An Online Chemhuevi Dictionary

Benjamin Tucker†
Dirk Elzinga*
Susan Penfield†
Angelina Chtareva-Serratos†

*Brigham Young University
†University of Arizona
Introduction

• Chemehuevi is a Uto-Aztecan language closely related to Southern Paiute (Sapir 1930a, b; 1931)

• More distantly related to languages such as Shoshoni (Crum and Dayley 1993, Gould and Loether 2002, Miller 1972, 1996).

• It is spoken in Western Arizona and Eastern California on two reservations:
  – the Colorado River Indian Reservation in Arizona
  – the Chemehuevi Valley Indian Reservation in California
• To our knowledge there are approximately 5 speakers of the language; all are over the age of 50.

• No children are currently learning the language as a first language.
Previous Print Documentation

• Previous documentation of Chemehuevi is rather sparse.

• Kroeber’s “Notes on Shoshonean Dialects of Southern California” (1909).

• J. P. Harrington collected large amounts of Chemehuevi vocabulary and texts.

• Carobeth Laid published two books on Chemehuevi ethnography which include short texts in Chemehuevi and fair sized word lists (Laird 1976, 1984).

• Margaret Press’s UCLA Ph.D. Dissertation (1975, 1979) represent the most detailed linguistic studies of the language.
Previous Audio Documentation

• Roy Major (1969) Doris Duke Indian Oral History Program, worked with several speakers eliciting approximately 11 reels of narrative, songs and language data.

• Guy Tyler (1972)
  – Guy Tyler was an amateur ethnographer who traveled primarily around the southwest eliciting recording language data from native speakers of 22 languages.
  – See http://www.nativeland.org/ilrp.html for a complete list of languages.

• Margaret Press (1973-74) audio recordings made as part of her dissertation.
The Dictionary

• In the summer of 2003, Elzinga constructed a database which served as the foundation for an electronic dictionary of the language.

• The source material
  – Word lists found in Laird 1976, Laird 1984
  – Word lists from Press 1979
  – Lexical items gathered during interviews with native speakers

• The database was created in Excel converted to XML using a Visual Basic script and then to HTML.
Why XML and what is it?

• XML stands for Extensible Markup Language.
• XML is the suggested best practice (emeld.org).
• Advantages to XML
  – XML is open source, therefore no reliance on proprietary software and can easily be updated as technology changes.
  – The researcher has complete control over the data and the database structure.
  – Ability to use XSLT or Extensible Stylesheet Language in conjunction with an XML database. XSLT allows the user to create an RTF, PDF or HTML output of a database.
View of our XML database
Why XML and what is it?

- Disadvantages to XML
  - XML and XSLT are two independent programming languages
  - Must be learned by researcher or a programmer must be hired
  - Learning their basic structures and approaches however is not extremely difficult.
  - Easier to use and learn software packages (e.g. Microsoft Excel).
The Dictionary

Dictionary Demo

Welcome to the online Chemehuevi Dictionary. Please click on one of the links below to proceed. You will need a login and password to access the dictionary below.

How to write Chemehuevi

Nuwpî mpaqapî pu'okatû/An Online Chemehuevi Dictionary

Nuwpî mpaqapî - Haiku amagaqî (Chemehuevi - English)

Haiku amagaqî - Nuwpî mpaqapî (English - Chemehuevi)
The Dictionary

- How to write (pronounce) Chemehuevi (soon to include audio examples)
- Chemehuevi – English, English – Chemehuevi
- Alphabetic sort
- Ability to listen to sound files
  - Several speakers representing
    - both genders
    - several dialects
- Search can be performed using the browser search function (not a particularly intuitive search)
The Dictionary: Main Goals

• Document the language
  – A synthesis of research done by Laird and Press in the form of a written dictionary with original audio recordings from Major (1969), Tyler (1972), Press (1973-74), and recent work by Penfield, Serratos, & Tucker (2005-2006).

• Produce a resource for the community
  – A researcher has an ethical responsibility to the community to give something back to the community.
  – Frequently this is accomplished by the giving a copy of research to the community or to the local archive. However, for most community members this product never reaches them or if it does it is not very useful.

• The dictionary created as a means to both document the language and return something to the community.
Future Development of the Dictionary

- Data clean-up, fix errors, typos
- Include data from Harrington notes
- Ethnographic information and sort function (the hardest part is the data entry)
- Inclusion of images and videos
- Increased encryption
- Internal search function