide us with insights for a better understanding of critical aspects of language endangerment and preservation, particularly as relating to indigenous languages.

### **Native Researcher**

I as the primary researcher in this study identify myself as a Garifuna person and I define Garifuna as a people of African and Amerindian cultural ascendency. This means, that Garifuna people are in their language, relationship with the nature, agricultural skills, sea life, dietary habits, and traditional medicine products of the Amerindian heritage. On the other hand, other important aspects of their cultural identity such as their phenotype (skin color, nose and lip shape, etc.), spirituality, rhythms, music, multilingual skills, etc., come mainly from the African origin. This characteristic of mixed cultural heritage has historically become a key factor for the

success of the Garifuna people throughout the centuries, especially in times of crisis. The advantages of the mixed cultural ancestry continue to play a key role in the present time, not only as an opportunity for an effective and even affective identification with the struggle and demands of both the Afro-descendants and the indigenous peoples, but also as an opportunity to play an decisive role in the promotion of unity in the struggle for the cause of these two of the most underprivileged and vulnerable sectors of the humanity in modern times. Moreover, my personal life experience as a mixed cultural ancestry could also allow me, as native Garifuna researchers, the opportunity to develop a special interest in searching for the best of the analytical and conceptual categories of both the Western and the indigenous traditions, for the advantage and enhancement of social science.

Researching as a native Garifuna in my own community has some pros and cons. Among the most frequently mentioned cons is the risk that the insider researcher might overlook relevant aspects of the reality that could appear as irrelevant element of everyday life to the eyes of an insider. According to this approach, taking the necessary distance from the object of study could become extremely difficult for insiders. Aware of these possibilities, I made important efforts throughout this study to minimize the possible negative effects of that potential constraint.

Having said that, it is important to state that researching from inside the community seems to offer significant opportunities in which the pros surpass the cons of being an insider, at least, for studies of this kind. In other words, the advantages of the native researcher were greater than those of the outside researcher. For instance, my personal life experience as native Garifuna speaker in predominantly Spanish-speaking and English-speaking societies became a valuable asset. That is particularly true in the case of my almost 35 years of personal schooling experience in many different countries in South America, the Caribbean, Central America, and North

America, starting from elementary education and continuing to graduate school. A common characteristic of the educational systems in these countries is the systematic overestimation of all that relates to the Western languages and cultures while at the same time underestimating, disqualifying, and even ridiculing almost anything that relates to indigenous and Afro-descendents languages, cultures, and societies. It is based on that lifetime direct and personal experience that I assume the historic responsibility, as anthropologist, to attempt to make a contribution to the social sciences through the assessment of some of the strengths and weaknesses of both Western and indigenous conceptual and analytic categories, particularly with regard to the identification, analysis, and solution of sociocultural phenomena in indigenous settings.

Other important variables can also be considered among the pros of being a native researcher that played a significant role in my motivation and determination to conduct this study and to address it not (through the easy way) following conventional interpretations and approaches that avoid taking risks of any sort, but rather following the challenging road of the innovative, creative, and responsible analytical and methodological approach. These valuable variables include my working experience as national executive for the education of the indigenous and Afro-descendent population in the Ministry of Education in Honduras, my experience as consultant assessing the impact of World Bank supported projects on the indigenous and Afro descendents populations in Central America, as well as the experience of accompanying and observing the everyday growth and multilingual development of my three-year-old daughter, my first-hand knowledge of the people, leaders, and community of Corozal. That I personally knew many of the school teachers and the community leaders, and did not have to spend time learning the roads and familiarizing myself with the food and culture of the

Corozal village, the research site, were important pluses for me. And more importantly, the fact that I knew many people in the village, and most of them knew me and trusted my work even before I arrived in the community to conduct the research, were additional elements that contributed to my interest in applying a specific methodology and added to my ability to interpret individual's responses. The insider condition also allowed me immediate access and understanding to the sociolinguistic of the local community, and consequently, to search for the appropriate theories and the most adequate responses to the research questions.

In that regard, joint efforts between Western social scientists and indigenous social scientists appear to be the best approach for the development of highly productive and reliable research activities. Therefore, researching in indigenous context could be more effective and fruitful if conducted as collaboration efforts by insider and outsider scientists. The critiques of the limits and inadequacy of Western social science theoretical categories and framework in this study do not imply, under any circumstance, that Western social scientists are incapable of understanding and analyzing indigenous sociocultural phenomena. Rather, the intention is to state categorically that the dominant theoretical framework and the analytical categories used by most Western social scientists have proven to be inadequate and inappropriate to identify and analyze phenomena developed in indigenous sociocultural contexts. Such analytical categories have also demonstrated to be even more ineffective with regard to the inclusion and recognition of indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the scientific enterprise, especially in terms of having an impact on public policies and the traditional practice of exclusion that has historically predominated in higher education, especially as it relates to indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and cultures.

## **Stakeholders**

A diverse group of stakeholders was approached using different research strategies. The most important stakeholders included: the heads of family households, youth leaders, community leaders, school students and teachers, and cultural actors. Families were visited at home either to administer the questionnaire or to conduct participant observation; the school teachers and students filled out the questionnaires, were interviewed, and/or observed. School teachers, students, and youth leaders also participated in the design, implementation, and preliminary data analysis.

## **Research Design**

In terms of the methodological approaches required for the pursuit of the proposed objectives, several research strategies were implemented in the process of the study. These are summarized in Table 1 and described briefly below.

1. **Questionnaire Based Surveys –Self-report:** Questionnaires were conducted at two different moments: First in summer and winter 2001, and second in fall 2004 and spring 2005. In the first phase (2001), the survey was conducted at the national level, administered particularly to school children and heads of family households. In the second phase 2004-2005, all stakeholders and the entire community participated, not only as informants but also as researchers. For instance, education authorities, teachers and school students were first interviewed, and then they became the interviewers, particularly to administer the questionnaire to family households. While the first phase was performed at the nationwide level, the second was conducted in one focal point, the village of Corozal.
2. **Participant Observation Research:** This approach was carried out in the summer 2002. In that stage, linguistic interactions on the streets, in family households, in schools, and in a playground were observed, in order to assess the actual linguistic attitudes and preferences of the different stakeholders in their everyday lives. The results of participant observation were used to validate or deny the information provided by the stakeholders on their linguistic attitudes in the questionnaire-based survey conducted the previous year.
3. **Archival Research Data and Structured Interview with Education Authorities:** The documentation pertaining to policies on Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB in Spanish) was gathered through archival research, as well as by interviews conducted with national and regional education authorities and political leaders. The library of the National Program for the Education of Indigenous and Afro-descendent Peoples of Honduras (PRONEEAAH in Spanish) provided archival data. The public policy on EIB is an

indicator of the importance and level of attention that Garifuna and indigenous languages are receiving from the national education authorities and the national government. This attention is critical for the level of status and prestige that a given language can have, both nationally and locally.

Table 3-1. Research design

#	Methodological Approaches	Description of the method (how?)
1	Participant Observation	Direct observation conducted by the primary researcher in the field. The purpose is to contrast the results of the self-reported linguistic attitude with the actual linguistic practice in everyday life (as it relates to the research problem)
2	Questionnaire based survey	At three different phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationwide survey</li> <li>• Participant observation in Corozal</li> <li>• Sociolinguistic and demographic survey in Corozal</li> </ul>
3	Archival Research and interviews with public policy makers	Archival research and interviews on Public Policy regarding Intercultural Bilingual Education at the national, regional and local levels
	<b>Participants</b> Stakeholders in the endangerment and preservation of Garifuna and indigenous languages	<b>Subgroups of participants</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family households</li> <li>2. Youth leaders</li> <li>3. Community leaders</li> <li>4. School students</li> <li>5. School teachers</li> <li>6. Politicians</li> </ol>

### **Descriptive Analysis of the Implementation Process of the Research Methodologies**

In order to assess the preservation strategies implemented by the community of speakers of Garifuna, three major field visits were conducted, each with a different but complementary methodological research approach. The work was conducted during three time periods: summer and winter 2001; summer 2002; fall 2004 and spring 2005.

The remainder of the chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the chronological development in which the actual research took place, so that anyone, especially novices, may be able to execute it without major difficulties. An important reason to share the methodological approach implemented in this study is the high level of involvement by stakeholders and

agencies at different stages of the research process. The chapter is developed following three main phases, each corresponding to one of the three research field visits.

1. The first section of the chapter (ch 3) describes the initial field visit, which was conducted nationwide using as the primary research tool a questionnaire-based survey, with extended participation of the stakeholders, both as informants and as researchers. School teachers children, and the heads of households were the primary target groups or stakeholders.
2. The second section of the chapter describes the second field visit, which was conducted in one location, the village of Corozal, using participant observation as the primary research method. The intent was to observe people in spontaneous linguistic interactions in open settings such as at home, on the street and in playgrounds. The primary stakeholders were family households, school children and community members in public spaces. The chapter explains the selection of Corozal as the site to conduct the doctoral study and the choice of participant observation as the primary research method, as well as the expected contribution of the visit to the entire dissertation.
8. The third section of the chapter refers to the last field visit. The primary research method was a questionnaire-based survey administered via household visits. The survey focused on socioeconomic, migration, and demographic variables and their impact on language preservation or language shift in the community. A team of young Garifuna local and neighboring professionals and local youth leaders administered the questionnaire.

### **First Field Visit: Summer 2001**

The first field visit (summer 2001) involved comprehensive research conducted nationwide and included an assessment of the level of endangerment of the Garifuna language. The variables addressed in this first visit included: the intergenerational language transmission, linguistic preference and competence in different age groups, and attitude toward the use and preservation of the linguistic heritage. Other factors such as institutional language planning (status and corpus), language policy (overt or covert), institutional support, and societal attitude toward the indigenous and Afro-descendent languages in the country were also addressed to a lesser extent. The primary instrument used to gather the information was a questionnaire-based survey that was structured in 24 open and closed questions to address aspects predominantly related to language status. The target population in this field visit included regional education

authorities, high school principals, teachers and students, and household units in Garifuna communities nationwide.

The questionnaire was adapted to each group based on the specific characteristics and the expected/assumed role of the group in the process of heritage language transmission, preservation, or even endangerment. For instance, the education authorities and school teachers were expected to guide the process of language preservation or decline through the implementation of educational policies, whether overt or covert. The school teachers were assumed to be responsible for implementing school language policies, most of the time covert policies. In addition, as a representative of education, knowledge and authority, the linguistic attitude of the school teacher has an enormous influence on the linguistic attitude of many people in the Garifuna communities. The family household was assumed to be the most critical unit in the social structure to provide relevant information about the status and level of endangerment of the heritage language. And finally, high school students were assumed to be the catalysts or the results of whatever linguistic competence and attitude was being taught to them at the school and transmitted/communicated at home, because these two institutions form the most immediate and basic social network of the child's linguistic socialization.

The implementation process of the questionnaire was designed to guarantee complete and well informed participation by regional and local actors in every step of the process. This means that the methodological approach can be defined as a comprehensive participatory research method. In the 1<sup>st</sup> level, for instance, the regional education authorities were the first to participate in the questionnaire-based survey, by taking part in an interview with the principal researcher, filling out the questionnaire, and releasing an official communication to the local

education authorities and teachers in every Garifuna school under their jurisdiction, and authorizing the implementation of the questionnaires in those schools.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> level of the process started once the official instructions from the district authorities were issued, and the school principals became involved. After receiving the authorization, they were totally willing to offer all the necessary collaboration to make sure that the implementation of the questionnaire in their schools would work in the best way possible. The working process at the school level was initiated by a short meeting with the principal and school teachers and led by the principal researcher, in order to explain the purpose of the research and to administer the questionnaire to the principal and teachers. The inclusion of school authorities in the process of completing questionnaires had an additional purpose beyond obtaining their opinions on the issue of endangerment and preservation of the heritage language. By filling out the questionnaire, they also became familiar with the information and structure contained in the questionnaires, so that when they distributed the instruments to the students, the school authorities would be able to offer well informed and quality instructions. Additionally, after the students completed the survey, the principal and teachers would be able to continue discussing the topic with the students.

Subsequently, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> level the questionnaire was administered to the students. In every case, before questionnaires were distributed, the protocol was read and the objectives of the research explained by the school teacher and also by the school principal in most cases. Up to this level of the process, the questionnaire-based survey was conducted by the primary researcher in collaboration with a small permanent team of assistants and some local counterparts who volunteered to join the team, as well as local collaborators from the institution to which the questionnaire was being conducted, in this particular case the school principal and teachers.

The purpose of designing the survey with that methodology was to pursue two goals at the same time: scientific and political/academic. The scientific goal pertained to assuring that sufficient and quality information was obtained from both teachers and students. The political and academic goal was to make the teachers and students aware of the importance of the heritage culture, by including them in the discussion and analysis of the status of the heritage language in a highly conventional and traditional academic setting. Establishing the concept of language heritage in a research topic within the context of a traditional academic space contributed to the process of transforming the status of heritage language into a valid academic subject.

After the high school students and teachers completed the questionnaires, we were ready to enter into the 4<sup>th</sup> level of the participatory methodological design, which involved full participation and responsibility of the school authorities, teachers, and students in the implementation of the survey at the household level. This was a voluntary activity, in which students could freely and voluntarily ask the teacher for a number of questionnaires, in order to administer them to their parents and the neighboring family households, and subsequently to return the completed questionnaires to the teachers. Some students administered the survey to as many as 25 family households. Others even organized themselves into teams to visit remaining family households in the village. Students were given between two to three weeks to conduct the activity. Most household visits were conducted during the weekend, because the students had more free time then, and because most families spend more time at home on Saturday and Sunday. When the data gathering was completed, students returned the questionnaires to the teacher, who collected, organized, and delivered them to the school principal's office, where they were picked up by the principal researcher or a member of the permanent team of assistants.

The final part of the first field visit was the presentation of a preliminary data analysis to community members and feedback reception. The data analysis was done by the principal researcher and the team of research assistants. This team had three members, two permanent and one temporary. They worked with the principal researcher for almost the entire field visit, particularly during visits to the villages. In addition to the permanent team, a group of local volunteers, principally local youth leaders, would normally join the team in each village, to work solely in that village.

For the purpose of data codification and analysis, a specialist in software use was hired to work with the team. The principal researcher was responsible for providing the team of assistants with an intensive research learning experience, and for covering their daily expenses during the time of the project plus a monthly stipend of one hundred dollars (US\$ 100). In terms of a learning experience, from the very moment that the assistants joined the team, the principal researcher scheduled frequent intensive training sessions on a variety of aspects related to the field research. Moreover, before starting and during the process of data codification and analysis, the team of research assistants received additional intensive training sessions on software use for qualitative and quantitative data analysis and data presentation. The research assistants had to be native Garifuna speakers, university students, and proven community leaders. The entire process of data organization, codification, and preparation of the presentation required about two full weeks.

**Preliminary data analysis and presentation:** The preliminary data presentation was a workshop type event, carried out in the Garifuna village of Mañali, one of the 16 villages located in the region linguistically classified as “category A”, a region in which the populations are native Garifuna speakers. The names of all sixteen communities are: Blagriba, Badayaugati,

Ñotón, Buena Vista, La Fe, San Fedu Dugamachu, San Isidu Dugamachu, Falumarugu, Sangaraya, Lichüguagu, Iriuna, Mañali, Gusunaugati, Dübürügati, and Limú. Around 10 representatives of different social groups in each of the 16 communities attended the workshop, making a total of almost 200 people, including organizers. The workshop was organized in collaboration with the regional office of the Social Apostolate of the Catholic Church in the Garifuna village of Mañali (Ciriboya), better known as “Sub-Sede de Pastoral Social”. The Sub-sede assumed the financial cost of organizing the workshop, including the provision of logistics for participant mobilization and transportation to Mañali and return to their villages. The participants are classified in Table 2. Included in the group were five high school students from each participant school, chosen according to their leadership capacities demonstrated during the process of questionnaire administration in the school and the village. Other participants included the principal and two teachers from each participant school, the regional authorities of three school districts, two representatives of the school parent association, two local community leaders; and one representative from the National Garifuna Organization (OFRANEH).

Table 3-2. Participants at the preliminary data presentation in Mañali

#	Sectors Represented in the Community	Subtotal
5	High School Students from each participating school	65
3	High School faculty members from each school including the Principals	39
3	Representatives of the Education District Authorities	3
2	Representatives from each local community (Patronato) and youth leaders	32
2	Representatives of the Association of Student Parents at each school	32
1	Representative of National Garifuna Organization – OFRANEH-	1
	Total of Participants	172

The students were required to wear their school uniforms to the event, because participation in the research activity, including the collaboration in questionnaire administration

to family households, was considered part of school academic program. As a result, the methodology used for the preliminary data presentation was designed not only to provide information on the status of the heritage language, but also as an academic and highly educational event, in which school students, community members, and leaders were introduced to the use of modern communication technologies, such as computers, data-show, video-camera (camcorder), and digital camera, as well as the software packages (Power Point, SPSS, and Excel) used in the field research process. And even more importantly, the preliminary data presentation also provided an opportunity to introduce the communities, school sector, and youth leaders to the academic debate over heritage language preservation.

As a Garifuna native, the primary researcher understood the need to introduce the participants to the importance and functions of the research protocols, such as reading and signing the informed consent form. The act of signing a document as a legal instrument to protect a person's intellectual property and other rights is something that differs from the cultural practice of the Garifuna people. In the Garifuna cultural framework, people are assured that their rights are protected in a particular research, for instance, if they know the parents or grandparents of the researchers, or if they at least know the family and personal background of the researcher's primary contact person in the village. Therefore, explaining the cultural differences and finding the appropriate parallelisms in the local culture became one of the critical jobs that the principal researcher had to tackle.

In terms of the preliminary results, a sample of 25 percent of the data from the households and the schools of each of the 16 villages was analyzed. Following the report on each in the 24 questions of the questionnaire-based survey, a few minutes were allowed for comments

and questions. This first field visit was characterized by a significant level of participation of local leaders and institutions, not only in data gathering, but also in the preliminary data analysis.

**Research Methodological Constraints:** A questionnaire-based survey relies heavily on the self-report methodological approach. This method, however, has its downside, in the sense that the informants tend to respond based on what they would like to happen, rather on what they actually do, even though in most cases these responses may not necessarily be due to conscious action.

Some measures were taken in order to reduce the possible impact of these methodological boundaries on the global results of the research. For instance, a participatory research method was developed, with well informed and full participation by local actors in the entire research process, including regional education authorities, school principals and teachers, high school students, local community leaders, youth leaders, and national organization representatives. In this particular case, the students would find it difficult to alter the information in the presence of the teachers, especially if there was a chance that the teacher and the school principal could see his/her responses to the survey. Also parents and neighboring family households would have almost no chance to deviate from the facts when the interviewer was a member of the neighboring household, because there was high possibility that the researcher might know the response even before asking the question. If people have almost no choice but to tell the truth, the quality of the gathered information will be correspondingly high. By this design, the opportunity for negative impact of the method was reduced to almost nothing.

### **Second Field Visit: Summer 2002**

The second visit was a follow-up to the visit conducted in the previous year, when the questionnaire-based survey was specifically administered to two groups: high school students and heads of family households. The second field visit focused on language preservation

strategies, using as primary method the participant observation research approach. In order to pursue this goal, a single location was selected, Corozal. This village had been previously classified as ‘category B’, in which the population is bilingual, or equally fluent in the heritage language, Garifuna, and in the dominant language in the country, Spanish. Corozal is a semi-rural Garifuna community of 3,000 people, located a few miles northeast of La Ceiba, the third largest city of Honduras. For more details, see chapter two: Afrodescendant Peoples of the Atlantic Coast: the Field Settings and Research Strategies.

Analysis of the data gathered in the 2001 nationwide field visit provided sufficient elements for the identification of Corozal village as the appropriate location for the participant observation research to be conducted in the summer 2002. The selection of a “category B” linguistic community resulted from the intent to focus the study in a location with characteristics of both extreme situations of the Garifuna language in Honduras and Central America: regions classified as ‘category A’, in which all persons are native speakers of Garifuna, and regions classified as ‘category C’, in which the population is no longer capable of conversing in Garifuna. Studying a ‘category B’ speech community increased the likelihood of gaining new insights for the analysis of the strategies of preservation of indigenous languages, particularly the Garifuna language in Honduras and Central America.

The focus on language preservation strategies rather than on endangerment arises from personal concerns of the researcher, as native Garifuna, as well as his professional interests, as an applied anthropologist. These two aspects (professional interest and personal concern) both point to the need to document and develop a complete understanding of the factors that have contributed to the preservation and development the Garifuna language. Documenting and understanding those processes becomes crucial particularly in the current context of the global

economy, in which most indigenous and Afro-descendent languages seem to be condemned to disappear, according to most specialists in the fields of sociolinguistics, linguistics, economics, and even anthropology. (cf. Chap 4). The better our understanding of these preservation strategies, the greater our opportunities will be to contribute to the design of effective and efficient actions for the preservation of the indigenous languages in Central and Latin America, and worldwide.

