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STUDY QUESTIONS ON STAVENHAGEN, WHITELEY, LINKE, HILL

1. Stavenhagen and Whiteley present somewhat opposing arguments regarding language rights. Discuss.
2. “An ethnic community without a language is a dying community” (Stavenhagen p. 41). Defend this statement. Oppose it.
3. Stavenhagen says that in most countries, indigenous languages are not given legal recognition, are not used in official administrative and judicial dealings, and are not taught in schools. Argue in favor of extending the state’s recognition of the languages spoken within its borders in these manners. Argue against such legislative and policy changes.
4. Should language rights be considered human rights? What does Stavenhagen say? What does Whiteley say? Who do you agree with more?
5. Why would indigenous organizations refuse to allow the communities they represent to be categorized among “ethnic minorities”? (Stavenhagen p. 42).
6. What is your position vis à vis bilingual education in both Spanish and English?
7. Whiteley says that the ideology of language rights is “logocentric and presumes a democratic, secular space of language use” (p. 712). What does he mean by “logocentric”? Give 3 examples of ways in which Hopi does not fit this characterization.
8. Give an example of English being used in an undemocratic and non-secular context.
9. Whiteley speaks of a process of reflexivization that occurs to languages. What is this (p. 712)?
10. How can language be thought of as inseparable from self and community?
11. Whiteley characterizes multiculturalism and language rights ideologies as considering culture and language to be a product or effect, even a commodity. Present an argument supporting his claim. Argue against it.
12. “...essentialism, reification, and naturalism—that unholy trinity of cardinal anthropological sins...” (Whiteley, p. 713). Discuss.
13. Language, according to Whiteley, can assume a “scheduled emblematic identity-display” function. Describe what this role would look like.

14. “The turn to ‘culture’ as a socially legitimating essence—subject to protection as a human right, at some level resistant and impermeable to explanation and, therefore, to domination (‘it’s my culture, only I can understand it’)—has taken on quasi-religious overtones” (Whiteley p. 714). Provide an example from your life at MIT.
15. Whiteley speaks of cultural difference manifesting a form of “cultural capital” (p. 715). What does this mean? What does the word “capital” usually refer to? Give an example of this kind of “cultural capital.”
16. Why are Hopi so ambivalent about making sure their language doesn’t become extinct?
17. Why didn’t the board of the Moencopi Day School—all of them Hopi—not want Hopi taught in the classroom?
18. Linke writes about “linguistic nationalism.” Describe the U.S.’s linguistic nationalism.
19. Provide two examples illustrating the notion of “national character.”
20. Describe Linke’s characterization of the legal reform that ushered in the possibility of dual citizenship for children (p. 154).
21. Why were applicants for political asylum officially forbidden to take German classes (p. 157)?
22. What metaphors have been used to bemoan the intrusion of foreign words into German (p. 159)?
23. Have you had the experience of a foreign word or phrase resembling “a sensual encounter, a source of pleasure...the erotic appeal, the seductive allure of the foreign” (p. 161)? If so, describe.
24. What is your take on Hill’s argument that “mock Spanish” phrases like “the big enchilada” are racist?
25. What is a “linguistic ideology”?
26. “For linguists, ‘correctness’ is a social and political, not a grammatical, fact” (p. 35). Discuss, providing two examples.
27. Describe Hill’s argument that “he don’t know no better” and similar double negatives are not incorrect English, including the linguistic analysis (p. 36).
28. Relate this point of Hill’s to her discussion of gendered/classed English (p. 37).
29. Describe two situations where “ungrammatical” English is seen as appropriate.

30. Describe what Humpty Dumpty said. Why is it funny?
31. Describe “moral panics” and discuss Hill’s points about them re. linguistic racism.

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