Collaboration in documentation

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Mohave and Chemehuevi Language Documentation

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Mohave, a member of the Yuman language family: Approximately 30 speakers today at CRIT [Colorado River Indian Tribes].

Chemehuevi, Chemehuevi is a southern Numic language of the Shoshonean branch of Uto-Aztecan: Fewer than 5 fully fluent speakers at CRIT.

Our project builds on previous work at CRIT which involved training tribal members in the use of technology related to language learning.
Colorado River
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Language Collaboration

- The notion of collaboration between Indigenous communities and linguists has been recently emphasized as a means to better accomplish language work.

- A collaborative model for preparing language curators (Furbee & Stanley 2002) with a focus on language revitalization.
What is the relationship between revitalization and documentation?

- What is documentary adequacy from a community perspective? All things that support the revitalization/pedagogical goals: grammars, dictionaries, pragmatics, conversation, and discourse.

- For communities, revitalization and documentation are inseparable - they energize each other.

- Documentation feeds revitalization.

- This presentation focuses on collaboration and training related specifically to language documentation.
Points of consideration when collaborating

- Who
  - Linguist team members
  - Community team members
- When
  - As often as possible
  - Language vs. Job
- Where
  - Onsite
  - Offsite
- How
  - Meetings (group and individual)
  - Electronic communication (OLE board & e-mail)
- Equipment
- Collaborator/Team member education
The Research Team

- Community team members
  - Motivated to work with the language
  - Knowledge of the language or of fluent speakers
  - Familiarity with the community and social factors

- Linguist team members
  - Motivated to work with the language
  - Trained in linguistic, language learning, and documentary methods

- “The Captain/Coach” (Linguist or Community team member)
  - Motivator
  - Follow-up
  - Responsible
Meeting Types (Training Sessions)

- **Group Meeting**
  - Opportunity to meet together as a group
  - Discuss and establish group goals
  - Conduct training on material relevant for the group
    - E.g. equipment, local cultural practices, basic linguistics

- **Individual Meeting**
  - Team members can work one on one
  - More comfortable setting
  - Establish individual goals
  - Work together on projects
Contact Time

- Frequent contact is central - both onsite and offsite
  - Onsite contact is always the best
  - E-mail
  - **The OLE board** technology (OLE) – a voice, video and text environment for asynchronous communication
    [http://www.ole.arizona.edu/](http://www.ole.arizona.edu/)
Collaborator Education

- Community team members
  - Descriptive linguistics, language acquisition, dialectal difference, language attitudes, bilingual education, training them to be researchers, explain linguists’ motivation…
  - Equipment education, documentary “best practices”
  - AILDI (and other native language institutes) as a resource

- Linguist team members
  - Social structure, cultural issues, political environment
  - Equipment education, documentary “best practices”
  - AILDI (and other native language institutes) as a resource
Examples of collaboration: Chemehuevi

An online Chemehuevi dictionary and video language lessons
Online Chemehuevi Dictionary

As a group it was established that an online dictionary of Chemehuevi (Nelson et al., 2004) containing sound files for individual items would be useful documentation and useful for to the tribe.
Video Lessons: A trial

- During an individual meeting we created a trial video on animals which led to more in depth planning of a longer video on the morning routine.
‘Best practices’ for the construction of Language Documentation Teams?

- ‘Best Practices’ are still being defined in the context of working within a community…

- However, motivation is the most essential characteristic in identifying prospective team members.
Towards a model of language documentation for Indigenous Communities

- Collaborative effort
- Onsite training/meetings
- Documenting toward revitalizing
- Community based protocols for use of materials
Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation
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