The identification of a specific site for the second field visit was a crucial part of the decision making process. Among the many other aspects (cf. Chap 2) that made Corozal village the most suitable location to conduct the field research on Garifuna heritage language preservation strategies are:

1. The community is predominantly Garifuna; more than 95 percent of the population identify themselves as Garinagu.
2. Its geographic location, a few miles from La Ceiba, has transformed Corozal into a marginal neighborhood of La Ceiba, third largest urban center in Honduras. Geographical proximity to a major city makes Corozal representative of 70 percent of Garifuna communities in Honduras, whose inhabitants are forced to have intense and daily social, economic, cultural, and linguistic interactions with the dominant culture in the urban center.
3. The income to satisfy basic subsistence needs depends almost totally on the remittances from urban centers, especially the USA.
4. The massive tourism industry is beginning to impact the lives of the people, particularly as regards to learning new cultural patterns and values, such as individualism and consumerism, with the consequential loss of cultural values like family and communal solidarity, respect for elders, and adults, etc.
5. The process of land and territory loss to companies and economically dominant groups that control the economic, legal and political life of the country is accelerating. For instance, legal land and territory of the community of Corozal has been reduced to the area where the houses are concentrated, which could be called the urban center (casco urbano) of the community, losing thereby almost the totality of the territory used historically by the community members for farming, crop growth and cultivation (cassava, rice, pineapple, plantain, etc). Most materials for house construction and canoe building, as well as every crop, used in the village come from that part of the historic Garifuna territory. The land

loss seems to be an important factor that causes people in Corozal to migrate in search for a better life away from the community and the national borders.

6. Interesting efforts have been conducted to introduce the model of bilingual and intercultural education (EIB) in the school system, including coordination with the Ministry of Education through the National Program for the Education of Indigenous and Afro-descendent populations (PRONEEAAH).
7. Small business initiatives in the area of ecotourism, managed by local owners, are starting to flourish in the villages.
8. The researcher has previous research work experience and contacts with community leaders, high school principals and teachers in Corozal.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the linguistic attitude and preferences of the people; this time, not based on survey, but rather on participant observation methodology. This research method served as a validating strategy, in the sense that it allowed direct observation of individual's linguistic preferences and attitudes in their spontaneous everyday actions. This methodological approach was strategically effective in either validating or invalidating the information provided in the self report methodological approach conducted the previous year (2001). In that regard, these two approaches were intended to complement each other.

For a period of four months during summer 2002, individuals' linguistic practices, including linguistic preferences and attitudes in Corozal, were observed with particular attention in those who had participated in the self-report questionnaire survey the year before. The dominant research method was participant observation, and it was conducted in a variety of settings including parent-to-child, child-to-parent, and brother-to-brother, sister-to-brother linguistic interactions in the intimacy of the family household, as well as interacting with peers at the playground.

A total of forty family households, 10 percent of the total number of households in the community were visited. Each household was visited two or three different times during the

research period, and each visit lasted between one to two hours. Five groups of children were observed while playing in the playground.

The research instruments implemented in this visit included semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, which occurred primarily at participant's homes, but some also occurred on the streets. The Garifuna village of Corozal is like a large extended family group, in the sense that houses are built very near to each other, there are no fences separating the houses, and doors and windows are kept open from 6:00 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. Somehow, all family households look after each others' children, especially when they are playing nearby. It is important to remember that most of these neighboring houses belong to people from the same extended family group; especially sisters from one family group tend to build their houses near their parent's home. This cultural practice is a kind of family social security network that guarantees that no elder parent is left alone or abandoned. The only space available between one house and the next is the street, which has become more like an extension of a person's home. That is why streets are frequently points of encounter for adults and playgrounds for children, particularly in the afternoon after school ends. Families take their chairs to spend time outside conversing or simply watching the children play, while enjoying the fresh breeze coming from the calm and blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. This peculiar function of the streets in Corozal, as a space for encounter and conversation for adults and playground for children, made it easy to conduct the participant observation research regarding linguistic use, interactions, and preferences, both among children and among adults.

The participant observation research was conducted by the principal researcher almost solely due to the specialized knowledge required. The researcher, for instance, had to be very alert to the different linguistic interactions and linguistic preferences, e.g., who uses a specific

language when talking to whom. When a child addresses another child at home, does he or she use the same language compared to when the encounter takes place on the street among peers? What is the linguistic preference at home from parent to child and from child to parent? Is there any difference in the linguistic preference when a child addresses the female parent compared to the male parent? Is there any difference in the linguistic preference when a teacher talks to a young adult and when he or she speaks to an elder person, or when he or she talks to a child on the street, at home, and at the school? Is it possible to say that teachers' linguistic preferences are similar anywhere? Therefore, the researcher must be alert to perceive when what occurs and with whom.

The expected results and its contribution to the dissertation: The results of this specific field visit were expected to contribute to the full objective of the research in a variety of ways: to determine what is the actual linguistic preference from parent to child, and child to parent at home, compared to the linguistic preference in a conversation among peers in the street, and in the school. Another crucial expected methodological outcome was verification or corroboration of the extent to which the information provided in the self-report questionnaire-based survey conducted among the people of Corozal a year before could be validated or contradicted using the participant observation research method. The methodology was also expected to shed light on how the disruption of intergenerational language transmission from parents to children, observed in the previous field visit in summer 2001, is affecting the preservation of the heritage language in the Garifuna village of Corozal. The outcome of the second field visit was expected to contribute to the confirmation or denial of the results of the previous field visit.

Such contribution should be possible because of the complementary nature that we assume exists between the self-report questionnaire and the participant observation research

methodology. Additionally, the major theoretical contribution of the second visit should be to demonstrate whether the current theories on indigenous language preservation and endangerment could be applied in the case of the Garifuna heritage language, taking as departing point the Garifuna village of Corozal.

The major and critical goals of the research were to determine the preservation strategies implemented by the community of speakers of the heritage language, and secondarily, to generate some response to the question of whether Garifuna can be classified as an endangered language.

No preliminary data were presented to the community in the second visit, but small discussion groups were organized with the participation of school teachers, some youth leaders and contact persons in the community.

### **Third Field Visit: Winter 2004 and Spring 2005**

In winter 2004 and spring 2005 the final phase of the research was conducted in Corozal. The specific purpose was to look at socioeconomic and demographic factors, and how they could be related primarily to the language preservation implemented by the speech community in Corozal; and secondarily, how these factors relate to the linguistic competences, preferences, and attitudes observed in the community. The researcher also wanted to determine whether there may be some link between linguistic preference, socioeconomic status and migration. Therefore, an extensive and detailed documentation of the community's socioeconomic, demographic, and migratory characteristics was conducted, in order to determine which social sector of the population was showing tendencies toward the preservation of the heritage language and which sector showed tendencies toward language shift. Determining the extent to which migration was contributing also became a relevant issue, in the sense that migration and its consequences in remittances play a decisive role in the structure of the economy and the social life in Corozal.

Therefore, language shift or language preservation in the Garifuna village of Corozal could not be understood without taking into account the impact of the migratory phenomenon, since almost every family has a member living in the USA and is receiving a monthly or biweekly remittances.

The research design included a questionnaire-based survey that covered linguistic, socioeconomic and demographic variables. For the administration of the questionnaires, a team of 18 local assistants was organized. The principal researcher offered the team an intensive training program, which included topics such as like the purpose and significance of the research for both the community and the science, the protocol of the research, the format and content of the research instrument and how to administer it. After the final training session, the group was organized in teams of three members each, based on affinity, gender equity, free-time availability, leadership, and knowledge of the community. The original group was composed of local people, including high school teachers, youth leaders, and university students. In the final phase of the process, a group of five recently graduated school teachers previously classified as ‘category A’ or dominantly Garifuna speaking joined the group of local assistants. These new volunteers were distributed among the teams, increasing the total number of research assistants from 18 to 23. This final phase involved one week of full-time work, visiting the houses in the still uncovered neighborhood. The method designed for house visiting was as follows: each of the five teams included a leader, who was either a local school teacher or a local youth leader, and an outside native Garifuna teacher. The household visits were performed by the five teams at the same time; while team 1 entered house 1, team 2 entered the next house, team 3 went to the 3<sup>rd</sup>, team 4 to the 4<sup>th</sup>, team 5 to the 5<sup>th</sup> and so forth, until the final house in the village was visited.

This strategy worked perfectly in the sense that it allowed the researchers to cover an area of the neighborhood at the same time, while the community members felt confident and ready to collaborate with the research. The community confidence and readiness to participate was strengthened when they realized that the researchers who were visiting them were school teachers and the community youth leaders accompanied by an outside teacher very fluent in the heritage language.

The methodological design worked so well that no household wanted to be left behind without being interviewed. Therefore, besides being highly successful in getting the family households interested in participating in the research, the inclusion of local youth leaders and local school teachers as research team leaders accomplished other relevant purposes of the research, such as the academic and the long term political goals.

Bringing the new generation of Garifuna teachers and professionals on board and raising their level of interest and concern about the importance of both maintaining the heritage language and presenting it as relevant research and academic instrument, the research study became solid ground for transformation of the education system in Corozal.

The research design and methodological approach were inspired, in part, by the work of Bronislaw Malinowski, who emphasized the importance of conducting an extensive and sustained ethnographic research in his studies of the Trobrianders, as well as by the interesting new scenario presented by the cultural practices within the Garifuna family social structure in the village of Corozal.

Including youth research team leaders opened the way for inclusion of the preservation of the heritage language among the priorities in the working agenda of the young people, and eventually, we hope, in their personal, family, community, and professional lives.

Within the context of the socioeconomic domain, beside focusing on the remittances and their possible impact on the heritage language preservation or shift, other relevant sources of economic income in the community were also considered during interviews. These alternative sources of income in Corozal included the following:

1. Fishermen or individuals that make a living from fishing
2. Educators or individuals whose primary income comes from their professional activities as school teachers, both in primary and secondary education
3. *Buyei* or heritage spiritual leaders, individuals specialized in traditional spiritual and physical healing
4. Medical doctors and other university professionals trained essentially within the framework of Western science and tradition
5. Returned Garifuna international and national migrants, especially after securing a retirement monthly check from the host country, normally the USA
6. Non-Governmental Organization local leaders
7. Owners of small businesses, such as restaurants, coconut bread bakeries, and the local tourism industry
8. Hotel managers
9. Musicians
10. Public servants

The role of the migrants returning for retirement and as heritage language instructors for Garifuna American grandchildren was of particular interest. This new phenomenon is becoming a very interesting variable in the analysis of the strategies for the preservation of the native language, especially when this action is oriented to toddlers born in the host county, the USA.

The theoretical basis for the analysis is presented in the chapter 4, and the contribution to the scientific analysis of the phenomenon of language endangerment and preservation is presented in the chapter 5.

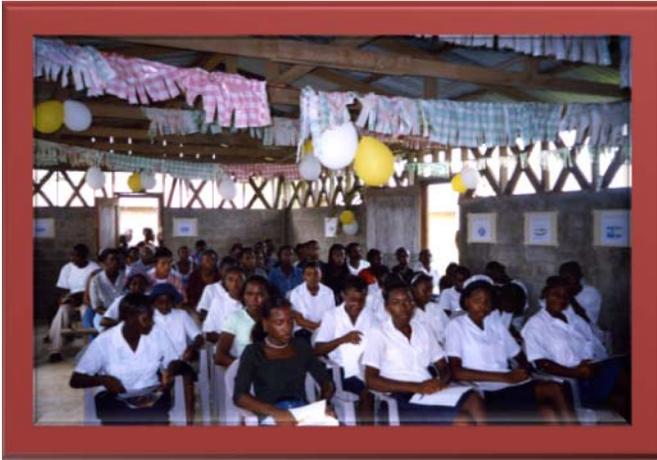


Figure 3-1. High school students at the preliminary data presentation in Manali, summer 2001



Figure 3-2. Primary researcher and team leader at preliminary data presentation in Manali, summer 2001



Figure 3-3. Research team leader, female youth leader, and district education authority leading activities at preliminary data presentation in Manali summer 2001



Figure 3-4. Name of the high school in Corozal Instituto “Mariano García Arzú” honors his memory. The text in the frame says “Mariano García Arzú, an exemplar citizen, born on April 17, 1913 and died on February 8, 1993”



Figure 3-5. Research team members in Corozal, comprised of young Garifuna school teachers

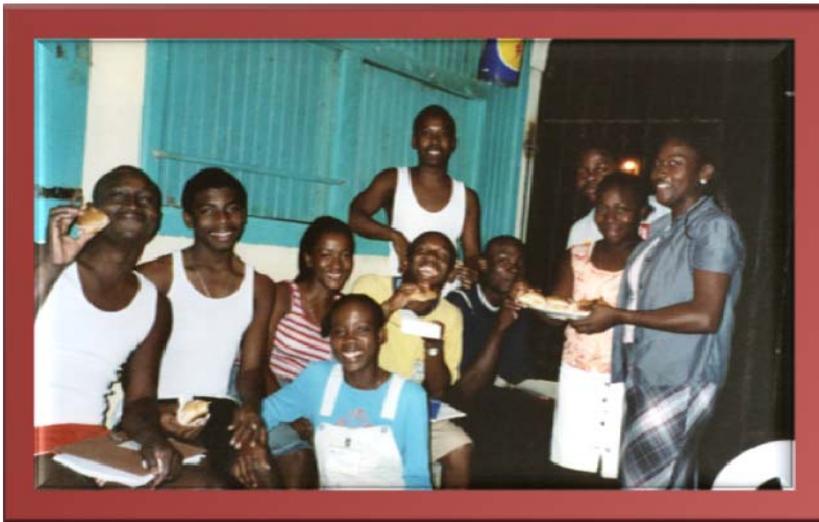


Figure 3-6. Research team members in Corozal, comprised of local youth leaders and university students. They were sharing some snacks after an intensive training session on research methodology



Figure 3-7. Lic. Carlos Ramírez Güity, high school Principal in Corozal and committed community leader to the cause of preservation of the Garifuna heritage language in the village

## CHAPTER 4 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

Theorists on language preservation and endangerment suggest that, if the current trend of decline of indigenous and less spoken languages of the world continues and no effective measures are taken to control this situation, more than 3,000 of the 6,000 existing world spoken languages will disappear within the next two generations (Crawford 2001; Crystal 2002; Fishman 1991, 2001; Grenoble and Whaley 1988; Wurm 1996, 2001).

Some others, including Crawford (2001) and Krauss (1992), have even suggested that one hundred years from now only 600 of today's spoken languages of the world can be considered safe from any form of threats. If these suggestions are consistent with actual facts, then it can be expected that in the next four generations, 200 years from now, the world community will be monolingual and monocultural. Such a situation would place at serious risk the continuation of the humankind, in the sense that cultural and ecological diversity is a precondition for a successful humanity, and language is essential to what it means to be human (Crystal 2000:32-34). "The loss of linguistic diversity corresponds to the loss of intellectual diversity" (Crawford 2001:62-63). Consequently, it destroys the sense of self-worth and the human potential to meet changing conditions (Fishman 1991:4).

Among the most accepted causes of the phenomenon of language endangerment are economic, political, and sociocultural factors (Edward 1992; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998). However, other variables are mentioned, such as lack of literary tradition (Bernard 1992), and linguistic ecology (Fettes 1997); nonetheless, most authors seem to concur that one of the most critical causal variables is the disruption of the intergenerational transmission process (Adegbija 2001; Fishman 1991; Garcia et al. 2001; Lee and McLaughlin 2001).

Even though most of these suggested causes can be observed in the sociocultural surrounding of the Garifuna community, the Garifuna language cannot be classified as an endangered language. Instead, the use of the heritage language of the Garifuna people has increased from fewer to larger numbers of speakers. For instance, the initial group of the contemporary Garifuna speech community was comprised of approximately 2,080 people, those who survived the exile from Saint Vincent and arrived at the Island of Roatan in Honduras-Central America in 1797. Two hundred years later, however, the Garifuna speech community in Honduras numbers more than 150,000 people from a population of over 200,000, not counting those in Belize, Guatemala, England, and especially in the United States of America. The number of Garifuna people in the United States is more than 100,000 (Gonzalez 1998:180), and most of them are Garifuna speakers. Therefore, the Garifuna speech community has increased from 2,080 people in the year 1797 to approximately 150,000 in the year 2000, in Honduras alone. These estimates are taken from the analysis of the data provided by ODECO (2002:13-14) and Suazo (2001:9). In that regard, these figures do not include the Garifuna speech community in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, nor are they reflective of the total number of Garifuna in the world, estimated at 300,000 people (Cayetano and Cayetano 1997:21-22; ODECO 2002:14).

When analyzing the status of the Garifuna language, taking as starting point the current situation of the northeastern Garifuna village of Corozal in Honduras, the results of the study are also very positive. In this case, although the speech community, culture, and language have existed for the last hundred and forty four years in a socioeconomically and culturally stressful environment, the language has been increasing in number of speakers and gaining new vitality. This is due to two variables in particular: the extended family as primary social structure in the Garifuna culture and the cultural leadership of the local youth. The vitality of the language has

shown new trends, particularly in the last two decades, with the development of a phenomenon of great cultural awareness and linguistic consciousness among organized and politically active local youth leaders. This phenomenon of cultural activism significantly affects not only the youth population but also the sociolinguistic practice of the community as a whole and the local schools.

In that regard, the linguistic practice in the last three generations in the Garifuna village of Corozal, as well as the current status of the heritage language in that northeastern Honduran village, raise important questions and doubts with regard to the effectiveness and adequacy of the conceptual categories and theoretical framework used by dominant Western social scientists to analyze language endangerment, particularly in the context of Garifuna and indigenous languages. Moreover, this raises the demand for incorporating new, adequate, relevant, and socioculturally pertinent analytical and conceptual categories, some of which have already been introduced or highlighted in this study. For instance, the concept of extended family, a social structure of the Garifuna culture, must be employed as fundamental analytical category for the identification, analysis, and interpretation of sociocultural phenomena like language preservation and endangerment in Garifuna and indigenous communities.

It is important to mention, however, that some Western social scientists, especially anthropologists, have acknowledged the relevance of the indigenous knowledge and analytical categories to the enhancement of the social science, particularly for the study of language endangerment and preservation. Nonetheless, these efforts have not yet produced significant impact in terms of effective recognition and inclusion of indigenous knowledge into the actual practice of the dominant social science, in the practice of public educational systems and academic community, especially in the Latin America and the Caribbean. The low impact of

these important efforts can essentially be attributed to the way they are used in public policies. The insignificant effect is such to the extent that the dominant discourse and public domain continue to demonize almost everything related to indigenous (including knowledge, culture, and language) and categorizes it as primitive and inferior.

This chapter aims to review some of the current and relevant literature, especially focused on language preservation and endangerment, in order to assess the actual situation of adequacy of the conceptual and analytical categories and the theoretical framework used by Western social scientists for the identification, analysis, and solution of sociocultural phenomena, especially those developed in Garifuna and indigenous settings. As result, this review intends to contribute to the literature in two ways: first, it provides a critical analysis of those aspects of the dominant Western social science that could operate as primary blindspots for the study of the phenomena of language endangerment and preservation in Garifuna and indigenous communities, and secondly, it seeks to identify alternative analytical categories for the study of language preservation and endangerment in Garifuna and indigenous contexts.

The format followed herein consists of exploring the theoretical perspectives of different authors and analyzing their strengths and weaknesses.

### **Western Social Science and its Adequacy for the Study of Sociocultural Events in Garifuna Settings**

In order to explore the pertinence and capability of the dominant social science to describe, analyze, and solve problems related to maintenance, loss, and revival of Garifuna and indigenous languages and cultures, the typologies of language endangerment suggested in the literature are presented; the challenges, threats, and opportunities posed by the indigenous politics, knowledge, and cosmovision to Western social science are analyzed; and the local indigenous knowledge is presented as source of sovereignty, critical literacy as conscious resistance, and the indigenous

living relationships as something that transcend and go beyond 'intergenerational transmission'. In this regards, Fishman's (1991) technicism and methodological approach to the analysis of language shift and endangerment, the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), is especially examined. The GIDS as the method assumed by many social scientists for the analysis of language endangerment, including indigenous languages, is analyzed and its blindspots highlighted.

In an important attempt to provide some light on the study of the phenomenon of threatened languages and an attempt to define a typology of language endangerment, Grenoble and Whaley (1998) suggest that a comprehensive model of language loss will not be possible until we have adequately responded to critical questions like:

Why do linguistically related groups with similar histories and demographics manifest significantly different rates of language obsolescence? Why do linguistically related groups whose histories contrast in obvious ways nevertheless show the same rate of language decline? Why are some groups able to reverse the process of language shift successfully, whereas others are not? (1998: 22-23).

In this regard, Grenoble and Whaley point to previous typologies, including those suggested by Fishman (1985), Kibrik (1991), and Krauss (1992). These typologies contributed to raise awareness of the phenomenon of language endangerment, according to Grenoble and Whaley, in the sense that they focused on aspects like demographic variables, language status and the language intergenerational transmission. Nonetheless, they were not able to identify the complete picture of the phenomenon of language loss. Furthermore, Grenoble and Whaley mention the 'ecolinguistic' approach proposed by Haugen (1971) and Haarmann (1988), which incorporate the role of the environmental variable in language loss. Grenoble and Whaley also mention Smalley (1994) tendency to favor 'objective' measurements of language to the detriment of subjective approaches and factors in the study of language loss.

In the context of their critique, Grenoble and Whaley state that Edwards' (1992) model is a more adequate option, in the sense that it incorporates eleven ecolinguistic variables at three levels. These levels allow a distinction between micro-and macro-variables. Micro-variables refer to internal aspects that are unique to a particular speech community. These are the elements that can inform about the dangers to a given language from within the language and the community of speakers. The macro-variable, however, refers to features in the broader context in which a speech community is located. The factors at macro-level can account for the existing threats to an indigenous language in a particular region of the globe.

Although, Grenoble and Whaley recognize the important contribution of Edwards, they do not believe that it is sufficiently adequate to generate a comprehensive typology for the phenomenon of language endangerment. Furthermore, they make reference to Fishman's warning, in the sense that predictive typologies can in the best case scenario provide some light on the future of language preservation or endangerment, but can never predict solutions to every situation of any language. Fishman's typologies, for instance, were intended to predict tentative trends in immigrant communities in the United States, such as the Greek, Italian, Spanish, and Japanese communities. The reason for this is the critical role played by the subjective factor of changes in attitudes and beliefs of the community of speakers on the process of language shift or preservation (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:27). In order to expand Edward (1992)'s model, Grenoble and Whaley (1998) propose the addition of three more variables: (1) literacy, (2) more refined work on the definition of the macro-variables, and (3) the hierarchy of the variables (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:31-42).

Nonetheless, even after the modification proposed by Grenoble and Whaley through the inclusion of three additional variables, the new typologies do not yet take into consideration

those factors that play a fundamental role in the preservation of the Garifuna language in Corozal, for instance, the role played by the youth, the structure of the extended family unit, etc.

Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998) analyze the four key factors identified by Fishman in a 1994 congress on Native American Languages held in Alaska as the decisive causes responsible for the failure of most programs addressing issues of language preservation and language shift reversed. These key elements include: the enormous possibility that the weaker culture will disappear when a stronger culture threatens a weaker culture; the delays in attempts to preserve the heritage language at a the time when it is easier for the speech community to conduct all its activities in the dominant language; implementation of endeavors to reverse language shift without a clear idea of the difference between language acquisition and language intergenerational transmission; and implementation in a disorganized way, instead of taking the right actions at the appropriate times.

These key factors, in essence, expose Fishman's great degree of pessimism and lack of trust in the possibility of success of the efforts to reverse language shift, which he himself proposed in his works in 1991 and in 2001. Moreover, this pessimistic approach could be a clear expression of what we can identify as Fishman's prejudices: (1) the inevitability of the annihilation of the weaker languages and cultures by the stronger ones (a kind of linguistic Darwinism in which only the stronger are 'destined' and called to survive, while the weaker must necessarily perish), (2) the mentality of 'the lost cause', in which it is better to renounce, before even starting the effort, (3) underestimation of key variables like the motivation of the speech community, (4) overestimation on the intergenerational transmission, in which the nuclear family is the key factor, and (5) failure to notice the crucial role played by the extended family, the basic structure of the Garifuna and indigenous societies, as a fundamental variable in the preservation

of Garifuna and indigenous languages. In one of his most important works on ‘Reversing Language Shift’ (RLS), Fishman states:

Health care which does not correspond to the patient’s culture and that does not prescribe accordingly is both less just and less effective than optimal health care requires. The same is true in the sociology of language. It too must arrive at understandings and develop practices which address themselves explicitly to ‘wellness’ and which recognize that ethnolinguistic ‘wellness’ is unattainable without theoretical knowledge and applied efforts that correspond to the ethnolinguistic and ethnocultural preferences and commitments of specific speech networks and speech communities (1991: xii).

He also establishes that “views about the desirability of RLS are, in essence, views as to the relationship between language and culture” (Fishman 1991:15). It is almost impossible to say the final word about the connection between these two variables, to the extent that whatever we can say about the correlation regarding language and culture cannot pretend to be definitive, especially in the context of endangered languages. Moreover, Fishman establishes that “Reversing Language shift is rarely, if ever, pursued ‘for its own sake’ ... RLSers should not be embarrassed about the fact that theirs is *basically a value position* (a value related to the ethnocultural saliency, content and regulation of their lives)” (1991:19), because value position is also the point of view of the adversary to the efforts of reversing language shift.

In other words, Fishman does not present or represent his position on reversing language shift as the ‘objective’ and definitive truth, although he puts forward many logically formatted arguments for RLS.

Generally, Fishman’s work is a defense of RLS and a strategic set of guidelines for RLS efforts. The arguments are effectively put forward, but they focus clearly on non-indigenous societies, because they limit their consideration of indigenous peoples to those living in industrialized societies, or to be more precise, in fast-capitalist countries. The situations of indigenous people in pre-capitalist or slow-capitalist settings (which may constitute the majority

of endangered language contexts) are not given substantial recognition, let alone description or analysis.

Fishman also recognizes the power of dominant discourses pertaining to endangered and 'minority' languages and cultures, both externally and internally, ie., the existence of economic and politically hegemonic cultures. However, he goes on to propose that RLSers should establish a specific and distinct rhythm (1991:29). To defend his modernist position on RLS, Fishman (1991) refers to Champagne work:

A further step along the path of re-rationalizing and demystifying revitalization movements was taken by Duane Champagne. He realizes that there are basic similarities between the revitalization movement that occur in structurally less differentiated societies and the reform or guided cultural change movements that occur in structurally more differentiated (=more modern) ones. Both types of efforts utilize the most efficient means available to their societies, those of the latter societies being organizationally, institutionally, materially, and conceptually more advanced and, therefore, more capable of accepting the inevitability of cultural change and able to influence the outcome via political and economic means. Champagne's analysis should once and for all remove the penumbra of backwardness and irrationality from the efforts of the RLS type. Such efforts... differ... from their contemporary competitors more with respect to ends than to means... All in all, attempts to convince the modern mind of the rationality of ethno-cultural behavior-and-identity re-intensification movements have experienced some success during the past half century, but much greater impact in this direction is still necessary before RLS-efforts will be commonly viewed as the natural, thoughtful, and constructive undertakings that their participants take them to be (1991:385-386).

Fishman buys into common modernist notions of progress, civilization, rationality, and their 'inevitability', despite his arguments to the contrary elsewhere.

Fishman sees no contradiction between authenticity preoccupation and rationality, but accuses Western social scientists of having prejudices against preoccupations with authenticity, as exemplified by Western social science's "simplistic theories according to which mainstream processes and virtues are considered simultaneously prototypical, normal, and inescapable" (1991:385). Fishman critiques Russel Thornton's 1980's analysis of American Indian Ghost Dance traditions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thornton characterizes these movements as irrational,

but says that, “in terms of their culture... (they were) essentially rational acts”. Fishman finds this to be “not only a condescending tautology, but implies that no such rationality would obtain from the point of view of modern, Western culture” (1991:385).

According to Fishman, RLS efforts “... are really attempts to arrive at *self-regulated modernization*”. (1991:384). In that regard, he characterizes the means employed by RLS movements as “thoroughly modern enterprise in terms of their rationality ..., while its goals ... partake of the rationality of modern religious and ideological verities” (1991:385). He states:

RLS-ers are not merely defenders of some mystical, mythical and bygone past; they are actually change agents on behalf of persistence... and realize that all cultures are constantly changing and that their goal is merely to influence and direct this change, so that it will not contradict or overpower the core of their cultural system, rather than legislate changes out of experience... It is not the return to the past that RLS seeks, but the mining of the past so that the core that animated it can continue to be implemented. For all its fascination with change, most of the thoughtful West is also ‘past appreciative’. For all of their use of the past, most RLS movements are future oriented (Fishman 1991:387-388).

Fishman advances an historical critique of Western social science, citing John Stuart Mill, Edmund Burke, Montesquieu, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, in which he criticizes the fact that

... change for change’s sake has come to occupy a somewhat hallowed position in social theory and has influenced the social sciences as well...Among the more or less systematic schools of social thought, only the Herderians, the nationalists, the racists, and Marxists defended carefully selected (and very different) affiliative ideals for any length of time after the flawed and failed Spring of ’48, and none of these was ever really taken seriously by the mainstream of Western social science. Furthermore, before the recent appearance of the new post-industrial left, the Marxists themselves were as classically anti-ethnic as were the bourgeois thinkers. Perhaps of greater import for recent theoretical opposition to planned-ethnicity-fostering culture change, such as RLS, is the ‘alternative society’ or ‘commune movement’ of the 60s and 70s...Many RLS efforts actually reveal a close similarity to the anti-establishment and anti-materialistic *Gemeinschaft* strivings of the ‘communes,’ thereby underscoring even more the void that so often (and so needlessly) separates the ethnic dimension and the radical dimensions of modern social criticism. Clearly, however ‘traditionless authenticity’ and ‘re-ethnifying authenticity’ are poles apart, regardless of the term “authenticity” that they share. Their common stress on achieving self-regulatory status is often overlooked, primarily because the former is individualistic and the latter is group-cultural in orientation vis-à-vis the attainment of happiness. The perfect combination of both might be optimal, but requires as much acceptance of the claims of (minority) ethnocultures as of the claims of individuality.

Modern Western thought has generally been more willing to suffer the pains of the latter rather than grant the legitimacy of the former (1991:389-390).

In the passage above, Fishman expresses the need to somehow integrate 'ethnocultural' claims into social science, but in an as yet poorly defined way that still insists that such integration be done in the terms of modernist thinking. He makes no mention of a deeper exchange of ideas at the level of the episteme. He is critical of some aspects of modernism, but his criticisms are from within and of a reformist nature.

Fishman rightly points out at several junctures in this book (RLS) that it is the dominant system that often does exactly what it accuses RLS of doing. This is a good case in point, but here Fishman doesn't make this point. Is this just an accident, or is this where Fishman's critique of modernism finds its limits? Fishman doesn't seem to critique modernism itself. Instead he seems to criticize what he sees as irrational distortions of 'true' modernism, which he firmly believes in. Some important contradictions in Fishman appear to be: modernism, alienation, ethnocide vs. local control, community, family, satisfaction. Fishman still doesn't make the deeper connections, namely that the U.S.A. was founded on the extermination, expropriation, and enslavement of indigenous peoples, and that a cornerstone in this process was the dominant discourse that demonizes all things related to indigenous as primitive, evil, and inferior. These contradictions are evident in such passages as the following:

The ethnic revival of the 60s and 70s roused both bourgeois and leftist thinkers from the stupor that had clouded their thinking about ethnicity for over a century. It came to be belatedly recognized...that many of the myths and biases that had previously colored their views of ethnicity (irrationality, backward-looking focus, conservatism, oppression of individual 'authenticity' culminating in sociocultural/political oppression) were substantially erroneous or unfounded. Ethnicity did not involve attempts to preserve the traits of either static or pre-modern cultures (Fishman 1991:391).

Fishman makes a comparative analysis of the transition process that occurs in both the states and non-state societies. In that regard he affirms that it is "the great power of the state

(the most successful predatory form of social organization)...” (1991:391). As it is revealed here, he can be quite clear about aspects of hegemony and domination, while not questioning many aspects of it.

In his recent work “Can threatened languages be saved”, Fishman (2001) gives an analysis of globalization in relation to RLS, in which the domination and forces behind globalization are not really mentioned. Instead, he refers to globalization as a process of Americanization, but rather with undisputed benefits, while the effort of Reversing Language Shift is defined as constructivist, rational, and modern (2001:6-11). According to Fishman:

RLSers may be said to be activated by such totally modern convictions as cultural democracy, the rights of populations to define their own identities and priorities, and the rights of minorities to march to a different drummer in an increasingly connected, materialistic and power-centered world that appears to put globalization above all else. RSLers believe that globalization has undoubted benefits, but that when these benefits are pursued at the expense of their own cultural identity...this expense is then an altogether unjustified and uncalled-for sacrifice and comes at a cost that they will not agree to (2001:8-9).

In summary, Fishman’s reasoning for the difficulty to save a threatened language are: (1) the inevitability and overwhelming power of dominant languages and cultures, (2) the RLS project seen as ‘social mobility contraindicated, parochial and anti-modern,’ (3) the concept that the functions of the threatened language ‘must both be differentiated and shared with its stronger competitor,’ (4) the need to reinforce functions to be regained from both ‘above’ and ‘below’, (5) his idea that opposition to RLS is both statist and supra-statist as those groups label it as ‘disruptive of local civility and of the higher-order international advantage’ (Fishman 2001:21). Although Fishman does not mention it, the challenge and threat created by indigenous knowledge, politics, and cosmovision could also be considered ‘disruptive to the local civility and the higher order’.

In his 2001 article: “From theory to practice (and vice versa): review, reconsideration and reiteration,” Fishman criticizes the lack of attention that he paid in 1991 to the ‘ideological foundations’ of RLS or ‘the why of RLS’ (2001: 451). He responds by saying that: “RLS is concerned with the recovery, recreation and retention of a complete way of life, including non-linguistic features” (Fishman 2001:452). Finally he observes that most RLS theories are based on indigenous cases, mainly European. This is not the best way of proceeding, since only the local context of a given language can totally account for that case. Moreover, the indigenous languages “do not, account for the immigrant cases and the latter hardly ever account for the former” (Fishman 2001:461).

Then, he goes on to say that these differences should not be “converted into a general theory... specifics themselves, important though they may be, must be seen as merely exceptional addenda and refinements for the general theory.” (2001:462) Fishman is here, once again, so close to the critical issue and yet so far from it. In an attempt to define a general theory of RLS founded on values, Fishman states:

I have sometimes been asked why RLS is so little related to the general theory of social change. My first answer has been that RLS recognizes democratic responsibility for cultural self-determination by minorities, whereas social change theory has ignored any moral responsibility toward those who suffer as a result of social change. My second answer has been that social change theory views modernization as an inevitable universal and ubiquitous process that pertains to all of culture, whereas RLS attempts to differentiate between faster and slower moving sectors of change and to foster greater self-regulation of the latter for the purposes of language-and-identity retention (2001: 462-463).

Although, RLS involves as a moral responsibility toward ‘slower’ moving sectors, such responsibility is necessary due to the ‘deficient’ dynamic of the indigenous cultures and languages in regard to the dominant culture and language. It is evident that Fishman, in many ways, shares the view that modernization is universal, inevitable, and ubiquitous.

Responding to the accusation of evolutionary inevitability implied in the theory of RLS, Fishman argues:

The stagewise nature of the 1991 RLS-theory has been accused of having implications of evolutionary inevitability. Actually, these stages are intended only for purposes of diagnostic and programmatic location (where to start and what to aim at when). The movement from one stage to another is totally a result of self-directed activity, rather than of any natural process of a built-in developmental nature (2001:465).

But an indigenous critique might focus on the fact that, even though the majority of threatened languages are spoken by indigenous peoples in non-fast-capitalist countries: (1) key terms are defined with reference to fast-capitalist and non-indigenous societies (intergenerational transmission, family, neighborhood, work, education, etc.); (2) the scale is situated in non-indigenous and fast-capitalist realities; and (3) the linearity of the scale clashes with indigenous notions of social processes and science. In any case, Fishman abruptly finishes his discussion of the ideological foundations of RLS here, and begins to discuss strategy and tactics. Essentially, Fishman has not substantially changed any of his theoretical frameworks since 1991.

In the case of the Yiddish spoken among ultra-Orthodox Jews in New York (Fishman 2001:96-99), boundaries seem to be a key factor. Maybe this has swayed Fishman to put such emphasis on boundaries; again, a non-indigenous fast-capitalist bias.

In the article “Reversing Quechua language Shift in South America”, Hornberger and King mention that:

Fettes... has suggested that effective language renewal practices are best conceived as a ‘triple braid’ interwoven of three discursive strands: (1) ‘critical literacy’, or what Fishman would likely term initial ideological clarification; (2) ‘local knowledge’, Fishman’s institutional domain; and (3) ‘living relationships’, Fishman’s Stage 6’. The concept of the braid is meant to remind us that ‘one approach is never enough. Only when woven together can the strands endure’ (2001:166-194).

There is a very important element here, which Hornberger and King are underestimating in their ideas of the differences between Fishman and the indigenous perspective. Local knowledge

is sovereignty, critical literacy is conscious resistance, and living relationships transcend intergenerational transmission.

**Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS):** The GIDS is a graded sociolinguistic disruption scale with respect to language communities or networks, in which higher numbers imply greater disruption. The typology follows the Richter Scale measure of intensity of earthquakes. “The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale is at least a quasi-implicational scale, i.e. higher (more disrupted) score implies all or nearly all of the lesser degree of disruption as well” (Fishman 1991:87). The GIDS has critical stages and is treated by Fishman as fully implicational in practice, especially in its impact on strategies. The experience in Corozal, however, provides clear evidence of having short-circuited some of Fishman’s steps. In that regard, Fishman’s theory is more commensurate with the experience in Corozal, when he says that the GIDS “is offered here as a heuristic theoretical stance, rather than as a proven verity. Real life is always full of more complexities and irregularities than theory can provide for. As a result, there may be less implicationality or reproduceability in real life than the theory implies” (Fishman 1991:396).

Regarding the necessary interdependence between the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue and language preservation Fishman says:

Intergenerational mother tongue transmission and language maintenance are not one and the same...Without intergenerational mother tongue transmission...no language maintenance is possible...On the other hand, without language maintenance (which is a post-transmission process) the pool from which successive intergenerational transmission efforts can draw must become continually smaller (Fishman 1991: 113).

As we saw above, Fishman himself has acknowledged and testified that his “RLS-theory has been accused of having implication of evolutionary inevitability” (Fishman 1991). To this he responds that such stages are only intended to provide a “diagnostic and programmatic location” (Fishman 2001:465). The critique of GIDS’ discreteness and sequencing also points to its

implicational character, as shown in Hornberger and King's study on "Reversing Quechua Language shift in South America" (2001:185).

### **Multidirectional Horizontal and Diagonal Garifuna Language Transmission in Corozal**

The absence or non-predominance of structures of domination, like nuclear family and mass media, in indigenous communities creates a favorable environment for a multidirectional horizontal transmission (among children: child-to-child; among youth: teenager-to-teenager, etc.) and diagonal transmission (among children-and-teenagers, among cultural agents and youth, etc.), different from the unidirectional and vertical cultural and language transmission between biological parents and biological children, as is taken for granted by the dominant Western social scientists. Dominant Western theories also take for granted the uni-directionality of the transmission: adults-to-children, institutions-to-children, mass media-to-children; children are always passive in the process. In Corozal, however, teenagers and youths has played an active role in the process of reversing language shift and revitalizing their heritage Garifuna language.

Contrary to the multidirectional horizontal and diagonal phenomena observed in Corozal, Fishman places particular emphasis on the unidirectional transmission process by making intergenerational transmission the primary focus of efforts at RLS. As Fishman states:

The priorities at various points in the RLS struggle must vary but they must, nevertheless, derive from a single, integrated theory of language-in-society processes that places intergenerational mother tongue transmission at the very center and that make sure to defend that center before setting out to conquer societal processes that are more distant, dubious and tenuous vis-a-vis such transmission (1991:6).

Similar to the Garifuna revitalization process in Corozal-Honduras and many other indigenous and Afro-descendent speech communities, in the Maori case in New Zealand, the teenagers and youth played a critical role in process of reversing language shift and the revitalization of indigenous heritage languages (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:49-52). Most of the time, these RLS' initiatives of the younger generation happened despite parents' negative

attitudes toward the heritage language and the subtractive official language policies of the national education system. In the Corozal case, there was no space for the centrality of intergenerational mother tongue transmission, as proposed by Fishman in the integrated theory of language RLS. On the contrary, while parents were deliberately trying to transmit Spanish, the dominant language, to their children, these children upon reaching adolescence and becoming teenagers began not only to speak the heritage language with great pride but also to organize in movements for the revitalization and preservation of the heritage Garifuna language.

Fishman's theory of RLS cannot account for the key role of the youth in the reversing and revitalization process, either in the case of Maori in New Zealand or in the case of Garifuna in Corozal. Even though Fishman addresses the 'ideological clarification' in his article "From theory to practice (and vice versa): review, reconsideration and reiteration" (Fishman 2001), still he could not see the extent to which youths can become critical agents in the efforts of reversing language shift.

### **Youth Motivation as Key Factor**

An important motivation for the revitalization of Maori language was the revitalization of Maori cosmivision and the Maori language as the irreplaceable vehicle for such a cosmivision (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:51-52). Likewise, the motivation and commitment of the young generation of Corozal to the revitalization of Garifuna language was the revitalization of Garifuna identity and cosmivision and the heritage language as the vehicle and foundation of that consmovision and identity.

Fishman's theories do not allow recognition and theorization regarding the role of the youth in RLS, because this generational sector does not strictly enter into the categories concerning intergenerational transmission. It is important to observe here how Fishman's theoretical framework and bias reflect his strong loyalty to the dominant Western cosmivision

and social science, in which youths are portrayed as adolescents (= deficient), and therefore not much can be expected from them but to be passive receptors of cultural and sociolinguistic processes.

In her studies on language preservation among Mayan peoples in Guatemala, England states that “language loss seems to proceed in a fairly classic manner” (England 1998:104), following essentially the typology proposed by Fishman. Nonetheless, she mentions that:

Many children, especially in the urban centers, no longer speak a Mayan language as their first language. They may have passive knowledge of the language... Some of these children acquire an active knowledge of the local language as they become more fully incorporated into the community (as adolescents or young adults), but it is not at all clear whether this is a general pattern that can be relied on to prevent language loss... (England 1998:104).

Even though England came across with this key phenomenon, she was not able to understand its dimensions and great relevance to efforts to reverse language shift. This is a clear example of how the dominant paradigm of the Western social science can block researchers from seeing or realizing the importance of a key phenomenon.

### **Issues of Unequal Power Relations**

With regard to power relations and language preservation, Fishman suggests that, “it is not a total isolation from the modern world that is desired at all, but, rather, an ability to retain that which is selected from the traditional alongside that which is adopted from the outside, and to do both the one and the other under community control of the decision making, implementation, and evaluation processes” (1991:261). The above statement demonstrates that Fishman understands issues of unequal power relations and of local control, but his concept of power is an unquestioned colonial one that cannot imagine Garifuna and indigenous sovereignty. The result: the cafeteria principle. In his view, the people on the outstations pick and choose elements from both cultures (1991:260-261). He can’t see how indigenous sovereignty provides the foundation

from which aboriginal peoples can interact with colonial culture from a position of strength rather than from a position of weakness.

### **Youths and Other Key Actors in Language Preservation in Indigenous Contexts**

Fishman recognizes the importance of the Maori Nga Tama Toa, a ‘radical activist youth movement’ in the late 1960s and early 1970s in putting political pressure on the New Zealand government, but he says nothing more about them (1991:233). Fishman also mentions the key role played by elders, cultural actors, and youth in Maori RLS efforts, and he also cites non-nuclear institutions such as *iwi* and *marae* but does not see how these facts might have helped him to elaborate a theoretical and strategic framework which might better include indigenous peoples (1991:238-239). With regard to other relevant actors in the effort of RLS, Fishman points out the key role played by elders in Yipirinya schools as well (1991:267). He reiterates that RLS efforts must establish: (1) ‘Priority of functions’ within the context of intergenerational transmission, and (2) ‘priority of linkages between functions,’ again within the context of intergenerational transmission (2001:14).

In their study on reversing Navajo language shift, Lee and McLaughlin also report that “as young people grow, they begin to use Navajo more especially at home. The teenagers started to use more the heritage language and in the process they realize more and more the importance of using their ancestral language” (Lee and McLaughlin 2001:32).

Hornberger and King refer to the pivotal politicized role played by young people in Saraguro popular education initiatives in the effort to revive and maintain elements of their heritage Quechua culture and language, while denouncing the domination and social injustices suffered by their community, particularly in southern Ecuador (2001:174-175). Hornberger and King take a further step in the analysis to question the underestimation of the role of young actors in the efforts of language maintenance in Fishman’s theoretical framework as they point to

the Saraguro youth group in the Quechua communities in Ecuador. Hornberger and King argue that:

Cultural interaction is not taking place exclusively among the ‘old timers’ (Fishman 1991:398). Indeed, the most active and vocal promoters and users of the language are members of the younger generation who are in their teens and twenties. It is not the case that they are ‘young guests’ who are simply passive observers at this stage (stage7), as Fishman describes (1991:398), but rather, the young are the primary performers, organizers, and participants in these cultural events. The Saraguro case, then, suggests that the role of the younger and often highly politicized generation may be insufficiently stressed in Fishman’s framework (2001:175).

The importance of the role of land claim as motivation for RLS is also addressed by Hornberger and King when they present:

An example from aboriginal Australia, reported by Haviland, graphically illustrates the impact of politico-economic forces on endangered languages. The Guugu Yimidhirr-speaking community of Hopevale in Queensland was founded by missionaries in 1886 with the purpose of educating and protecting remnants of aboriginal tribes from the area. Major language shift did not take place until World War II, when the entire population of the mission was, without warning, suddenly evacuated to an inland aboriginal settlement. They were eventually permitted to return in the early 1950s, but to a site about 25 kilometers inland from the original location. By then, the balance between English and Guugu Yimidhirr had been disrupted and by late 1983, the aboriginal language was in danger of disappearing. However, this changed with the passing of a new aboriginal Land Act which made provisions for Aboriginal claims to certain lands in Queensland, with the result that ‘young people who had given up speaking Guugu Yimidhirr have begun to speak it again, seeing the language as a necessary part of making a land claim on traditional lands’ ...the question of land is a highly significant one for the future of Quechua as well (2001:188).

In a study of the linguistic attitudes toward Andamanese in India, E. Annamalai and V. Gnanasundaram report that, “Andamanese children speak Andamanese, but begin with a greater knowledge of Hindi-derived vocabulary than Andamanese-derived vocabulary, but this difference is largely erased by the time they reach adolescence. Attitudes toward Andamanese grow more positive (especially as a marker of identity) as well as children grow older” (2001:316-319).

Maher refers to language symbolism as an important variable frequently forgotten by theorists of language shift and maintenance:

The ethno-symbolic role of Ainu plays a role in revitalization. Here the objective reality of a symbolic role in personal life uncouples traditional criteria on the existence or non-existence of a language. Replying to my question: ‘Do you speak Ainu?’ an Ainu woman replied after a long pause: ‘That’s a difficult question. I don’t speak it and I can’t understand it but I know it and I can sing in it. It’s always kind of here, a voice inside. And it’s never left me.’ (Personal communication – Kyoko Kitahara). A holistic view of language existence (‘presence’?) obliges sociolinguists to re-examine traditional criteria of language vitality (2001:337).

Definitely, Fishman’s theoretical framework on RLS does not address this aspect, but rather Fettes did take it into consideration. Maher concludes by saying that, “the sociolinguistic expression ‘language transmission’ is conceptually polyvalent. Among Ainu speakers attitudes towards transmission are indeed complex and varied and rich” (2001:345).

### **Garifuna and Indigenous Resistance Approach versus Colonized Society’s Pessimism**

Because the Garifuna and indigenous communities have strong living relationships and traditions at both the individual and collective levels, they have always resisted all form of domination, both external (conquest) and internal (hegemony). Conversely, the colonized societies see domination as a natural and inevitable phenomenon, and consequently, the science that they practice considers the extermination of peoples, cultures, and languages as a natural, normal, necessary, and inevitable event in the ‘progress’ and development of humanity. Therefore, the social science as practiced by many ‘experts’ in language shift and revitalization, like Fishman, as well as by many revolutionary ‘experts’ in popular (grassroots or base) education, diminishes people’s ability to understand and respond to the phenomenon of endangerment and loss of indigenous languages and cultures, in the following ways:

1. ***The impossible struggle:*** It convinces them that even though the efforts to reverse language shift and maintenance of indigenous languages are worthy, they are struggling for a goal that they will not be able to reach.

2. ***Give-up/Resignation:*** Worse, it paralyzes them completely, by convincing them about the inevitability of an eventual disappearance of all the languages and cultures of the indigenous peoples.
3. ***Assimilation:*** Even worse, it convinces them that the only way to promote and to work for the best interests of the indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples is to assimilate them into these same domination structures.

Fishman, in the introduction of his book on Reversing Language Shift, believes that RSL is a ‘good problem,’ in that its resolution can contribute to the resolution of even bigger problems, such as alienation in modern society (Fishman 1991:6-7). This is one of his arguments in support of why the efforts of RLS are worthy and needed. However, in the concluding section of the book he says that this is a worthy struggle in which not even the strongest have succeeded:

RLS should be at the forefront of returning communities, neighborhoods, and families to the values, norms, and behaviors that have preferential historical validity for them....The basic dilemma of RLS-efforts everywhere is that their success requires overcoming the very problems of modern life that the strongest societies and cultures have not been able to overcome. The basic strength of RLS-efforts is that they can afford to take a less ponderous, more grass-roots approach to these problems and, thereby, seek to come to the attention of and become more identified with those whose lives they aim to influence (Fishman 1991:410).

Fishman completely drops indigenous knowledge, science, theories, and practices out of the picture in the formulation of these solutions. These are problems that were solved in the past.

### **Fishman Critiques His Own Work in the Context of Social Science**

In parts of his critique of social science, Fishman actually identifies and analyzes some of the weaknesses of his own work (1991): “The most general reason for the neglect of RLS is probably the fact that RLS is an activity of minorities, frequently powerless, unpopular with outsiders, and querulous amongst themselves” (Fishman 1991:382). Fishman neglects important aspects of RLS and cannot envision certain solutions to his theoretical problems, precisely because many of these aspects and solutions are those put forward by indigenous peoples, whose

cosmovision, knowledge and science are not recognized by the scientific paradigm in which Fishman operates.

Fishman states that social science does not quite know where to place RSL efforts, because they straddle boundaries between phenomena studied by earlier generations, such as the irrational behavior of crowds and other ‘types of bona fide’ (Fishman’s term!) social movements that have elicited more recent sociological attention (1991:383). So, while Fishman levels some very severe and insightful criticism at dominant social science, he ultimately buys into many of its major biases and superstitions.

Burns’ intensive linguistic and anthropological work with Mayan people in Mexico in the last three decades provides evidence which contradicts the social determinism proposed by Fishman and the dominant Western social scientists, with regards to the inevitability of the disappearance of indigenous languages and cultures. In Burns (1998), the Mayan culture, language, and identity are constantly developing effective strategies of resistance. And according to Yucatecan Mayan, they will not give up anytime soon; rather, they are ready to resist for centuries more if their voices are not heard and their demands are not answered by the Mexican dominant sociopolitical sectors.

According to Burns (1998), after 150 year the Yucatecan Mayan leaders and teachers are prepared to undertake the same struggle for the same purpose as their forefathers:

Recover the autonomy of the Mayan peoples and to put an end to 300 years of oppression. The official (Mexican) history has occulted the authentic historical facts, has hidden the enormous strength and contribution of the Mayan people, and has imposed the viewpoint of the dominant society on the national history and promotes the interests of the dominant culture through the history books, and even pretends to talk about the war in a romantic way... As you should know, we have ideas and our voices must be listened to. If this doesn’t happen, we are always ready for some more centuries of resistance, educating our children according to our traditions and preparing them for the renaissances of our great past. ¡Nos siguen guerreando! (1998:379-380).

Moreover, according to Burns (1998), these claims were addressed at different levels and from distinct fronts, with the Mayan teachers of the third generation as one of the most conscious and vocal among these fronts. As Burns mentions, “by demanding and receiving curses in Mayan language at the university, these teachers transformed their roles as culture brokers between schools and the state to more activist positions in the politics of the university” (Burns 1998:382).

### **Western Community and Nuclear Family versus Garifuna Community and Extended Family Structure**

Fishman is not only a theorist, but also a strategist and tactician. He strategically focuses our attention on what he considers to be the most important goal of RSL-intergenerational transmission and on the social nexus that supports it: home, family, neighborhood, and community. But these notions do not apply in the same way to Garifuna and indigenous communities in pre-capitalist settings as they do to all of the communities that Fishman considers in his book, which are mostly non-indigenous. The relatively few indigenous communities that Fishman does consider have all been heavily colonized by and integrated into advanced capitalist societies (Canada, US, Australia, New Zealand).

Fishman’s significant biases toward Western dominant social science include:

1. Bias toward fast-capitalist and non-indigenous contexts made explicit. He sets aside studies of “Third World and pre-industrial cases...in favor of modern ethnolinguistic groups” (Fishman 1991:118).
2. Bias toward colonial paradigms of science: “What is more generally missing is attention to less politicized, community-level institutional (family, club, church, school, workplace) functioning of a situational type... which permits... some process analysis and some quantification of rates and outcomes. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) is very provocative but is too close to the microscopic and ‘stream of consciousness’ analytic extreme to permit a clear picture to emerge.” (Fishman 1991:119).

The institutions suggested by Fishman here “*family, club, church, school, workplace*” are all colonized spaces. When Fishman speaks of family, he tends to have the nuclear family in

mind. He decries the demise of the nuclear family in fast capitalism, but he never even mentions the extended family in the entire book. The same holds true of Fishman's concept of neighborhood (Fishman 1991:376-377).

Fishman makes explicit that his working definition of family is the capitalist nuclear family:

The family as the very building block of such transmission. It is in the family that social support and transaction with the community have traditionally been initiated and nurtured... Unfortunately, the 'traditional' family has become harder and harder to find and to maintain. It has been eroded by the same universalizing macro-forces that erode small languages and caring neighborhoods (1991:409).

Fishman makes explicit that his working definition of the neighborhood is the fast capitalist fragmented urban neighborhood; he sees RLS groups as "interest groups" (Fishman 1991:407).

When Colette Grinevald (1998:154) mentions Fishman's (1991) statement that there is a need to 'intellectualize' the field of work with endangered languages, was she referring to passages such as this one? So, Fishman recognizes the need to 'sell' the study of endangered languages to the dominant academic institutions, but does he recognize the need to adapt it to the epistemologies of the communities whose languages are endangered?

In Fishman's treatment of Stage 3 (work spheres), he says that "There is very little to report in connection with RLS efforts in Australia at the stage 3 level" (Fishman 1991:269). But then in the very next paragraph, he goes on to say:

The situation is somewhat different among a substantial portion of young Aborigines only in the 'outstations'. As might be expected, these are virtually always encountered speaking their own languages 'at work', particularly since the Western distinctions between 'home' and 'work' are really not applicable in such settings. Interestingly enough, the Aborigines living in these outstations have also been judged (by a white researcher commissioned by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs) to constitute 'the most economically independent (Aborigines) in the Northern Territory (Fishman 1991:269).

Once Again, Fishman misses an opportunity to expand his theoretical and strategic frameworks to include indigenous theory and practice, a good example of how theories determine what we see and what we don't see. Fishman recognizes that non-indigenous notions of work and home don't apply here, but then doesn't go any further, as if these have no implications for his own theories and strategies regarding languages mainly spoken by indigenous peoples. It is particularly important, however, that Fishman was able to state that "There is much more successful RLS than the smugly provincial modern world knows or cares to know" (1991:288).

### **Problem Identification, Analysis, and Resolution as Conscious Acts and Integral Parts of the Traditional Knowledge and Practice of Sovereignty of the Garifuna and Indigenous Peoples**

As an integral part of the traditional practices of sovereignty, indigenous peoples have always integrated the identification, analysis, and resolution of problems as conscious acts in the transformation of both their individual and collective lives. However, the dominant social science tends to deny systematically any significant role of the conscience in the organization, establishment, and change of social processes. Instead, in the framework of the dominant social science, social change is categorized as a monodirectional, lineal, but above all unconscious, denying at the same time: (1) the determinant role played by the beliefs, ideologies, and other mechanisms of conscious hegemonies, which are increasingly and actively promulgated by the dominant social classes and their mass media, and (2) any possible utilization of the enormous conscious capacity of human beings to resist oppressive factors imposed by others and to re-imagine and re-create new realities in their own image and interest.

As an example of the important influence of micro-variables, Grenoble and Whaley cite (from Bradley 1989) the case of the Ugong language in Thailand. The language has perished in those communities where the traditional chiefs, Ugong headman, have lost influence for a long

time, while in other communities, where the traditional chiefs have had significant power, the language is maintained (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:28). England, on the other hand, mentions that Mayan peoples have been experiencing an important renaissance of cultural pride and the reaffirmation of cultural values since the 1970s, especially since the end of the civil war in the 1980s (England 1998:105). Kaia'titahkhe Annette Jacobs acknowledges that the successful program in reviving the Mohawk in Quebec involved a simultaneous effort to revive the language, the culture, and the values of the Mohawk people (Jacobs 1998:117-123).

In a critical analysis of his 1991 work, Fishman acknowledges the lack of attention that he paid in his book *Reversing Language Shift* to the “ideological foundations of RLS” (2001:451). And he said that: “RLS is concerned with the recovery, recreation and retention of a complete way of life, including non-linguistic features” (2001:452). Moreover, in an interesting approximation to an actual indigenous context Fishman states that “the maintenance of Xish identity and cultural intactness becomes ...important for community problem solving, health, education, and cultural creativity” (2001:452).

Another excellent example of how indigenous consciousness and sovereignty in West Africa have ensured the vitality of languages with the fewest speakers is presented by Adegbija, who points out that there is no threat to the Oko heritage language in the village because of the pride of the villagers in maintaining their native language (Adegbija 2001:288-291). Annamalai and Gnanasundaram also offer an extraordinary case study on how the indigenous consciousness of the importance of Andmanese is key to keeping the language alive, despite the fact that there are only 35 people left in the ethnic group (Annamalai and Gnanasundaram 2001:321).

Similar evidence of a high degree of consciousness in the identification, analysis, and solving of problems was also observed in Maher's study of the Ainu language. In that regard, he

calls the attention of sociolinguists and Western social scientist in general to the urgent need to re-evaluate the traditional criteria of language vitality (Maher 2001:337).

Integration of the identification, analysis, and solution of problems as conscious acts in the transformation of people's lives in Garifuna and indigenous cultures is eloquently represented in Burns' (1998) studies among the Yucatecan Mayan people, where he identifies acts of sovereignty not only through the social organization but also through education and language planning. For instance, the Yucatecan Maya moved the bilingual-bicultural education to the university setting so that issues of Mayan cultural resistance and revival could be heard at the highest level, in spaces traditionally restricted to reproduction and reaffirmation of the self-image of the mainstream and privileged dominant sector of the society (Burns 1998:382). In his analysis, Burns establishes how indigenous people are not only capable of offering resistance to external oppressive factors, but also are successful in accessing new spaces in which they are able to re-imagine and re-create new realities in their own image and interest. This was evidenced, for instance, in the letter that the descendants of the Mayan combatants sent to the congress in Mérida on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Castle War (Burns 1998:379-380).

### **Education Systems, Language Policies, and the Preservation of Garifuna and Indigenous Languages**

The role of educational systems and language planning and policies in the preservation of Garifuna and indigenous languages has been studied and observed by many indigenous communities around the world. Coady and O'Laoire (2002) point, for instance, to the importance of the required match between national language policies and the actual practice of education. According to these authors, there is an important mismatch between national language policies and the educational support necessary for the effective implementation of the school curriculum

in Irish medium schools, known in Irish as Gaelscoileanna (2002:148). Linked to the discrepancy between policies and practice is also apparently the high level of skepticism among the teachers in regard to the impact of school on the Irish revival (2002:158).

The lack of effective support by institutions of higher education to the implementation of bilingual education and the preservation of indigenous languages, as well as the consequences of teachers' skepticism (Coady and O'Laoire 2002:158) and the negative attitude of the mainstream dominant culture toward the preservation and revival of indigenous languages, is not limited to the Irish experience, as reported by Coady and O'Laoire (2002). These are common phenomena in other parts of the world, including Honduras. Concomitant, with the theory of Coady and O'Laoire (2002), the positive attitudes of teachers towards the impact of school on language revival and preservation grows as these teachers adopt a curricular content that is pertinent and relevant to second language acquisition and to indigenous cultures, knowledge, and cosmovisions. In that regard, Stairs (1988) clearly states in her study on educational development among the Inuit people that the aim of indigenous educational development should be an intrinsic cultural-based process.

Stairs (1988) expands the range of indigenous educational development from an extrinsic cultural inclusion process to an intrinsic cultural-based process, and she goes on to define these aspects in the following terms: "The (exclusion) cultural inclusion process implicitly assumes that cultural universals, at least those worthy of formal teaching, are contained exclusively within the majority culture"(1988:308). Indigenous education is perceived in this context as the mere inclusion of some specific elements of the minority culture in the mainstream standard program. Stairs states to the contrary that "the cultural-based process implies that cultural universals are part of all cultures, and that such universals of human perception, thought, language, etc. can be

learned through the specific knowledge and transmission style of any indigenous culture” (1988:309).

An interesting link can be established between the intrinsic cultural-based process of indigenous educational development proposed by Stairs (1988) and the transformative pedagogy suggested by Cummins (2000), which takes place in the context of an interaction between educators and students in which both are empowered. In the context of this collaborative exchange, Cummins states that students are enabled and encouraged to relate their personal and community experiences to the curriculum content as well as to analyze broader social issues relevant to their lives (2000:246).

Cummins’ framework seems clearly justified because the conventional pedagogy has led to “historical patterns of underachievement among marginalized groups to the devaluation of identity that has typically been played out in the interaction between educators and students” (2000:246). The means for devaluation of identity used by the mainstream, standard pedagogy includes punishment for speaking the native language (Cummins 2000:246), leading to lasting negative effects on the children and consequently for their parents and cultural communities, as these children are transformed into underachievers academically and by extension, into underachievers at both personal and social levels. As Cummins states:

This devaluation of linguistic, cultural and academic identity reflected the pattern of coercive relations of power that characterized intergroup relations in the broader society. Under these conditions, students quickly became convinced that academic efforts were futile and many resisted further devaluation of their identities by mentally withdrawing from participation in the life of school (2000:246).

That withdrawal from the life of school usually ends up being a withdrawal from the participation in building the life of the community and the society at large.

Therefore, transformative pedagogy is, in effect, a key instrument to reverse the historical process of underachievement, because affirmation of identity in the classroom is critical to

understanding the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Cummins 2000:247). The explanatory function of the transformative pedagogy is particularly relevant to the academic context of the Afro-descendent and indigenous communities in Latin America, especially in the case of the Garifuna children in Corozal.

The preservation of indigenous languages through the use of effective pedagogical means is also highlighted by Ada (1988), who points to the relevance of developing effective strategies to involve parents in their children's education. These strategies include training sessions with parents, in their native language, in which their knowledge and identity are affirmed. According to Ada, one of the aspects that should underline the pedagogic approach to the education of any group, and especially subaltern groups, is the assumption that parents are the first and best teachers of their children, and consequently, the use of the mother tongue and the transmission of the heritage language and culture to their children is an inalienable human right (Ada 1988:226-227). Ada's statement is absolutely accurate in the case of the children of Latino immigrant families in the U.S. But it is also equally valid in the case of the Garifuna and indigenous children in Latin America, when it comes to the implementation of national education policies imposing Spanish as the only language of instruction in countries that are historically multilingual and multicultural.

Phillipson (1988) takes a further step in the analysis of language endangerment by addressing the concept of linguisticism as an analytical category to understand the phenomenon of 'linguistic imperialism'. In that regard, he focuses on English as the imperial language in both the colonial and neo-colonial period. The influence of language on people worldview and the modus operandi of colonial language policies are presented by Phillipson in the following terms:

As language exerts a decisive influence on how we see and interpret the world, it is easy to understand that colonial language policies have had a deep, long term impact. Their influence is still felt. English remains in the post-colonial age as the key language of the multinationals, of administration and justice, of the media, of the military, of science, of internationalism, of aid, of education, etc. The colonial legacy is shared both by the decision-makers in the Periphery (Third World) and by the Center (Western) personnel who directly or indirectly promote the continued use of European languages” (Phillipson 1988:345-356).

The phenomenon of English imperialism is observed in sub-Saharan Africa, in Western Europe, in India, and in Latin America. Phillipson points to the consequences of this linguistic imperialism in terms of elevating the status of English, while lowering the status of other languages, to the extent of marginalizing and displacing local languages even from the educational system. In that regard, Phillipson mentions that members of the Inter-African Bureau of Languages and the European Parliament have raised the issue. For instance, the European Parliament has expressed concern that the preponderant use of English in economic life, science, and technology, due to the present day dominance of American civilization, represents a threat to the languages and culture of the European Community and the mode of thought embodied in these languages (1988:343-346).

The concern of the European Parliament about the threat posed by English imperialism to European languages and culture is well informed, due to the previous experience of many of the members of the Parliament as colonizers over the culture, language, economy and even people of other countries.

The Garifuna and indigenous peoples of Africa and America in colonized countries have developed effective strategies to preserve their languages even in the imperialist presence of another language. Some of these effective preservation strategies of the Garifuna language are addressed as the primary focus in this study.

## CHAPTER 5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### **Introduction**

The primary objective of the data analysis is to understand the reasons why the Garifuna language is not endangered or disappearing in the village of Corozal, even though the “vertical” language transmission, parent to children, has been fundamentally disrupted, particularly in the last half century. As the data in the Section two will show, the Garifuna parents teach their children Spanish as the first language. Most Garifuna youth learn their heritage language after completing secondary education.

The qualitative data to understand this phenomenon consist primarily of participant observation research conducted in the village of Corozal, in which the key participants were family households and children in the playground. Language use and preference among adults and youth on the streets and in other public settings were also observed. In addition to the participant observation, quantitative data were obtained from questionnaire-based survey, as well as comprehensive socioeconomic and demographic survey conducted in the entire village (see Appendixes A, B, and C).

The interpretation of data is developed within the ethnographic context of a sociolinguistic model of language survival, which includes horizontal, vertical, and diagonal multidirectional and multidimensional intergenerational language transmission. A fundamental factor for the development of this sociolinguistic model of language survival is the leadership role played by the youth. This involvement of the younger generations in the transmission and preservation of the heritage language does not seem to be phenomenon unique to the Garifuna culture, in the sense that similar experiences were observed by other social scientists in different parts of the world. Examples of those experiences are described in chapter 4.

The fieldwork was conducted in the language of preference of the interviewee, either Garifuna, local heritage language, or Spanish, the national dominant language. The interviewees were given the option to use the language that they were more comfortable using. Moreover, considering that family households in Corozal keep the doors open during the day and the streets pass near the doors, it is usual that any visitor would normally hear what language the family uses even before entering the household. Therefore, in the participant observation the researcher would use the language that the family was using when he was entering the household. The language strategy was effective in terms of avoiding the risk that the language used in the fieldwork be determined by the preference or even the language proficiency of the researcher.

### **Data to Understand this Phenomenon Consists of Participant Observation Research**

Informants: A number of 40 family households and 5 groups of children between the ages of 7-13 participated in the study. Based on the estimates of the local Health Center and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), this number of surveyed households represents around 10 percent of the total community domestic units. All the participants were originally from the Garifuna community of Corozal. One common characteristic to the selected households is that at least one family member was either currently attending high school or had completed a high school education.

### **Defining the Population and Sample**

Corozal is a Garifuna community of approximately 3,000 people, according to local leaders and NGO estimates. These estimates do not include community members who spend most of the year away from the village for employment, in U.S.A. cruise ships, and who spend only two to three months of the year in the village.

Like most Garifuna communities in Honduras, Corozal has a relatively young population; more than 60 percent of its 3,000 inhabitants are under the age of 21. The adult population

consists primarily of Garifuna speakers, and they also have good command of Spanish. Spanish is mainly used for socioeconomic transactions with the mainstream Ladino/Mestizo society and to talk to the children at home, because Garifuna parents want to make sure that their children have a good command of Spanish by the time they reach primary school age (6 to 7 years old).

In that regard, the child population in Corozal speaks Spanish as the primary language and understands some Garifuna; only the very young among them do not understand Garifuna at all. As these children grow, however, gradually they begin to acquire competence in the heritage language, so by the time they are 13 they are competent not only in understanding the language, but also in speaking at least at the level of basic dialogue. Therefore, Corozal can be classified in general as a bilingual speech community.

### **Gender of the Head of Family Household**

During the household visits, 90 percent of the time a female parent was the person responsible for the household. The reason for this low representation of male heads of household was because at the time of the study, either the men were working away from home, or simply because the head of the household was a single mother. The point here is to say that most of the adult subjects and representatives of the households in this study were females, as shown in the Figure (5-1).

In those few cases in which a male was actually the head of the family household only half of the time, the male parent was effectively at home for the interview and he did not ask the female parent to respond to most of the questions of the interview. The high percentage of female household representatives, as well as the predominant role of the female parent in the study, point to the crucial role played by the Garifuna mother in the entire decision-making process with regard to the language choice in the family households in Corozal. Mothers are the key players in the processes of language use, preference, maintenance, revitalization, and even

language shift in the Garifuna communities. That central role also positions the Garifuna mother as the key informant on language choice in the family household.

Mothers' central roles in the language choice in Garifuna family households is not a new phenomenon, but rather is deeply rooted in the origin of the Garifuna culture, which includes three linguistically different ethnic groups that form the basis of the modern Garifuna language. The Arawak language of the female Ancestries comprises more than 55 percent of Garifuna; the Kallina language of the male Ancestries, together with the West African phonologies represent only 20 percent, while the remaining 25 percent of modern Garifuna language are borrowed words from

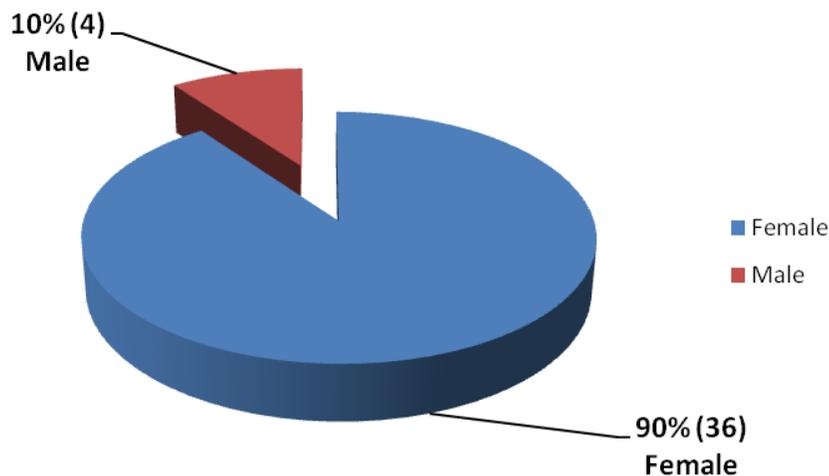


Figure 5-1. Surveyed heads of household by gender

French, English, and Spanish (Suazo 2002; GAHFU IV Annual Garifuna Community Forum in New York, summer 2008). Borrowed words are defined here as those words originated in other languages, but which have already been either phonologically or morphologically incorporated into the Garifuna language, and they are words used even by Garifuna monolinguals.

The predominant role of the Garifuna mother in passing on the culture and language to future generations does not belong only to the past, but rather it remains and even increases in

modern times. This female leadership in the transmission of Garifuna language can be observed nowadays in the growing tendency among the Garifuna young males to use Arawak terminologies, which were originally restricted only for female use, instead of Kallina words, initially restricted for males only. Moreover, the overwhelming presence of the female head of household in this study is also another clear expression of that undeniable and still undisputed maternal role in Garifuna language maintenance and development. Although the near absence of male figures as heads of the household does not appear to have had a negative impact on the outcome of the study, it would be interesting to see what would have happened if more men had participated in the study.

**Level of Education of the Heads of Household**

From the 40 households visited, 4 heads of family hold a university degree, while the remaining 90 percent (36 household heads) either have completed only high school (40 percent) or have attended only 6<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school (50 percent), as shown in Figure 5-2.

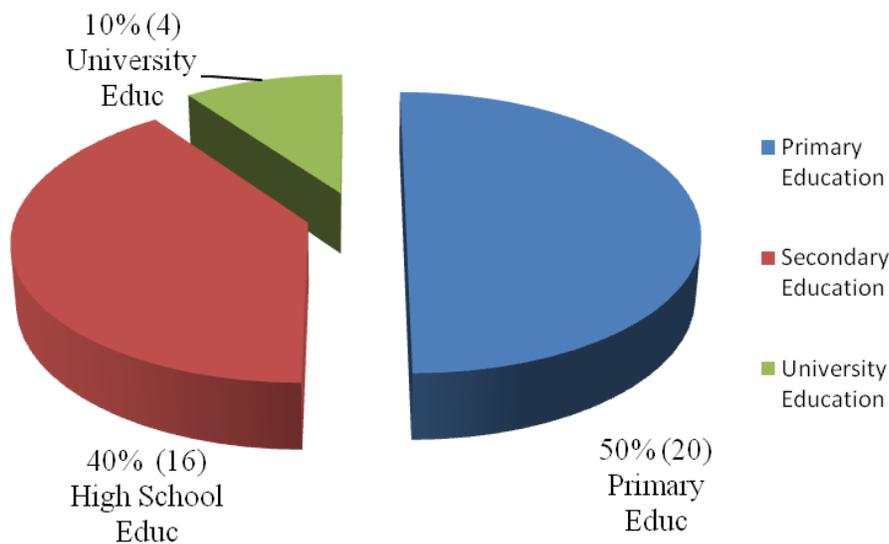


Figure 5-2. Surveyed heads of household by education level

The level of education of the head of household is a relevant variable in the study of linguistic attitude among the Garifuna people in Honduras, and particularly in the village of

Corozal. That 50 percent of the informants (heads of households) have at least attended high school is important, in the sense that these parents have already personally experienced how hostile the high school environment can be for culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially for Garifunas and any others of indigenous or Afro-descendent origin. These parents are more aware of their children's needs in order to succeed academically in high school, including the language skills necessary to help them avoid linguistic discrimination. Therefore, they have a clear idea about what should be the first and primary language of the children at every stage in their lives to succeed in the mainstream ladino/mestizo Honduran society.

Moreover, one mother informant who described herself as an 'uneducated' person (i.e. someone who does not hold at least a high school diploma) reported that the Garifuna professionals were the first to introduce the idea of teaching Spanish as the first language to the children in Corozal. According to the informant, the argument generally used by those professionals to decide teaching Spanish as first language to their children was that Spanish would position Garifuna children in advantageous situations.

Parents without a secondary education (or high school diploma) follow the examples of parents whose children have succeeded better in the local and national formal educational system and in the mainstream society. The very widespread dynamic of teaching Spanish as first language to children in Corozal was introduced by the Garinagu with high school or higher education, and was subsequently followed by parents with less formal education.

Surprisingly, however, those educated sectors seem to be the same ones who are now also introducing the new phenomenon of encouraging their high school children to learn and speak Garifuna as their primary language. The new tendency among young parents to motivate and encourage their children to learn Garifuna, as well as to use Garifuna autochthonous names (e.g.

Anigi, Nirisin, Naruni, Emeri, Darina, etc.) for their children, was also initiated by the well educated sector of Garinagu.

What kind of impact is this new phenomenon of children learning Garifuna as second language and speaking it as primary language after high school going to have on the whole process of language maintenance and development? This is still to be seen, and it will need to be evaluated in the future.

### **Children in the Playground**

Children's linguistic use and preference, while playing in the house yard with other friends, was also observed. Five (5) different groups of children between the ages of 7 and 13 were observed playing *mábule* (canicas in Spanish and marbles in English). Each group was observed for as long as 30 to 45 minutes.

### ***Mábule Game***

Mábule is a children and youths game that tests the ability of each player to make a round trip tossing a small ball into three holes located linearly at a distance of two meters from each other. Each hole has a rounded surface three centimeters in diameter, and the mábule is one centimeter ball with a hard surface.

The starting point is a line made on the ground and located two meters from the first hole. Each player is expected to throw the ball from the line to place it into the first hole, then from the first hole into the second, from the second into the third, from the third hole back into the second and finally into the first hole. The last player to complete the round trip is penalized. In the penalty each one of the players knocks the loser's hands three times with the mábule. That can be very painful, depending on how hard the winners want to knock the loser.

Similar to golf, the mábule is a precision game measured by the ability to place the mábule into the hole. The players in mábule also take turns. In mábule however, the turn is defined by

how close each player places the mábule to the line at the opening of each game. The number of mábule players varies according to the number of children interested in participating. Table 5-1 includes groups of mábule players varying from two to eighteen children.

Mábule used to be a boys-only game, but the researcher was positively surprised to observe in Corozal that both boys and girls were playing, and that the game leader was a girl. This interesting circumstance allowed observation of not only the linguistic use and preference among children of one sex but within a mixed gender group.

Table 5-1. Observed children’s linguistic preferences in the playground in the mábule game.

Group #	Number of Group Members	Language of preference in the Game	
		Garifuna	Spanish
1	Group -18		X
2	Group – 8		X
3	Group – 5		X
4	Group – 4		X
5	Group – 2		X

The players were all primary school children attending the local public school. In Corozal there is a primary school (1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades) and a high school program that functions in the primary school building during the evening. The language of instruction from pre-school to higher education (university) in Honduras is Spanish, including those schools in Garifuna communities like Corozal. Therefore, learning Spanish is not much of a choice but an obligatory means to receive the benefit of the formal education system in the country.

The largest group of children observed playing was around 18, including the actual players, those who were waiting to join in the next round, and those who were just watching the game. These children were not interviewed, but observed only. The purpose of observing them playing was to assess their language preference, and use in the playground; therefore, there was no need to interview them.

The observed game required constant talk and good communication among the players. An essential part of playing *mábule* is fair turn-taking among the players in the game. Players must be vigilant to make sure that each player takes his or her appropriate turn at the right moment. Anyone who takes somebody else's turn automatically has an advantage over the other players, and therefore has more chances to win. Therefore, everybody was alert to take his or her own turn, as well as to identify whose turn was the next. In that sense, *mábule* playing provides an excellent opportunity to observe children's linguistic preference and attitudes in a spontaneous and natural setting.

### **Data Analysis: Case Study in Corozal**

In the participant observation research in Corozal a total of 40 households were visited. The primary purpose of the visit was to observe which language Garifuna parents are actually speaking to their children at home. When asked about the issue, almost 100 percent of parents said that they were speaking in Spanish to their children, especially to the toddlers and youngest ones, while the heritage Garifuna language was to be learned in the future. Parents' decision to teach Spanish to their children as the primary language in the very initial stage of their lives was confirmed not only in all the conversations in the interviews but also during the entire participant observation research conducted in each and every household visited. As result of that linguistic behavior, almost every adolescent in Corozal has Spanish as the primarily language.

The adult members of the household (i.e. 20 and above), speak Garifuna among themselves, and they switch to Spanish when addressing the younger family members. Moreover, one of the informants stated that many parents in Corozal, especially the most educated (i.e., those with at least a high school diploma) talk in Spanish to their infants even before they are born.

In her interview, the informant JF mentioned that the differences between the linguistic competences and preferences of the speech community under 20 years old and those in their 20s and above are remarkable. The teenagers of the families are Spanish-dominant speakers, while the adults are mostly dominant Garifuna speakers, even though they may also have some competence to converse in Spanish. The different levels of linguistic preferences and competences among these groups can frequently be paralleled with the group's age and level of education. It seems that the younger the child, the higher the possibility that Spanish is his or her strongest language.

There is a general believe among parents in Corozal in the last two to three decades that children must learn Spanish as first language and learn Garifuna as second language, especially after finishing high school. Parents strongly believe that for a child to be successful in life, she or he must do well at school, and in Honduras this depends heavily on whether she or he has a good command of Spanish by the time she or he reaches school age, six to seven years old. Therefore, this linguistic decision is not a choice, but it is basically due to the Spanish monolingual and mono-cultural perspectives that characterize the educational system in Honduras. It is only after children have successfully finished primary school and started their secondary education that parents begin to introduce and even to encourage them to learn the native language.

This linguistic practice may be seen by many as the unequivocal way toward language loss, as is frequently observed in minority languages. In Corozal, however, there does not necessarily seem to exist a permanent language shift from Garifuna into Spanish. Instead, the Garifuna have adopted a very practical, temporary, and even transitory linguistic strategy in order to guarantee their children success at school, while at the same time, protecting the

children from suffering the negative impacts of a national educational system that suffers from a severe monolingual and mono-cultural myopia.

### **Why Was the Strategy of Temporal Language Shift Adopted?**

Based on the data provided by informant RF, there are many causes that lead Garifuna mothers in Corozal to adopt a temporal and practical linguistic strategy. Among these causes we can include:

1. The most educated (those with high school diploma) introduced the practice and others just followed them.
2. The informant RF, a mother of five in her late forties and now living with her second husband after the first one passed away a year and a half ago (June 1999), stated that she talked to her children in Spanish from the very beginning, because she saw that educated parents in Corozal talked to their children in Spanish even before they were born.
3. The informant RF also argued that even parents that are not very fluent in Spanish and without much formal education also talk to their children in Spanish.
4. Parents talk to their children in Spanish to protect them from cultural, linguistic, and psychological abuses at school.

Another major reason why a Garifuna mother must speak in Spanish rather than in the heritage Garifuna language to the younger children is not much of a choice, argued the informant RF, but a need imposed on parents, because they do not want their children to go through the same humiliations that these same parents went through at school for not being fluent in Spanish. The informant RF also mentioned that Garifuna school children were also labeled as ignorant and incompetent by the teachers and Ladino/Mestizo classmates for their lack of a good command of Spanish.

Conclusively, informant RF stated that “No mother wants her children to be treated as ignorant.” On the other hand, the informant mentioned that they also want their kids to do well at school in order to have a better future. (June 12, 2002, personal communication.)

The informant JF, a single mother in her thirties with three children, the oldest being 12 years old, pointed out that her children can't speak Garifuna, but they can understand the heritage language. She said that, like most of the modern young Garifuna mothers in Corozal, she talks to her children in Spanish most of the time. The more educated Garinagu in Corozal used to make fun of those less educated Garinagu, particularly for their lack of knowledge of Spanish. This is why poor and illiterate mothers try to offer a more secure future to their children by teaching them Spanish as the first language. An older person, the informant said, can manage to survive in a situation of social and linguistic exclusion, which can happen sometimes even within one's own community. Children however can't be exposed to these types of social hostilities. Informant JF defines herself as a humble person, one who doesn't have a high school diploma (June 14, 2002, personal communication). Similar to the previous informant, JF speaks Spanish to her children so they will have a safe and better future.

However, when asked their opinions about the possibility of teaching Garifuna to the children at school sometime in the future in Corozal, both mothers, as well as almost everyone who was asked the same question in Corozal, said that they would strongly support the idea of a bilingual education (Garifuna-Spanish) not only in Corozal, but also in Honduras in general. But isn't there an apparent contradiction here? While these "modern mothers" in Corozal are decidedly speaking only Spanish at home and teaching it as the first language to the children, they are at the same time expressing total support for the idea of a bilingual education (Garifuna-Spanish) program in the public school system.

No, there is no contradiction, because the Garifuna mothers in Corozal are not and have never been opposed to the use and development of the heritage Garifuna language, but rather, they are against the discrimination suffered by Garifuna students at school for not being native

Spanish speakers. Therefore, the apparent contradiction would dissolve at the very moment that Garifuna is incorporated as language of instruction in the school system. The discrimination against the Garifuna-speaking children would automatically disappear and with it the reasons that have forced the mothers in Corozal not to speak in their native Garifuna language, especially to their small children. Moreover, the use of Garifuna as language of instruction in the school system in Corozal would increase the language prestige, so that neither the school teachers nor the society in general would consider it to be language of uneducated and illiterate people.

#### Language Preference in the Family Households in Corozal

A summarized assessment of the comprehensive perspective on the fundamental linguistic preferences and attitudes in the Garifuna family households in Corozal is shown in Figure 5-3. Based on the study of 40 family households, the data show that 100 percent of children under the age of 13 are primarily Spanish language speakers. However, by the time these children finish high school almost 87.5 percent of them learn Garifuna and speak it as their primary language. Only fewer than 12.5 percent of the households reported that children did not speak Garifuna in or after high school. Nonetheless, since the adult members of the family speak in Garifuna to each other, the adults on the streets also speak in Garifuna, and in the future the heritage language will be used as language of instruction in the school system in Corozal, it is to be expected that some of the latter 12.5 percent will at least become passive Garifuna speakers by the time they reach the age of 20.

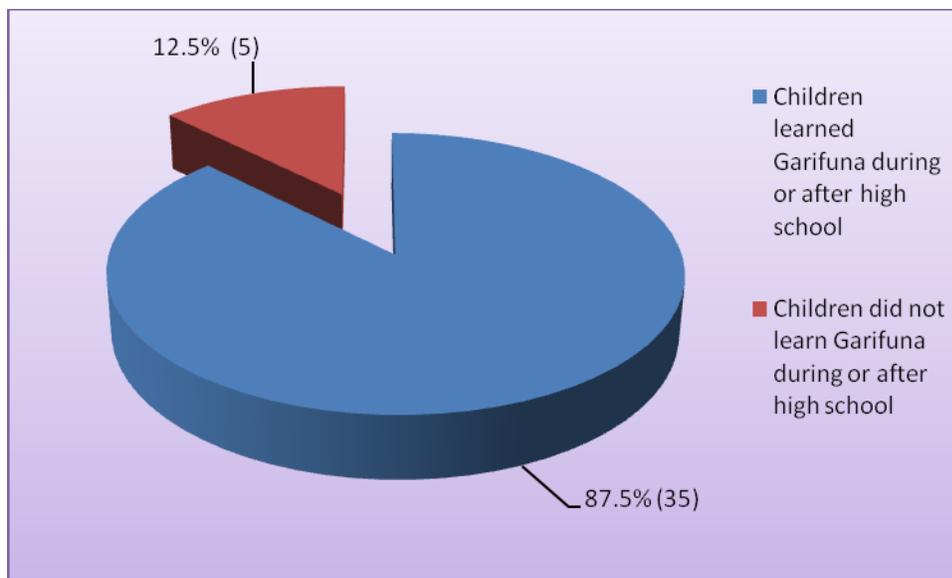


Figure 5-3. Linguistic preferences in Garifuna households in Corozal

If these 40 family households are sufficiently representative of the general dynamics of language choice, preferences, and processes in Corozal, it can be definitely concluded that Garifuna is not in danger of disappearing in Corozal. From this observation, a number of other factors also need to be considered. For instance, (1) the fact that children are not learning the native language of their parents as their first language does not necessarily mean that this particular indigenous language is in danger of disappearing; (2) the reduction or any disparities between the total of population and the actual number of speakers is not sufficient to conclude that these disparities are signs of language loss; (3) it appears that mothers in Corozal are being sufficiently successful (87.5 percent) in encouraging their children to learn Garifuna as second language and to speak it as primary language particularly after the high school, based on the households that participated in the study; (4) similar to what England (1988) observed among the Mayas in Guatemala, the monolingual and monocultural formal educational system in Honduras forces Garifuna mothers to teach Spanish as first language to their children, but unlike the Mayan people, Garifuna mothers are being successful in bringing their children back to the native

language, especially after finishing their secondary education; (5) Transforming of the national educational system into a more culturally and linguistically inclusive system could eliminate the basis of what has forced mothers to teach Spanish as L1 to their children.

The assumption that a culturally and linguistically inclusive curricula could eliminate most of the causes that induced Garifuna mother teach Spanish their toddlers and strengthen the conditions for the development of the Garifuna language is not groundless, but rather can be supported by Bernard Spolsky (1998) statements with regards to the role of literacy and language status.

The continued development of the Garifuna language during the last two centuries has been in spite of the unfortunate belief that speaker of non-standard languages and moreover the speakers of a minority non-official language “are less intelligent or less inherently capable than standard speakers” (Spolsky 1998:73). It is probable that Spolsky’s statement regarding the fact that “there is no evidence that people who speak a non-standard language are intellectually inferior to people who speak a standard language” was somehow naturally welcomed by the Garifuna speech community in Corozal, particularly in the last century. In that regard, even though “the normal association of the standard language with literacy and with formal education means that a key goal of many systems is to provide access to the standard language to the largest possible section of the population” (Spolsky 1998:74), the process of incorporation of members of the Garifuna speech community to the formal education system through the medium of Spanish, the national official language in Honduras, has not greatly altered the basis of the strategies of preservation and development of the Garifuna language in the village of Corozal. The preservation of the Garifuna language historically has been within the context of multilingual environment.

In Spolsky (1998)'s view literacy become key characteristic of prestige within the national political contexts. However, my research looks at prestige in the local speech community level of analysis. This explains the difference between Spolsky's approach and mine.

### **Interpretation of Data within the Context of an Ethnographic Model of Language Survival**

In order to understand the newly proposed sociolinguistic model in which the Garifuna language has been and is being maintained in the village of Corozal, it is also important to define the vertical mode of language transmission based on the nuclear family social structure and proposed by the dominant Western social science.

### **Occidental Tradition: Vertical Unidirectional Model**

The concept of vertical and unidirectional transmission is a model of language transmission proposed by dominant Western social scientists. It is essentially based on the idea of nuclear family social structure. According to this model, language transmission is almost totally restricted to the binary parent-child relationship, and it is invariably delivered in a top-down vertical and unidirectional manner, from parents to children. This model provides the theoretical basis for the existing generalized assumption among Western social scientists that whenever parents stop speaking their native language to their children and these stop learning the heritage language as first language, such language can be unquestionably classified as an endangered language. In the framework of this assumption, there is no room for horizontal and diagonal language transmission, much less for the multidirectional and multidimensional character of these. Therefore, it is due to these inherited constraints that the vertical unidirectional framework is unable to explain what is taking place in the village of Corozal with regard to language preservation and transmission.

## **Garifuna and Indigenous Tradition: Horizontal, Vertical, and Diagonal Multidirectional/Multidimensional Language Transmission Model**

The language transmission model developed within the context of the extended Garifuna family structure in the village of Corozal can be defined as a horizontal, vertical, and diagonal sociolinguistic language transmission model, with multidirectional and multidimensional characteristics. Moreover, all these aspects operate as integral components of the structure of one language transmission model. In that regard, in the context of linguistic exchange in the everyday life of the Garifuna extended family, these dimensions work as integral components of a single body or system of language transmission.

### **Vertical Multidirectional Dimension**

The dynamic of the vertical multidirectional dimension of language transmission comes into action whenever the parents or any other older member of the extended family structure or the community has a linguistic exchange with younger family or community members, using an up-to-down and down-to-up approach. This happens, for instance, when one of the interlocutors plays an authority role in the dialogue. In this case, the rest of the participants can ask questions, request explanations, and so forth, but they always are acknowledging the authority position of the adult interlocutor, a parent, grandparent, godparent, *uguchuhaña*, older sibling, etc.

As we can see here, in an extended family structure, the vertical language transmission is not necessarily restricted to the parent-children domain as it seems to be in the Western nuclear family structure, which is assumed by most Western social scientists.

### **Horizontal Multidirectional Dimension**

The dynamic of the horizontal multidirectional dimension of language transmission occurs in an ordinary conversation in which two or more participants take turn to share in the dialogue on a more or less equal basis. An important characteristic of the horizontal multidirectional

dialogue is that everyone shares and acquires linguistic competence and knowledge from each other via linguistic exchange, and that takes place specifically between people in the same age and generational group. For instance, children can transmit linguistic competence to other children in the playground; adults can learn from other adults in a wide variety of formal or informal settings; youth and adolescents can acquire linguist abilities from other youth and adolescents.

### **Diagonal Multidirectional Dimension**

The diagonal multidirectional dimension of language transmission takes place when linguistic contents, structure, and competence are shared and transmitted specifically between people of different age and generational groups. Therefore, this dimension of language transmission occurs despite the differences in ages, roles, positions or any other distinction that may exist between the interlocutors. In that regard, children can transmit linguistic knowledge to youth, in the same way that youth and teenagers can transmit cultural content and linguistic knowledge and competence to adult people, and young adults can transmit these parameters to elderly people.

### **Multidirectional Dimension**

The multidirectional dimension of language transmission operates in the sense that language transmission and learning is generally a two-way process, and hardly a one-way only dynamic, especially when it refers to Garifuna and indigenous language transmission within the context of the extended family structure. Even the most knowledgeable elders in the community can learn something about their own heritage language and culture from the youngest family and community members. Moreover, in the most apparently vertical language transmission from parent to his toddler, the toddler is not an absolutely passive receptor. In that regard, the toddler always has something to say, to respond, and even to ask to her parents. An interesting

ethnographic representation of multidirectional transmission is shown, in the case of Naruni, a 30-month-old, in the next section when the proposed model is analyzed within an ethnographic context.

### **Multidimensional Aspect**

The multidimensional factor of language transmission is an important aspect present in each of the previously mentioned elements of the model. Language transmission in the context of the Garifuna extended family is multidimensional in the sense that the transmission does not necessarily work under a single format, mechanism, or characteristic every time. Moreover, language transmission between grandmothers to grandchildren follows distinct characteristics compared to language transmission between *uguchuhaña* (explained below), uncle, or Godmother and a younger family member. Even in the case that the *uguchuhaña*, uncle, or Godmother may be using a vertical multidirectional approach; the language transmission event will always differ in some extent in content, depth, and even the interest and attitude of the participants toward the conversation.

### **Multidirectional, Horizontal, Vertical, and Diagonal Language Transmission within the Context of an Ethnographic Analysis**

In contrast to an interpretation of a linguistic phenomenon based on a vertical unidirectional language transmission, the data here will be analyzed within the ethnographic context of a new sociolinguistic model of language transmission, preservation, and survival. This new model is not limited to a vertical language transmission, but rather incorporates other dimensions such as horizontal, diagonal, and multidirectional dimensions of intergenerational language transmission.

Horizontal, diagonal and multidirectional language transmission is grounded on the complexity and versatility of the processes of the intergenerational language and cultural

transmission, characteristic of the sociolinguistic dynamics in the context of the extended family social structure in the Garifuna village of Corozal. In that regard, language is not acquired solely as a result of the traditional parent-to-children vertical top-to-down communication scheme, but it involves more multidirectional and complex dynamics. In the complex dynamic of the intergenerational language transmission in the Garifuna family structure, biological parents are the primary, but not the only, persons responsible for children's first language acquisition. Furthermore, the concept of parenting is much more complex and broad, since the definition of the concept is not reduced to biological parenthood, as in the Western nuclear family.

For instance, in the extended Garifuna family structure, besides the mother, there are other important figures to guide children. These figures are the *uguchuhaña* (similar to a second mother) and the *uguchihaña* (similar to a second father). In other words, the sisters of the child's mother are the *uguchuhaña* to the child; while the brothers of the child's father become *uguchihaña* to the child. In the Garifuna extended family structure, the mother's brothers and the father's sisters are the uncles and aunts to the child, respectively.

According to this family structure, if for any reason the biological parents are not available, the *uguchuhaña* and *uguchihaña* are the next ones morally obligated and socially responsible for taking care of the child. Taking care here means providing for the child's health care and education, and, if necessary, it can even involve raising the child and orienting her or his language acquisition. The multidimensional and multidirectional, diagonal, and horizontal character of language transmission in the Garifuna family structure suggests that linguistic communication is essentially not a one-way only process, and the message does not have to originate necessarily from one and the same side. Instead, linguistic communication normally requires at least two interlocutors, who take turn and can use the same or different channels of

transmission. This is where vertical, unidirectional language transmission, as understood by the dominant Western social scientists, is not the best or most suitable comprehensive representation of the complex phenomenon of language transmission, but in the best case scenario, it is just one aspect of that multidimensional process of language transmission. In that regard, multidirectional, diagonal, and horizontal language transmission, as suggested in the dynamic of the extended Garifuna family structure, becomes a more comprehensive representation of the complex dynamic of language transmission and maintenance. Language transmission, therefore, occurs in the communication from *uguchuhaña* to *irauhaña* (similar to a second child); children to children, youth to adult, parent to grandparent, child to grandparent, adolescent to adult, community to children, and so forth.

The complexity and multidirectional and multidimensional character of the phenomenon of language transmission in the extended family in the Garifuna culture is illustrated in the case of the informant MF, a retired grandmother whose new job in her seventies consisted of travelling periodically with her preschool-aged grandchild from the United States of America to the village of Corozal in order for the child to experience cultural and language immersion processes. In the process, the 1½-year-old child was expected to acquire the heritage language and culture, not only through contact with adult members of the speech community, but also through contact with teenagers and even with other children in the playground. The primary intent of the exchange with other children was not, however, as a means of language acquisition, but rather as a source of cultural learning.

Horizontal, diagonal, and multidimensional language use and transmission also occur among youth leaders in Corozal. These young language advocates address their parents,

grandparents, and any adult person in the heritage language as part of their effort to encourage the use, promotion and development of Garifuna language and culture in the village.

Diagonal and multidirectional language transmissions are also exemplified in the following event of child-parent language exchange. SR's 2½-years-old daughter Naruni was sent to the Garifuna village of Batayaugati to spend time with her grandparents, as well as to be exposed to a cultural and linguistic learning environment at a Garifuna community school, kindergarten. When Naruni returned to Tegucigalpa two months later, SR asked her what she had learned at the school. She told him that she had participated in the Mothers' Day celebration at the school with some songs and poems. So she sang four school songs and said one of the poems. SR was very much impressed by his little daughter's excellent learning ability, especially because the conversation with Naruni took place over Skype, a free international audio and video communication systems from computer to computer. SR was in Gainesville, FL and Naruni was in Tegucigalpa.

But the important point was that, when she finished singing, Naruni asked SR to sing one of the songs. She was so confident that SR could learn it while she was singing. However, to her big disappointment, SR had not paid sufficient attention to learn any of the songs, and he had to learn one before the conversation could continue.

SR's experience with Naruni is eloquent evidence for a diagonal and multidirectional language transmission between daughter and father, child-parent. The horizontal, diagonal, and multidirectional mode of language transmission is occurring in other scenarios, as many other authors have reported after observing similar linguistic practices in other parts of the world. Hornberger and King, for instance, wrote of the active role played by younger generations in their teens and twenties in the use and promotion of the heritage Quechua language and culture

in the Andes (2001:175). Moreover, Hornberger and King even suggested that these young participants can no longer be characterized just as passive 'young guests' and should be given higher consideration in Fishman's framework when making reference to the Saraguro (Hornberger and King 2001).

This phenomenon of horizontal and multidirectional language transmission was also reported by England who met Mayan children in Guatemala who do not speak a Mayan language as their first language. However, due to playgroup exposure, some of these children acquire an active knowledge of the heritage Mayan language as they become adolescents and get more involved in community life (England 1998). In that regard, these adolescents start to play an important role in the process of heritage language transmission and preservation.

However, unlike Hornberger(2001), England (1998) was not able to realize the significance of the role of the young in the process of language transmission and preservation, as she was unsure that such a youth involvement represents a general pattern that can be relied on to prevent language loss. England's viewpoint was basically determined by dominant Western approach, as she suggested that language loss generally follows the same pattern, in which the older members of the family speak the language more than the younger generations (England 1998). Contrary to England's assumption, this study has demonstrated that language use, transmission, and maintenance are not necessarily vertical and unidirectional. Therefore, language transmission and preservation do not depend solely on the adults transmitting the language to the children, in the sense that language is also transmitted from children to children, teenagers to children, youth to adults, and vice versa.

The anthropologist Allan Burns also reported having witnessed the preponderance of youth leadership with regard to heritage language preservation and transmission among the new

generation of Mayan teachers in Yucatec, Mexico. Burns, an authority on Mayan studies, has been working for decades with the Yucatecan Mayan people, and has devoted an important part of his professional life to the work in teacher training programs in Mayan communities (Burns, May 15, 2008, personal communication).

### **How Does the Garifuna Language Manage to Survive in a Stressful Environment Surrounding in Corozal**

Important variables explain the successful maintenance of the Garifuna language in the village of Corozal. Among the most relevantes of these variables are the followings:

#### **Role of Garifuna Extended Family Social Structure in Language Transmission and Maintenance**

The process of transmission as well as the maintenance of the Garifuna language in the village of Corozal and nationwide in the last three decades cannot be explained and understood unless the basic organization of Garifuna extended family social structure is analyzed. The extended Garifuna family structure, different from the Western nuclear family structure, allows both vertical and horizontal intergenerational language transmission.

Vertical transmission is far more complex than the unidirectional parent-to-children language transmission as proposed by Western social scientists. This includes, for instance, the intergenerational language transmission from grandparents to grandchildren, from *uguchuhaña* (as second mother) to nieces and nephews, from *uguchihaña* (as second father) to nieces and nephews, from uncles to nieces and nephews, from aunts to nieces and nephews, from godparents to godchildren, from adult neighbors to youth and child neighbors, and so forth. The role of grandparent, *uguchuhaña* and *uguchihaña* in the Garifuna culture is not one of simple relatives, who in the Western society are merely involved in an annual family gathering and gift exchange for birthdays, Christmas, graduation or other special occasions. In the Garifuna society, these roles can include actual parenthood responsibilities such as financial responsibility for the

nieces' and nephews' health, education, and if the *uguchuhaña* or *uguchihaña* can afford it, full care for nieces or nephews. But even when the *uguchuhaña* and *uguchihaña* are not required to have full responsibility for the child, they are still active in language transmission to their nieces and nephews.

This complex family social structure explains why the disruption of one aspect of the vertical intergenerational language transmission, biological mother-to-child, has not posed a significant threat to the use, maintenance, and preservation of the Garifuna language in Corozal.

### **Daily Use of the Garifuna Language among the Adult Population in the Community**

The use of the heritage language in every domain of everyday life among adults and young populations in Corozal is another important factor that explains why the Garifuna language is preserved, even though the direct transmission from parent to children has technically being suspended in the village in last three decades.

The preference of the adult population to use the heritage language as the primary medium of communication in everyday conversation in Corozal cannot be classified as a vertical language transmission *per se*, even though, it represents an invaluable opportunity for language exposition and acquisition by children. This language transmission mode cannot be properly defined as vertical transmission in the sense that the purposes of those conversations among adults are not primarily oriented to meet children's linguistic acquisition needs. The primary interlocutor, or listener, is the other adult, not only for the content, but even for the vocabulary used in these types of dialogue. Therefore, child exposure to the language in that context results only as a secondary effect.

Nonetheless, adult preference for the use of the native language in conversations about different domains and aspects of their everyday lives is an important variable for language transmission to children, even as secondary listeners.

## **Leadership Role Played by Culturally Conscious and Politically Activist Local Youth Leaders**

Although it is a recent phenomenon in the process of transmission and maintenance of the Garifuna heritage language in Corozal, of a new type of community youth leadership has emerged, which is especially committed to the promotion of cultural activism and awareness, and promotion of Intercultural and Bilingual Education programs. In addition, the promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives among Garifuna youth in Corozal is a relevant factor in the history of language transmission and maintenance in Corozal, and it represents the basis for a sustainable maintenance tradition of the heritage language.

One of the areas of the entrepreneurial activity preferred by the youth in Corozal is tourism, specifically restaurant ownership. For instance, one of these youth leaders started running his own restaurants while attending high school, and he continued in the business while pursuing a university degree in business administration at one of the greatest universities in La Ceiba, the nearest city to Corozal.

Although not all of these business and entrepreneurial initiatives have been successful, most of these youth continue pursuing university carriers in La Ceiba, in the industrial city of San Pedro Sula, or in the capital of Tegucigalpa. Unfortunately, one or two of them have migrated to the United State of America, because of the difficult economic situation in Honduras. Therefore, even some of the best local leaders have also been victims of the epidemic of migration to the USA, in some cases legally and some others illegally.

The intergenerational language transmission mode introduced by these teenagers and youth leaders in Corozal is a type of horizontal and diagonal multidirectional language transmission, in the sense that the sectors of the speech community leading the process of language use, transmission, and maintenance include primarily teenagers to teenagers, teenagers to young

adults, adults to older people, and teenagers to other adult speech community members, including their own parents, and grandparents. Moreover, due to the wide range of participants from different age groups performing roles as both speakers and listeners, this mode of language use, maintenance, and transmission can also be defined as multidirectional language transmission, including bottom-up exchange and transmission.

### **Disruption of Vertical Intergenerational Language Transmission, Parent- to-Children, Has Not Threatened the Continuation of the Garifuna Language in the Village**

Vertical intergenerational language transmission is defined in this study as the process of passing on the native language directly from biological parents to children. Because they base their analysis on Western conceptual and theoretical categories, most language transmission social scientists place significant weight on the relational variable parents-children, and pay little or no attention to variables such as the language transmission from grandparents to grandchildren, *uguchuhaña* (similar to a second mother) and *uguchihaña* (similar to a second father) to nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts to nieces and nephews, godparents to godchildren, adult neighbors to young neighbors, child to child, and so forth. The extended family social structure of the Garifuna culture is one of the critical factors, if not the most critical one, that explains how the Garifuna language has been maintained in the village of Corozal, despite the hostile surroundings that have historically characterized the Garifuna communities in that specific region of the country.

The tendency of Western theorists to have an almost absolute concentration on parent to children transmission is a direct result of the Western culture and cosmovision, in which the concept of family is limited to the nuclear group, composed by parents and children. The Garifuna and indigenous social scientists, however, base their analyses on a conceptual category in which the family is not limited to the nuclear group, but includes the extended family structure

as fundamental to the Garifuna and indigenous primary social organization. Therefore, while the definition of the nuclear family becomes a theoretical blind-spot for the Western social scientists in the analysis of language endangerment and transmission, the concept of extended family seems to offer Garifuna and indigenous social scientists the opportunity for a wider and more comprehensive analytical approach to the phenomenon of language transmission, shift, endangerment, maintenance, and death.

As these conceptual categories provide two different analytical points of departure in the study of language maintenance and endangerment, the Western concept of the nuclear family does not allow us to understand how Garifuna language is transmitted, or how it has been maintained in the village of Corozal for the last three generations in hostile surroundings. On the other hand, the Garifuna theoretical category of extended family provides the analytical access to understand not only how Garifuna has and is intergenerationally being transmitted, but also how the heritage language will continue to be intergenerationally transmitted and maintained.

If an analysis of the status of the Garifuna language in Corozal had been conducted two generations ago using the nuclear family concept, the conclusion would have indisputably been that the language was in danger of disappearing even then. Moreover, if a similar study were conducted now, one hundred years later, using the same conceptual categories, the conclusion would also be exactly the same: Garifuna in danger of disappearing. In other words, the constraints of the theoretical framework would mislead the conclusion of the studies, both then and now.

In conclusion, although the vertical parents-to-children intergenerational transmission of the Garifuna language in the village of Corozal has been interrupted in the last two to three decades, the existence of the heritage language does not seem to be in danger of disappearing, as

would be expected by most Western theorists on language endangerment. Fishman, for instance, stipulates in his Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) that one of the most critical factors for language shift and eventual death is the disruption of the process of language transmission from parents to children (Fishman 1991; 2001). In Corozal, however, the case of the Garifuna language demonstrates a totally different outcome. Summarily, vertical language transmission in the Garifuna community, important as it may be, has proven not to be the only or most decisive variable for language transmission and maintenance.

### **Historical Tradition of Resistance of the Garifuna People Has Played a Significant Role in the Preservation of the Garifuna Language**

The role of the tradition of resistance of the Garinagu, as a people that incorporates in its history the experiences of two traditions of resistance to colonialism and domination (the Afro-Caribbean and the Indigenous Caribbean), cannot be underestimated as we attempt to understand the variables that have contributed to the process of successful transmission, maintenance, and even revitalization of the Garifuna language in the village of Corozal.

The Garifuna people are defined in this study as an Afro-indigenous people, in the sense that Garinagu incorporate a double ancestral tradition: the African indigenous and the American indigenous ancestral traditions. While some aspects of the African ancestral tradition are manifested through Garifuna autochthonous religious practice, spirituality, music, dance, and phenotype, aspects of the American indigenous ancestry and tradition are manifested in the Garifuna language, significant elements of the system of beliefs, gastronomy, fishing, and marine life tradition, as well as the holistic cosmivision of the relationship between human and nature, including the approach to land use and property.

The traditions of resistance of the African indigenous and American indigenous people provide extraordinary testimony of the highest and indestructible spirit of freedom of the human

species, embodied in the unbreakable sovereignty and resistance to colonization and domination by the Garifuna people in Saint Vincent and Central America. Most scholars on Garifuna history agree that there is no evidence of colonization, domination, or slavery in the history of the Garifuna people, either in the African or in the American indigenous ancestry.

This historic tradition of resistance of the Garifuna people to any form of domination and colonization becomes another important variable that contributes to understanding the phenomenon of preservation, use, transmission, and maintenance of the Garifuna language and culture in Corozal in the last hundred and fifty years.

### **Role of the Churches and Schools Has Been Opposition to the Garifuna Language Preservation Rather than Support**

Regarding churches, the role of religion in the use and maintenance of the Garifuna language is limited to the acceptance by some churches in Garifuna communities to use the heritage language for some aspects of the liturgical celebration, particularly the songs. Preaching and readings of the Gospel can sometimes also be delivered in Garifuna by the community lay ministers in the absence of the priest, nuns or pastors.

Even though the use of the Garifuna language in the religious domain was started by the Catholic Church in Honduras in the late 1970s (Ruiz, n.d.), the practice continues to be strongly censured and opposed by most priests, nuns, and pastors in the country, particularly by those who maintain the incorrect and colonizing idea that the use of Garifuna and any other indigenous language in the religious service is a profanation of the sacredness of the ceremony and the holiness of the space.

Opponents to the idea of inculturation of the Gospel or the use of the vernacular languages in religious services and the contextualization of Biblical interpretation outnumbered supporters of pastoral reform proposed by the Vatican II Council. As a result, church authorities, especially

those settled in Garifuna and indigenous territories, continue to condemn the practice of Garifuna language and culture as sinful and pagan.

Regarding schools, the public school system has been totally absent from the process of Garifuna language preservation in Corozal. Moreover, while church leaders keep a condemnatory position toward the Garifuna culture, the schools have historically played a fierce role of opposition to the development of the Garifuna culture. The school system has led teachers and students to the conclusion that Garifuna and indigenous languages are languages for primitive, non-educated, and ignorant people, and the use of these languages on school campuses has been totally prohibited.

Nonetheless, during the last decade there has been very slow progress in the incorporation of Garifuna culture in the curricula and the use of the Garifuna as a language of instruction in the public school system via the initial stage of implementation of the Intercultural Bilingual Education approach in the public schools of Corozal. However, the principal of the primary public school of Corozal at the time of the dissertation research, a ladino/mestizo lady in her mid fifties and non-native to the local community, has just taken some specific actions oriented toward reversing any possible advances in terms of the implementation of the Intercultural Bilingual Education approach at the school. For instance, she removed almost every Garifuna school teacher from decision-making administrative positions and replaced them by ladino/mestizo teachers.

Among the removed Garifuna teachers was NG, the school library director, one of the most intelligent and committed school staff members, who had successfully presented a proposal to the US Ambassador in Honduras, Dr. Larry Palmer, to acquire chairs, work tables, books, and additional teaching and support materials for the school library. NG had also decorated the

library with Garifuna cultural objects, information and illustrations, including the Garifuna national flag and illustration of Garifuna national heroes. When the school principal was asked about the reasons to remove the school library director, she replied that she wanted the school library to look like a 'normal library', for example, a traditional school library that makes no allusion to the history, culture, and much less the language and heroes of the local people. Instead, the principal of the school prefers those libraries that honor the image of European conquerors and colonizers of the national territory.

Although, there is a legal framework for the national execution of the Intercultural Bilingual Education approach in Honduras, the actual process of implementation in the classroom still depends on the good will of the regional districts' school authorities and school principals, many of whom, like the school principal of Ramón Rosa public school of Corozal, have demonstrated no interest whatsoever in the implementation of cultural and linguistically pertinent and quality school curricula. The situation becomes even worse, however, when national education authorities, such as Ministries and Vice-Ministries of Education and the administrative staff, also demonstrate lack of knowledge and interest of the pertinence of the content of the curriculum for the improvement of the quality of the national educational system.

Consequently, both schools and churches have historically and continue essentially to favor the process of annihilation and extinction of the Garifuna language and culture, similar to what these two institutions have traditionally done with the indigenous languages and cultures worldwide. Therefore, the continued use and maintenance of the Garifuna language in Corozal has not occurred because of the support of these institutions, but has happened despite these two traditional speakers and activists for the Western tradition of colonization of indigenous territories.

Nonetheless, these institutions are being forced to accept that the possibility of their very existence and presence in the Garifuna community is no longer viable, unless they make some significant and fundamental transformations in terms of their traditional and colonizing approach to the language and culture of the Garifuna people. The need for a new approach could become inevitable as church and school authorities begin to realize the presence of well educated Garifuna leaders in the communities, some of whom are equally and even more educated than national representatives of the schools and churches. This new image of Garifuna and indigenous persons is challenging the unquestioned role of authority traditionally played by priests, nuns, pastors, and school authorities. These traditional figures used to represent the undisputed holders of the Truth; therefore, they were considered by the villagers as the unmistakable spiritual, academic, and even cultural and linguistic guides. Therefore, the presence in the village of a new generation of highly educated and culturally conscious Garinagu may represent only the beginning of a new relationship between schools and churches and the Garifuna communities, hopefully one of great respect for the dignity and culture of the Garifuna and indigenous people.

Actually, a bright and current example of this hopeful future is the efficient job and great achievements of the National Program for the Education of Autochthonous and Afrodescendent People of Honduras (PRONEEAAH, for the Spanish acronym), especially in the last three fiscal years (2006-2008), under the administrative management and leadership of Rony L. Castillo, a well educated young Garifuna who is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the Catholic University in Tegucigalpa.

PRONEEAAH is an executing unit of the Secretary of Education of Honduras based in Tegucigalpa and created in the early 1990s. The major achievements of PRONEEAAH,

especially in last three years under the management of a well educated and culturally conscious young Garifuna leader, include the following:

1. The design and implementation of formal teacher training programs for indigenous and Afro-descendent educators, using the methodological approach of the Bilingual Intercultural Education Program (EIB). Around 1000 Afro-descendent and indigenous teachers have graduated from these programs with degrees as Primary School Teachers.
2. The in-service teacher training program on the EIB approach, through intensive and systematic workshops and seminars delivered to more than 5,000 school teachers nationwide.
3. The production of text books for primary school children (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades) written in the seven existing indigenous and Afro-descendent native languages of Honduras and incorporating cultural content in the curricula. Actually, this is the first time that the Ministry of Education of Honduras, at the very official level, has produced culturally and linguistically pertinent textbooks, teaching and support materials for school children in indigenous and Afro-descendent communities. In that regard, these textbooks were officially presented by Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of Honduras, Marlon Antonio Brevé Reyes, Minister of Education, and Rony L. Castillo, National Director of PRONEEAAH, to the national education system and to the nation in general in a well organized and highly sophisticated official event, well covered by the mass media.



Figure 5-4. Informant MF, Garifuna-American retired grandmother travels periodically from the USA to Corozal with her granddaughter for cultural and language immersion experience for the toddler



Figure 5-5. Group of young mábule players, with girls' leadership in a traditionally boys-only game

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS

### **Current Situation of Indigenous Languages within the Context of Garifuna in Honduras**

Social scientists, particularly specialists in language endangerment, suggest that if the current trend of threats to indigenous and less spoken languages continues unabated, half (3,000) of the 6,000 current world's spoken languages will disappear within the next hundred years (Crystal 2000; Fishman 1991, 2001; Grenoble & Whaley 1998; Wurm 1991). Crawford (2001) has even suggested that only 10 percent of the current spoken languages may continue to exist 100 years from now. Reasons cited by these researchers include political, economic, and sociocultural variables, which themselves will be negatively impacted by language decline. Fishman and others place special emphasis on the critical role of variables such as the disruption of intergenerational language transmission, especially vertical language transmission from biological parent to children, in the phenomenon of world languages endangerment (Fishman 1991; 2001).

The case of the Garifuna language in the village of Corozal, however, seems to follow a different trend from current theoretical assumptions with regard to language endangerment, death, revival and preservation. Although the Garifuna language has always existed in stressful surroundings, to the point that cases of language shift have been observed and vertical intergenerational language transmission from biological parents to children has been disrupted, Garifuna does not seem to be undergoing language endangerment; on the contrary, it has been gaining in number of speakers.

To illustrate that argument, the Garifuna speech community in the year 1797 in Honduras was around 2,080 people. However, by the year 2008, the number of Garifuna speakers increased to more than 150,000 people, even though, these figures do not include those Garinagu living in

Belize, Guatemala, United States, and elsewhere. If the Garifuna speech communities in the worldwide Garifuna diaspora are added, the total number of Garifuna speakers could be 250,000 people, considering that the 100,000 reported by Gonzalez (1988) are mainly first generation migrants and native Garifuna speakers. Moreover, Garifuna not only expanded in number of speakers over these two centuries in Central America, but it has also gained in language vitality.

The case of the Garifuna language, therefore, develops a new scenario which presents new challenges to experts on language endangerment, and consequently to the classification of endangered languages. Chief among these is the need to review the limitations and adequacy of the theoretical frameworks and the conceptual categories proposed by linguists and social scientists for the analysis and classification of language endangerment. Perhaps the Garifuna case is not unique in its vitality even though it is a lesser known language. The Garifuna case also shows the utility and suitability of the Garifuna and indigenous conceptual categories, sociolinguistic practices, and theoretical perspectives for the analysis and interpretation of sociocultural phenomenon such as language shift, death, preservation, and revitalization.

### **Relationships between the Less and Most Spoken Languages**

The relationship between the dominant and most spoken languages (e.g. English and Spanish) and the less spoken languages (i.e. Garifuna and other indigenous languages) has always been presented and portrayed as one of domination and threat. Nonetheless, the new scenario posed by the Garifuna language as described in this dissertation has proven that the dominant concepts may not necessarily be involved in every situation. For instance, in the Garifuna case, even though it is a language with relatively small numbers of speakers, as compared to languages like English and Spanish, the relationship has historically tended to be one of horizontal connection and exchange. In that regard, the presumed prestige differences between the less spoken (Garifuna) and the more spoken (Spanish or English) languages, for

some reason, has not played a significantly negative role here. Even though the more spoken languages tend to be used in more sociolinguistic domains, the less spoken Garifuna language is used in fewer but highly critical domains for the lives and the very existence of the speech community as a culturally and linguistically differentiated people. Garifuna people have historically been bilingual, trilingual, and even multilingual, beginning in the early days of the existence of the Garifuna people and culture in the Island of Saint Vincent (1635-1796) until the present day in Central America and the diaspora.

The awareness and consciousness of the Garifuna people about the horizontal relationship and equal importance of their heritage Garifuna language compared to Spanish or English seem to have been key factors that have favored the preservation and constantly increasing number of speakers of Garifuna during the 360 years of existence of the language (1635-2008), including its 200-year presence in Honduras and elsewhere after the exile from Saint Vincent in 1796. Most Garinagu understand that Garifuna, Spanish, and English may be different as regard to language structures, domains of use, and numbers of speakers, but they all are undisputedly equally important. This cultural and linguistic awareness helps explain why the Garifuna language has been preserved to this day in the village of Corozal.

The sociolinguistic strategy historically developed by the Garifuna people over the course of more than 350 years of their existence has been one of maintaining the heritage language while learning as many other languages as possible, including the regionally dominant Spanish language and the internationally dominant English language. For instance, in the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Saint Vincent, most Garinagu spoke their native Garifuna language as well as French, Spanish, and English (the languages of the colonizers). Most historians of that particular period attribute the decades of successful Garifuna resistance against the European conquerors in

great measure to the multilingual competence of the population, particularly those men and women in the Garifuna anti-colonialist force of resistance in Saint Vincent.

### **Linguistic and Analytic Contributions of the Study**

The analytical proposal that arises from the situation of language endangerment and the new scenario created by the Garifuna language preservation strategies raise some issues that are relevant to academia, the state, and to the Garifuna community.

**Inadequate academic categories:** There is an important and urgent need to address the issue of the inadequate performance shown by the theoretical framework of the dominant Western social science when it comes to identifying, analyzing, and solving problems related to indigenous and Afro-descendent sociocultural context. The second issue comes as a direct consequence of the previous one, in the sense that it becomes an imperative for social scientists to incorporate conceptual categories and theoretical approaches developed within the indigenous and Afrodescendent cultural setting. Both academics and universities must develop actions in order to respond to these pressing theoretical and social scientific issues.

**Government language policies:** This study suggests that governments, including the government of Honduras, must design effective public policies not only to bring into practice the definition of the multicultural and multilingual nation state, but also to create the structural and legal frameworks that can enhance the ability of universities to respond to the educational demands of culturally and linguistically diverse sectors of the population. In order to pursue these national objectives, in concert with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the 169 Decree of the International Labor Organization (ILO), governments must establish well structured and quality education programs targeting indigenous and Afro-descendent populations from primary all the way through graduate and post graduate education levels. Teacher training in areas related to intercultural and bilingual education is also an important

component that cannot be left behind in the actions to be taken to respond to being multicultural and multilingual states.

Government intervention through the design and implementation of public policies in areas like education, health, and land use and property, especially for indigenous and Afro-descendent populations, involves actions that require a great deal of political will on the part of government authorities and public servants. It is common knowledge among the people of Honduras, however, that the Government's political will is not necessarily related to solving the people's needs, but rather depends most of the time on what is politically convenient or 'correct' at a given moment. Therefore, the Garifuna, indigenous and Afro-descendent communities must develop mechanisms to create some of those conditions and scenarios that are defined by the government as politically convenient and correct, in order to support, design, and implement public policies favorable to their own.

The capability to make government act in favor of a specific sector of the society, however, is a situation in which the economically and politically dominant sectors of the population tend to benefit the most, in the sense that those sectors have the necessary political and economic resources to influence government decision-making processes. However, while the most vulnerable sectors, like the Garifuna, indigenous and Afro-descendent populations, may not have private financial resources and political contacts, they still have some peculiar resources to influence the political situation effectively. In other words, their own social and financial vulnerability, as well as their organization, can become sources of a strong voice to force the government to pay attention to their needs and demands.

**The local speech community:** This research suggests that, if local speakers of Garifuna continue with the Garifuna historic resistance tradition, the values relating to this heritage

language will continue to function to ensure Garifuna language vitality. The enhancement and continuity of the extended family Garifuna social structure is critical to the preservation of the heritage Garifuna language, in the sense that it guarantees horizontal, vertical and diagonal multidirectional intergenerational language transmission. Similarly, empowerment of the newly emerged phenomenon of interest and commitment to community leadership among the youth in Corozal is becoming key to the survival of the language and the culture. Youth leaders incorporate both well grounded cultural values and identity and a high level of formal quality education, which are fundamental variables in building a strong speech community that can adapt to the demands of the new and ever changing sociocultural, national, and international conditions.

The preservation of the native Garifuna language also guarantees the access to traditional and ancestral knowledge as it relates to nature (weather change), cultural practice (agriculture, land use and tenure, fishing systems, medicinal plants), and even the spiritual domain. In that regard the heritage language becomes a crucial resource of survival, especially in times of change and crisis.

### **Recommendations for National and International Universities**

The national universities of Honduras must assume the challenge of addressing the theoretical failure faced by the conceptual categories and theoretical framework traditionally used by the dominant Western social science for the study of Garifuna and indigenous cultural practices. In this regard, these institutions cannot afford maintaining the old traditional Western conceptual categories as the only valid sources of scientific knowledge, or the prejudicial and irrational attitude that has historically characterized the approach of these entities of higher education to the knowledge, cosmovision, and cultural practice of the Garifuna and indigenous people, denying them every chance as sources of scientific information.

Contrary to such an unfounded idea, Garifuna and indigenous conceptual categories and theoretical frameworks have proven to be effective instruments for the scientific enterprise with regards to identifying, analyzing, and solving problems, particularly within Garifuna, indigenous and Afro-descendent sociocultural settings. Moreover, as pointed out above, this study has also categorically demonstrated the limitations and inadequacy of the dominant Western conceptual categories and theoretical frameworks to understand Garifuna sociocultural phenomena, such as the language preservation that is currently taking place in the Garifuna village of Corozal.

In Honduran higher education, therefore, besides the need to face the theoretical challenges that derive from the inadequacy of the Western theoretical categories, national universities must guarantee quality and pertinent training to the new professionals, so that they will successfully meet the educational demands of a world that is aware more than ever before of its multicultural characteristics and sociolinguistic rights. No doubt, this will mean not only updating the curricula of the higher education system with quality, pertinent, and relevant content from indigenous cultural contexts, but it also must guarantee access to programs of in-service teacher training for those already graduated. This curricular update and teacher program must especially focus on content relevant to cultural and linguistic diversity in the context of multicultural societies.

The creation of research centers with particular emphasis on documenting social, cultural, political, economic, and linguistic practice, knowledge, and cosmovision of Garifuna and indigenous peoples should be a priority of the universities. This will allow these institutions to build information resource centers for the development of curricular content, as well as reading and teaching materials suitable for different educational levels, including university, high school (7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades) and primary school (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>). Coordinating and establishing collaboration

efforts, and even learning from the experiences of other institutions, especially those who have gained some experience working with other indigenous people, could also be of great benefit to the universities in Honduras.

An unavoidable local counterpart for these universities within Honduras with regard to Garifuna and indigenous education is the National Program for Afro-descendant and Indigenous Education (PRONEEAAH, for its Spanish acronym). PRONEEAAH has surpassed the job done by the national universities with regards to teacher training, textbook and support material development, and even in initiatives on the creation of public policies to favor Garifuna and indigenous education through the implementation of the Intercultural Bilingual Education Program nationwide.

PRONEEAAH is an institution within of the Ministry of Education of Honduras that has been functioning for the last fourteen years. Nonetheless, due to lack of attention by most of the past governments and the disinterest of some of the PRONEEAAH's previous national directors, this program has not produced significant results until the last three years, when Rony Castillo, a highly qualified and committed Afro-indigenous professional, was appointed as the PRONEEAAH national director.

Based on the successful experience of PRONEEAAH, the national universities must also learn the importance of appointing highly qualified Garifuna and indigenous scholars in both academic and administrative positions. PRONEEAAH's experience, therefore, teaches that the updating of the higher education curricula with content from Garifuna and indigenous cultural practice must be accompanied by the appointment highly qualified Garifuna and indigenous professionals in order for the process to be effective.

The higher education system in Honduras and elsewhere, in order to fulfill its scientific responsibilities, must also devote special time and resources to the exploration of those conceptual categories relevant to the Garifuna sociocultural settings and analytical framework, such as the *uguchuhaña*, *uguchihaña*, and the extended family, since these categories can enhance the opportunity to make significant contributions to the scientific community.

The study of the extended family structure as the primary and fundamental social structure in the Garifuna and indigenous cultures, as well as the assessment of the role of this structure on language intergenerational transmission, death, and preservation, must also become an unavoidable research topic for the purpose of methodological and content development of the social sciences. Similarly, great interest must also be developed around the study of the multidirectional dimensions of the horizontal, vertical, and diagonal structure of intergenerational language transmission, particularly in the context of the extended family structure.

Additionally, other initiatives that should be undertaken by the national universities in Honduras include the development of serious and reliable demographic statistics on the Garifuna population in Honduras and the collaboration of scientific research projects with other institutions.

Regarding international universities, social scientists, including linguists, anthropologists, and other scholars, have the responsibility to keep a permanent attitude of research in order to guarantee that social science is constantly updating both its methodological research approaches and its conceptual and theoretical framework. In that regards, the higher education systems and institutions, particularly in the United States of America, must make sure that their universities are diligently keeping track of the development of new cultural practices and knowledge that

may be happening in any part of the world, because they can contribute to the development of the science and the enhancement of human knowledge. One way to ensure this is to establish ties with universities in Honduras and other countries and to create conditions for the exchange of scholars and scholarship to the benefit of both universities.

The sociocultural practice and language intergenerational transmission phenomenon that is taking place in the village of Corozal in Honduras must be a top priority process to be documented and studied by an interdisciplinary team of social scientists. This is particularly critical to universities in the USA, the most powerful and richest country in today's world economy, to make sure not only that its higher education system and institutions have the best equipped and organized schools and programs of social science, but also that its documentation centers maintain the most updated information on different regions of the world.

In order to develop and maintain a scientific leadership profile, the institutions of higher education in the USA must establish a working strategy based on a strong network of coordination and collaboration with other institutions, including institutions of higher education, especially in geographic areas with high incidences of Garifuna, indigenous, and Afro-descendent populations. The collaborative effort cannot be limited to having an international university extract information from the Garifuna and indigenous communities and societies, but rather it will be more effective and sustainable if a number of the Garifuna and indigenous scholars are given the opportunity to acquire graduate degrees at similar levels to those held by their international counterparts. Moreover, the establishment of partnerships and collaboration agreements with local institutions of higher education, particularly with those that are focused on Garifuna and indigenous people and societies, must be given high priority to guarantee permanent collaborative efforts, based on a fair and equitable exchange.

### **Recommendations to Continue this Line of Study**

There are no previous studies on the strategies developed by the Garifuna speech community to preserve its heritage language. In that regard, this is the first time that the topic is specifically addressed. Therefore, while some questions with regard to Garifuna and indigenous language maintenance have been answered, others have only been raised, and others are yet to be undertaken. Nonetheless, many lessons can be drawn from this first-of-its-kind study, particularly for those interested in conducting further research on Garifuna language preservation strategies.

Additionally, this study has addressed the critical issue of identifying the weaknesses of the dominant social science and highlighting the adequacy of the Garifuna and indigenous knowledge and cultures for making significant contributions to the development of social science theories and methods. However, there is still much to be done in order to reach the target of uncovering the potential of the Garifuna and indigenous knowledge in terms of scientific sources, and that will be necessary step toward the official recognition of the possibility of a Garifuna and indigenous social science.

In order to reach that point, however, not only is an innovative research method necessary, but also the courageous researcher must be committed to make contributions to the science. Such a researcher must have a critical approach to the preexisting theoretical framework and conceptual categories of the dominant Western social science. This critical attitude must be based on the premise that theoretical frameworks become obsolete, and their authenticity must be constantly verified by concrete evidence. The researcher cannot have overt or covert negative predisposition toward Garifuna and indigenous conceptual categories and theoretical framework, especially when these predispositions are groundless. She or he must have an open attitude to try new approaches, as long as these can offer some possibilities to improve the scientific research

enterprise, while the repetition of conventional research methods and theoretical frameworks, just for the sake of avoiding the risk of making errors, is not a choice.

Consequently, whoever aims to continue this study must embody those scientific attitudes, and she or he must also have important personal qualities, as described in the following sections.

### **A Courageous Approach to Linguistic Science**

Conducting further work in this field requires a critical attitude toward the dominant Western social science. It is an imperative for honest scholars, especially Garifuna, indigenous and Afro-descendent, to approach the social science with a courageous determination to make important contributions. This aim can only be achieved, however, if scientists are brave enough to follow Renato Descartes approach of methodical doubt, of “cogito ergo sum”. Descartes is called by many as the father of Modernism. He was able to make a significant contribution to science only by assuming a research attitude in which he placed on hold the assumed truth of every theory and postulate that he was taught, and took as a departing point the methodical doubt of every possible established truth, including the very truth of his own existence and the existence of God.

This scientific attitude of doubt is particularly urgent when the dominant social science pretends to identify, analyze, and solve sociocultural phenomena without considering the indigenous context, as we have seen in the analysis of intergenerational language transmission within the context of the extended family social structure.

### **Clear Intention to Make Scientific Contribution**

Researchers can contribute to the science only if they are ready to challenge even the most commonly assumed theories by means of consistent data and well conducted fieldwork. Whenever, factual events from everyday life appear to contradict a theoretical supposition, regardless of its popularity, such theory needs to be reexamined. Through examination of

theories vis-à-vis real facts could offer a great opportunity to make important contributions to the scientific community. In the particular case of this study, the contradicting sociolinguistic facts in the Garifuna village of Corozal with regards to language preservation and death became the iceberg for the identification of deeper inconsistencies in the current theoretical approach of the Western dominant social sciences to identify, analyze, and solve sociolinguistic phenomena developed in Garifuna, indigenous and Afro-descendent settings.

### **Defined Methodology**

In terms of methodological approach, the great Bronislaw Malinowski called the attention of the social scientists, particularly anthropologists, to the necessity of conducting extensive and long-term cultural immersion in the target community in order to achieve a successful and reliable ethnographic study. In this sense, Malinowski is not only the father of the ethnographic research, but also the grandfather of participant observation research. Both of these attitudes were fundamental to the research method implemented in Corozal and they both are also mandatory aspects for any attempts to continue this study.

This study has also established as a methodological approach the critical relevance of involving the community at different stages of the research, including design, data gathering, and even preliminary data analysis, in addition to having the research dwell in the community for an extended period of time. Effective community effective involvement is particularly essential, because it offers the study great opportunities of obtain in-depth, objective, and reliable results. Moreover, full community involvement in the research process could also guarantee effective use of the results of the study, not only to benefit the academy and the science, but also to benefit the community.

For instance, the degree and extent of community participation in this study included a wide range of collaborators, as described in chapter 3. Some of these groups had greater

participation than others; however, most of them took part in research design, data gathering, and even in data analysis. The research strategy of community participation provided the researcher with access to more authentic and objective information and insights into issues that he could not have obtained otherwise. In that regard, outcome confirms the relevance of research method that involves community participation at all stages of the research process.

### **Research and Advocacy**

One important characteristic of this study was the link between research and advocacy. The study was designed to provide insights into specific issues of community interest, with the aim of having an applied dimension in the results. The research was undertaken not just for the sake of conducting an investigation, but also to contribute to the ability of the scientific research enterprise to provide effective solutions to humankind's everyday problems, particularly those problems affecting the most vulnerable sectors of the society, which in Latin America are the African descendents and the indigenous populations. The result provided by this study serve as unquestionable evidence of the great iceberg of scientific knowledge that represents and is hidden within the native communities of the Garifuna, indigenous, and Afrodescendent cultures in Honduras, Latin America, the Caribbean, and around the world.

### **Short-Term and Immediate Goals**

Due to the important degree of community involvement in the research, the study focused not only on midterm and long term impacts, but also on short term and immediate effects in the life of the community:

1. The data on the situation in the local public school system, both in primary (elementary – 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade) and secondary education (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade) was gathered and analyzed with the participation of local team work, a group comprised of 23 male and female youth leaders and some school teachers. Later, these data were presented to the representatives of the community local “*fuerzas vivas*” (the most active and representative local organizations);

2. The youth leaders and the *fuerzas vivas* were shocked when they realized how high the student dropout rates were, especially in the high school. Although the analysis on the possible causes of the problem pointed to lack of sociocultural pertinence in the school curricula for adolescent students in process/crisis of affirming their cultural/personal identities, the community organization, through the youth leaders and the *fuerzas vivas*, however, decided to address the problem by an immediate action, calling for a community election to change the members of the local Patronato, the most important local socioeconomic and political organization. The problem was caused primarily by the collision between, on one side, the Garifuna adolescents in search or affirmation of their personal-cultural identity and, on the other side, the monocultural myopia of the curriculum of the public school systems, which find it much easier “to solve” the problem by failing and dismissing the students of non-mainstream cultural background rather than by addressing the real problem of inadequacy of the monocultural school system. Since the Patronato was in charge of monitoring the performance of the teachers and the entire school system in the community, removing them signified an immediate action to secure a mid and long-term solution to the problem of high dropout rates. The community expected to solve the problem by working hard in order to transform the school system through the implementation of the Intercultural Bilingual Education Program, a culturally and linguistically pertinent educational program offered by the Ministry of Education through PRONEEAAH;
3. Another immediate benefit of the research method was participation of each schoolchild, teacher, and principal in filling out a questionnaire to give his/her opinion on the status of the heritage language. The exercise contributed to bring cultural conscience among the students and teachers about the importance of their heritage language and their culture, since this was the first time that the Garifuna language and culture were being the objects of academic research. The high prestige that the heritage language was gaining had also led to the development of a stronger personal cultural identity and a higher esteem in those Garifuna school teachers and children. The same is true for the family households who participated in at least one aspect of the research.
4. The youth leaders and teachers that took part in the entire process of the research were among those who benefited most from the research, particularly with regards to acquiring research methodology and data gathering techniques, use of new technology and equipment such as laptop computer, digital camera, and camcorder. More importantly, they gained in terms of raising their levels of cultural consciousness, cultural identity and self-esteem. The latter qualities will lead them to take action at the local level, e.g. selection of new members of the Patronato, as a mechanism to transform the curricula of the public school system and consequently to lower the rate of dropouts and increase the rate of retention.

The primary aim of the Research and Advocacy method is to address and propose solutions to issues in people’s everyday lives. By doing so, research will maintain its pertinence to people in real life. Reorienting research to its function as problem-solving in every aspect of

life is definitely an applied objective of this study. In this way, young researchers are decidedly distancing themselves from the concept that an applied purpose makes the research non-objective and non-scientific. To the contrary, the present generation of researchers is moving forward with the idea that collaborative efforts between insider and outsider perspectives are themselves vehicles for scientific work.

### **Pending Pressing Research Issues on Garifuna**

Among the most pressing research activities that are pending and need to be addressed are lack of access to a pertinent and quality education system and health service. Part of this is due to the sociopolitical and economic exclusion of the Garifuna and indigenous peoples, including systematic processes of expropriation of these groups from their historic and traditional territories, as well as the lack of reliable statistics on Garifuna demographics. There is no possible way to address the needs of this population effectively unless efforts are made in order to produce consistent and reliable data on their numbers and living conditions.

A structural solution to the problem requires effective representation of the Garifuna and indigenous people in the decision-making stages of the sociopolitical and economic spheres. This can happen only if a significant number of Garifuna and indigenous communities are offered training at the highest levels in different areas of human knowledge. This will place the Garifuna and indigenous people in the position to compete successfully for influential position, so that their voices can be heard and their structural demands addressed.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRES

**Encuesta Sociolingüística**

**Para maestras y maestros de la escuela “Ramón Rosa” Comunidad Corozal  
9 de diciembre de 2004**

**Santiago J. Ruiz  
Antropólogo**

**Datos Generales**

1. Nombre de la comunidad: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Nombre de la escuela en que labora: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Grado que atiende: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Tiempo de laborar en esta escuela: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Tu identidad étnico (raza): \_\_\_\_\_

**Datos sociolingüísticos**

6. Lengua(s) que hablas:
  - a. Español
  - b. Garifuna
  - c. Garifuna y Español
7. Tu grado de alfabetismo en el idioma Garifuna
  - a. Lo hablo, lo entiendo y lo escribo
  - b. Lo hablo, lo entiendo, pero no lo escribo
  - c. Lo entiendo, pero no lo hablo, ni lo escribo
  - d. No lo entiendo, ni lo hablo, ni lo escribo
8. Tu grado de alfabetismo en el idioma Español
  - a. Lo hablo, lo entiendo y lo escribo
  - b. Lo hablo, lo entiendo, pero no lo escribo
  - c. Lo entiendo, pero no lo hablo, ni lo escribo
  - d. No lo entiendo, ni lo hablo, ni lo escribo
9. ¿Piensas que se debería enseñar el idioma y gramática Garífuna en tu escuela como parte de la educación intelectual, además del Español y el Inglés?
  - a. No
  - b. SíPor qué? \_\_\_\_\_
10. ¿Piensas que las escuelas, colegios y universidades nacionales deberían enseñar la historia y cultura Garifuna como parte de la historia y cultura de Honduras?
  - a. No
  - b. SíPor qué? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Piensas que ya se está enseñando historia y gramática Garifuna en alguna universidad del mundo?
  - a. No
  - b. Sí
12. La enseñanza de la lengua y cultura Garifuna en los centros educativos de Honduras

- a. Retrazará el desarrollo de la calidad educativa del país
  - b. Contribuirá al desarrollo y mejora de la calidad educativa del país
- Por qué? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Piensa usted que el dominio de la lengua ancestral debe ser condición necesaria para que el nombramiento de maestros en comunidades indígenas de Honduras?
- a. No
  - b. Sí
- Por qué? \_\_\_\_\_
14. ¿Piensa usted que es importante la preservación del Garífuna u otros idiomas indígenas de Honduras?
- a. No
  - b. Sí
15. ¿Qué se debe hacer para que el Garífuna u otros idiomas indígenas no desaparezcan?
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_

*Mil gracias por su colaboración y ¡FELIZ NAVIDAD!*

APPENDIX B  
CENSO POBLACIONAL Y SOCIOECONOMICO

**Third Field Visit (winter 2004 and spring 2005):** Censo Poblacional y Socioeconomico

**Cómo Preservar y Revitalizar el Idioma Garifuna en un Contexto de Economía Global en  
Corozal, Atlántida, Honduras.**

Febrero de 2005

Tesis Doctoral en Antropología Cultural

Santiago J. Ruiz, P.h.D. Candidate

University of Florida 2005

Número de casa: \_\_\_\_\_ Nombre de encuestador: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del barrio o colonia: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de jefe(a) de hogar: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Cuántas personas habitan en el hogar actualmente? Total de personas: \_\_\_\_\_

2. De las personas que habitan en el hogar,

a. ¿cuántos hablan el Garifuna? \_\_\_\_\_

b. ¿cuántos sólo entienden el Garifuna? \_\_\_\_\_

c. ¿cuántos ni hablan ni entienden el Garifuna? \_\_\_\_\_

d. ¿cuál es la edad de los que hablan el Garifuna? 0-12; 13-20; 21-68

e. ¿cuál es la edad de los que solo entienden el Garifuna? 0-12; 13-20; 21-68

f. ¿cuál es la edad de los que ni hablan ni entienden? 0-12; 13-20; 21-68

3. Cuántas personas habitaban en el hogar el año pasado? Total de personas: \_\_\_\_\_

4. En esta casa donde vive:

4.1 ¿Tiene agua potable de tubería en la casa?

Sí  No

4.2 ¿Cómo disponen de las heces fecales?

a. Tiene servicio de alcantarillado

b. Tiene letrina

b. Tiene fosa séptica

c. No tiene ninguna de las anteriores

4.3 ¿De qué material está construida las paredes de su casa principal (túgubu)?

a. Cartón

d. Ladrillo

b. Adobe/tierra

e. Bloque

c. Bahareque

f. Otro (especifique): \_\_\_\_\_

4.4 ¿De qué material está construido el techo de su casa principal (túgubu)?

a. Cartón

c. Panelit

d. Lámina de asbesto

b. Manaca

d. Lámina de zinc

e. Otros

- 4.5 ¿Tiene la familia más de una casa en el mismo patio? **Si o No** ¿cuáles?
- a. Tógubu                      b. Gusina                      c. Añaragülei                      d. Aneksu
- e. Otra casa completa

4.6 ¿Tiene la familia otras casas completas en mismo patio pero sin habitar? **Sí o No**  
Si la respuesta es Sí, ¿Cuántas? \_\_\_\_\_ y desde cuándo están las casas sin habitar:  
a. Desde su construcción      b. Desde hace \_\_\_\_\_ meses / años.

4.5 ¿Cuántos dormitorios (cuartos donde duermen personas) tiene en la casa? Total de dormitorios en el *Tógubu*: \_\_\_\_\_; en la *Gusina*: \_\_\_\_\_; en el *Aneksu*: \_\_\_\_\_

4.6 ¿Cuántos núcleos familiares hay en su hogar? Parejas sin hijos: \_\_\_\_\_; Parejas con hijos: \_\_\_\_\_; Madres solteras: \_\_\_\_\_; Padres solteros: \_\_\_\_\_

4.7 ¿Cuántos miembros de la familia incluyendo niños están fuera de la comunidad? Cuántos están en otras ciudades de Honduras: \_\_\_\_\_; Cuántos están en el extranjero: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Hay niño(a)s en edades de 6-12 años que habitan en la casa?

Sí  No

5.1 Si contesta que sí, ¿cuánto niños (6-12 años de edad) no están asistiendo a la escuela en la actualidad? Total de niños(as): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Del total de adultos(as)  $\geq$  18 años de edad que habitan en la casa, ¿hay algunos adultos(as) que estén trabajando actualmente y gane un salario?

Sí  No

6.1 Si contesta que no, explique cómo esta haciendo para sobrevivir: \_\_\_\_\_

6.1 Si contesta que sí, ¿cuántos adultos(as)  $\geq$  de 18 años de edad) están trabajando y recibiendo un salario en la actualidad? Total de adultos (as): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Durante los últimos doce meses, ¿recibió alguno de los miembros de este hogar dinero enviado desde el exterior u otras ciudades nacionales?

Sí  No

7.1 Si contesta que sí, ¿cuántas veces recibieron dinero en los últimos doce meses? Número total de veces desde el exterior: \_\_\_\_\_

Número de veces desde otras ciudades del país: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
CENSO POBLACIONAL Y SOCIOLINGÜÍSTICO

**Censo Poblacional y Sociolingüístico**

**Santiago J. Ruiz, P.h. D. Candidate**  
**University of Florida,**  
**Primavera 2005**

Número de casa: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personas que Habitan Actualmente en este Hogar:**

# Nombre de la Persona	Relación de Parentesco			Edad (en años)	Habilidad Lingüística Garifuna			Sexo		Años de Escola ridad	Estado Civil				
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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Santiago Jaime Ruiz Alvarez was born in 1965 in the Garifuna community of Mañali in the northeastern department of Colon in Honduras. The youngest of ten children, he grew up in the District of Colon. He earned his B.A. in Philosophy and his B.A. in Ecclesiastics studies from the Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas”(UCA) in San Salvador, El Salvador, in 1993 and 1998, respectively. He also completed course work in the M.A. program in Theology at UCA. In 2001 he was accepted at the Department of Anthropology at the University to pursue graduate studies. Upon earning his M.A. in May 2002, he was accepted to the Ph.D. program in anthropology, and after completing the course work, took his qualifying exam in May 2004. While he was pursuing doctoral studies, Santiago had two internships at the World Bank (WB) in Washington, D.C., where he developed professional experience assessing on the impact of WB projects on Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples, being the Central American region of his primary interest.

In fall 2004, Santiago travelled to his home country Honduras to conduct research focusing on strategies for preserving indigenous languages. After finishing his fieldwork, Santiago was appointed as National Director for the Multicultural and Bilingual Education Program for Central America (PROEIMCA) in Honduras, a position that he held for three years. In January 2008, he suspended his work at PROEIMCA to return to Gainesville to complete his Ph.D. program. Santiago has been married to Sandra Green for 5 years. They have one daughter, Naruni, age 3.